

*JANNI AND THE DRAKEN*

ONCE there was a man who shunned the world, and lived in the wilderness. He owned nothing but a flock of sheep, whose milk and wool he sold, and so procured himself bread to eat; he also carried wooden spoons, and sold them. He had a wife and one little girl, and after a long time his wife had another child. The evening it was born the man went to the nearest village to fetch a nurse, and on the way he met a monk who begged him for a night's lodging. This the man willingly granted, and took him home with him. There being no one far nor near to baptize the child, the man asked the monk to do him this service, and the child was given the name of Janni.

In the course of time Janni's parents died, and he and his sister were left alone in the world; soon affairs went badly with them, so they determined to wander away to seek their fortune. In packing up, the sister found a knife which the monk had left for his godson, and this she gave to her brother.

Then they went on their way, taking with them the three sheep which were all that remained of their flocks. After wandering for three days they met a man with three dogs who proposed that they should exchange animals, he taking the sheep, and they the dogs. The brother and sister were quite pleased at this arrangement, and after the exchange was made they separated, and went their different ways.

Janni and his sister in course of time came to a great castle, in which dwelt forty Draken, who, when they heard that Janni had come, fled forty fathoms underground.

So Janni found the castle deserted, and abode there with his sister, and every day went out to hunt with the weapons the Draken had left in the castle.

One day, when he was away hunting, one of the Draken came up to get provisions, not knowing that there was anyone in the castle. When he saw Janni's sister he was terrified, but she told him not to be afraid, and by-and-by they fell in love with each other, for every time that Janni went to hunt the sister called the Drakos up. Thus they went on making love to each other till at length, unknown to Janni, they got married. Then, when it was too late, the sister repented, and was afraid of Janni's wrath when he found it out.

One day the Drakos came to her, and said: 'You must pretend to be ill, and when Janni asks what ails you, and what you want, you must answer: "Cherries," and when he inquires where these are to be found, you must say: "There are some in a garden a day's journey from here." Then your brother will go there, and will never come back, for there dwell three of my brothers who will look after him well.'

Then the sister did as the Drakos advised, and next day Janni set out to fetch the cherries, taking his three dogs with him. When he came to the garden where the cherries grew he jumped off his horse, drank some water from the spring, which rose there, and fell directly into a deep sleep. The Draken came round about to eat him, but the dogs flung themselves on them and tore them in pieces, and scratched a grave in the ground with their paws, and buried the Draken so that Janni might not see their dead bodies. When Janni awoke, and saw his dogs all covered with blood, he believed that they had caught, somewhere, a wild beast, and was angry because they

had left none of it for him. But he plucked the cherries, and took them back to his sister.

When the Drakos heard that Janni had come back, he fled for fear forty fathoms underground. And the sister ate the cherries and declared herself well again.

The next day, when Janni was gone to hunt, the Drakos came out, and advised the sister that she should pretend to be ill again, and when her brother asked her what she would like, she should answer 'Quinces,' and when he inquired where these were to be found, she should say: 'In a garden distant about two days' journey.' Then would Janni certainly be destroyed, for there dwelt six brothers of the Drakos, each of whom had two heads.

The sister did as she was advised, and next day Janni again set off, taking his three dogs with him. When he came to the garden he dismounted, sat down to rest a little, and fell fast asleep. First there came three Draken round about to eat him, and when these three had been worried by the dogs, there came three others who were worried in like manner. Then the dogs again dug a grave and buried the dead Draken, that their master might not see them. When Janni awoke and beheld the dogs all covered with blood, he thought, as before, that they had killed a wild beast, and was again angry with them for leaving him nothing. But he took the quinces and brought them back to his sister, who, when she had eaten them, declared herself better. The Drakos, when he heard that Janni had come back, fled for fear forty fathoms deeper underground.

Next day, when Janni was hunting, the Drakos went to the sister and advised that she should again pretend to be ill, and should beg for some pears, which grew in a garden three days' journey from the castle. From this quest Janni would certainly never return, for there dwelt nine brothers of the Drakos, each of whom had three heads.

The sister did as she was told, and next day Janni,

taking his three dogs with him, went to get the pears. When he came to the garden he laid himself down to rest, and soon fell asleep.

Then first came three Draken to eat him, and when the dogs had worried these, six others came and fought the dogs a long time. The noise of this combat awoke Janni, and he slew the Draken, and knew at last why the dogs were covered with blood.

After that he freed all whom the Draken held prisoners, amongst others, a king's daughter. Out of gratitude she would have taken him for her husband ; but he put her off, saying : ' For the kindness that I have been able to do to you, you shall receive in this castle all the blind and lame who pass this way.' The princess promised him to do so, and on his departure gave him a ring.

So Janni plucked the pears and took them to his sister, who, when she had eaten them, declared she felt better. When, however, the Drakos heard that Janni had come back yet a third time safe and sound, he fled for fright forty fathoms deeper underground ; and, next day, when Janni was away hunting, he crept out and said to the sister : ' Now are we indeed both lost, unless you find out from him wherein his strength lies, and then between us we will contrive to do away with him.'

When, therefore, Janni had come back from hunting, and sat at evening with his sister by the fire, she begged him to tell her wherein lay his strength, and he answered : ' It lies in my two fingers ; if these are bound together then all my strength disappears.'

' That I will not believe,' said the sister, ' unless I see it for myself.'

Then he let her tie his fingers together with a thread, and immediately he became powerless. Then the sister called up the Drakos, who, when he had come forth, tore out Janni's eyes, gave them to his dogs to eat, and threw him into a dry well.

Now it happened that some travellers, going to draw water from this well, heard Janni groaning at the bottom. They came near, and asked him where he was, and he begged them to draw him up from the well, for he was a poor unfortunate man.

The travellers let a rope down and drew him up to



daylight. It was not till then that he first became aware that he was blind, and he begged the travellers to lead him to the country of the king whose daughter he had freed, and they would be well repaid for their trouble.

When they had brought him there he sent to beg the princess to come to him; but she did not recognise him till he had shown her the ring she had given him.

Then she remembered him, and took him with her into the castle.

When she learnt what had befallen him she called together all the sorceresses in the country in order that they should tell her where the eyes were. At last she found one who declared that she knew where they were, and that she could restore them. This sorceress then went straight to the castle where dwelt the sister and the Drakos, and gave something to the dogs to eat which caused the eyes to reappear. She took them with her and put them back in Janni's head, so that he saw as well as before.

Then he returned to the castle of the Drakos, whom he slew as well as his sister; and, taking his dogs with him, went back to the princess and they were immediately married.