

# The Sunken City

AND OTHER TALES FROM ROUND THE WORLD



By JAMES McNEILL

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By JAMES McNEILL

*Illustrated by THEO DIMSON*



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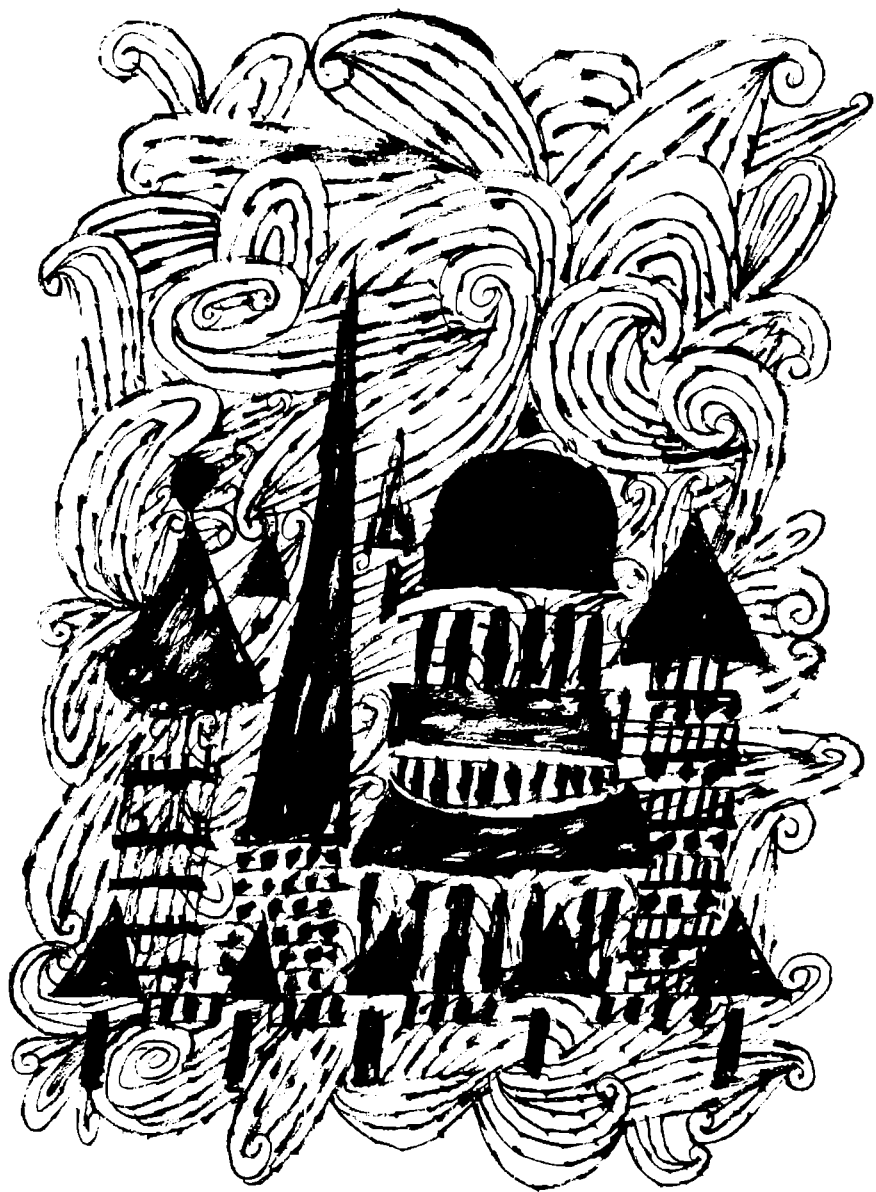
To my children

JEANIE JUDY JIMMIE

CLAIRE WENDY

LINDA KEVIN

whose love of stories  
prompted this collection



## The Sunken City *HOLLAND*

IN HOLLAND, beneath the waves of the Zuider Zee, lie the ruins of a once prosperous city called Stavoren. The people who lived there were nearly all wealthy, and had fine homes and liveried servants. The richest among them was a certain maiden lady. She owned counting houses, farms, palaces, and fleets of ships, and she spent all her waking moments planning new ventures to increase her already fabulous wealth. If money bought happiness, she would have been the happiest woman in the land, but she was envious of her neighbors. If one had silver plates on his table, then she must have golden plates. If one had gold railings on his porch, then she would have a solid gold porch. If her greed and pride made her hated, her wealth made the poorer people of the city hold her in awe.

One day she bought the largest ship afloat and added

it to her fleet. Sending for the captain of the vessel, she said: "As I am now your mistress and you are an experienced captain, there is no reason why we cannot make a fortune with the vessel you command. I have filled your holds with money. I command you to bring back to me a cargo of the most valuable thing in the world."

"Your wish is my command, my lady," answered the captain. "But there is just one thing. What is the most valuable thing in the world?"

The lady would not tell him. Instead, she bade him be off and not return without it or he would forfeit his head.

"I will make my neighbors take notice," she laughed. "Wait until they see the cargo my ship brings back to Stavoren."

When the ship was far out at sea, the captain called his crew together and explained their mission. "Now *you* be the ones to tell me," he said. "What is the most valuable cargo we can get?"

"Gold!" cried the first mate.

"Jewels!" cried the second.

"No!" shouted the bos'n. "Slaves are the most valuable cargo."

"It is rum!" roared the cook.

"Spices and silk from the orient bring the highest prices!" added a deckhand.

But it was the youngest member of the crew, a little cabinboy, who suggested that wheat was the most valuable because it was the staff of life.



All looked at the boy in surprise. But of course! Wheat *would* be the most valuable cargo. Setting course for northern waters, they sailed to Danzig. There they found a cargo of rich, golden wheat. Quickly they filled the holds and sailed for home.

As the ship neared the city, the news that the captain was returning with the most valuable cargo in the world flashed through the streets. Large crowds of curious people flocked to the shore to watch the ship's arrival. The haughty ship's owner too heard the news. She left off trying on her expensive clothes and rushed to the wharf to see her new treasure. With her servants behind her, she rudely pushed everyone aside who stood in her path.

"What have you brought me?" she said to the captain imperiously when the ship had been tied up.

"Wheat!" he answered triumphantly, bowing before her. "The staff of life."

"Wheat, you say?" screeched the lady. "Off with the fool's head!" she ordered. "Throw the wheat into the sea, every grain of it!"

And what she commanded was done. While the wheat was poured into the sea, crowds of beggars gathered, striving to catch just a handful of it. But the lady's servants beat them off.

"As surely as God is above us you will be punished for this sin!" the captain cried as he was led away. "Not long from now, you who are the wealthiest lady in Stavoren will yearn for a few handfuls of that very wheat that is being wasted."

The woman laughed contemptuously. Taking a glittering ring from her finger, she cast it into the sea and coolly declared: "If ever I see that ring again, then I will believe your words."

It was some time later. The cook was preparing the lady's supper, and as he took a fish to open it up and dress it, he found a ring in its mouth. Thinking of the reward he would receive for it, the cook rushed with the ring to his mistress. The proud lady paled and began to tremble when she saw it, remembering the last words of the captain.

Before an hour had passed a panting messenger arrived to tell her that her counting houses had failed. People were clamoring for their money back. Then another messenger galloped up to say that the dikes had broken and that her rich farms were being flooded. Next a mighty wind arose and wrecked all her ships as they lay at anchor. That night fire swept her palaces — even the one she lived in. She was fortunate to escape with her life, clad only in a robe and slippers.

The next morning the lady, far from haughty now, called on the other rich burghers of the city for help, but they ignored her, pretending they did not know her. Before long she was pleading for food with the beggars (who scorned her, remembering the wheat she had denied them).

Meanwhile the merchants of Stavoren continued to enjoy life as before, but the reward for their greed and avarice was not long in coming. The wasted wheat took root on the ocean floor. Slowly it grew until it

choked the channel so that even the fish could not come in. The silt and mud clung to the wheat, creating a sand bar which blocked the harbor completely. As the ships could not get into Stavoren to trade, they went elsewhere.

Next, a leak developed in the dikes around the town. The salt water seeped in and ruined the fresh-water wells. The arrogant rich, unconcerned as usual, drank wine and champagne with ruin at their very doors, but the miserable poor had nothing, and they begged in vain at the gates of the rich for food and drink. Desperate, they had to flee the city. Soon not a laborer was to be found.

The dikes, left in disrepair, grew more dangerous with every passing hour. One night the sky turned dark and threatening. The wind blew fiercely, and the sea rushed in angry billows over the dikes until they burst in a terrible fury on the sleeping city.

The next day the sea was calm — a sheet of blue rippling merrily in the sunlight, though underneath its waters lay Stavoren.

Even to this day, when the water is calm and clear, fishermen sailing from the modern town that bears the ancient city's name can see the towers and steeples of old Stavoren lying far below. Sometimes fish swimming through the belfries cause the bells to toll. Then a sound of faraway tinkling can be heard floating above the watery depths — a warning to all who hear it of the punishment of greed.

## The Land Ship    *IRELAND*

THERE WAS ONCE a great King of Ireland who was without sons, but he had one beautiful daughter whom he loved dearly and to whom he would some day leave his kingdom. His wife was dead, and he lived in fear of the day when his daughter would marry and leave him alone. So he made a vow that she would marry only the man who could sail a ship right up to the door of the castle. Now this may not seem to be a difficult task, for there were many great ships in Ireland and many good men to sail them. But the fact was that the castle was twenty miles from the nearest edge of the sea.

Dyeermud Ulta was the stalwart son of a farmer who lived near Kilcar. He had heard of the beauty of the King's daughter and of her father's vow, and he wished with all his heart that he might be the one to find a ship

that could sail right to the castle door. When he grew up, instead of forgetting his dream of finding such a vessel, he thought of it all the more.

One day he was walking to the market at Killybegs. Suddenly he stopped short. He saw a marvelous sight — a great and lovely ship sailing right over the fields towards him as though it were on water. Presently Dyeermud saw that a Red Champion was at the helm. He called out, and the helmsman brought the ship about and tied it to an oak.

“What journey are you on and where are you going?” asked the Red Champion.

“I seek a ship like yours,” replied Dyeermud Ulta when he was able to speak above his excitement.

“Pray why do you need a ship like mine?” inquired the Red Champion.

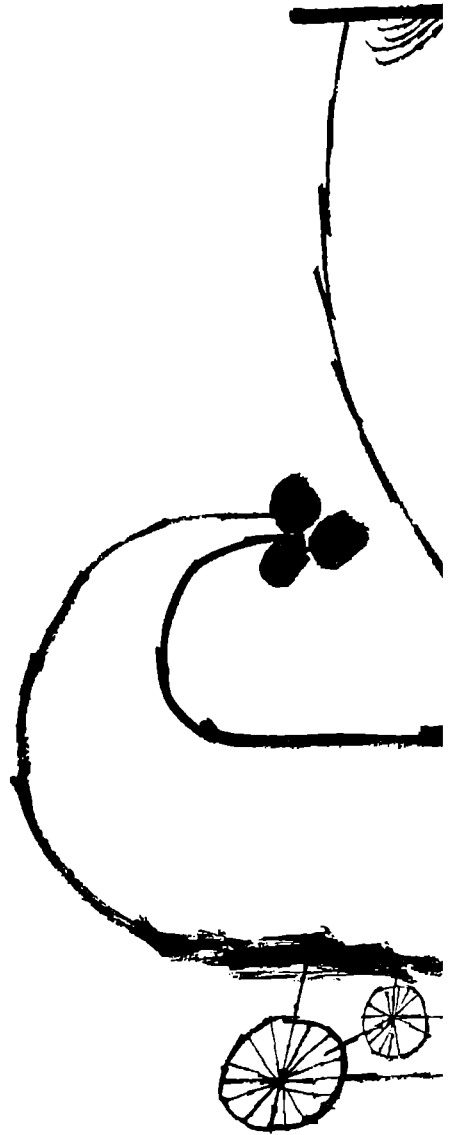
So Dyeermud explained to him the wish of his heart.

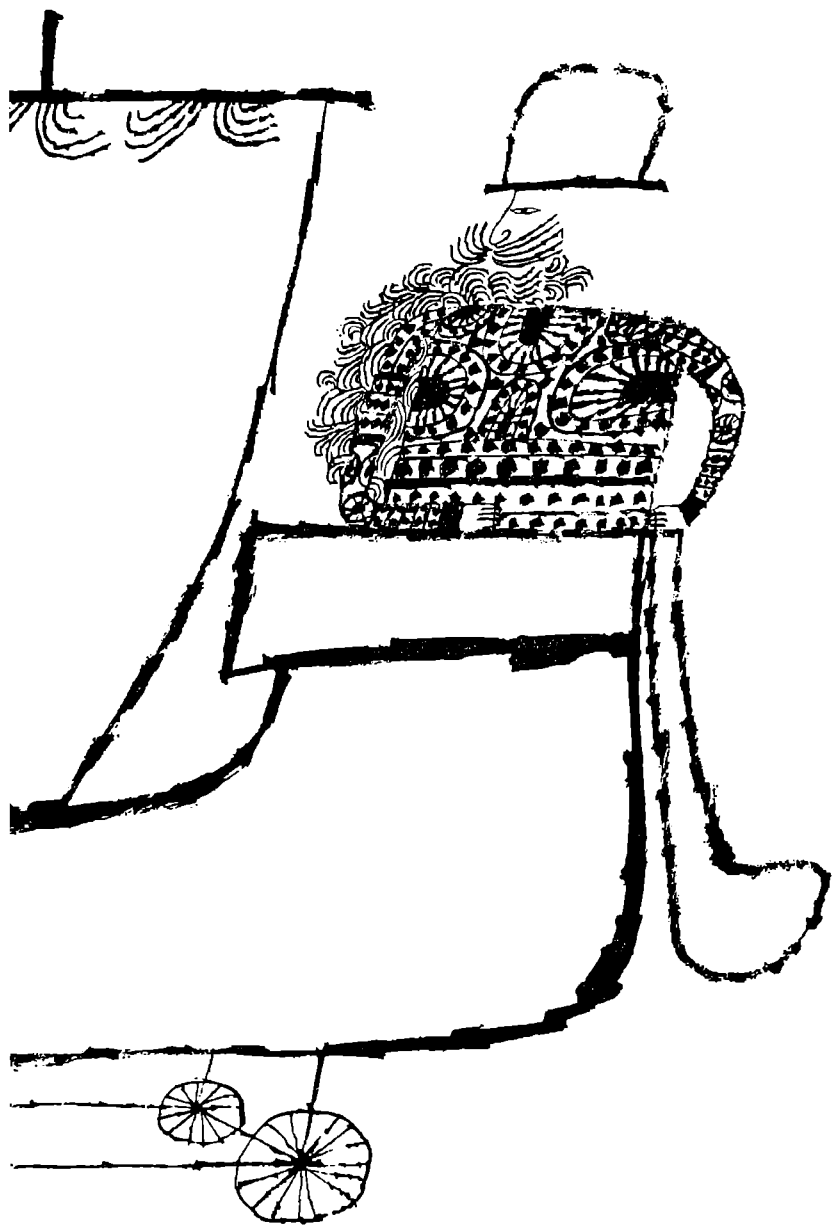
“Come with me as a shipmate,” said the Red Man, “and give me what you will when your wish comes true.”

“Very well,” was Dyeermud’s answer. “I will give you what is right when the time comes.” And they sailed away together.

They came to Conlun, a mile above Killybegs. In a field beside a road they saw twelve men cutting sod and a thirteenth man eating every sod as fast as the twelve could cut it. Dyeermud wondered at the sight, and when the ship came alongside the sod diggers he asked the name of the thirteenth man.

“My name is Sod-Eater,” the man replied, with his





mouth full. "Because I cannot get enough to eat, I must eat sods to fill my empty stomach."

"Will you come with us?" asked the Red Champion.

"What will you give me if I do?"

"Five pieces of gold at the journey's end," was the reply.

"That will be payment enough," and Sod-Eater joined them in the ship.

They sailed on until they came to the Howling River, about a mile below Dunkineely, and there they saw a man blowing mightily, but he had a plug in one nostril.

When they had drawn the ship alongside the puffing man, Dyeermud shouted to him, "Why do you blow so hard? And why have you stopped your nostril with a plug?"

"I am called Greedy-of-Blowing," was the reply, "and were I to blow with both nostrils I would blow everything away."

"Will you come with us?" asked the Red Champion.

Greedy-of-Blowing agreed to come when he was promised five pieces of gold at the journey's end.

The ship then sailed until it came to Bunlaky, a mile above Dunkineely, and there they saw another man crushing stones and rocks by sitting on them suddenly. Dyeermud was amazed at his strength and had the ship brought alongside of him.

"I am called Iron-Back," said the man, "and I am breaking up these stones and rocks to build a mill, a road, and a bridge."

Such a man would be a useful companion, so the



Red Champion asked him to accompany them on their journey.

“I will if the pay is right,” the strong man said.

He was offered five pieces of gold at the journey's end, and he agreed that this would be ample reward. Iron-Back boarded the ship and they sailed away.

They had sailed another mile or so when they saw a man running fast against the wind, with only one leg — his other leg was tied against his shoulder. The Red Champion sailed the ship beside the running man and asked his name. (He had to shout loudly because the ship was moving fast.)

“My name is Foot-on-Shoulder,” the man replied as soon as they slowed down. “The reason I run with one foot tied to my shoulder is that, with both legs, I would travel so fast no one would be able to see me.”

The men aboard the ship explained that they were on their way to win the daughter of the King of Ireland for Dyeermud Ulta. They asked him the price for his aid, and Foot-on-Shoulder agreed that five pieces of gold would be fair.

They sailed on again until they came to within a mile of Donegal, and there, at a place called Killymard, the Red Champion spied a man lying in a field with his cheek to the ground. He steered the ship toward him.

“Why do you lie on the ground?” asked Dyeermud.

“I was listening to the earthworms talking and the grass growing,” was the reply. “My name is Hearing-Ear.”

They sought his aid on their quest and he readily

offered it for their price: five gold pieces at the journey's end.

Many more miles they sailed, over green valleys and hills, and at last they came to a stop beside a wall of stone. An ancient man sat on top of it chewing his thumb.

"Why do you chew your thumb?" asked Dyeermud.

"I am called Fis Wacfis [which means *a wise man*], and when I chew my thumb I am able to think of the answer to any question I am asked."

He would be invaluable, and the companions persuaded him to come with them for the sum of five pieces of gold at the journey's end.

Then, hoisting all their canvas, the eight companions sailed on until they came to the castle of the King. They went right up to the gates and boldly asked the guards to announce them.

The King was so alarmed when he learned of the arrival of the land ship and its strange crew that he had his men shut the gates tight while he conferred with his wisest ministers. In spite of his vow he did not want his daughter to marry Dyeermud Ulta. When his ministers could give him no advice, he consulted a henwife.

The henwife said to the King: "Gather all the best food in the castle and invite all the ship's crew to come to a feast. On every chair I shall place a poisoned spike so that when each man sits down he shall die forthwith from the poison."

Now Hearing-Ear heard these plans and warned



Dyeermud, who took the problem to Fis Wacfis. The wise man chewed his thumb for a moment and then said: "Let the first man into the banquet hall be Iron-Back, and he shall sit on the first chair and break it like a cabbage stalk. If he does this to every chair in turn, the feast cannot be held, for there will be no place for the guests to sit."

And so it was done, and each chair with its poisoned spike was broken and the King was forced to cancel the feast. The next day he went again to the henwife and asked what he must do to prevent his daughter from marrying.

"You must invite the crew to a great barbecue," the henwife advised. "Offer your daughter in marriage only after all the food is eaten. If even so much as a crumb remains, she cannot marry."

Now Hearing-Ear told Fis Wacfis what he had heard, for he had kept his ear to the ground the whole while. Fis Wacfis went to Dyeermud, advising him to send in Sod-Eater ahead of the rest.

Sod-Eater went to the barbecue ahead of his companions as Fis Wacfis had planned. By the time the others had arrived at the spits, he had eaten up one hundred and fifty tons of meat and all the potatoes in sight. And before the King could stop him, Sod-Eater cleaned the pantry out as well. Then he ate all the vegetables in the garden, and the haystacks in the barnyard too.

The King was furious. He rushed to the henwife a third time, and threatened to lock her up if she didn't

find a better plan. The henwife then figured out the most complicated ruse of all: "You must tell them that no man may marry your daughter until you have the bottle of cure from the three sons of Sean MacGlinn, who live in the Eastern world. You must ask to have the bottle by noon tomorrow, or your daughter will be a maid forever."

Now, unknown to the henwife, Hearing-Ear had heard their plans and straightway told them to Fis Wacfis. Together they brought the news to Dyeermud. "We must send Foot-on-Shoulder," they all agreed. So the fast man untied his bound foot from his shoulder and sped away to the Eastern world to find the three sons of Sean MacGlinn who owned the bottle of cure. He traveled so fast that he came to the sea in a minute and made himself a boat from his cap and a sail from his shirt and reached the Eastern world in five hours. When he arrived at the castle of MacGlinn, he shouted to the guards, "I must have the bottle of cure by sundown or I shall have your lives."

The brothers paid him no heed because they thought themselves safe behind the walls, but they had not reckoned on such a powerful man. In the twinkling of an eye Foot-on-Shoulder leapt into the air and cleared the wall by six feet (the wall was sixty-six feet high). Terrified, the brothers quickly gave him the bottle of cure in exchange for their lives, and Foot-on-Shoulder sped back to Ireland.

Meanwhile the King had sent a messenger to Dyeermud Ulta saying that no man could marry his daughter

unless he had the bottle of cure by noon the next day. When the messenger finished speaking, Dyeermud laughed. "Go back and tell the King," he said, "that the bottle of cure shall be his before tomorrow noon."

When the King heard this, he rushed to tell the henwife. She dressed herself as a piper and went out on a high hill so that she could watch for Foot-on-Shoulder when he was coming back. She planned to pipe sweet music that would make him pause long enough for her to seize the bottle. Now this plan was also perceived by Fis Wacfis, and he told Greedy-of-Blowing what was about to happen.

Greedy-of-Blowing went to the hill where the henwife was sitting disguised as a piper. He greeted her kindly and begged to be allowed to play a note on the pipes for her. The unsuspecting henwife agreed, and when Greedy-of-Blowing blew one note, the pipes burst and the note went howling through the air. Then Greedy-of-Blowing sneezed loudly and blew the henwife away into the air until she disappeared like the note itself. She went so far into space that she might still be going, for nothing has been heard of her since.

Foot-on-Shoulder finally returned and gave the bottle to Dyeermud. At the hour of noon Dyeermud was standing before the castle gate. Holding up the bottle, he demanded the King's daughter for his bride. But just as the King was about to refuse again, his daughter came to the gate. Her eyes fell on her suitor, and her heart was filled with love. She hushed her

father's protests and begged him to allow her to take Dyeermud as her husband. Powerless before his daughter's plea, the King consented.

The wedding took place soon after, and there was much feasting and joy. Years passed. The King died. His kingdom and all his wealth he left to Dyeermud, who in turn rewarded his companions of the land ship as they had agreed. But one of them, the Red Champion, became greedy and asked for half the kingdom. Dyeermud refused his request, for he had promised to give him only what was right.

The Red Champion grew cunning in his fury. He pretended to sail away, but in fact he meant to return again and again to torment Dyeermud for as long as he should live. But Fis Wacfis knew of his plan, and just before the ship spread its sails he stole the rudder so that it could neither turn nor steer. And it is sailing even now, high in the air, around and around the earth. You may see it some day if you wish hard enough — especially as hard as Dyeermud Ulta wished when he was but a boy.

## The Magic Ring ❖ *THE UKRAINE*

LONG AGO in a little Ukrainian village, there lived a boy and his mother who was a widow. They were poor, and the cottage in which they lived was the meanest and smallest in the village (it had only one window). They ate dry bread, and cold water was their only drink. They might have lived better if Ivan had been more ambitious, but he was a daydreamer and had to be told to do everything. The neighbors called him "Ivan the Fool," but his mother, who loved him in spite of his laziness, called him "Ivanushka."

Many times she would say to him as he sat by the stove or lay in the ashes: "Ivanushka, you are sitting there with your nose unwiped. Why don't you go into the marketplace, and perhaps some kind man will give you work so that you can buy some bread for us to eat."

One day Ivan grew tired of her scolding and went out to the marketplace in search of employment. He met a farmer who offered him a job for a year. Ivan accepted gladly.



He was happy on the farm, and when the farmer's dog had puppies, one pleased him more than the others. He played with the puppy in his free time, training him to do many tricks – even teaching him to talk.

After the year had passed, the farmer called Ivan to receive his wages. Ivan was glad the year was over, for he wanted to see his mother again. But he could not bear the thought of leaving the little dog behind.

“I do not need the money,” Ivan told the farmer, “but let me keep this dog, and that will be pay enough.”

The farmer was pleased to get off so lightly, and he quickly agreed to the bargain.

The lad took the dog home. When his mother saw that it was the only reward for his year's labor she was very angry, and stormed: “All people are people, but you, Ivanushka, are a fool. Here we have nothing to eat for ourselves, and you bring home another life to support.”

Ivan was not home very long before his mother again drove him out to find a job. This time he met a woodsman who needed a helper. Ivan worked in the woods a whole year. In his spare time he played with a small kitten; indeed, the kitten and the dog were his only companions. He taught the kitten many tricks – even how to talk. All three loved one another very much.

When the year was over, the woodsman called Ivan to receive his wages.

“I have no use for gold or silver,” Ivan said to him,

“but let me keep this cat, and that will be payment enough.”

Of course the woodsman was overjoyed at the bargain and agreed readily.

Ivan set off for home with his dog and cat, and when he reached his mother's cottage, she was more angry than ever. “People are people,” she said again, “but you, Ivanushka, are a fool. We have no food for ourselves, let alone for two useless animals.”

His mother made life miserable for him, so Ivan and his two friends decided to go away. They wandered dejectedly for many days. One night as they sat close together for warmth, they saw a huge fire burning in the very center of a field. A voice called for help from the depths of the flames. They ran quickly toward the fire. Ivan could see nothing in the dancing flames, but still the voice kept calling and calling. He poked at the fire with his staff and uncovered only a large venomous serpent.

“Take me out of this fire, I beg you,” the serpent cried, “and I will give you a great reward for my life.”

Ivan hooked his staff to the squirming serpent and pulled it out of the fire, and when he had laid it on the ground the serpent disappeared. In its stead was a beautiful girl.

“Thank you, Ivanushka,” the maiden cried. “You have done me a great service and I shall see that your reward is fitting. Come with me to the house of my mother and I will tell her it was you who broke the magic spell that bound me.”

Ivan recovered from his astonishment at this apparition and quickly said he'd go. On the way the maiden warned her new friends not to take the first reward, nor the second, nor the third that was offered, but to ask for the ring on her mother's middle finger.

"If you take the first thing she offers you, it will be copper, and before you can use it it will turn into coal; if you take the second it will be silver, and it will change into chips of wood; while the third, which is gold, will change into brick."

"But what value is the ring?" Ivan asked. "For surely gold and silver are valuable things."

"It is an enchanted ring," the maiden explained, "but not even I know how to use it. If you ask my godmother in the village she can tell you its properties, for it was she who gave it to my mother when I was born."

When the girl's mother saw that her daughter was safe and heard of Ivan's kindness, she asked him to accept a bag of copper coins as a reward, but Ivan refused them. He also refused a bag of silver and a lump of gold as she proffered them. When he insisted on the iron ring with the twelve screws that she wore on her middle finger, she grew very pale. But she had promised any reward in the world for her daughter's safe return. She could not refuse to give it to him.

Then Ivan and his animal friends journeyed to the house of the maiden's godmother to learn the secret of the ring.

"Let me hold the ring," said the cagey old woman.

“Then I can show you its secret.”

But the cat, being very wise, had told Ivan not to take it off his finger.

“No,” he said. “I’ll keep it, if you please.”

The old woman looked at him long and hard. Then she said: “It is a magic ring, but as you appear an honest youth I will explain it to you. If you stand on the threshold any night at sunset and tighten the twelve screws, a host of twelve thousand men will spring up, ready to do your bidding.”

“Thank you kindly,” said Ivan, and with his two friends he set out for his mother’s cottage.

“*Now* what have you brought home?” scolded his mother. Ivan proudly held the ring on his finger for her inspection, but he did not tell her of its power. “A silly iron ring,” she screamed, “and not well made at that! Ivanushka, you will always be a fool.”

His mother went to bed as soon as the sun had passed the one window of the cottage, for she did not have oil to light the lamp. When she was asleep, Ivan stood on the threshold and carefully tightened each of the twelve screws on the ring. He made the last turn on the twelfth screw, and in the instant that he blinked his eyes twelve thousand men appeared.

“Master, we are your servants,” said the leader of the host. “Whatever you wish is our command.”

Ivan was struck dumb. A whole army to do his bidding! When he was able to speak, he asked for an ivory castle. “Build it high with many rooms,” he said excitedly. “In every room a liveried servant, in

every bedroom a golden bed with swansdown pillows. And stock the biggest room of all with cabbage rolls, kolbassa, borsch, poppy-seed cakes, and all the other things I like to eat.”

“Lie down and rest,” the leader said, “and all will be done as you have commanded.” And the twelve thousand men bowed as one as Ivan closed the door.

When he woke in the morning, it had all come to pass; and if anyone was more surprised than Ivan, it was his mother. Ivan could not believe what he saw, and he stopped at the first big mirror in the hall to look at himself. Behold, his very face had changed! He was no longer a lad with a running nose, but a handsome youth who was plainly the lord of the castle.

They lived, boy and mother, in luxury for nearly a year, eating the finest foods, listening to a twelve-piece orchestra; and his two animal friends shared Ivan’s comfort with him. The only time Ivan and his mother bestirred themselves was to try on the countless suits and dresses that were hanging in the closets.

But such a beautiful castle and such incredible good fortune caused gossip in the village. And it was not long before news of it reached the ears of the Tsar. He set out with a band of his soldiers and constables to see for himself if the rumor were true. When he arrived at the castle Ivan welcomed him most warmly (as if many times before he’d been a host to Tsars). His hospitality was greater than the Tsar had ever known, even in princes’ castles and in those of wealthy nobles. He stayed many days, and when he left for

home he invited Ivan to visit him as soon as possible, for he wished to entertain him in return, and even thought of making him a prince.

Shortly after, Ivan and many of his retinue called at the Tsar's palace and received the warmest welcome. The Tsar introduced him to his second youngest daughter. She was a great beauty, but she lacked one thing: a pleasant disposition. Ivan fell in love with her, however, for that was what the Tsar had planned that he should do. When he asked for her hand, her father consented — but only on condition that Ivan should first build a golden road connecting Ivan's castle with his own, with an ivory bridge inlaid with silver to span the river. No matter what the season of the year, he insisted, there should be green grass and trees beside the road. Tropical birds were to sing in the leafy branches and swans should swim in the river all the year round.

Ivan accepted the challenge cheerfully. When the sun was setting that evening, he left the palace and stood in the doorway of a servant's hut. Then, making sure no one was watching, he tightened the twelve screws of the ring one by one. When he had tightened the last one (and in the time it took to blink) his host of servants rose before him. And that night, when all were sleeping, the golden road was built and the ivory-and-silver bridge stretched across the river. Birds sang in the trees that grew on the lawns along the glistening road.

When the Tsar got up next morning and stuck his



head out his window, he could not believe his eyes. Clearly there was nothing to do now but fulfill his promise. He ordered the coaches out to take his daughter to be married to Ivan. While they drove to the church birds fluttered and chirped along the road, and when the carriage came back bearing the smiling wedded couple, white blossoms burst forth from their buds.

The couple returned to Ivan's palace, and they were very happy for a while. They would have remained so forever if the Princess had not been so curious about the ugly ring her husband wore. She continually plagued him with questions. "Ivan!" she would say disagreeably. "Why do you wear that ugly ring when you have diamonds and rubies and sapphires?" Then a frown would knit her brow and she would look at him suspiciously. "Perhaps some peasant girl gave it to you, and you still love her?"

But Ivan, of course, always denied her accusations.

One day she said to him: "If you really love me, Ivan, you will give me that ugly ring and let me throw it away. If not, I shall go back to my father and tell him you beat me!"

Poor Ivan did not know what to do. Finally, in desperation, he told her the secret of the ring. That very night the Princess put a drug in Ivan's food. He fell into a heavy slumber, and as soon as he was asleep his wicked wife slipped the ring from his finger. When night fell, she stood on the threshold and tightened the twelve screws, and lo, before her stood twelve thousand men all ready to do her bidding!



“Set this castle on the farthest isle of the farthest sea,” she commanded loftily, “and restore this spot, as well as Ivan and his mother, to their old condition.”

Before morning dawned everything was as before. There was not a sign of the castle — merely a humble cottage and bleak, gray fields. When Ivan woke he was astounded and could not believe what had happened. His poor mother wept bitterly that they had to return to their old ways.

Ivan went straight to the Tsar.

“Ho, ho!” laughed the Tsar when Ivan told him that the Princess had deserted him and stolen all his goods. “My son-in-law is a very handsome man who has fine clothes and many carriages. You are but an ugly oaf in rags and without shoes.” Then he ordered the guards to take him away and lock him in the dungeon.

All seemed lost. Time dragged on and on in the dismal dungeon. But one day Ivan heard scatching on the barred door. It was his faithful animal friends come to help him. “Never fear, good master,” said the cat, “we’ll not let you rot in this foul place. Have patience and we’ll find the iron ring!”

Now, as I have said, the cat was a very wise animal, and besides being able to talk with humans she was endowed with a sixth sense, so that she could even hear what they were thinking. The good cat listened very hard until she heard the wicked wife’s thoughts, and from her thoughts learned where the castle had been taken.

The cat and dog set out together to find it, taking

turns riding on each other's back as they swam across the sea. After a long and perilous journey they came to the ivory castle. When no one was watching they slipped into the Princess's chamber. The cat found the ring hidden in a little glass box. She knocked the box over with her paw, and as the ring fell to the floor, the dog took it in his mouth and the animals fled away together.

It was many more weeks before they reached their own country. They found Ivan nearly dead from hunger, but before he put the ring back on his finger he kissed his two true friends.

"You have never forsaken us," the dog said, "so how could we forsake you in your worst hour?"

Ivan carefully tightened the twelve screws, and in a flash there stood before him the host of twelve thousand, though they shattered the dungeon walls to make room.

"Bring back my castle," Ivan commanded, "and with everyone in it asleep as they are at this moment. Place it where it stood before!" This was done in the twinkling of an eye. Ivan was restored to his fine clothes and to the same handsome countenance he had worn before the ring was stolen.

He went straight to the Tsar. The monarch pretended to be pleased to see him. "I have been beyond the sea," Ivan said after the Tsar had greeted him, "and I saw many strange things, many curious customs. I have come to you for your wise judgment of an affair that bothers men and has puzzled the most learned judges."

The Tsar asked him what it was. (He was very flattered to be consulted, for he prided himself on being a very learned man.)

“A man’s wife takes from him his most valued possessions,” Ivan replied, “his servants and his home, and she runs off with them to a far land while the husband is reduced to poverty. His mother is a penniless widow, begging for food in the streets. What is the just due of such a wife?”

“That is easy,” said the Tsar. “I would have her banished forever.”

Then Ivan asked the Tsar to come with him to his castle, for, he said, there was another urgent matter that needed his attention. When they arrived, Ivan showed the Tsar his own daughter, who was fast asleep, and told him of all her wicked treachery.

“Not my own daughter!” the Tsar said, aghast. But he had no choice. He had to allow his judgment to be carried out, for Ivan had again tightened the twelve screws when no one was watching. The twelve thousand men appeared so quickly that the Tsar’s bodyguards were unable to draw their daggers.

You may be sure Ivan never allowed the ring to be taken from his finger again, and he lived a long and happy life. It is even said that he married the beautiful maiden he rescued from the fire. But that was long, long ago, and no one knows for sure.

## The Laughing Merman • *ICELAND*

LONG AGO there lived in Iceland, near the village of Vagor, a farmer who, like his fellow farmers, was also a fisherman when the season allowed him to leave the land.

One day while out fishing, with his line many fathoms down, he felt his hook catch fast. After much reeling and sweating he pulled his line in, and great was his astonishment to see that what he had caught was only half a fish — the upper part had the body of a man!

“Who and what are you?” the fisherman asked, helping the thing into the boat.

“I am a merman,” the unlucky creature replied, “and you had better let me go, for my mother will miss me.”

The fisherman was now very curious, for he had heard of mermen only in tales and never thought they really existed. So he questioned his captive further.

“What were you doing when my hook caught your flesh?”

“I was fixing my mother’s chimney pot to suit the

wind, and as I said, you had best let me go, for by now she will be worried."

"No," the fisherman replied, "I will not let you go for the present. I think you can serve me a while."

So saying, he took the unhappy merman with him back to the harbor. Covered with lines and canvas, the poor thing could not possibly escape.

When they arrived at the boathouse, the fisherman took his prize up the path that led to his cottage. Before he reached it, however, his dog ran joyfully toward him, barking and wagging his tail. He leapt up and licked his master's hand as all dogs do when they want to express affection. But the fisherman, who was tired and irritable, brushed him away angrily, kicking him as he ran. And as he kicked the dog the merman broke out with a peal of laughter, and he continued to laugh until the salt tears rolled down his cheeks. This puzzled the fisherman, but he said nothing.

When they went a few steps farther, the fisherman tripped over a little hillock in the yard (although he had gone that way many times before, he had never once stepped on it). As he picked himself up, muttering crossly, the merman laughed for the second time — even louder and more merrily than the first — much to the annoyance of the fisherman.

When the man stepped on to the porch of his cottage his wife opened the door and rushed to greet him. Flinging her arms about his neck she kissed him many times. This pleased him very much, but the

merman burst into uncontrollable laughter. The fisherman could no longer contain himself. "Why do you laugh?" he shouted. "Three times you have laughed this day when I could see nothing funny."

"Yes, I laughed," said the merman, still chuckling, "but I'll never tell you why — that is, unless you promise to set me free."

After some deliberation the landsman promised to give him his freedom, so full was he of curiosity. The delighted merman fulfilled his part of the bargain.

"I laughed the first time," he said, "because you kicked your dog, whose joy at seeing you was real. I laughed the second time because you cursed the mound of earth over which you stumbled, though that mound covers a hoard of Viking gold. The third time I laughed because you received with pleasure the embrace of your wife, though it is empty and flattering, for she is faithless to you and a hypocrite besides."

Then the merman said, "Now be an honest man and take me out to the sea where you found me, for I have done what you have asked."

"That is so," the fisherman replied, "but of the three, two things you have no means of proving: my dog's faithfulness and my wife's unfaithfulness. The other I can prove here and now, and if it's true, I'll believe the other two."

Taking a spade in his hand, the fisherman strode to the hillock and began to dig. He dug and dug, and he was just going to give up and berate the merman for a liar when he unearthed a large pile of golden

vessels and coins — enough to make him rich for the rest of his life. The fisherman looked at his treasure in amazement. When he could find his voice to speak, he admitted that the other two things he had been told must indeed be true.

The merman only smiled.

The very next morning he rowed the merman back to the place where he had found him. Before the creature sank beneath the waves he called to the fisherman: “You are an honest man, and I shall reward you well for restoring me to my mother, but you must have skill enough to take what I will send your way.”

The fisherman did not go to sea again, for his farm was now all he needed. He took very good care of his old dog. His wife, who was a shrewd woman, begged his forgiveness. When he gave it to her, she was never unfaithful again.

Some time after these memorable events, when the good man was inspecting a piece of land that lay near the sea, he came upon seven sea cows lying in the tall grass. Remembering the merman’s last words (about taking possession of what was sent his way), the man and his dog rushed to prevent the beasts from escaping to the sea. Together they drove them inland and they were soon captured.

Soon the fame of the sea cows spread far and wide. And even to this day their black-and-white descendants are valued all the world over for the quality of their milk.

## The Three Golden Hairs • *BOHEMIA*

THERE WAS ONCE A KING in a distant land who was a great sportsman, and his favorite sport of all was hunting. He went often into the woods alone to track wild deer. It was on one of these expeditions that he lost his way, and as night fell he was guided to the shelter of a small cottage by a light burning in its window. It was the home of a charcoal burner and his wife. Though they were poor, they gladly gave him the hospitality of their roof, and the charcoal burner promised to show him the road out of the forest in the morning.

Alone in the garret of the little cottage, lying on a bed of straw, the King did not fall asleep, for he was not accustomed to such discomfort. As he lay awake he heard voices downstairs. "How strange!" he said to himself, for it was the middle of the night. He peeped through a chink in the floorboards and saw that the room below was dimly lighted with three flickering tapers.



The charcoal burner was asleep, and his wife lay in a deep coma. Around a crude cradle stood three ugly hags looking at a newborn child. The King knew that they must be the Three Fates, for he had heard in old tales that they often visited the newly-born.

"I," said the first hag, "have only one gift to give this newborn child, and that is that he shall come into great danger in his life."

"My gift," said the second, "is that he shall escape and have a long life."

"My gift," said the third, "is to give him to wife the daughter of the King who lies upstairs asleep at this very hour."

Thereupon the three hags snuffed out the tapers and left the house in silent darkness.

The King lay down again on the straw, and as he waited to fall asleep he was perplexed about the third hag's gift, for as yet he had no daughter, though he wished with all his heart that his next child would be a girl.

When morning came, the charcoal burner woke to find a baby boy in the crib, and when he tried to rouse his wife he found that she had fallen asleep forever. The poor man was at his wits' end and was moaning in despair when the King came down from the garret.

"Give me the child," the monarch said, "and I will raise him as my own. I will give you enough money that you will not have to work any longer but can go and live in the city, away from the sad memories this cottage holds for you now."

The charcoal burner was content with this arrange-

ment, and when he guided his ruler to the path leading out of the forest, the King said good-bye to him and promised to send his servant for the child.

When the King arrived at the palace, he was greeted by happy throngs who told him that a daughter had been born to him. He rushed to the Queen, and she proudly held the baby up to him. She, of course, did not know the reason for his dismay when she told him the child had been born one minute before midnight.

Sending for one of his most trusted servants, the King bade him go into the forest to the charcoal burner's cottage and get the little boy. He gave the servant a bag of money for the father, as he had agreed in his bargain.

"Do not bring the child to the palace," he instructed. "When you are alone, throw him into the river to drown — and mind that you tell no one of this affair, or you will forfeit your life."

The servant did as he was told, thinking that perhaps the child would some day be an enemy of the kingdom. He gave the money to the father, and putting the child in a basket, took him away. When he came to a river he dropped the child, basket and all, into the water, hiding his eyes as he committed the cruel deed. But the basket, with the baby inside, floated down the stream, and as the current rocked it gently this way then that way, the child soon fell fast asleep.

Not far away there happened to be an old fisherman sitting on the bank mending his nets. He saw the

basket floating on the water, and thinking it to be of some value, rowed out to retrieve it. Great was his astonishment when he saw the little sleeping child. Carefully he lifted the baby out of the basket and took it home to his wife, for she had always wished for a son. The woman loved the child dearly and called him Floatling, because he had been found floating on the water.

The years rolled by. They were such good years that no one noticed how quickly they flew. The old man grew older, but he and his wife were happy with their son, and he with them, for he never knew that they were not his real parents and there was no need to tell him.

Now it happened one day that the King was fishing in the river, and he stopped at the fisherman's cottage for food. The fisherman sent Floatling for it, and when the lad returned the King studied him carefully.

"That is a fine strong youth. Is he your son?"

"He is and he isn't," replied the fisherman. "I found him as a baby, floating in a basket on the river."

"How long ago was that?" the King asked.

When he was told that it was twenty years before, the King grew both angry and frightened, but he hid his feelings.

"I need a messenger to go to the palace with a letter for me," the King said.

"Your majesty has but to command and I will send Floatling," the fisherman offered.

The King took out a piece of paper and wrote a message on it. Sealing it with his signet ring, he

handed it to Floatling to take to the Queen at the palace.

Floatling did not know that the letter said: "Cause this young man to be run through with a sword at once. He is my dangerous enemy."

As it was the first time he had ever been away from home, Floatling became quite lost in the woods, and by nightfall did not know which way to turn. At last he spied a tiny cottage with a candle burning in the window. He was met at the door by an old, old hag.

"Where are you going, Floatling?"

"I am going with a letter to the King's palace and have lost my way," the lad answered. "Can you tell me, Mother, how to reach the right road?"

It was far too late at night to continue the journey, so the hag bade him have some supper and lie down to sleep until daylight, promising to send him on his way in the morning. As soon as he was sound asleep, she took the letter from his pocket and read it. Quickly she changed the message to read: "Cause this young man I send to you to be married to my daughter at once. He is destined to be my dearly loved son-in-law."

When the Queen read the letter, she gave orders for the wedding arrangements to be made immediately. Neither she nor her daughter could gaze enough at the handsome young man.

Just before the wedding was to begin, the King returned. He flew into a rage when he saw what was taking place. He demanded that the Queen show him the letter, which he read with amazement, for the handwriting was his own and so were the paper and

the seal. Then he sent for Floatling and questioned him closely about his journey. When he heard the description of the old hag, he knew at once that it was one of the Three Fates protecting him.

“What is done cannot be altered,” said the King, “but you cannot be my son-in-law for nothing. If you wish to marry my daughter, you must bring me three golden hairs from the head of Grandfather All-Know.”

Now, few people had ever heard of Grandfather All-Know, and none knew where he lived. But the good youth was now so in love with the princess that he would gladly have gone to the end of the earth for her.

He traveled far through forest and dale until he came to the Black Lake. There he saw a boat and in it an old ferryman bowed over from work and weariness.

“God bless you, old ferryman,” cried Floatling.

“God grant it, young pilgrim – and whither are you traveling?”

“To Grandfather All-Know for three golden hairs from his head,” the youth replied.

“For twenty years I have been ferrying here and no one has come to set me free,” the old man said. “If you promise to ask Grandfather All-Know when the end of my work will be, I will ferry you across.”

Floatling promised, and the ferryman took him across the Black Lake. On and on he traveled until he came to a great city. The city was immersed in gloom and crumbled in decay. At the gate he met an old man with a staff in his hand.

“God be with you, aged Grandfather,” he said.

“God grant it, handsome youth. Whither are you bound?”

When Floatling told him he was seeking three golden hairs from the head of Grandfather All-Know, the old man made a request of him.

“We have been waiting a long time for a youth as brave as you to take a message from us to Grandfather All-Know. Come, I will conduct you to our King.”

The ruler told him sadly: “The reason for the decay of our city is that our enchanted apple tree which bore the fruit of life has been barren for twenty years. Without the enchanted fruit to eat, my people grow old and die. Please ask Grandfather All-Know what must be done to bring the tree to bear again.” This the youth promised to do and was shown the road from the city.

On and on he traveled until he came to another decaying city. On the street he met an ancient scholar, of whom he asked the reason for the sadness and decay. The old man answered: “Our enchanted spring has dried up, and without the water from it men grow old and tired, so there is not a young man left in the city. If only someone would take a message from us to Grandfather All-Know, he would be well rewarded!”

“I will ask him how to make the spring flow again,” promised Floatling, “for I am on my way this very day to ask him for three golden hairs from his head.”

After many more days’ journey he came to a beautiful castle in the middle of the greenest and thickest

forest he had yet encountered. "This could be Grandfather All-Know's home," thought the lad as he entered the unguarded courtyard. He saw no one but an aged hag sitting in the corner spinning.

"Floatling, what are you seeking with such determination?" the hag asked in greeting.

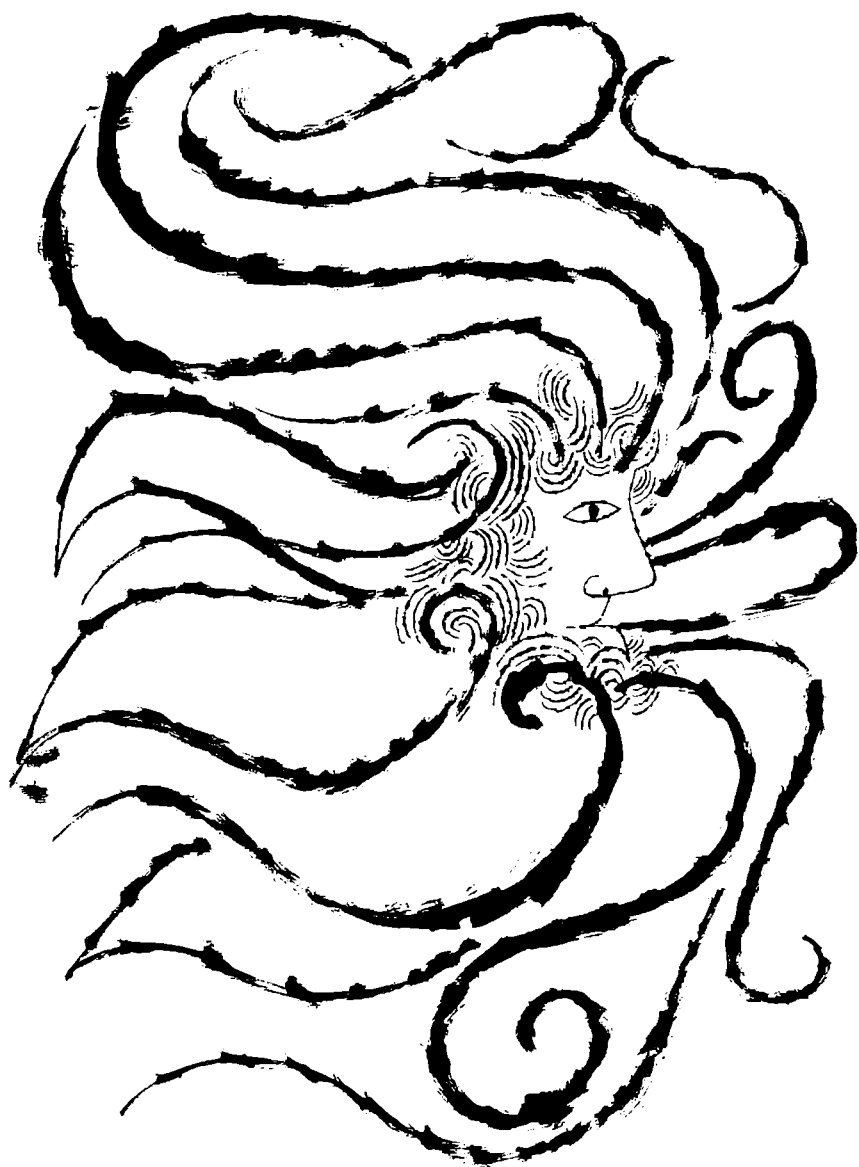
"I seek three golden hairs from the head of Grandfather All-Know as a gift for the King whose daughter I desire to be my bride," Floatling replied. "Is this his castle?"

"It is indeed," said the hag. "Grandfather All-Know is my son, but to the world he is the Sun. In the morning he is a little child, at noon a grown man, and at night an old grandfather. He looks at the world all day and knows all things of men and what is in their hearts. You have asked for three golden hairs, and I will help you get them. But he must not see you here, for sometimes when he comes home and is very tired he can roast a man in a moment with one gleam from his eye."

"Thank you, Grandmother," Floatling said politely, and he told her of his adventures while seeking the palace. When she heard his tale she agreed to get him the three answers in addition to the hairs.

"Hide under this tub," she told him suddenly. "Listen carefully and do not make a sound!"

A moment after he had hidden, a great wind whistled through the palace and in flew Grandfather All-Know, right through the open west window. When he finished his supper he laid his huge golden head





on the old hag's lap and fell asleep, weary from his long day in the sky.

When he was sleeping soundly, the old hag pulled a hair from his head and threw it on the floor, where it tinkled like a harp string. The sound woke him up with a start and he cried, "What ails you, Mother?"

"Nothing, my son," replied the hag. "As I slept I dreamt a marvelous dream about a city that had an enchanted apple tree. Whoever ate its fruit when they were sick were cured, and it made old men young again. But alas, for twenty years it has borne no fruit. Is there no hope for it?"

"There is a serpent at the root of the tree that is strangling it," the old man replied. "If they killed the serpent it would be as before."

He laid his head down and again fell fast asleep. The hag pulled out a second hair from his head.

"What ails you, Mother?" he cried as the extraction woke him up.

"Nothing, nothing at all, my son," the hag replied soothingly. "I was asleep and had a most marvelous dream. I dreamed about a city that had a spring of living water, and when anyone drank from it he became strong and healthy, and age did not come to him. But for twenty years it has not flowed. Is there any help for it?"

"Quite easy," her son replied. "Just kill the toad that is sitting in the well and it will flow as before." And he sank into slumber once more.

Carefully the old hag pulled a third hair from his head. This time he was very angry when he woke,

but she comforted him and told him she had had another marvelous dream. "It was about an old ferryman on the Black Lake who has been rowing for twenty years without end and no one has come to relieve him. Will he have no rest?"

"Let him put the oar into the hand of his next passenger and then leap ashore," Grandfather All-Know answered, irritably this time. "The passenger will then be the ferryman." And again he fell asleep.

In the morning a great roar, like the rushing of many winds, shook the palace. Floatling trembled under the tub. The Sun leapt up from his mother's arms, and like a small boy rushed out of the east window.

When he was high in the sky the old hag lifted the tub and called Floatling out. She gave him the three golden hairs, which shone like miniature suns, and sent him on his way. She did not have to repeat the answers to the three questions for he had listened closely during the night.

After many days' journey Floatling came to the city with the enchanted spring. He told the King the cause of their troubles. The toad was killed forthwith, and water spouted out of the well as before. The people rejoiced greatly, and as a reward the King gave Floatling twelve horses as white as swans. Eleven of them were loaded with gold and silver, and he was mounted upon the twelfth and sent on his way to his Princess.

Next he came to the city with the enchanted apple

tree. Floatling appeared before the King and told him of the serpent. When the reptile was dispatched, the apples grew as before. The people were filled with joy and made him a present of twelve horses as black as coal, all loaded with rare jewels for him to take to his Princess.

It was a wonderful cavalcade that came at last to the ferry on the Black Lake. The old ferryman was glad of his safe return, but lost no time in asking him what was his answer from Grandfather All-Know.

“It is good news, old ferryman,” Floatling assured him, “but I cannot tell you until we are across.”

When they reached the other shore, Floatling told him to put the oar into the hand of his next passenger and then leap ashore and his work would be ended forever.

When Floatling reached the palace the people were overjoyed to see him. The Princess and Floatling were married straightaway, for Floatling kept his part of the bargain when he gave the three golden hairs of Grandfather All-Know to the King.

But the King was not satisfied with this alone. When he learned from Floatling of the enchanted tree and the enchanted spring, his greed was aroused and he set off to find them.

Floatling and his Princess lived happily ever after. As for the King, he never returned. One traveller, however, has reported seeing him rowing a boat on the Black Lake. That could well be, because Floatling never told him about the tired old ferryman.

## **The Donkey,**

## **the Table, and the Stick** € *ENGLAND*

**O**NCE UPON A TIME in Yorkshire there lived a lad named Jack. When he was too old to be a boy and too young to be a man, he set out from his father's house to seek his fortune. He stopped first of all at the home of his sweetheart Jill. He wanted to bid her farewell.

"I shall make a great fortune and come back and marry you," he promised. Whereupon he kissed her and departed.

Jack trudged along the dusty road until he came upon an old woman gathering faggots for her fire. The woman looked very tired, and Jack could not resist helping her, for he was a kindhearted boy.

"You seem a likely lad," said the old woman. "Will you be my servant?"

Jack accepted her offer, and when a year and a day had passed he asked for his wages.

“I shall not give you money,” said the old woman, “but this donkey will serve you well, for now you will not have to walk any more. You can ride in style.” Jack was disappointed, for the donkey was a sad-looking beast that would bring him little if he sold it. Seeing him looking so crestfallen, the old woman said to him, “This is a magic donkey, mind. If you ever need money, all you have to do is shake the donkey’s ear and money will come rolling out.” Jack tried it. He grabbed hold of an ear and shook it hard, and sure enough, five golden crowns fell at his feet.

The lad rode the donkey proudly toward his father’s house. When he was one night’s journey from home he stopped at an inn and asked for lodging. The landlord was a crafty man, and seeing that Jack was so young and his beast so poor, he would not trust him but demanded the price of food and pallet in advance.

“I do not have that much in my pocket,” Jack replied, “but be patient a moment and I will get it from my saddlebag in the barn where my beast is.”

While Jack was in the barn, the innkeeper watched him through a window. He saw him shake the donkey’s ear, then pick the golden crowns from off the straw.

That night while Jack was asleep, the innkeeper put another donkey that appeared to be exactly like Jack’s in the barn and hid Jack’s own beast in the forest. And the next day Jack reached home, never suspecting that a trick had been played on him.

“Is that all you have earned for a year’s labor?” shouted his father angrily.

“Wait until you see what my donkey can do,” Jack replied blithely. “He is a magic donkey, and if I need money I pull his ears and golden crowns fall out of them. There is enough for all, and we shall be rich forever.”

Jack demonstrated for his father, but to his surprise and humiliation not a penny dropped out.

“You stupid boy!” shouted his father as he beat him. “The donkey is hardly fit to draw a peddler’s cart.”

Jack next hired himself to a joiner. He worked very hard in the joiner’s shop for a year and a day. When the year ended, Jack asked for his wages.

“I cannot give you money,” the joiner said, “but take this table and you shall see that it is better than gold.” Jack did not wish to take the table, beautiful though it was, because it was small pay for a year’s work. The joiner saw his disappointment, and decided to show how the table could serve him.

“Table, be covered!” he commanded, and instantly the table was covered with a white cloth and groaned under the weight of good things to eat.

“Thank you!” cried Jack gratefully. “This time my father will surely be pleased.” And putting the table on his broad back, he started home.

When he was a day’s journey from his father’s house he stopped again at the same inn and asked for a night’s lodging. The crafty innkeeper pretended to be very poor, so that Jack would not suspect it was he who had changed his donkey the year before.

“I have nothing to offer you, young traveler,” he

said, "except some eggs and dry bread."

"Never fear," said Jack. "I have a table here that can supply food enough for you and me and all your guests." With a flourish he cried, "Table, be covered!" And instantly a great feast was piled upon it.

During the night, while Jack slept, the covetous inn-keeper stole his table and replaced it with another that looked exactly the same.

When the lad reached his house this time, his father was more angry than ever. "Is that all you have to show for a year's work?" he cried.

"But this is no ordinary table," Jack answered, full of pride. "It's a magic table that can give us the best food in any amount you want. Look!" And he shouted the magic command. But of course nothing happened.

Poor Jack. His father beat him and sent him away, telling him not to come back until he had gained some sense. Jack was very sad as he wandered down the road. He traveled many days but could find no work. One afternoon he came upon an old man who was trying to lay a tree over a stream to make a bridge.

"Let me help you," Jack said.

The boy was very strong and he threw the tree over the stream in a moment, then helped the old man to cross. "Let me give you a reward," the old man said, peeling the bark from a stout stick with his sharp knife.

"I need no reward," said Jack, "but perhaps you can tell me where I should go to make my fortune."

The old man finished peeling the stick, and after

saying a magic incantation over it, put it in Jack's hand. "This is now a charmed stick," the old man said. "It will make your walking easier, and besides, if any man be your enemy, it will beat him for you if you say, 'Up stick and at 'em!'"

Seeing that Jack did not believe him, the old man ordered the stick to beat the lad, and Jack received a crack across the shins and another on his back before a word from the old man caused the stick to be still. He was convinced, and he accepted the stick gratefully.

"It will be useful for walking, for as yet I have no enemy in the world," said Jack naïvely.

"That is not so," said the old man gravely. "A day's journey from your father's house is an innkeeper who has twice robbed you of your fortune."

Jack stared at the man in surprise, then hurried away to find the innkeeper. With the aid of the charmed stick, the miles flew beneath his feet. The innkeeper had no time to hide his riches before Jack appeared and took him by surprise. He found the innkeeper's table piled high with food and the floor all about him strewn with golden coins.

"Up stick and at 'em!" Jack commanded, and the stick set upon the wicked innkeeper with such force that the man screamed for mercy.

"Call it off, call it off!" he begged. "I will restore your possessions!"

When the stick had given him a good beating, Jack called it off, threatening as he did so to come back and repeat the lesson if the innkeeper ever cheated a



traveler again. Then, setting the table on the donkey's back and with his good stick in his hand, Jack set off for his father's house.

"You will never know the value of your labor!" cried his father. "You have returned again with a useless donkey and an old table. What will become of you?"

But Jack only smiled and set the table on the floor. Then he commanded, "Table, be covered!" The table was instantly covered with the most sumptuous fare his father had ever seen. Next Jack shook the donkey's ear, and gold coins tumbled out until there were enough to fill all his father's pockets and more to spare. For once his father could not complain.

What became of Jack? I do not know, but it is safe to say he married Jill and lived happily ever after.

## The Lady and the Toad ✿ FRANCE

IN THAT PART OF FRANCE called Alsace-Lorraine, high in the hills and backed by a forest of somber pines, lay the ruins of Greifenstein Castle. Long ago, so legend says, it was owned by a rich Duke. Its green swards were the scene of jousting and knightly sports. Great feasts were held there, and the sound of minstrels singing echoed in its halls. But one by one the dukes died and the people moved away, so that the inhabitants of the region could not remember when the last person had lived there, or when the last assault of time had laid its ramparts low.

Many legends haunted the ruins, but they were considered just fables told to children. The most common story was of an enchanted toad.

Every day in sun and shower a shepherd named René drove his uncle's sheep to the high pastures to graze on the grassy slopes near the castle. As the sheep munched the green grass, he would sit near the ruins

and dream of the day when fair ladies and brave knights lived there. He sometimes imagined he was one of them. When the sun rose to the highest point in the sky, he would take his lunch to a secret hollow between two groves of beech trees to eat. Then he would fall asleep.

One day he sensed a strange presence in the glade and thought his private haunt had been discovered. The sun shone on a form as white and delicately frail as a morning mist. René looked at it with wonder. It was a beautiful woman, whose golden hair hung loose and shone in the shafts of sunlight. But her face had an air of sadness and pain quite out of keeping with her great beauty. He wanted to help her, but in his eagerness to go to her René tripped on his shepherd's crook. When he recovered himself, the figure was gone; he searched for many hours, but did not catch sight of her again. Then the tinkle of the bell around the lead sheep's neck told him it was time to take his flock home.

Each day he drove his flock to the high pastures and, while they grazed, searched for the fair maid. He had nearly given up hope of seeing her, and indeed had almost convinced himself that she had been an illusion, when he spied her again in the same place. This time she wore a shimmering white robe, and as before the sun glistened in her unbound hair. She saw him staring at her, and her smile was friendly in acknowledgment. He was so smitten by her beauty that he could not speak. When she disappeared this time though, she waved gaily at him. "I shall return!" she

called to him, and her voice rang like a bell in René's ears.

He could not sleep that night, nor the next nor the next. All his waking hours were spent waiting for her to return to the glade, while all the hours he should have been sleeping were spent longing for her. He grew thin and pale, and the tongues of the old village women began to wag.

"He has seen the Chasse d'Odin, and evil must befall him," said one. "No man ever saw those strange creatures whirling through the sky without coming to a bad end."

But the youth's Uncle Louis, who was his guardian, only laughed and said, "'Tis not the Chasse d'Odin he has seen. I'll wager that some pretty girl has kissed him while he slept in the fields and he is pining away from love." And he laughed loudly, poking his nephew in the ribs.

Days passed, and still she did not return to the glade as she had promised. René's disappointment was very great, and he vowed to speak to her if only she would return once more. Then one day as he sat down to eat his lunch he found her sitting opposite him, weeping softly.

"Lady, you weep and are so distressed. Is there not something I can do for you?"

The lady smiled wanly at him and replied, "René, my name is Anne and yonder was once my home."

The young man looked in amazement toward the ruins of Greifenstein and then back to Anne.

"You stare, but I speak the truth. Look at me — am I

not beautiful enough for a Princess?"

René nodded, openmouthed, and the words he would have uttered were lost in his throat.

"René," she went on, "this beauty has been my bane. Do you really want to help me?"

"Speak your heart's desire and I will do anything in the world for you," he replied.

"Even if I asked you to marry me?"

"What could any man desire more than that?" said René.

"I shall not ask you until you listen to my story."

When René showed his eagerness to listen, she began to tell him her strange tale — the story of an enchanted toad.

"I am not mad. My home was really in yonder castle, when it was more beautiful than you can imagine. I was called Anne of Greifenstein in those days. Knights came to our joustings, and after they had tested their skill they stayed to live in the shadow of my beauty. I wouldn't marry any of them. I grew proud on the praise they showered upon me. Even in church I had a special chair with a red velvet footcloth. Love and pity were things I knew not the meaning of." She paused for a moment and then went on, the tears springing to her eyes as she remembered.

"One day an old man came to the castle to beg food and shelter. He was very old and very ugly; he leaned on a gnarled stick for support. He came directly to me, appealing to my charity. To my great — and as you will learn, my lasting — sorrow, I did not see the marks of greatness on his face. I cried out in anger at his

presumptuousness in addressing *me*, the daughter of the master of the castle. I ordered my servants to have him whipped and thrown out of the gates. But the servants made no move to obey me. Raising himself to his full height, he pulled out a stone shaped like a toad from his cloak. It was such an ugly object, wrinkled and wet, dripping with slime and covered with green pimples, that I could not look at it but cowered behind one of my maids.

“‘Girl,’ the strange man shouted at me. ‘As you shrink from this toad, so shall all men shrink from you. You have been gifted with wondrous beauty and have used it only to satisfy your evil pride. You have despised the gifts of God: sunshine and moonlight, sighing words, tears of sorrow, murmuring streams — all these things you have scorned, even friendship. Now hear the curse that has come upon you.’

“His burning eyes bored through me as he said: ‘By day you shall live unchanged by time and age. Your relatives will pass away, but you shall not be allowed to join them. By night you shall take on the face and form of this toad, and be an object of revulsion to all who set eyes on you.’

“He turned then, hiding the stone beneath his cloak, and he passed out of the castle, pausing near the great gates to say: ‘One boon I grant you. Let any man be brave enough to kiss you on the lips at midnight, and you shall be returned to your human form and live the span of a mortal life. While you are a toad, a silver key and a golden ring will be in your mouth. He who kisses you will wed you with the ring, and the silver key will

lead you both to a hidden treasure.'

"Then he was gone out of the gate and out of sight. I have never seen him since in all these hundreds of years. That very night when I sat in my room I felt a cold moisture form on my forehead and saliva drip from the corners of my mouth. In a frenzy I ran to my mirror. I saw not myself but a horrible toad. I screamed in terror for my maids. They came, and not seeing me but seeing a toad instead, they took sticks and drove the ugly creature from the castle. So it began and so it is now. I am a girl by day and live in a little room beneath the ruins, but at night my toad body drives me forth to haunt the marshy bank of the stream where you take your sheep to water."

"Fear not, dear lady," René said. "Not another night shall you spend in such a hideous disguise. You have learned your lesson well, and if you will show me where you will be tonight, I shall come and set you free."

The lady rose. René followed her to the bank of the stream and she showed him the place where she would wait for him after the moon had risen.

It is needless to say that René did not eat his supper when he returned his flock to his uncle's folds that evening. He waited until all were fast asleep, and in the pale silver moonlight he crept from his room to seek the marshy bank.

When it seemed that he had waited for hours and he was ready to go home, he saw a great grey mass oozing sideways from the tall reeds. It ambled toward him. Its moist skin glistened, and the saliva dripped from

the corners of its crooked mouth; its baleful eyes glimmered in the rays of the pale moon. The gaping mouth stood open, and in the dark depths René could see the key and the ring. He gazed for a moment, then closed his eyes and turned to flee from the hideous creature.

“René! René!” cried a croaking voice which stopped him in his tracks. “Have you forgotten your promise? I am Anne! Do not fail me, for I cannot bear this life another night since I have met you.”

“I cannot touch you,” he moaned. “I cannot bear to look at you. You are too horrible.” Then he remembered how she had looked in the glade in the bright sunshine. His eyes still shut, he summoned all his courage and turned and kissed the fearful mouth.

Suddenly over his sickened senses stole a perfume as penetrating and as subtle as the scent of bursting buds in spring. The horror passed, and he opened his eyes to see before him the girl as she had been in the afternoon. In her hand she held the ring and the key. Silently he took them and led her from the stream back to his home.

It was not long after this that he placed the ring on Anne’s finger in marriage; and the old women of the village wondered, as did the old men, where René the shepherd could have found a bride so beautiful.

René and Anne visited the castle only once, and that was when they took the silver key. There, hidden in a stone, they found a secret store of jewels and gold. They sold this treasure, and René bought a magnificent house, where he and his wife spent the rest of their lives in happiness.



## The Magic Fife \* POLAND

THERE ONCE LIVED IN POLAND a peasant farmer who had only one son. The day came when he said to him, "Pavel, my son, it is time you went to work. You should start putting by a little money for when you are old enough to marry." The father then took his son to a rich farmer, who agreed to employ him as a shepherd.

The work was easy enough, though the hours were long. The farmer was a stingy man and often he did not give the lad enough to eat. One day as Pavel sat in the meadow, so hungry he was in tears, a strange musical voice caused him to look up.

"What is the matter, my lad?" asked a kind-faced old man.

"I am so hungry," replied the lad. "I have had nothing to eat since sunset."

The man fumbled for a moment in his pocket and drew out a little tin fife. He gave it to the boy.

"Take this," he said. "You have only to blow through it and make a wish, and good food will come to you, as will anything else you care to ask for."

The lad thanked him very much for the present, but he did not believe what the good stranger had said. "With a little practice," he thought to himself, "I shall be able to play well enough to pass away the time."

The next day when the lad drove the sheep to the meadow he was still very hungry, for he had been driven out without any breakfast. The pains in his stomach recalled the little fife and the old man's promise. Pulling it out, he blew it sharply and said:

Blow me a dinner, my little fife,  
The best I've had in all my life.

And before the note had died away there was a table spread before him laden with borsch, sour cabbage, potato dumplings, and sausages!

Needless to say he was not hungry that day, and he threw the scraps the farmer gave him for supper to the dogs. He did not tell his employer of his good fortune, in case the cruel man should try to take the fife away from him. Instead he resolved to go to Warsaw.

The next morning he left before the farmer was out of bed. At the edge of the great city he stopped at an inn for a rest and engaged the innkeeper in conversa-

tion. "I have come to Warsaw to make my fortune," he told him. "Do you know anyone hereabouts who needs a strong and willing lad?"

"If you are as you say," the innkeeper replied, "you can perhaps find work at the palace, for I understand the King needs a new gardener."

To the palace the lad went, and to his surprise the King hired him as his gardener, but under very harsh terms: he was to make the garden bloom like the Garden of Eden within one year, or he would lose his head as well as his pay.

The garden was a sorry mess. The few flowers were drooping and dying, and the leaves were sparse on the trees even though it was only midsummer; the grass had given way to weeds.

When he was sure no one was watching, the lad took his fife from his pocket and said quietly:

Blow me some flowers, my little fife.  
Only the fairest will save my life.

And before the note of the fife had died away, rows and rows of flowers in a thousand hues tossed in the summer sunlight! He blew the fife again and whispered:

Now blow me some trees, my little fife,  
The tallest I've seen in all my life.

The cracked and faded trees disappeared. They were

replaced by rows of tall, stately elms that sparkled as the sunlight filtered through their leafy branches.

Gently he blew the fife a third time and made another wish:

Blow me a fountain, my little fife,  
Like a spring just leapt to life.

And a tall jet of silver water sprang out of a marble fountain in the middle of the garden.

Imagine the King's surprise when he saw the transformation! He had to admit it was the finest garden he had ever seen.

Now the King had three daughters, the youngest of whom fell in love with the gardener as she watched him working day after day. She asked her mother to arrange a marriage with him for her. But her mother refused. "Who," she said, "ever heard of a princess marrying a gardener, no matter how skilled."

The little Princess was so brokenhearted that she took to her bed very ill, and none of the royal physicians could cure her. The only time she appeared to be better was when she was propped up at her window and could see the handsome young gardener working beneath the trees. Again and again she begged her mother to let her marry the young man, but her mother was firm. "I tell you Princesses do not marry gardeners," she said.

"Have pity, Mother. I shall die if I don't marry him."

When the Queen told her husband, he too was

against it and cried out, "Tell her if she marries him I shall make them both feed pigs for the rest of their lives."

The Queen told her daughter what her father's answer was, thinking that this would be the end of it. But instead of being dismayed by the threat, the Princess was full of joy. Soon she and her lover were married. The King's wrath did not cool their happiness, for even as he made them feed the royal swine as he had said, they were together and that was all that mattered. The Princess was as happy in the swineherd's hut as she had ever been in the palace.

As time passed, mighty foes attacked the country and the King had to take the field at the head of his armies. Things went badly for him from the beginning. He was defeated time after time, and the news was disheartening throughout the land.

The swineherd was worried by the state of affairs and went to see the Queen.

"Let me go to the war, Mother-in-law," he begged.

"A fine one to go to war! What do you know about fighting?" she scoffed. "Go back to your pigs and don't bother me."

But he continued to beg to be allowed to help, until at last, wearied by his arguments, the Queen ordered her servants to prepare him for the journey to the war. His equipment was a few pieces of rusty armor and an old nag that could scarcely walk. With this and a dull lance he set out to seek the fortunes of war.

A jeering crowd saw him off. When he was out of

their sight, and after he had wiped away the last tear that his wife had shed on his cheek, he drew out the little fife that he had not used for so long. He whispered to it as before:

Blow me an army, my little fife,  
That I may lead it to the strife.

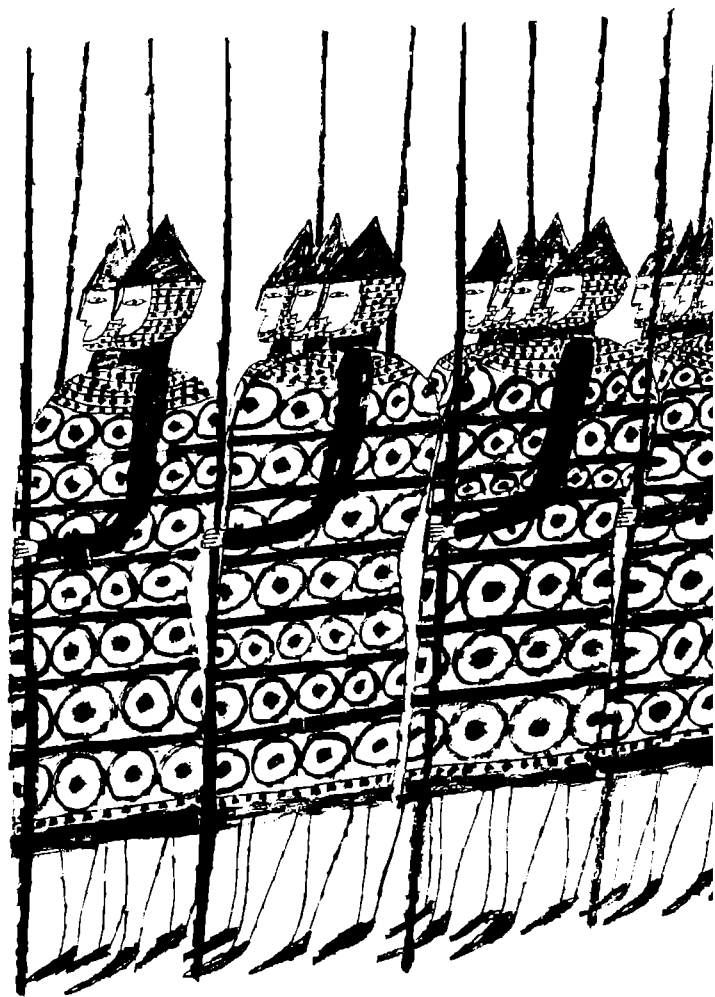
No sooner had he finished blowing it than there appeared before him a large army fully equipped; its ranks stood row on row as far as the eye could see. He blew the fife again and said:

Blow me a charger, my little fife,  
And armor and sword to protect my life.

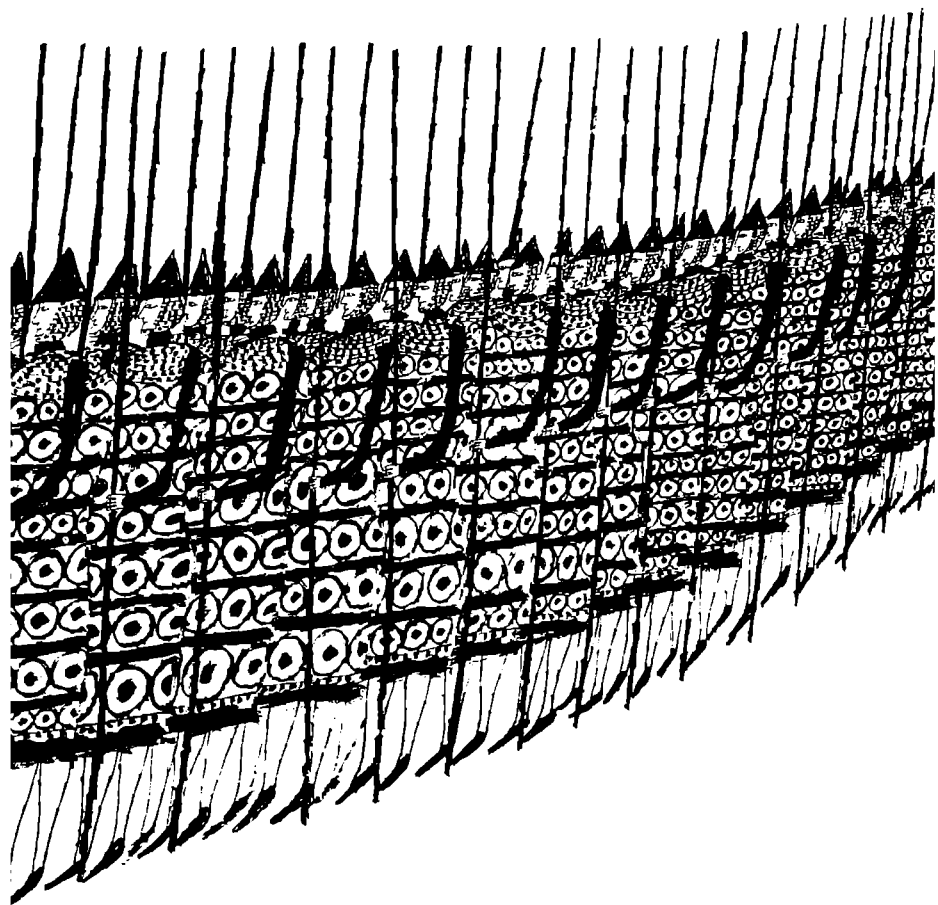
When this wish was accomplished a moment later, he took his place at the head of his army and, clad in silver armor, he marched toward the scene of the battle. He arrived with his mighty host just in time to save the day for his King, whose army was on the point of fleeing. He scattered the enemy from the field and disappeared before the King or anyone else could identify him.

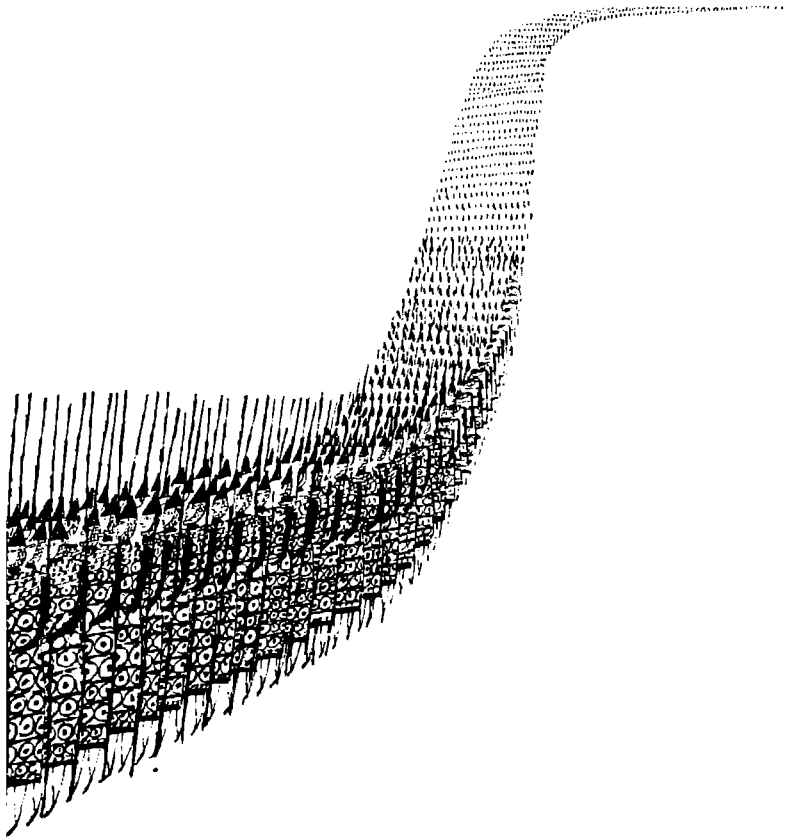
The King returned to his castle with the news of the victory preceding him. Throngs of peasants lined the roads to pay him homage, and though he was happy at the defeat of the enemy he felt guilty at not being able to pay his debt of gratitude to the strange knight in silver armor who had saved him.











Peace reigned in the land for several years; everything was back to normal. The young man remained a swineherd, and his wife continued to love him; two little sons made their lives even happier than before.

The Queen did not come to visit her daughter at all; she pretended she did not exist. The King never mentioned her name, nor did he let any courtier speak of her.

One day a soldier came galloping up to the palace and all was in turmoil once more. The enemy had again invaded the kingdom, this time seeking revenge for the defeat they had suffered, and the King rode at the head of his armies as before. Things went from bad to worse. The enemy daily grew closer and closer to the city. The swineherd went to the Queen and as before he begged to be allowed to go to meet them.

“What good could you do when our best knights cannot resist the enemy’s swords?” scoffed the Queen.

But he persisted, and at last she let him go, ordering the servants to give him a donkey to ride and a broken crossbow for a weapon. Again the people jeered as he rode the awkward animal down the road, but as soon as he was out of sight he drew out the fife he had not used for so long and said:

Blow me an army, my little fife,  
That I may lead it to the strife.

And a great army stood before him, both mounted

and on foot, ready to do his bidding. Putting the fife to his lips again, he said:

Blow me a charger, my little fife,  
And armor and sword to protect my life.

When his charger appeared and he had donned the silver armor, he was ready for battle. He took his place at the head of the army and rode to the aid of the King.

The field was hotly contested, and it was not without terrible fighting that the enemy was put to rout. As he jousting with knight after knight, Pavel was wounded in the foot with a lance. But he did not stop until the last of the King's enemies lay dead or were put to flight from the battlefield.

The King was more grateful than ever for this unexpected help, and he raced after the stranger to thank him. At this moment Pavel was dressing his wound with a handkerchief which he had torn in half. When he saw the King galloping toward him, he left off and had barely time to mount his horse and flee.

Picking up the piece of torn handkerchief from the ground, the King looked at it very carefully for clues of his helper's identity. He turned it over and saw to his amazement that it bore his own royal crest.

The people were celebrating the great victory when the swineherd returned to the city riding his sorry donkey, but they left off their singing and feasting long enough to jeer and laugh at him.

"Here comes our warrior!" someone shouted.

“Look, he must have been in a battle!” yelled another. “He has a bandaged foot.”

“No,” said a third. “He tripped over his fork and hurt himself.”

But the swineherd paid no attention and hurried home to his wife and sons, happy that he had done his duty. He told no one of his experiences.

Though happy for the victory, the King’s heart was sad because he had not been able to reward or thank his nameless helper. When the celebrations were over, he asked his wife which of his servants had followed him to war. At first she could think of none. Then she remembered.

“Why, your son-in-law, the swineherd!” she said. “He begged and pestered me so much that I had to send him off.”

The King sent a servant to summon his son-in-law. The servant sped to the swineherd’s hut, but soon returned to tell the King that his son-in-law could not come because of a sore foot.

“Then I will go to him myself,” the king said.

He found the swineherd in bed, suffering from a high fever caused by the wound in his foot.

“I have heard that you, the lowliest of my servants, followed me to the war,” the King said kindly. “Yet I do not remember seeing you on the field. Were you present at the great victory?”

“Indeed I was, sire,” answered the swineherd. “That was the day I received the wound in my foot which is causing me such pain and fever.”

The King looked at the wound and gasped in sur-

prise. He found it bound with the other half of the handkerchief he had picked up on the field. He fell on his knees and begged forgiveness of his son-in-law the swineherd for all the indignity he had forced him to bear.

The swineherd readily forgave him, and after the finest physicians in the land had restored him to health, he became head of all the King's armies.

In time — many years later — the King died. His grandson, the swineherd's eldest son, became King, and all lived happily ever after.

## **The Twelve Months**    *CZECHOSLOVAKIA*

**O**NCE UPON A TIME, in the country that is now called Czechoslovakia, there lived a beautiful maiden whose name was Marusa. She was loved by all who knew her because of her gentle ways and the kindness of her actions. The animals she fed every day in the barnyard knew her step and voice and looked forward to her daily visits with them. Spreading happiness all round her, she herself was happy — except for one disturbing circumstance: her mother had died, and her father had married again before he himself died, leaving her with a cruel stepmother and a wicked stepsister named Holena.

Holena was a very spiteful girl. Being indolent and lazy as well, she had the habit of commanding Marusa to wait on her. This the poor girl had to do, along with all her other chores on the little farm.

“Why should I keep a pretty stepdaughter?” thought the stepmother. “When the young men come to court my Holena, they will fall in love with her instead.” So it was only to herself that she admitted that Marusa was more beautiful than Holena, and the thought of this always made her angry. She forced the poor girl to work all the harder. She gave her only scraps to eat and barely enough rags for decency.

In spite of starvation and beatings, Marusa grew more lovely every day. But none knew how lovely she was except those who hated her, for she was so modest that she never looked into a mirror nor stopped to view herself in the well when drawing water.

One day in the middle of January, when the snow lay deep upon the ground and a chill wind blew across the fields, Holena had a craving for the smell of violets.

“Go, Marusa,” she ordered, “and get me a bouquet of violets, that I may smell them and put some in my waistband.”

Marusa protested because of the season, but this only made her stepsister angry. “You wretched girl!” she screamed. “How dare you argue with me. Off you go at once, and if you don’t bring me back some violets I will kill you.”

The wicked mother joined her daughter in shouting at Marusa. Together they pushed her out the door, bolting it inside.

Marusa walked slowly across the fields into the forest, treading the deep snow that had not one footprint to guide her. At last, tired and cold, she sat



down on a fallen tree and wept in desperation, for the night was falling fast. When it seemed that all hope was gone, she saw a faint light shining through the trees. She rose and went toward it.

She found that it was a huge fire. In a circle around the warm flames were twelve stone stools, and on each stool sat a man. Four of the men had hair as white as the snow that was falling all round them, four had gray hair, and the last four were not so old at all. They all sat very still, saying not a word and looking not to right or left, but straight into the leaping flames.

Marusa walked into the circle of firelight. She did not know that the strange men were the Twelve Months, and that this was where they held their councils to decide the weather for the whole year through.

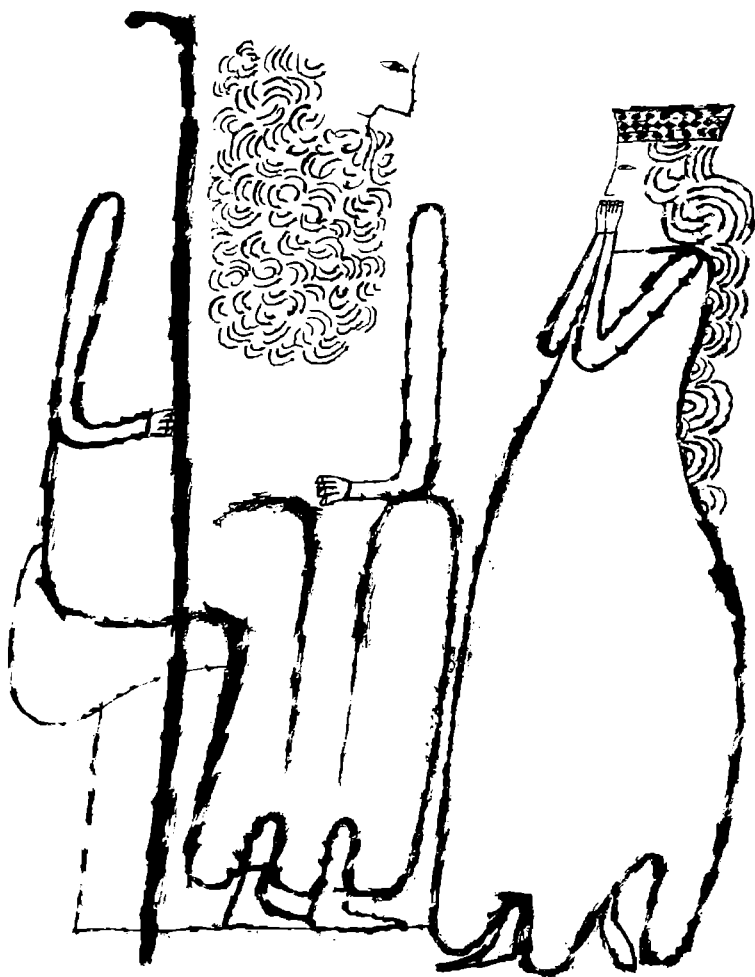
"Please, kind sirs, may I warm my hands at your fire?" she asked very timidly.

The eldest of the men slowly raised his head. He was great January, and as this was his month to rule, he sat in the highest seat of the council. Marusa fought to control the terror rising in her, for he stared at her for a long moment before speaking. Then, seeing that she was poorly dressed and trembling with the cold, he smiled kindly.

"Why have you come to the Council of the Seasons, my girl?" he asked, beckoning to her to stand near him by the fire.

Marusa told him that she was seeking violets for her stepsister, and that if she went home without them she and her stepmother would surely put her to death.

Great January bowed his head for a moment and thought deeply. Then he stood up and called one of the young months whose name was April. Putting the great staff of office into his hand, he bade him take the high stool in his stead.



April waved the staff over the fire, and as he did so the flames leapt higher and higher and grew brighter than ever. The wind ceased to blow; the snow stopped falling and melted away beneath the trees until green grass sprouted up through the brown turf. Next, violets poked their heads above the grass, blooming in such quantity that the air was filled with their scent.

"Pick them quickly," commanded April, "for they can stay but a moment."

Marusa managed to fill her apron with the fragrant blooms before the snow began to fall again and all was as wintry as before. She took them home to her stepsister, who smelled them and put them in her waistband, not sharing the smallest bud with anyone.

Not many days passed before Holena developed a new craving. Though the snow was still deep upon the ground, she wanted to eat fresh strawberries. Again she commanded her stepsister to go into the woods, this time for a basket of strawberries.

Marusa now knew better than to refuse. She walked slowly into the forest, stumbling through the snow until she was cold and hungry. She came once more to the fire and found the Twelve Months still sitting just as she had left them. She told great January of her quest, and as before he treated her kindly and called June to the high seat in his stead.

June took the staff of office into his hand, waving it over the fire until the flames leapt high. The snow began to melt under the trees, and when it was gone green grass sprang up. Birds sang overhead, and in the

branches where they perched white blossoms bloomed. In a twinkling the blossoms fluttered to the ground, leaving the branches glowing with hundreds of red strawberries.

“Pick them quickly,” ordered June, “for they cannot stay long.”

Marusa did, and when her apron was full she said, “Thank you, dear Grandfathers.” Her heart was light once more, and as she carried the berries home the snow fell all round her, covering the countryside as before. When she reached the farm, her wicked stepsister and stepmother ate the berries greedily, offering Marusa not a mouthful. But she said nothing and continued with her work.

As it usually is with selfish people, the more they get the more they want, and so it was not long before Holena asked for another impossibility. This time her desire was for red apples. As before, she and her mother ordered Marusa to go into the forest and bring them a basketful. They threatened her, if she failed, with a terrible end.

Poor Marusa went again into the forest. She walked slowly toward the place where she knew the council fire of the Seasons was burning, though she was reluctant to bother them again.

As she approached the fire, she heard great Janu-ary speak. “What,” he asked gruffly, “is the meaning of *this* visit? We do not like to have our contemplations disturbed.” Marusa explained that her stepsister Holena had a craving for red apples, and that if she did

not bring them home it would surely mean her death.

This time great January called on September to take his place on the high stool. September waved the great staff over the flames, and they raged and crackled more violently than ever. In a moment the snow was gone, and in its place was brown grass. Golden leaves were fluttering from the trees, brown vines and red ferns blew in the soft autumn air. Marusa looked very carefully at the colorful scene and at last spied an apple tree.

“Pick them quickly,” growled September, “for they will soon be gone.”

Marusa rushed to the tree, but the apples were too high for her to reach. She shook the tree as hard as she could, and one lovely apple fell down. She shook it again and another apple fell. But before she could repeat the action the snow began to fall and she only had time to pick the two apples from the ground. She thanked the Seasons kindly, promising not to disturb them again.

When she arrived home, her cruel relatives seized the fruit and ate it greedily, admitting it was the best they had ever tasted. But they did not thank Marusa. Instead they scolded her for getting only two.

“Where did you find such apples?” the stepsister asked crossly. And Marusa was forced to tell them of the twelve strange men in the forest.

“I shall go myself and get more of them,” Holena exclaimed. And off she went into the forest, wearing her fine fur coat and her warmest boots.

She finally reached the fire burning in the forest. Wasting not a moment, she rushed up to the Twelve Months and demanded that they bring Autumn to the forest. "I want to pick a basket of apples," she announced imperiously.

Great January's eyes blazed as he slowly raised his head. He stood up and shook his staff violently over the flames, but instead of leaping up brightly the flames stopped dancing altogether, and the coals glowed dully and hissed in the falling snow. Heavier and heavier the snowflakes fell. Soon Holena could see nothing in front of her, and even as she shouted and cursed at the twelve men they faded from her view. She stumbled about in the forest, but could not find her way out. Before long she collapsed. She froze to death, and was soon covered by the falling snow until not a trace of her was seen.

The wicked stepmother waited and waited. When Holena did not return, she too set out for the forest — not to look for her daughter, but because she wanted more apples. She may have found the twelve men, but no one will ever know, for she too was never heard from again.

Time passed and spring came again to the land. The judge of the court ruled that Marusa, now all alone, should have both farm and cottage. And it is said that no matter what extremes of rain or snow, heat or cold, afflicted other farms, on Marusa's land the weather was always fair.

## Olaf the Mermaid's Son in DENMARK

ONCE, A LONG TIME AGO, there lived in the town of Furreby, on the Skagerrak in Denmark, a good and honest blacksmith. His shop was never very busy because the townspeople were poor, and much of his work was done not for pay but out of kindness. He was a young man, strong and handsome, and any of the girls in the town would have been happy to be his wife; but the smith loved his widowed mother and his many brothers and sisters. All his money was spent to buy them food and clothing.

When there was no work to be done in his shop, the smith would wander along the seashore to pick up driftwood from ships that had been wrecked in the Skagerrak. The driftwood warmed his house in winter, and from it he salvaged iron hoops and nails for use in his shop; but he walked on the beach most of all because he loved the sound of the sea.

One day while he was rowing out to a wreck, a great storm arose and he was not seen for three weeks. Everyone gave him up for lost, but one day he re-

turned, none the worse for his experience. The townspeople wondered how he had survived, but he told no one — not even his mother — of his experiences. Stranger still, the day after he came back to his forge his luck changed. Every day he found fresh fish washed up on the shore, and wrecks of ships yielded not only timber and iron but often golden coins.

The years rolled by, and they were such good years that he did not notice their passing, until one day a young boy whom he had never seen before stopped at the door of his shop.

“Hello, Father,” the boy said. “I have come to live with you for six years, as you told my mother I should.”

The smith was so amazed that for a moment he could not speak, but when he had gained control of himself he asked, “Pray tell me, young one, who is your mother?”

“My mother is a mermaid and lives beneath the wave,” answered the boy. “From my earliest days she has told me that one day I must leave her and go and live with my father on the shore.”

Then the good smith remembered the storm at sea and the mermaid who had given him her protection. He and the mermaid had married and lived together for three weeks until he returned to the shore because of his duty and love for his mother. A wave of fatherly tenderness swept over the smith as he looked at the boy. Laying his hand on the child’s shoulder, he said, “You must be hungry, my son. Come into the house and have some bread and milk.”

When the boy had finished eating and returned to



the smithy, the good man looked up in amazement and saw that he had grown at least four inches while he was eating his lunch. At a loss for words, he asked if he had enough, and the boy answered with youthful candor, "The bread and milk were fine to taste, but two loaves and a jug were not nearly enough, and my stomach still craves food."

A week passed, and the blacksmith knew that he would never be able to keep the boy properly fed, for his appetite grew with each passing hour. And his clothes! As fast as his grandmother made them, they became too small. The lad was so strong that he broke nearly everything he touched, and he handled the great sledgehammer in his father's shop as if it were a feather.

Sadly the smith resolved to send his son away to the farming country where he could get a job and have enough to eat. So he made him a staff of iron bars banded together, and the boy's grandmother baked him twelve loaves of bread. With the staff to support him when he was tired and the loaves to nourish him when he was hungry, the youth set out alone for the farming country.

When he had walked for one day and part of another, he came to the farming district, for his stride was five times that of the average man. Very tired and hungry, he stopped at a large estate and inquired from the servants whether or not help was needed. He was ushered into the mansion to meet the landlord. After telling him that he was called Olaf the Mermaid's Son, he showed the farmer how strong he

was by twisting his iron staff into a spring and then straightening it out again.

"I have twelve men working for me," the landlórd said, "and I need twelve more if I am to get the harvest completed and the wheat sown before winter comes."

"I can do the work of twelve men," Olaf said confidently. "I shall gladly take the job for the wages of one man if you will give me the food for each meal that you would have to provide for twelve men."

"Very well," the landlórd agreed, thinking he was striking a good bargain for himself. As it was near nightfall, he directed his servants to fix Olaf a place to sleep and then take him to the dining hall to eat.

Olaf was hungry, and at supper he ate a pot of porridge, a gallon of milk, and a pot of potatoes. Then he fell asleep on the pile of hay that was his bed.

In the morning when he woke he found everyone up and at work, so he hastened out to the barn where the other twelve were laboring. The men were threshing the grain on the barn floor. Olaf watched them for a moment to learn how it was done. Then he took a flail in his hands and began to beat the sheaves in the same manner as the others were doing. Alas, with the first few strokes the flail broke. He tied together five flails, but the same thing happened again. Then he took a large wooden beam and fashioned it into a flail, binding it together with raw horsehide strips to make it strong. He began to beat the sheaves with this, but there was not enough room in the barn to swing it. Taking the roof from the barn, he set it aside and swung his flail with all his might till the grain was threshed

in a single day. But as Olaf had never worked on a farm before, and did not know one kind of grain from another, he mixed the wheat, the barley, and the flax all together.

The farmer was very angry, but he could do nothing to help the situation by scolding Olaf. He showed the youth how to tell one type of grain from another, and Olaf agreed to sort them into different piles. Picking up the huge baskets of grain, he emptied them onto the barn floor. As the grain fell he blew his breath upon it, blowing the lighter flax into one pile, the barley in another, and the wheat in a third. And soon it was done — the grains were separated.

Because Olaf could do so much more work than they, the other workers became jealous of him. They feared that before long he would be doing the work of twenty-four men and they would be out of a job. But how to get rid of him? Not a man among them dared tell him to leave for fear of making him angry.

After much discussion, one of the men made a suggestion. "Let us have a contest," he said. "Each of us will go into the woods with a team of oxen and cut a load of wood. The last one in shall be hanged." His fellow workers agreed with him and the landlord was very pleased too, for in one stroke he would get the winter's wood done very quickly and he would be rid of Olaf, whom he feared. Naturally Olaf would be the last man in because he had never cut wood before in his life.

The next day Olaf slept late again. When he woke, the sun was high in the sky and all the men had gone

to the forest. They had taken all the oxen and left only a broken-down wagon and a tired old horse in the barn. With these Olaf followed the trail that led to the forest. Coming to the gate, he opened it but did not close it again. Instead he laid a rock that measured seven yards long across the entrance. In the woods he found that the other men had finished cutting their loads and were preparing to go home. Olaf set to work cutting trees, but in a moment his axe blade melted. Throwing it away, he pulled the trees up by their roots instead. In a few minutes the cart was so full it collapsed from the weight. The other men had left meanwhile, and he had no one to help him. So he picked up the cartload of logs, and the horse too, and trudged homeward.

“Out of the way, you puny creatures!” he cried as he found the other men vainly trying to move the rock from the gate. Pushing the rock aside with one foot, he walked on.

The landlord saw him coming down the road with the trees and cart under one arm and the horse under the other. In a panic he bolted the gates, but it did him no good. Olaf began to throw the trees one at a time over the wall. “Open the gate,” he cried, “or I shall throw the horse over too!”

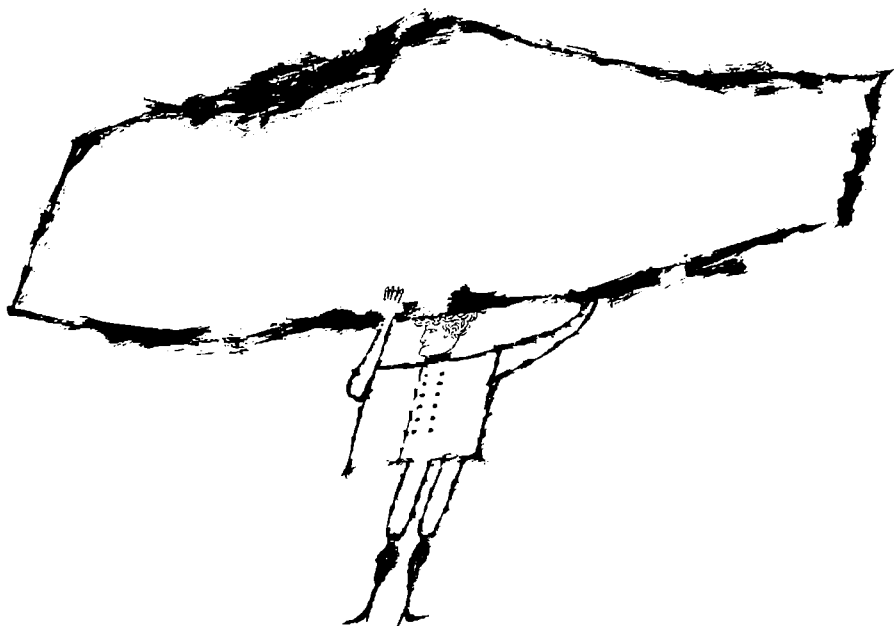
Months went by, and Olaf and his appetite grew every day. The landlord despaired of getting rid of him by physical means. One day he consulted an old soothsayer for advice.

“Send him at night to the Devil’s Pool,” she advised. “Tell him to bring back a load of fish by morning.

While he is catching them, he will be sucked into the whirlpool and drowned.”

Now the Devil's Pool was the home of Old Eric — the name of the Devil in Denmark. He often posed as a fisherman's guide, and would lead the unwary to a dangerous whirlpool where they were drawn down to his home below.

Olaf left at sundown for the pool because it was a long walk. He took with him a lunch — an ovenful of bread, twenty pounds of butter, a keg of beer, and a bushel of nuts. When he arrived at the pool he found Old Eric, disguised as a fisherman, sitting in a boat at the water's edge. “Be a good man,” requested Olaf politely, “and help me catch a load of fish for my master.”



The Devil agreed, and he began to row Olaf toward the center of the pool. Olaf, of course, suspected nothing, and sat contentedly eating his lunch. Suddenly the boat began to spin round and round like a top. Before Olaf could swallow, the Devil seized him fast, and together they whirled to the bottom of the pool. As soon as his feet touched solid bottom, Olaf struck the Devil a terrible blow with his fist. Then he began to beat him until he screamed for mercy.

“I shall beat you until you promise to deliver all the fish in this pond to my master — and before sunrise!” cried Olaf.

“I will, I will!” squealed the Devil.

Needless to say the Devil delivered the fish as agreed — in the morning they were stacked against the landlord’s gate so high he could not open it. Olaf was fast asleep in his bed.

The landlord went again to the soothsayer and she answered him with further advice, “If one devil cannot destroy him, then a thousand can,” she cackled. “Send him to the Devil’s treasury to collect your dues, for they have not been paid for three years.”

This he did. The journey took Olaf many days — not so much because of the distance, but because no one he asked had any idea where the Devil’s treasury was. Olaf followed many a man who was going to the Devil, but they would always change their minds. At last he met a likely fellow who had already been there and he pointed the way.

As Olaf neared the gates he heard a terrible gnashing

of teeth and sharp yapping sounds as of dogs. He drew closer and found they were not dogs but thousands of little black imps, each about three feet high. They swarmed around him, screeching and nipping his legs with pointed teeth. He brushed them away like gnats and demanded of the biggest imp, "Take my master's compliments to the Devil and tell him that I have been sent to collect three years' dues for him."

Old Eric looked out of the window to see who the visitor was. Recognizing Olaf, who had nearly killed him in the pool, he fled to safety, shouting to his imps, "Pay him, pay him! Give him ten years' dues if he does not come back."

The imps came running to Olaf with bags of gold, and Olaf, not knowing how much was owed his master, took all he could carry.

On his return he gave the landlord one bagful, which was more than his share. Taking the rest for himself, he decided to return home.

He lived happily with his father, and they were able to buy food by the shipload if they wished. But before all the gold was spent, the six years were over and it was time to return to his mother in the sea, where it is much easier to find food. Sadly he said farewell to his father and waded into the water. He walked five miles out to sea, and when he finally turned to wave, the water just reached his shoulders.

To this day he has not been seen again in Denmark, but then you never know: he could come back for a visit.

## **The Haunted Forest** \* *LITHUANIA*

LONG, LONG AGO IN LITHUANIA there stood a beautiful forest — that is, it was beautiful to strangers beholding it for the first time. But for the people who lived nearby it was fearsome, for it was said that many strange things took place among the tangled shrubs and majestic oaks. Travelers told of getting lost in its depths and of seeing ruined houses filled with tiny ragged people. Parents told their children of little sooty elves who snatched at your clothes if you ventured inside.

One day the King heard of these strange things. When he learned that the people feared the forest, he laughed at their silly superstitions and ordered the royal woodsmen to cut it down. But when the woodsmen drove their sharp axes into the first few trees, blood flowed from them and the trees wailed in anguish. Cries of sorrow for the fallen trees swept through the forest, and the woodsmen fled in terror.



The King gave it up as a bad job and left things the way they were. Except for a lost stranger or so, no one ventured into the forest for many years. Even the huntsmen's dogs yelped in terror if they accidentally found their way into its dark depths.

Near the forest there was an old village, and the people in it were poorer than anywhere else in the country. Among them dwelt a peasant who had lost his first wife and had married again. His second wife was very hard to please. There was no end to her scolding and wrangling, so the poor man spent very little time at home. He had a daughter aged seven years called Elspeth who had been a baby when her mother died. The stepmother made her life miserable. In spite of this, Elspeth remained a bright, sunny child, who was very thoughtful and much prettier than her stepmother would ever admit.

One sunny afternoon, while out gathering strawberries with the other village children, Elspeth ventured to the edge of the haunted forest. Oblivious to dangers, as children often are, her playmates followed, traveling farther and farther into the forest, for the berries were bigger and thicker there than anywhere else. Suddenly one of the older children noticed where they were and cried out in terror: "Fly, fly! We're in the haunted forest!" To the children the words were more terrible than thunder and lightning, and they fled from the forest, not stopping till they had reached the safety of their homes.

But Elspeth stayed. She could see no danger in a place where the berries lay red in the soft green grass,

where garlands of flowers hid the gnarled trunks of the trees, and where birds sang sweetly in the branches overhead. "It cannot be worse than home," she thought to herself.

Presently a little black dog came barking toward her with a silver bell tinkling on its neck. Just as she was about to flee from the dog, a little girl about her own age came running after it.

"I'm so glad to see you," the girl replied. "It was brave of you not to run away with the other children. Please stay here and play with me." She held out her hand as she came forward, and the dog began to wag his tail in friendly greeting.

"Come," said the little girl, "I'll take you to my mother. She'll be as glad as I am to see you, for no one has come here for many a long year."

Hand in hand the two children ran through the forest, with the little dog barking happily at their heels. Presently they came to a beautiful garden with the rarest and most exotic flowers growing in it. In the trees were birds of many hues that stopped their singing and tamely fluttered to the ground. In the very center of the garden stood a crystal house built of glass and precious stones.

"Mother, mother!" cried the little girl happily. "Look who has come to play with me. Can she stay?"

A beautiful tall lady who had been sitting on a bench in the garden came toward them holding out her hand in welcome, and Elspeth knew she had never seen anyone like her nor ever heard a voice so sweet — it

was all at once like the falling of water, the singing of birds, the sighing of the wind.

“What guest do you bring here, my child?” she asked, kissing her daughter.

“I found her alone in the forest and brought her home to be my friend.”

The kind lady asked Elspeth many questions, and when the little girl told her of her unhappy life, and that her real mother had long rested beneath the grass, the woman’s eyes glistened in sympathy. “We shall see what can be done,” she said comfortingly. And while she thought about how she could let the little guest stay with them, the children went out to play.

Elspeth’s companion brought out a small black ebony box, holding it tight in her hand.

“Have you ever seen the sea?” she asked.

“No,” Elspeth replied in wonderment. “What is it?”

“Very well, you shall see it, and at once.” She lifted the cover from the small box, and inside lay a leaf of alchemilla, a mussel shell, and two fish bones. On the alchemilla leaf lay two drops of water glittering like dew drops.

The child shook the dewdrops on to the grass, and whatever had been there before disappeared as though the earth had swallowed them, and in its place, as far as the eye could see, only water was visible except for the dry place where the children stood. Then the little girl placed the mussel shell on the water. Instantly it changed into a boat, and the fish bones into oars! They clambered into the boat, and while Elspeth stared

in astonishment her friend rowed the boat over the water. As she rowed, other boats began to gather about them, some with colorful sails puffed out in the gentle breeze. And on the breeze came the sound of singing — the voices of hundreds of children who sang a care-free, lilting song.

“We must answer their song,” the little hostess cried.

Elspeth could not understand what they were singing, for she had never heard any other tongue but her own. One word of the song was repeated over and over again: “*Kiisike, Kiisike, Kiisike.*”

“What does that word mean?” she asked her companion.

“That is my name,” the little girl laughed.

After a time *Kiisike*’s mother’s voice was heard across the water, and it was time to row for home.

When they had brought the boat back to the dry spot, *Kiisike* took the alchemilla leaf from the box and dipped it carefully into the water, shaking it so that only two drops remained on it. Immediately the water disappeared, and all was as before. The oars became fish bones and the boat a mussel shell, which she carefully put back in the box.

The children ran gaily up the path to the house, and the servants came to meet them and show them to the table. And what a table! A servant brought in thirteen golden dishes. When each one was opened, it contained better food than the one before it. And when they were all opened but the thirteenth one, they began to eat. In her whole life Elspeth had never seen so much food at once, and all of it so delicious.

After the meal the good lady turned to one of the ladies in waiting and whispered something to her. She left the room and presently came back, followed by a very old man with a beard the length of himself. He bowed very low before Kiisike's mother.

"Look at that peasant maiden," commanded the woman, pointing to Elspeth. "I wish to adopt her. Form an imitation of her for me to send into the village tomorrow to take her place."

Although Elspeth did not understand what the woman was saying, she was sure that it would bring her no ill, and was very happy. "If you are a good girl, all will go well with you," the woman told her kindly, "and you may stay with us as long as you wish."

After a short time, the old man came back into the room. He was carrying a bucket of clay in one hand and in the other a wicker basket. He fashioned the clay into the shape of a doll's body, only he left it hollow. From the basket he took a long black snake and thrust it into the hollow body. Then he fashioned the head, and when it was finished and placed on the doll, it was truly Elspeth in miniature.

His work completed, the old man raised his head and said, "Nothing is wanting but a drop of this little girl's blood."

Seeing the terror in Elspeth's face, the good woman comforted her and said, "Fear not, for it is essential for your future happiness." And taking a gold needle, she pricked Elspeth's arm so gently that the girl felt nothing when the needle was withdrawn with a drop of blood on the point. The old man took the needle and

thrust it into the doll's heart. Then he laid the image into the basket to grow, promising to return the next day.

That night Elspeth lay in the largest and softest bed she had ever been in, and fell promptly to sleep. She was awakened by the bright sunlight streaming in the window and the sound of birds in the trees outside. Instead of her old garments, she found a wardrobe awaiting her that a princess would dare not ask for. It included her first pair of shoes.

Kiisike came to help her dress and took her to the dininghall for breakfast. To Elspeth's surprise and horror, there sat a girl in her complete likeness, and wearing the clothes she herself had been wearing the day before.

"Do not fear, Elspeth," said Kiisike, "The clay doll can do you no harm. We shall send it to your stepmother in your stead. She may beat it as much as she likes, for this stonyhearted doll can feel no pain, and the day will come when your substitute will award her the punishment she deserves."

Many were the happy days which followed. They were so full of gladness for Elspeth, and there were so many things to do, that she scarcely noticed their passing. But every day she took time off from play to learn her lessons from the servants and to take instruction in etiquette and courtly manners.

As she grew in size and in wisdom, she grew also in beauty, but her playmate Kiisike never grew at all. Indeed, she was no bigger and no different after sev-

eral years than she was on the day Elspeth met her in the woods.

One time when Elspeth was reading by herself in the garden, she learned the secret of the crystal house and how they remained so happy, with no one else in the world knowing of their existence. Seeing the old man approach a large square block of granite in the garden, she watched him tap it three times with a little silver wand. Immediately a large golden rooster sprang forth from it and, lighting up, crowed loudly three times. In a second the rock opened and a table covered with a cloth issued forth, followed by a chair for each member of the household and a plate for each to eat from. Next followed thirteen covered dishes of food such as the table always bore when Elspeth sat down to eat.

The girl was very curious about this, and when she had a chance to speak to the good lady alone she asked her about it.

“The old gray-bearded man is a magician,” she was told, “and has been very kind to us for more than two hundred years. Everything the heart could wish for he has supplied us from out of the granite rock. But there has always been one condition: that I never change and that Kiisike never grow up, but remain a little girl forever.”

Then Elspeth asked her about the thirteenth dish, and why it was at every meal and why it was never uncovered.

“That,” she explained, “contains the hidden blessings

of life, and if we opened it we would know all and our happy life would cease. We must not try to snatch all the gifts at once, else we would lose those we already have.”

Nine more years passed, and by this time Elspeth was as comely a maiden as ever a man set eyes upon, only no man had ever come to see her, for the forest was still a fearful place to those outside. One day the kind lady called her and said, “Dearest child, the time has come when we must part.”

“Dearest mother, that can never be till death comes to claim one of us. Having once so kindly received me, why do you now thrust me from you?”

“Peace, my child. You do not understand. You are grown up now and great happiness awaits you in the world. You are a mortal girl. Your years in time will come to an end. As you see, we never grow old here and can never leave the forest.”

As Elspeth’s tears flowed down her cheeks, the good lady took a golden comb from her pocket and gently combed her long and lovely curls. Then she bade her go and rest, for she would begin her journey on the morrow.

In all these years the stepmother had tormented the doll, but the clay creature whose body felt no pain minded it not and this made the wicked woman more cruel than ever. One day she fell into a terrible rage and threatened to beat the girl more severely than ever, and as she was about to hit her with a whip, the black snake so long concealed in the hollow body darted out and bit her on the tongue. It was only a



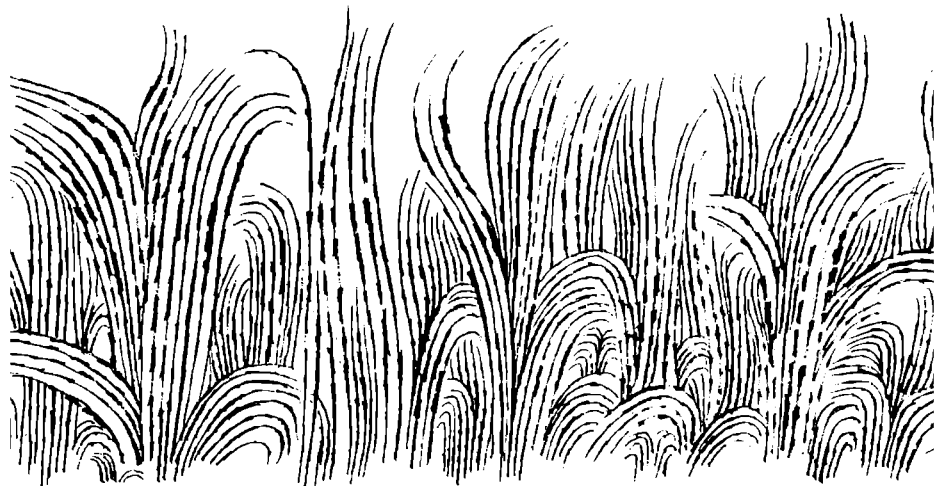


few days before the woman died and no one knew what became of her daughter, for no one ever discovered that she was not a real child but a doll.

As for Elspeth, she wept all the night through, for she couldn't bear to leave her friends behind her. In the morning the kind lady gave her a signet ring for her finger and hung a small gold locket about her neck. Then she summoned the gray-bearded man and bade her farewell with tears in her eyes. The old man struck Elspeth gently on the head three times with the silver wand he always carried. She felt herself changing. Her arms became wings, her feet became the claws of an eagle, and instead of her fine clothes she was covered with feathers. She soared high into the air over the green forest and soon the crystal house and her friends were far behind, but still she was unable to control

her flying. The air currents bore her southwards for many days until she came to a huge forest quite unlike the one that had been her home for so long. She was very tired and ceased to flap her great wings and fell lower and lower.

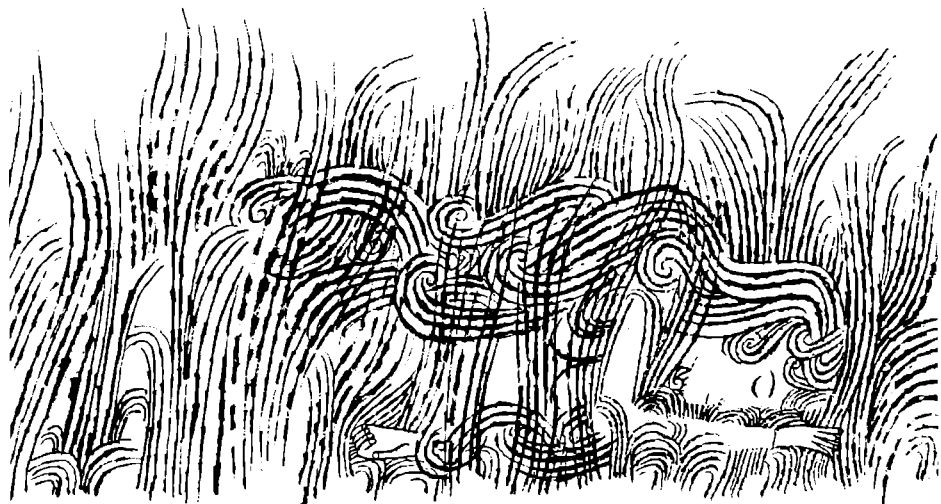
Suddenly a sharp arrow pierced her feathers and she began to fall, fall, until she thought she was asleep and having a nightmare that would end when she hit the ground. When she came out of her swoon she found herself lying in a thicket – not as an eagle any more, but back in her own lovely form. Everything lay behind her like a dream and she wanted so much to fall asleep again to recapture it. Suddenly she felt someone near her, comforting her and trying to raise her to her feet. When she turned she saw a tall, handsome youth with flashing eyes and a happy face bending over her. He began to speak:



“It was a happy hour when I rode forth this morning, dearest maiden. I have been dreaming every night for half a year that I would find you in this forest. But though I have looked everywhere and have passed this way a hundred times, my longing and my hope have never been rewarded. But today I aimed an arrow at a passing eagle, and while seeking the place where it fell I found you, and I shall never let you leave my sight.”

Suddenly a flock of pigeons flew over them, each carrying a present for Elspeth's dowry. One brought her a message from the enchanted forest, “Marry the Prince who has found you, and the great happiness I foretold will be yours.”

And so it was.



## Lazarus and the Dragons GREECE

**T**HERE ONCE WAS A COBBLER whose name was Lazarus. He worked very hard at his trade, but sometimes he grew very weary of it and wished that his life were more adventurous.

One day as he was making a piece of fine leather into a sword scabbard for a customer, he was set upon by a swarm of flies. He struck at them with the leather and killed a great many — forty, he discovered on counting them. Even this small incident added some brightness to his humdrum existence. In a moment of fancy he stitched a motto onto the leather scabbard which read: *With one stroke I have taken forty lives!* When it was finished he took an old sword and polished it. Then, putting it into the new scabbard, he set out in search of adventure.

After a long day's journey he grew tired, and when he came to a well he drank deeply and fell asleep beside it.

Very early the next morning some dragons came to the well to get water for their breakfast and found him lying there asleep. At first they thought to kill him and take him home for breakfast, but one of the smarter dragons read the inscription on his scabbard.

“Let’s keep him,” he said to his brothers, “for clearly he is a mighty powerful man, and if we make him a comrade he may be of great use in our business of robbing people.”

They all agreed that this was a fine idea and waited until the cobbler woke, for not one of them had the courage to disturb him in his sleep lest he waken angry. When Lazarus finally opened his eyes, he was so scared that he made haste to run away. But when he saw that the dragons looked worried too, he laughed to himself and put on a very courageous front.

“Ho, my friends! Do not look so frightened. I shall not hurt you – unless, of course, you are looking for a quarrel.”

The dragons laughed with relief, for they were convinced that he was as strong and brave as the legend made him out to be. So Lazarus went to live with the dragons as they asked him to, and soon he became a fast friend and helped them on their adventures, which consisted mostly of scaring travelers half to death so that they dropped all their money and fled.

One day when Lazarus had been with them for some time and they trusted him out of their sight, they told him to take his turn in bringing the water. He dragged the great waterbag, which held two hundred gallons, down to the well, wondering all the while how he was

going to bring it back full. When he arrived at the well he began to think and think and think, for he could not let the dragons know that he was not so strong after all. While he was thinking, he walked round and round the well until the path was worn deeper and deeper. Soon the dragons became very thirsty and went down to the well to look for him.

“What are you doing?” the dragon leader asked.

“I see no reason for coming to the well for water every day, so I am going to bring back the whole well with me when I get it dug out of the ground.”

“No, no, that will never do!” replied one of the dragons. “It would soon be empty and have no way of filling up again. Let one of us carry the water when it is your turn.”

And so they did.

When winter came and it began to get cold, they took turns going to the forest for firewood. They brought home two huge trees every day. At last it was the cobbler’s turn to go for wood. Again he was at a loss to know what to do, for he could never carry one of those great trees, let alone pull it out of the ground by the roots as the dragons could do.

He wandered about the woods for a long time. So that he would not get lost, he tied a piece of heavy twine to the first tree, and he wrapped the string a turn or two around every large tree he came to thereafter. After a long time had passed the dragons set out to look for him, and found him only after following the twine.

“What are you doing?” asked the leader of the dragons. “You have been so long getting the wood for the fire we feared you had got lost.”

The little cobbler spoke out very boldly: “I see no need for coming into the forest for firewood each day, so I have tied all the trees together and shall bring them all home at once.”

“No, that will never do,” the dragon said, shocked. “We have no place to keep that much wood. When it comes your turn again, one of us will take it for you so that you will not have to bother.”

The dragons were beginning to fear Lazarus very much. One night they conspired to slay him while he slept. But the cobbler overheard their conversation, and he slipped out of bed and put a log under the covers in his place.

One by one each dragon crept up to the bed and struck a mighty blow at what they thought was Lazarus. Then they all went back to bed content that he was dead.

In the morning Lazarus hid the log under the bed, put some tiny bandages on his face and arms, and came down to breakfast. The dragons gasped to see him. When their leader at last found his voice, he said good morning and asked how he had slept.

“I slept well,” said Lazarus casually, “but some fleas gave me terrible bites, so I bandaged them to prevent infection.”

The dragons were amazed. They would have to try a different approach if they wanted to be rid of

him, so they asked him about his family. When they saw that it made Lazarus very sad to talk about his children, the dragon leader promised him a huge bag of gold and silver if he would go home. Lazarus agreed.

The bag of gold was so heavy Lazarus could not lift it, but he did not let on that this was the case. "Alas, my wife will not forgive me for leaving her and the children, nor will she believe that I have been living with my friends the dragons. She will accuse me of stealing this gold unless I have one of you come with me to verify that it is legally mine."

One of the dragons, having been a family man himself, agreed to go with him. Taking the bag of gold, he followed Lazarus down the road. At length, when they neared his house, the cobbler bid the dragon rest for a moment.

"I had better run ahead and tie up my children, because they are not as understanding as I and sometimes they eat dragons," he warned. Then he rushed on ahead and ran till he reached his house. Quickly he tied up his children, telling them as he did so to pretend they were hungry and cry out, "Dragon flesh, dragon flesh!" when he appeared at the door with the dragon.

A little later the dragon arrived, and the children began screaming as they had been told to do. The dragon recoiled. Even though they were tied up, he thought the children were as terrible as their father. He dropped the bag of gold and fled as fast as he could back to his brothers.

When he was tired and far enough away from the



dragoneaters, he sat down puffing to rest for a moment. A fox came by. The dragon told him he was fleeing from the terrible Lazarus and his bloodthirsty children.

The fox laughed loud and long. "Why you foolish dragon," he said, gasping for breath. "He is the most harmless man I've ever seen. Last week I ate two of his chickens and no one tried to frighten *me* away. I'm on my way now to eat the others. Come with me and watch the fun."

The dragon was still not convinced, so the fox told him to hang on to his tail and have no fear. The dragon obediently took the tail of the fox in his mouth and was led back to the cobbler's house.

But Lazarus saw them coming. When they were within earshot, he stood at the window and shouted, "You foolish fox! I told you not to bring me back *one* dragon but *all* of them!"

The dragon halted in terror, the fox's tail still in his teeth. "*The fox has tricked me!*" he thought in a panic. He turned and fled, and he ran so far and so fast that the fox was dead before he opened his mouth to let him go.

The cobbler was never again bothered with the fox, and it is certain none of the dragons ever came near him when they heard the tale their brother told.

As for Lazarus, he must have had enough adventures, for never more did he leave the safety of his house.

## The Golden Fleece \* *SERBIA*

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a hunter who lived in the mountains of Serbia and made his living by selling meat and skins to the villagers. One day while out hunting he was attacked by a ram. This startled him of course, but what surprised him more and made him unable to shoot was that the ram had a golden fleece. While he stood there gaping, the ram ran him through with its horn.

The hunter lay where he had fallen for several days until a party of searchers found his body and took it to his house. They buried him there and gave his gun to his widow, who kept it for many years hanging from the wall. When her son grew up, he wanted very much to use the gun, but his mother forbade him. So one day, when no one was watching, he took the gun off its hook and went up into the mountains to hunt.

He had not been hunting very long when he heard a deep voice say, "I am the Golden Ram. I killed your father many years ago, and now I am going to kill you." But the youth was too fast for him. Undazzled by its golden fleece, he fired and killed the beast before he was attacked. He skinned it and took the fleece home to his mother. She was overjoyed to see him safe and sound, and to know that he had avenged his father's death. The fleece she hung up on the wall under the gun.

In time the King heard of the golden fleece. Curious to see it, he commanded that young Peter Petrovitch (for that was the boy's name) come before him and bring the fleece with him. Peter did. He spread out the shining fur, and when the King saw it he could not contain his greed. "I want it," he said rudely.

"I would not sell it for all the money in the kingdom," the boy replied when asked to name his price.

Now it happened that the King had a very crafty prime minister. He whispered something in the King's ear to which the King whispered back: "I cannot kill him without a reason."

"That's easy," hissed the prime minister. "Give him something impossible to do, and if he hasn't done it in a prescribed time, take his head."

"A good idea," the King said. And he ordered Peter to plant a vineyard and bring him a bottle of wine made from the first grapes. All this was to be done in seven days.

Poor Peter was horrified. "I'll run away and they'll

never find me!" was his first thought. But then he remembered his widowed mother. Instead, he went into the forest and sat down on a log. He began to weep. When he had cried until he could cry no more, he sat there helplessly, lamenting his horrible fate. Presently a gentle voice spoke behind him, and he turned round to see a very small but extraordinarily beautiful girl.

"Why do you weep, my brother?" she asked him softly.

"Go away — you cannot help me," Peter said impatiently, for he did not know that she was a Vila who lived in the woods.

"Perhaps I can," said the Vila, "for things are never so bad that they cannot be worse. And besides, you killed my enemy, the Ram with the Golden Fleece."

The boy grasped at this straw of hope and quickly told her what the King had asked of him. After thinking for a moment, the Vila explained her plan: "Go to the King and say: 'Where do you wish me to plant this vineyard?' and have him plough the land very carefully for you. Then when you have done this, take a sprig of basil and sleep on it in the very spot where you wish the vineyard to grow."

Peter followed the Vila's advice. He went back to the King and asked to have the ground ploughed. This was done forthwith. Then, still following the instructions, he slept in the field that night with a piece of basil under his head in a bag. In the morning — behold! he found vines already planted and growing. On the second day the vines had leaves, on the third day

blossoms, on the fourth grapes, and on the fifth day they were ripe. On the sixth day Peter picked some grapes and put the juice into a keg. By the seventh day it had fermented and was ready to drink.

He took a bottle to the King.

The King was dumbfounded and looked questioningly at the prime minister. The sly old man covered up his own surprise and said, "That task was too easy." He suggested another to the King.

"I want you to build me a castle," the King told Peter. "It must be made of elephant tusks, for there is not a castle of pure ivory anywhere in the world."

Again Peter went to the forest and again he began to weep. The Vila appeared once more, and when he told her what the King had asked, she said: "Go to the King. Tell him you can build the castle, but that he must give you a ship and three hundred barrels of wine, as many kegs of brandy, and twenty carpenters."

The King provided these things and Peter set out for Africa. When he and the carpenters came to the elephant country, they dammed up a small lake and Peter had the wine and brandy all poured into it. Then he sat down to watch. Soon a gigantic herd of elephants came by and at once began to drink from the lake. One by one the elephants grew drowsy and fell asleep. When the whole herd was unconscious, the twenty carpenters began sawing off their tusks, and soon they had enough ivory to fill the ship. They sailed home. There was only one more day to spare, so they had to work fast. The ivory was brought to the place where

the King wanted the castle, and Peter lay down to sleep.

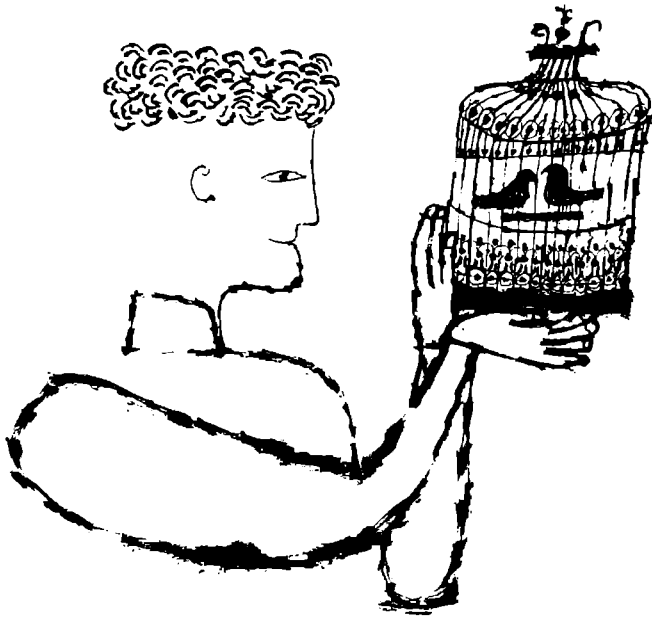
When morning came, instead of a bare field there stood a beautiful castle, and its walls were of woven ivory tusks that gleamed in the morning sun.

Peter went straight to the King to tell him that his castle was ready. This time the prime minister flew into a rage. "The task was too easy," he cried. But the King simply said to Peter: "Now I have another job for you: I want you to go and get me a lovely Princess who lives in a faraway land, and bring her to my kingdom so that I may take her to be my wife."

Peter went into the woods again and once more met the Vila. She told him where the Princess lived. And she said, "Ask the King for a galley filled with many kinds of merchandise and equipped with twenty shops. Ask also for a handsome youth in each shop to sell the wares."

These things were provided, and when the ship was ready to sail, the Vila came to see Peter and told him that at every port he put into he would meet a pedlar. "You must buy whatever the pedlar has to sell," she said, and then she waved good-bye. Peter thanked her and sailed away.

At the first port the ships reached, a man sold Peter a golden-plumed eagle, and Peter took one feather from the bird and turned him loose. In the next port he met a man who sold him a golden fish, of which he took but one scale and let the fish swim away. At the third port a man sold him a pair of lovebirds;



Peter took a feather from each and let them go free. When they finally reached the faraway kingdom where the Princess lived, Peter opened all the shops in the galley and sent word throughout the land that they had fine wares for sale and rare perfume to smell. Then, as all women are the same the world over and have been since the beginning of time, word of this sale soon reached the Princess. Together with her twenty handmaidens she visited the ship. While they chattered and shopped, and the handsome clerks kept them busy trying the wares, the ship quietly pulled anchor and slipped out of the harbor. They were many miles at sea before the Princess noticed what had happened and then it was too late.

“We have been kidnaped!” screamed her maidens in terror.

“Have no fear,” the Princess said calmly. “I will release my pet pigeon, and he will take a message to my father the Emperor. Soon fast warships will come and rescue us.”

As the carrier pigeon flew away with the message, Peter burned the feather he had taken from the eagle, as the Vila had told him to do, and with a rush of wings the eagle came back. Peter sent him to overtake and destroy the carrier pigeon.

“All is not lost,” said the Princess when no help came. She took a magic pearl from her earring. “I shall cast this pearl into the sea, and the ship will stop moving. My father will soon miss us and send his fleet to our rescue.”

As soon as the pearl sank into the water, the ship stopped moving. But Peter burned the scale from the golden fish and the fish came swimming up to him. Peter ordered it to dive down and pick up the pearl. This was done, for presently the ship moved on again.

As the ship was passing a narrows, sheltered on either side by high mountains, the sea was becalmed and the ship's sails hung loosely from their masts. Then Peter took out the lovebirds' feathers and burned them. No sooner did he do this than the air filled with thousands of lovebirds. The beating of their wings created a rush of air that filled the sails and caused the ship to move. Soon Peter was back in his own country.

When the King saw the ship come into the harbor with the Princess on board he was more amazed than happy to see her. Peter's magic power puzzled and



astounded him, and he began to fear for his throne. He resolved to get rid of Peter, and instructed the royal guards to seize him and cut off his head forthwith.

As soon as the guards arrested Peter, the Princess became very angry with the King. "You are too cruel!" she said — for by this time she loved her abductor. "But may I bid him farewell?"

The King consented, and the Princess went to Peter. She took out a tiny vial of elixir from her pocket and held it up to his nose. Immediately Peter turned into the King! He looked like him, talked like him, and even wore his clothes. Meanwhile the real King looked just like Peter — in fact so much like him that the guards became confused and seized him and cut off his head, in spite of his loud and terrified protests.

The Princess then gave Peter another sniff from the bottle of elixir, and he became his own self again. All the people of the kingdom rejoiced at the news that the greedy king was dead, and they voted unanimously that, as the King had no son, Peter should succeed him. Peter was reluctant to become King because, as a lowly hunter's son, he felt unfit. But when the Princess consented to marry him, he took the throne. And he received the blessings of his father-in-law and the loyalty of the people.

The twenty handsome youths each married one of the Princess's handmaidens, and Peter elevated them to the rank of dukes, that they might help him rule the kingdom wisely and well for as long as he should live.

## The Three Wishes \* HUNGARY

ONCE THERE WAS a poor man who had a pretty wife. Though they had nothing in the world but each other, they were quite content with their lot. When they quarreled, as all couples do, it was because of their poverty; but their arguments were always short-lived and they soon kissed and forgot how the quarrel had started.

One evening the good wife returned home to their little cottage much earlier than her husband and lighted the fire in the kitchen, though she had nothing in the house to cook for supper.

“I wish I could cook a drop of soup for him,” she said to herself, setting the pot on the flame full of water. “Perhaps he will bring something with him; if he does, all will at least be ready.”

As the pot began to boil, her husband arrived home — emptyhanded, much to his wife’s dismay. But she said nothing. She simply scowled at him while he sat down on a bench and told her the happenings of the day.

“Do you know what befell me tonight?” he said.  
“How would I know? I wasn’t with you,” his wife replied crossly.

“As I was coming from the squire’s maize field, I saw in the dark distance what looked like a black spot on the road. I could not see what it was, so I went nearer and lo! — do you know what it was? A beautiful little golden carriage with a pretty little woman inside and four fine black dogs harnessed to it.”

“You’re joking,” said his wife.

“Indeed I am not. It is true. You know how muddy the roads are hereabouts at this season? Well, the dogs were stuck fast with the carriage. The little woman could not get out in the mud, for she would surely have ruined the silken gown she wore. I took her for some evil spirit and would have run had she not called out, imploring me to help her. It did not take much to lift the little carriage, lady and all, from the mire, and I set them on the good road again. But before I left she leaned out from the tiny window and asked if I was married, and I told her, ‘Yes, to the prettiest woman in the world.’ Then she asked if we were rich, and I laughed and said there were none poorer in the country than you and I. ‘That can be remedied,’ she said. ‘I shall fulfill any three wishes that your wife may propose.’ And she left as fast as if dragons had stolen her away. She must have been a fairy.”

“You are lightheaded from your empty stomach, and someone has made a fool of you,” his wife replied haughtily.

“That remains to be seen,” replied her husband. “You must think of a wish, dear wife.”

His wife, who thought all he had related was foolishness, said, “I should like to have some sausages to cook on this lovely fire.”

No sooner had she uttered the word “sausages” than a frying pan came down the chimney, and in it was a sausage of such length that it was long enough to fence the garden. The good wife was so surprised she was speechless. Her husband cautioned her to be more careful with the two remaining wishes. He reminded her that if they had two horses, two heifers, and a pig they would be able to live comfortably.

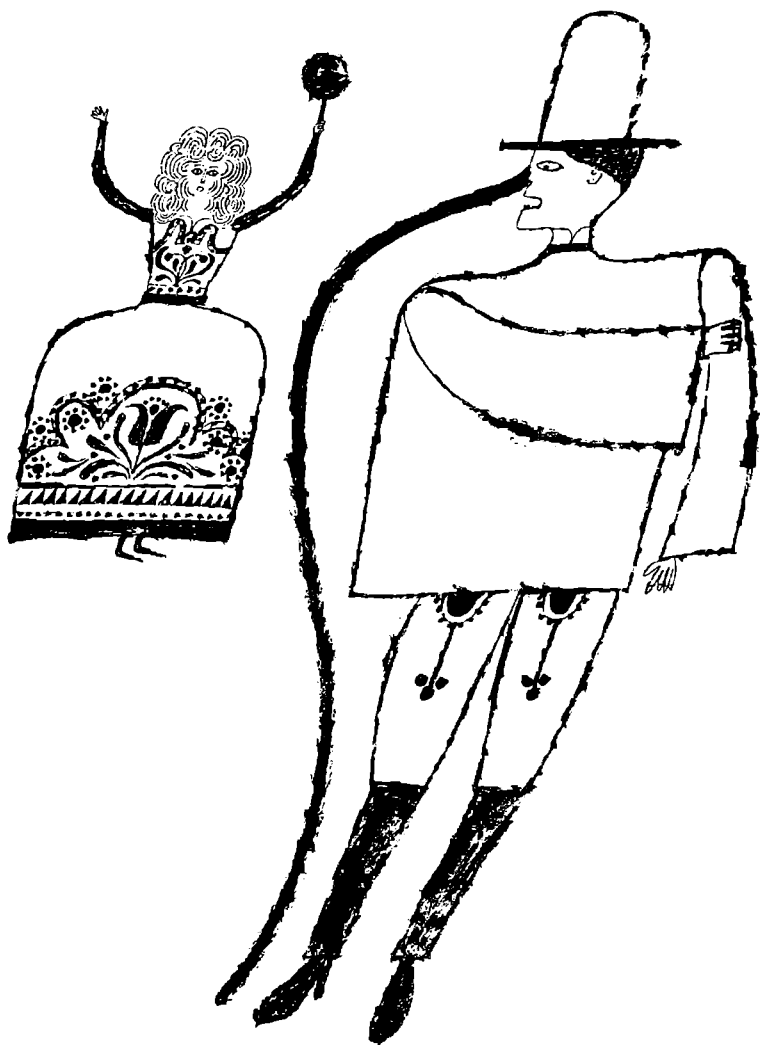
While the wife was pondering what had befallen them as she turned the giant sausage in the pan, the husband took his pipe from his hatband to prepare for a smoke. After filling it, he stooped down to pick a coal from the fire to light it with, but he burned his fingers, and as he leapt up he overturned the frying pan and the sausage fell into the ashes.

“Good heavens, the sausage!” cried his wife. “What on earth are you doing? I wish that sausage would grow on to your nose!”

Before she finished uttering the words, and before she could snatch the sausage from the ashes, it had attached itself to her husband’s nose and stretched from his face to his toes.

“You fool!” shouted her husband. “The second wish is gone. What am I going to do now?”

He felt his nose, and sure enough, the sausage had



become part of him — indeed, it was rather uncomfortable, so close was it to the fire. His wife took up a knife and was about to cut his nose off when her husband stopped her.

“No, no!” he cried out. “Can’t you see it’s grown to me? I shan’t let you cut it off. How can I allow myself to be cut about in such a manner? Not for all the treasures on earth!”

As his wife was wailing over her hasty wish, the husband comforted her by saying, “We have yet another wish, my love. It would be better if you wished that the sausage would go back into the pan so that all could be as before, for you will never want to kiss me again with a nose like this.”

“But the horses, the heifers, and the pig we wanted!” she wailed. “How shall we get them?”

To this he had no answer, and so they argued and quarreled for a long time. But finally the husband succeeded in convincing his wife, and she made her third wish. The sausage flew back into the pan and began cooking again, and the husband looked as he had always looked.

So they remained as poor as ever after all, but I’ll tell you this — they never quarreled again; nor did they even raise their voices. And though they had to do without the heifers, the horses, and the pig, their house which had once been so noisy was now a place of peace.

## The Lord of Gold \* *ESTONIA*

ONE STORMY WINTER NIGHT, many years ago, a young Estonian lad missed his road while seeking his way home. As it was useless to travel farther in the trackless snow, he lay down beneath a tree and curled up like a hedgehog in his fur coat. Just as he was about to fall asleep, someone shook him.

“Peasant, awake! Stand up — otherwise you will be buried alive in the snow before morning.”

The peasant obeyed the voice, which was a kindly one, and when he arose, there stood before him a tall and slender man about twice his height, holding a fir-tree staff in his hand.

“What is your name?” asked the stranger.

“Hans, the son of Long Hans,” the lad replied.

“Come with me, Hans,” invited the stranger. “A

fire is waiting for us beneath the trees in the forest. There we can wait out the storm in comfort."

The young peasant did not refuse this kind offer and followed as the stranger led the way. The storm continued to rage. Swirling snow filled their footprints as soon as they lifted their feet. The stranger raised his staff and cried out in a loud voice, "Ho, ho, Mother-of-the-storm, make room for us travelers!"

Immediately there opened before them a path where not a single snowflake fell, and though the wind blew fiercely all round, they did not feel it. It seemed to Hans as though he were walking in a glass corridor at the end of which blazed a huge fire. Though it was winter, it was miraculously summer within the circle of firelight. Beetles, ants, and crickets crawled in the green grass, and bees buzzed in the blooming rose-bushes.

"What do you think, Hans, son of Long Hans? Is this not better than lying beneath the snowdrifts?"

Hans agreed that it was, and when he had finished eating the bread and cheese his host had given him, he drank a long draught from a stein made of carved amber. Then he fell into a deep sleep.

When he woke it was daylight, and to his amazement neither fire nor forest was there. He thought he must have dreamed it all. Then from afar came the sound of hammers, and the ground seemed to pulse beneath his feet. Hans walked in the direction of the sound, hoping to meet someone to direct him back to his own village. Presently he came to the mouth of a rocky cavern, from which a bright light shone.



He poked his head inside and found that it was a huge smithy with many forges and bellows and rows of anvils. At each anvil stood seven workers. More curious smiths could not be found in the whole world, for they were little men who stood only knee high to Hans and they had beards longer than their tiny bodies. The hammers they wielded were twice their own size. They struck the anvils in unison and the din was like high metallic thunder in the cavern.

On a block of iron sat Hans's friend directing the work of the smiths. At his feet was a tankard from which the little men drank from time to time. As he could not be heard above the hammering, the tall man directed the workers by pointing with his fir-tree staff. After an hour had passed the smiths suddenly dropped their hammers and scampered gaily out of the cavern, each carrying a little leather bag. They did not seem to notice Hans standing at the entrance.

"I saw you watching us," the tall man said as he stood up. "But the work was pressing and I could not speak to you. Come. Be my guest again, and I will show you my home and my manner of living." With this he unlocked a door in the wall of the cavern and bade Hans enter.

What riches and treasures Hans beheld there! Bars of silver and gold glittered and sparkled before his astonished eyes. Hans tried to count the bars, but had only reached five hundred and fifty-two when his host returned from changing his clothes.

"Leave the counting alone, for it would take you many a day to complete it," he said. "Instead take

a few bars from the heap. You may have them as a memento." Eagerly the lad bent down to lift a bar of gold, but it was far too heavy for him to move.

The stranger laughed heartily at Hans' efforts, and said: "You puny mortal, you cannot take away even the smallest of my gifts. Content yourself, then, with the pleasure of beholding them." So saying he led Hans into another room, then to a third and a fourth, and so on until they entered the seventh. This room was huge and, like the others, contained stacks of gold, silver, and platinum.

"Why do you heap up such enormous treasures if no one can enjoy them?" Hans asked. "If this treasure were in the hands of men, they would all be rich and no one would have to work again or suffer want."

"It is just for that reason that I dare not deliver this treasure to mankind," his host answered. "If I did I am afraid men would go to rack and ruin through idleness if they no longer had to earn their daily bread. Man is created to support himself through toil and care. I am the Lord of Gold, and it is my duty to see that men have just enough of it to carry on their work. I, with my little men, make the gold and silver. No man may possess it without trouble. We must therefore beat the gold very fine, then mix the grains with earth and clay and sand. My dwarfs hide little leather bags of this throughout the world, but they can be found — if the seeker is fortunate and diligent enough.

"Every year between Christmas and New Year's I take a journey through the world to see if men are getting enough gold to continue their affairs. Some-

times I am not pleased with them at all. The greater number live to injure and annoy one another. Each complains about his neighbor. No one sees his own mistakes, but condemns the same faults in others.”

Thereupon the Lord of Gold donned a robe of flame-colored silk covered with gold embroidery. Placing a crown on his head, he sat himself at the head of the table and bade Hans sit opposite him. Twelve dishes of food were set upon the table by twelve little men. The men were so tiny they could not reach the table, but hopped up on it to set down their burdens, then leapt down again as nimbly as grasshoppers. Hans was sure they must have wings, so quickly and silently did they fly about without spilling a drop. Never in his whole life had Hans eaten such wonderful food; and when he could not eat another bite, his host gave him a drink from the same stein he had seen in the woods. And as before Hans promptly fell asleep.

When he woke at last, he was lying on the ground. But gone were the table, the treasure, the Lord of Gold, and even the fabulous room. Everything had disappeared as completely as in a dream. He searched for some trace of the cavern, but all he found was an old fireplace. It glittered brightly in the rising sun, as though a fire still burned in it. He looked closely at it, and then he saw that he had been rewarded, for the ashes were silver dust, the firebrands purest gold.

It was in this strange manner that Hans the peasant lad suddenly became rich. He told this story to his children and they to theirs. And so it is told to this day.

## The Voice of the Bell • CHINA

WHEN THE WATERCLOCK MARKS THE HOUR in the great belltower in Peking, the bell's voice of liquid thunder cries, *Ko-Ngai, Ko-Ngai, Ko-Ngai*. All the gargoyles that decorate the green roofs of the temple shiver, and the paper lanterns and the coils of herbs in the shops tremble. The sleepy blue flies swarm up in the marketplace, hang still for a moment in the air, then settle once more on the melons until the next thunderous *Ko-Ngai, Ko-Ngai* frightens them again. And they do this each day, as they have ever since the first stupendous sound rolled over the city more than five hundred years ago.

Children hearing the bell ask their mothers about it, and why it cries *Ko-Ngai* instead of some other sound more like the little brass bells in the family shrines.

And this is the story they are told, just as it was told to their mothers when they were children.

Many years ago, when the Ming Emperor Yung-Lo ruled over China, he commanded his chief minister Kuan-Yu to build a bell for the city of such size and beauty of tone that it would be heard for a hundred *li*. He ordered that the voice of the bell should be sweetened with brass, deepened with gold, and made sibilant with silver. Moreover, the outside of the bell should be decorated with the symbols of his majesty and the sayings from the sacred books.

In obedience to his commands, Kuan-Yu assembled a company of master molders, renowned bellsmiths with great knowledge of alloys. He sent for musicians who could detect a flaw even in the note of a bird's song.

For many weeks they labored, carefully weighing and measuring materials, preparing the molds, and laying wood for a fire beneath the monstrous melting pot. They labored like giants, neglecting rest and sleep in order that the Emperor's wish might be fulfilled as speedily as possible.

At last the casting was finished, and when it had cooled and the earthen mold was separated from the bell, it was discovered that in spite of all the care and prodigious labor that had been devoted to it, the metal of the bell was ugly in color and no amount of polishing could brighten it. Gold scorned alliance with brass; silver would not mingle with iron.

Kuan-Yu sent word to the Emperor that he had failed in his first attempt, but that he was starting a

second time. No word was received in return from the mighty Yung-Lo, and his very silence was a threat that the next time they must not fail.

They worked the metal again, prepared the furnace, and rebuilt the mold; they studied their past work minutely, to discover what mistakes they could have made. When the work was finished and the mold removed, they were confronted with the result: a bell even uglier than the first. It had no uniformity, its sides were cracked and fissured, the lips ragged and split.

This time the Emperor's impatience turned to anger, and he wrote a letter on a length of yellow silk: "Twice you have betrayed the trust we have placed in you. If you fail a third time in fulfilling our command, your head shall be severed from your neck. Tremble and obey." He stamped the letter with his dragon seal and dispatched it to Kuan-Yu.

Now Kuan-Yu had a daughter of dazzling loveliness, whose name was Ko-Ngai. Her beauty was much praised by everyone who saw her, and those who knew her well said that her heart was even more beautiful than her face. She loved her father very much, lighting his house and his life with her presence. She had refused many worthy suitors, for she was loath to leave him desolate without her.

When the Emperor's messenger had delivered the yellow scroll to her father, she recognized the dragon seal, and her heart trembled with fear. Her father told her nothing of what it contained, but his troubled

expression betrayed his feelings. When he departed that day for the foundry, she unrolled it. Reading it, she resolved to help him.

Taking some of her best jade with her, she went into the narrow streets of the city and sought out a fortuneteller and astrologer who was reputed to be the wisest in all China. She told him of the Emperor's letter, and for a great price he offered his help. At night when the sky turned black he consulted the stars in the heavens and read the Principles of the Universe; he studied the mystical books of the alchemists. After a long silence in which he considered their revelations, he spoke to Ko-Ngai, saying: "Gold and brass will never meet in wedlock; silver and iron will never embrace until the flesh and blood of a maiden of pure heart are mixed with the metals in their fusion."

Ko-Ngai returned home very sad. She told no one, not even her dear father, what she had learned.

At last the awful day came for the third and final casting of the great bell. Standing with her father and her serving woman on a platform overlooking the work below, Ko-Ngai watched the sweating men as they thrust fuel into the roaring furnace beneath the seething cauldron of metal. The little apprentices pumped the bellows with all their might; and the molten metal glowed like a blood-red lake, turned slowly to vermilion, to gold, then to a mirrorlike silver. Kuan-Yu gave a signal and they ceased to feed the fire. The men stood ready, watching him on the platform, wait-



ing for his signal to pour the liquid metal from its crucible into the waiting mold.

But before he could give the signal, a cry caused him to turn: "For your sake, oh Father!"

It came from Ko-Ngai as she leapt into the white flood of metal which roared to receive her.

Kuan-Yu shrieked with horror. He would have leapt after her had not his servants pulled him back. They carried him like a dead man from the foundry.



The foreman took his place on the platform and gave the order for the pouring to be carried out. When this was completed, all left the building in a sad, silent procession to await the cooling of the metal. The last to leave was Ko-Ngai's old servingwoman who stood, still speechless with shock and grief, holding in her hand a little pearl-embroidered shoe. She had grasped it in a futile effort to prevent her mistress's tragic leap.

The bell was finished. When the mold was removed, it stood more beautiful than any bell that had ever been. Even before the artisans finished polishing it, the gold shone like the sun. When it was struck, its tones were deep and mellow, reaching farther than a hundred *li*; they were like the pealing of summer thunder and again like some vast voice uttering a woman's name: *Ko-Ngai*. And between each mighty stroke there was a golden moaning, followed by a silver whisper that was almost a woman's sigh.

"That is Ko-Ngai calling for her shoe," Chinese mothers tell their children as they have done these many, many years.

## **The Three Aunts**    *NORWAY*

**T**H**ERE** WAS ONCE a man who lived in the woods at the foot of a mountain in Norway. He was far from rich, but he always had sufficient food, for he hunted birds. His house was a little hut that he shared with his only relative, his young daughter, who kept it neat and clean. Her mother had died when she was just three years old, and she had never received instruction in mending or spinning as other girls had, but she could pick and cook a pheasant better than any housewife.

One day her father told her sadly that she would have to go into the world and find work to earn money for her dowry, for of course he was so poor that he could not afford one for her. And besides, he told her, she would never meet a young man if she stayed with him, for they saw few people.

After the girl had journeyed several days from her

home, she came to the King's palace. She decided to look for the chief steward and ask him if he needed any help. While she wandered round the palace yard, the Queen spied her from a window. She liked the girl's shy manner as she asked first one person then another the way to the chief steward. "I'll have her near me always," the Queen said to herself, and she had the girl brought to her side. Her first impression was confirmed when she saw the girl close to, and she hired her on the spot. That is how the daughter of the poor man who lived in a hut in the woods became maid-in-waiting to the Queen.

The girl liked the work very much, and every day she made herself more and more useful. The other maids were very lazy, and they grew jealous of the newcomer because she was favored by the Queen and because they could never do as much work as she could. They resolved to do her harm. They spread gossip about her, and the story soon reached the ears of the Queen that the new maid had boasted she could spin a bale of flax in four and twenty hours.

"Did you really say this?" asked the Queen of the girl. "Then you shall do it, only you may take a few hours longer than four and twenty if you need to."

The poor girl stared dumbfounded. She did not know what to reply, for she dared not say she had never spun in her life. She agreed to try, however, and asked only for a small room to herself. This was granted, and the flax and spinningwheel were brought to her. The door was locked, and she was left alone.

She looked at the spinningwheel, the first she had ever seen, and timidly tried to make it work. But under her unskilled hands it refused to spin. Not knowing what to do in her sorry plight, she threw herself down on the floor and cried.

As she lay there weeping, someone entered the room. She heard nothing over her sobs until a voice spoke: "What ails you, child?"

The maid looked up startled. She saw standing at the door a very ugly old woman with a long nose.

"It would be no good to tell you," moaned the girl, glad to see anyone, ugly or not. "No one can help me now."

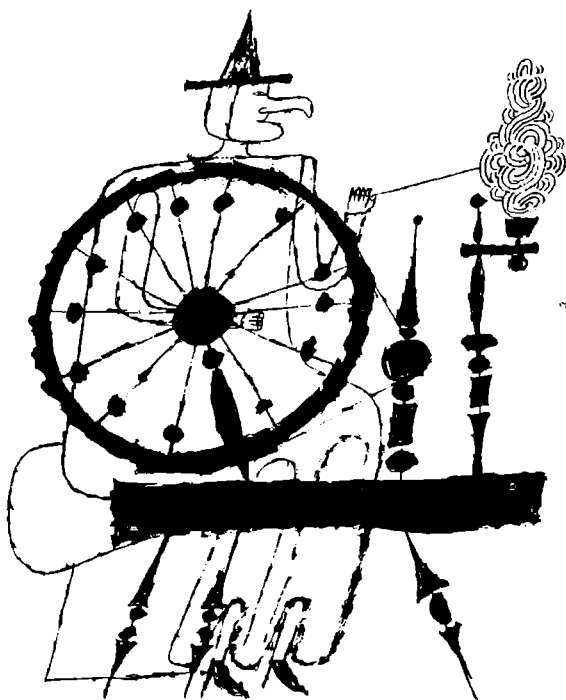
"Tell me your trouble, my dear, and we shall see," the old woman said.

So the girl told her all that had befallen her and how she feared that if she disappointed the Queen she would be sent away from the palace.

"Never mind, child," said the old woman. "If you will call me Aunt on the happiest day of your life, I'll spin this flax for you while you lie down and sleep."

This the girl readily agreed to do. She lay down and soon fell asleep. Next morning when she woke, all the flax was spun and lying on the table.

Needless to say, the Queen was very pleased to see such beautiful yarn. Now she thought more of her maid than ever, and the other maids grew more envious. They spread another tale throughout the palace. This time they said that the little maid had boasted she could weave into cloth the yarn she had spun, and



in four and twenty hours. Of course it did not take long for this story to reach the Queen.

“Did you really say this?” she asked the girl without waiting for an answer. “Then you shall do it, only you may take a longer time to finish if you wish.”

Again the poor girl did not want to say she had never woven in her life, so she nodded silently and asked only for a quiet room to work in. She was given a loom and the yarn the old woman had spun in the night. The door closed, and she was alone once more.

She tried to work the loom, but she could not. She gave up and threw herself on the floor sobbing. As the tears poured down her cheeks and her eyes grew red, a knock sounded at the door and presently there stood beside her an ugly old woman with a humped back.

“What ails you, child?”

“It would do no good for me to tell you,” moaned the little maid.

“Tell me your trouble and then we shall judge whether or not I can help you,” the old woman answered.

The girl soon told her tale, and the old woman smiled and said, “If you will call me Aunt on the happiest day of your life, I will see that the yarn is woven while you lie down and sleep.”

The girl agreed. She lay down obediently and soon fell fast asleep. When she woke it was morning. The old woman had gone, but on the table lay a bolt of fine-woven cloth.

The Queen exclaimed with pleasure when she felt it. “It is more perfect than any I have ever seen before!” she said. And of course the little maid was cherished and praised more than ever in the palace.

If the other maids had been envious and jealous before, now they hated their rival, and contrived ways to make life unbearable for her. They told more lies about her, and soon it reached the Queen’s ears that she had boasted she could cut and sew the cloth into shirts in four and twenty hours.

“Did you say that?” exclaimed the Queen. “Then you shall do it, only you may take a little longer if you wish.”

Once again the poor little maid did not deny the tale, but only nodded and asked for a quiet room in which to work. When she was left alone with the cloth and scissors, she only managed to thread the needle when she burst out weeping. She had never before cut out or sewed a shirt. While she sobbed, a knock sounded on the door and in walked an old woman with large red eyes.

“What ails you, child?”

“It would do no good to tell you for no one can help me now,” the maid answered through her tears. “The Queen will never forgive me if this cloth is not made into shirts by this time tomorrow.”

“Tell me your trouble and we shall see,” the old woman answered kindly.

So the little girl told her how the other maids were jealous of her and contrived to make the Queen send her away by telling lies about her.

“Call me Aunt on the happiest day of your life, and I will make the shirts while you sleep,” the old woman said.

It was morning when the maid woke. On the table lay a pile of perfect linen shirts, and not a scrap of cloth was left.

When the Queen saw them she was so happy that she said, “Such sewing I have never had nor seen in all my days.” And she threw her arms about the maid

and thenceforth treated her as her very own daughter.

One day the Queen told the maid that she was near the age of marriage and asked her if she would consent to marry the Crown Prince. The girl was thrilled, but she answered very demurely, "I can only marry for love and would marry no man, be he prince or woodsman, unless he loved me."

The Queen was pleased with this answer and arranged for the two to meet. They fell in love at first sight, for the Prince was tall and handsome, and the maid was very beautiful.

It was not long before the betrothal was announced, and everyone except the servingmaids was happy to see such a perfect match.

The Queen gave them a huge wedding feast followed by a ball. All the court came in their finest clothes; generals came bedecked in medals and ambassadors in their red-sashed uniforms. It was truly a splendid sight when they all sat down at the long table and toasted the young couple's happiness. The woodsman's daughter, who was now a princess, replied to the toast with a voice overflowing with happiness.

Just as the guests picked up their forks to begin eating, an old hag with a nose four ells long came in, pushing past the waiters. Instantly the Princess stood up. She made the old woman a pretty curtsy and said to her, "Good evening, Auntie!"

The Prince, thinking it was truly his wife's aunt, invited the hag to sit at the table. The surprised guests were no sooner reseated when the Princess jumped



up again and curtsied a second time, this time to another old hag with humped shoulders and a back so broad it was a wonder that she got through the door. "Good evening, dear Auntie!" she cried.

The Prince, thinking it was another relative, bade her sit at the table with the first one. No sooner were they seated again when the Princess rose and curtsied to yet another ancient crone who appeared with eyes as large as plums all red and bleary. "Good evening, Auntie," the Princess said, greeting her happily.

The Prince could not contain his curiosity any longer and asked how a bride so lovely could have such ugly relatives.

"I'll tell you how it is," said the first old hag. "When I was her age I too was beautiful. I got this long nose from years of sitting and bending over my spinning, until my nose stretched to be as long as you see it now."

"And I," said the second, "since I was a lovely young girl have sat and shuttled backward and forward over the loom until my back became as broad and my shoulders as humped as you see them now."

"And I," said the third, "lost my beauty early, because I have sat and stared, cut and sewn, night and day, until my eyes got as ugly and red as you see them now."

The Prince gasped in amazement. "It was lucky for me I came to know of this!" he said. "If women can get so ugly and loathsome at such work, then my bride shall never spin or weave or sew all her life long!"

And she never did.

## The Conch Shell of Ram *INDIA*

**H**ARVESTS WITHOUT NUMBER AGO there lived in India a farmer who was always indebted to the village moneylender. Rain or drought there was seldom enough from his fields, after he paid his interest, to feed his family. One day he resolved to implore the help of the god Ram who is the source of all fortune. Taking three wheaten cakes for food, he set out on the journey to the Himalayas where he had heard the great Ram lived.

He met a Brahman on the way. "Give me, good Brahman, the directions to Ram, and in exchange I will give you a cake," he said politely.

The Brahman took the cake without a word and walked away, spurning the farmer's request.

Next the farmer met a Yogi who was buried up to his neck in the hot sand. "Can you direct me, oh Holy One, to Ram?" he asked. "In exchange I will give you a cake." But the Yogi answered not a word.

At last he reached the foot of the mountains and came upon an old beggar sitting under a banyan tree. "Take this cake to ease your hunger," the farmer said, proffering him the last of his food. With thanks the beggar ate the cake and when he had finished began to converse with his new friend.

"Where are you bound?" he asked.

"I seek the god Ram, the giver of riches," replied the farmer, "for I am deeply indebted to a moneylender and cannot get out of his clutches."

The beggar smiled, and from under his tattered clothes produced a large conch shell. "I am the god Ram," he said, "and to those as kind as you have been I give great rewards. Take this shell, and if you blow it exactly in this way"—and he demonstrated the method—"the wish you have in mind will be fulfilled at once."

Taking the shell, the happy farmer set out on the journey home. Ram called out after him: "Be careful that a moneylender does not get hold of it, for in spite of magic they can cause you great mischief."

Upon reaching his village, the farmer was so light-hearted and gay that he fairly skipped down the street to his house. The moneylender spied him and thought to himself, "The stupid fellow must have had good fortune to be acting so jaunty."

That very night the moneylender visited the farmer,

pretending to have heard all about his good fortune; and the farmer, thinking that he had indeed, showed him his treasure. But he was careful not to show him the manner in which it must be blown when making a wish.

In time the moneylender grew envious of the farmer's prosperity and stole the conch shell. Try as he might he could not make a single sound come out of it. Returning to the farmer, he made an offer: "I have the shell but cannot use it, but then of course you cannot use it either. I will return it to you on condition that whatever you get from it I will get double."

The farmer was forced to yield to this one-sided deal. From then on whatever he wished for he received, but his enemy received the same: twofold. Once when the weather was very dry, he wished for a well that he might water his fields. Instantly the new well began to flow, and of course the moneylender received two wells and began to sell water to the villagers.

That was too much for the farmer. Seizing the conch shell, he blew it and called out: "Oh, Ram, I wish to be blind in one eye."

Instantly it was done, and at the same moment the moneylender was blind in both. Sightless, he fell into one of his new wells and was drowned.

Needless to say the one-eyed farmer prospered, and lived a good and happy life.

## **The Little Gray Man**    *GERMANY*

**L**ONG AGO there lived in the Harz Mountains near the river Bode a fisherman who, though he had few worldly goods, had a fine family and a house of his own. The river gave him food enough and even a little extra fish to sell in the markets on Fridays.

Across from the spot where he dried his nets each day there was a high cliff, and on top of it stood the ruins of an old castle, long since fallen to decay until it was only a jagged pile of broken walls and stones. The castle was called Schloss Treseburg and had been a ruin even when the fisherman himself was but a boy.

Each evening before starting home he would lie on the bank for a few moments and gaze up at the castle walls before him. It was restful there, and very beautiful as the last rays of the sun struck the ruins.

He dreamt many times of the great days when the castle was a stronghold and from its lofty position commanded the whole valley below. When he was a boy his great-grandfather had told him tales of the castle's owners, and he felt proud when he remembered that he was kin to the last great Knight of Schloss Treseburg.

One summer day as he rested on the bank thinking of all these things, he heard a sharp small voice calling to him from across the river. He looked in the direction of the sound and saw a small gray figure waving frantically from the opposite shore.

"Fisherman, fisherman, carry me across," the little man called.

The good fisherman, seeing that he was in trouble, obligingly waded across the stream. Taking the little man upon his shoulders, he found he was as light as a feather; he waded back across the stream and set him down beside the drying nets.

"Thank you, sir," the little man said. "Since you have obliged me so kindly, I am ready to grant you any wish as your reward. It is St. John's Eve, you know, and I am going to join my friends for a night's revelry, so you had better make it fast."

The fisherman did not believe the little man, but as everyone has a secret wish, he thought it would do no harm to tell him what it was.

"The only wish I have could never come true," he warned the little man.

"Only one?" cried the little man in amazement. "You



have only one wish and here I stand ready to grant you two or three? What *is* your one great wish?"

"I wish I could be transported back five hundred years," the fisherman said dreamily, raising his eyes to the castle ruins, "when the heap of stones on yonder cliff was Schloss Treseburg surrounded with battlements and towers, with flags flying and bugles playing."

"Well, well," laughed the little manikin. "That's an easy one. Just shut your eyes for a moment and open them when I tell you."

The fisherman, thinking to humor the little figure, did as he was told. When he opened his eyes a moment later he was sure he was dreaming, for instead of a heap of stones, the top of the cliff was crowned with a castle that far outdid the wildest of his imaginings.

"There you are!" said the gray manikin. "There is your wish. Are you contented?"

Just then one of the soldiers on the battlements aimed his crossbow at the fisherman and began cursing and threatening him for not bringing up a basket of fish and quickly. To show he meant business he fired his crossbow and the deadly bolt shot past the ear of the frightened fisherman.

"I have one more wish," he said, turning to the manikin who was greatly enjoying the scene. "I wish to reign there as my ancestor did five hundred years ago."

"Then you shall," answered the little man softly. "Just close your eyes for a moment."

When the fisherman opened his eyes the whole scene had changed. And his life had too. . . .



He was now a knight in armor; he lay on a cot in a large room, the stone walls of which were hung with shields and captured battle-flags. A dull pain throbbed in his arm and blood ran from a huge sword wound in his shoulder.

The door opened and in hobbled an old servant. "Forgive my delay, noble sir, but as the enemy presses close I had difficulty in getting through with these healing ointments."

As his wound was being dressed the servant told him how the battle was progressing. It was not good news.

"Your men are tired and hungry, sir, and their ranks are being thinned by the murderous hail of arrows."

"But the treasures, my man, what of the treasures?"

"I have obeyed you, noble sir," the servant answered, "and have buried them in a little casket three times seven paces westward from the round tower and three times seven paces southward from the gate. But hark! The enemy have forced our defenses!"

No sooner had he said this than the room was filled with the enemy's soldiers. They took the fisherman-knight as their prisoner and cast him into a dungeon cell. He lay there for a long time. Finally someone came — it was the guard. The news he brought struck terror to the prisoner's heart.

"Ho, Robber Baron of Schloss Treseburg!" thundered the guard. "We have you at last, you murderer of good men! You have an hour for prayers and then you shall hang for your crimes."

With this the captain of the guard left him. As his terror grew he cried out for the gray manikin. In a

moment the little man appeared, squeezing his body between the bars.

“Grant me a third wish!” he begged. “Let me go home to my cottage on the banks of the Bode and I will never make foolish wishes again.”

“Your wish is granted. Close your eyes as before.”

A moment later he was back at his drying nets. As he stared at the cliff the castle disappeared and all was a heap of rubble as before. But he was content.

That night beside the fire he related what had happened to his wife and sons, and they laughed. His wife said that he must have fallen asleep and dreamed it. He laughed too and agreed with her.

But his youngest son, who had more imagination than his brothers, could not forget the tale so easily. The next day he climbed the cliff. He started from the ruined tower and took three times seven paces to the west of it; then, after pacing twenty-one steps southward, he began to dig. He worked feverishly all day. Just as the sun was setting, his shovel struck something metallic. It was a chest, so badly rusted by the years that it crumbled when he tried to lift it. A hoard of golden coins it held, and jewels lay at the bottom!

The boy knelt down for a moment and eagerly filtered the coins through his fingers, thinking what this wealth would mean at home. Then he stood up and looked across at the ruined tower. It was all pink and black in the setting sun, but in one gaping hole, then another, a gray form appeared — a man in armor. Unafraid, the boy did not run or even move. He simply whispered: “Thank you, noble sir.”

## **The Maid of the Waves**    *SCOTLAND*

LONG AGO, on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland, there lived a young crofter called Jock MacCrimmon. Jock was learning to play the bagpipes, for it was his life's ambition to be as good a piper as his father and his father's father before him. Lacking a place to practice at home, he often went down to the seashore and would play there for hours. The sound of his pipes rose and fell above the noises of the breaking waves, and his only audience was the screaming gulls foraging among the black rocks.

One afternoon, after he had played for several hours, he set his pipes down for a rest. He closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them he saw the strangest sight. There on the beach among the rocks some mermaids were combing their hair. They did not have scales on their bodies, nor tails like fish, the way Jock had heard, but they were dressed in shimmering green robes. Their scaly coverings were spread out on the rocks, like clothes to be dried.



They were all very beautiful maidens, and when Jock recovered his senses he crept cautiously toward them to see better. His foot touched a pebble and sent it rattling down the rocks, and the maidens leaped up in alarm. Catching their skin suits, they dived into the sea — all but one, who did not sink beneath the surface of the water before Jock caught her scaly suit.

The young man took the strange garment home with him and hid it from his family in a sea chest, for they would surely have had a great laugh at his expense if they had known of his adventure.

That night when the lamps were lit there came a soft knocking at his door. He opened it an inch, and he saw standing on the step before him one of the same lovely maidens he had watched that afternoon.

“Oh, Earthman,” the maiden said. “Have pity and give me back my skin covering so that I may return to my sea home.”

But Jock would not give it to her, and she turned away weeping. Jock was sorry for her, but in his heart he wanted her to stay, and he knew that if he gave her back the mermaid’s costume, he would lose her forever.

An hour passed, and the soft rapping came again at the door. Jock opened it wide this time and invited the mermaid to come in. They talked for a long time, and he learned much of her life, but he was so fascinated by her lovely voice and long red hair that he refused every time she mentioned the return of her property.

“Whatever will I do?” the mermaid moaned. “I cannot join my father and sisters beneath the waves,

for without my covering I can stay in the water no longer than a mortal."

"You can stay here and marry me," Jock told her, "for I shall never give you back the skin covering. Besides," he added, "you are more beautiful than any woman I have ever seen, and I am in love with you."

"I could well love you too," she replied, "but if I marry you, you must be very kind and not tell man or woman whence I came."

This Jock swore solemnly to do.

It was not long before the wedding was arranged, and they were married one morning in the chapel near the sea. As the words of blessing and promise were passed between them, the waves rose mightily; the seals swam near the shore, and their crying could be heard far inland. A salt tear blinded the bride's eyes for a moment as she watched her childhood playmates in the brine; then, turning her back upon them, she did not look that way again.

Jock and his wife were happy. They lived for many years in a little cottage, and he supplemented their livelihood by fishing. He was the most fortunate fisherman on the Isle of Lewis, for no matter how rough the sea he was always protected and his nets were always filled.

They had two fine boys, and a little daughter who looked just like her mother. In the evening when his work was done, Jock taught the boys to play the pipes, and his wife would sit smiling, remembering the days when she lay in the surf with her sisters, listening to the sound of Jock practicing.

All went well until the morning of their tenth anniversary. Jock had gone to the nearest town, Barvas, to bring his wife a present. While he was away, his eldest boy found the key to the chest and opened it. His mother came running, meaning to scold him, but alas, she spied the skin covering. A yearning came over her, and carrying the costume in her hand, she looked out upon the sea.

The gulls were screaming above the curling white-caps and the porpoises were leaping with joy. Then a chorus of gentle voices was heard, like the sound of distant pipes, calling to her to come back to them. "*Maighdean nan Tonn!*" they sang over and over, for that was her name, and in Gaelic it means: "Maid of the Waves".

Oh maid of the waves, we wait for thee,  
Thy home is here in the midst of the sea;  
Here in the green deep,  
Here where the waves sweep,  
Not where land-winds weep,  
Here is your home, and here you should be.

Oh maid of the waves, come and be free,  
Thy playmates and sisters are waiting for thee;  
Here in the green-gold,  
Here in the sea-fold,  
This is your household,  
Oh, turn, please return to the sea.

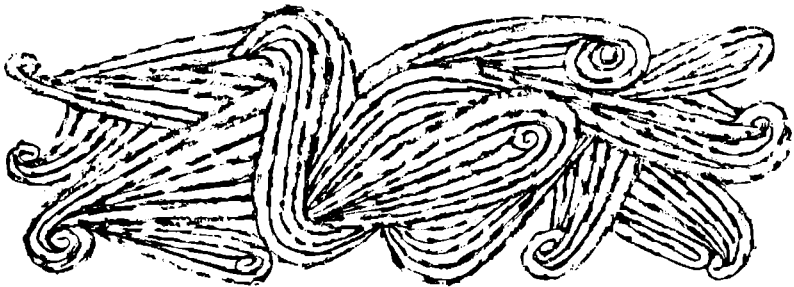
Jock's wife wiped a tear from her eyes. Kissing the children, she threw off her apron and shoes and rushed

to the seashore — she could not resist the plaintive, beautiful song. As she entered the water, the voices grew closer and closer and sang as before:

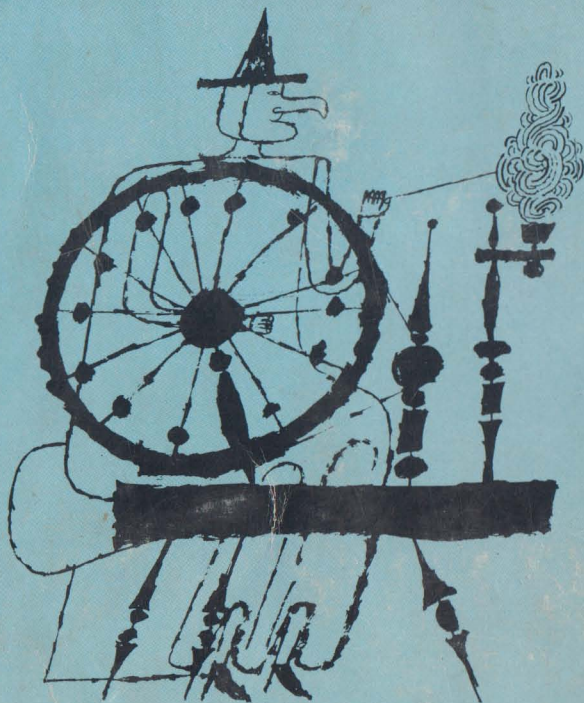
Oh, maid of the waves, come and be free,  
Thy playmates and sisters are waiting for thee.

When Jock came home that night, the children were asleep in their beds. He searched everywhere for his wife until he found the chest open, and he knew then what had happened. Sadly he went down to the seashore and sat there until morning.

The Maid of the Waves never returned to him, but it is said that Jock continued to be a good fisherman as did his children after him. For many years he went every Sunday afternoon and played a lament on his pipes for his wife. And it is said that she heard him, and would send him a message on the waves to take home to their children.







**“What do you spin there, spinner,  
with your quick and clever hands?”**

**“Twenty tales of magic  
from twenty far-off lands.”**



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