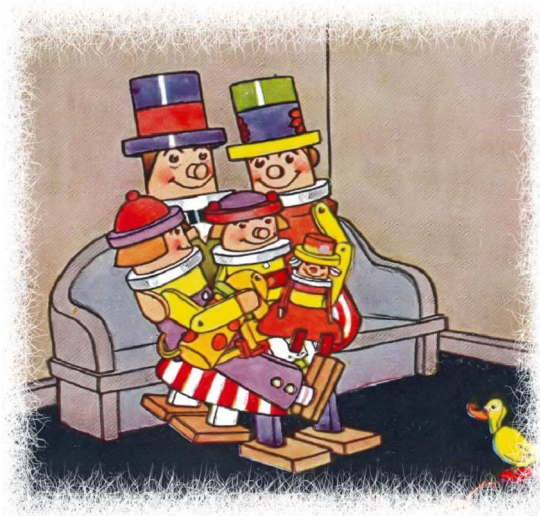




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STORIES TO TELL TO CHILDREN

Ellie Dixon



Based on an original text

by

Sarah Cone Bryant

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About Us

Scruffy's Bookshop is based in deepest rural Devon, England where Ellie Dixon lives with her dogs, Scruffy and Polly. Ellie has brought up her own daughter, and now spends her time restoring and editing vintage children's literature to appeal to today's kids. When not busy with her business, she can usually be found on the beach or getting involved with local community activities.



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SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STORY-TELLER

For a complete practical and step-by-step easy to follow guide to becoming a great story teller, please refer to "How to tell Stories to Children," available from www.continue.to/storyteller

Meanwhile, the few hints and tips below are useful to anyone who tells stories to children.

Take your story seriously. No matter how riotously absurd it is, or how full of inane repetition, remember, if it is good enough to tell, it is a real story, and must be treated with respect. If you cannot feel so toward it, do not tell it. Have faith in the story, and in the attitude of the children toward it and you. If you fail in this, the immediate result will be a touch of embarrassment, which will be obvious to the children, affecting your manner unfavourably, and, probably, influencing your accuracy and imaginative vividness.

Perhaps I can make the point clearer by telling you about one of the girls in a class which was studying stories last winter;

A few members of the class had prepared the story of *The Fisherman and his Wife*. The first girl called on was evidently inclined to feel that it was rather a foolish story. She tried to tell it well, but there were parts of it which produced in her the embarrassment to which I have referred.

When she came to the rhyme,—

"O man of the sea, come, listen to me,
For Alice, my wife, the plague of my life,
Has sent me to beg a boon of thee,"

she said it rather rapidly. At the first repetition she said it still more rapidly; the next time she came to the jingle she said it so fast and so low that it was unintelligible; and the next recurrence was too much for her. With a blush and a hesitating smile she said, "And he said that same thing, you know!" Of course everybody laughed, and of course the thread of interest and illusion was hopelessly broken for everybody.

What she should have remembered is that the absurd rhyme gave great opportunity for expression, in its very repetition; each time that the fisherman came to the water's edge his chagrin and unwillingness were greater, and his summons to the magic fish mirrored his feeling. The jingle *is* foolish; that is a part of the charm. But if the person who tells it *feels* foolish, there is no charm at all! It is the same principle which applies to any assemblage: if the speaker has the air of finding what he has to say absurd or unworthy of effort, the audience naturally tends to follow his lead, and find it not worth listening to.



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So, don't forget, *take your story seriously*.

Next, "take your time." This suggestion needs explaining, perhaps. It does not mean license to dawdle. Nothing is much more annoying in a speaker than too great deliberateness or than hesitation of speech. But it means a quiet realisation of the fact that the floor is yours, everybody wants to hear you, there is time enough for every nuance of meaning, and no one will think the story too long. Never hurry. A business-like leisure is the true attitude of the story-teller.

This result is best achieved by concentrating one's attention on the episodes of the story. Pass lightly, and comparatively quickly, over the portions between actual episodes, but take all the time you need for the elaboration of those. And above all, do not *feel* hurried.

The next suggestion is extremely plain and practical, if not an all too obvious one. It is this: if all your preparation and confidence fails you at the crucial point, and your memory lets you down,—if, in short, you make a mistake regarding a detail of the story, *never admit it*.

If it was an unimportant detail which you got wrong, keep going, accepting whatever you said, and continuing with it. If you were unlucky enough to have left out a fact which was a necessary link in the chain, put it in, later, as skillfully as you can, and try to make it appear as though it's in the intended order; but never take the children behind the scenes, and let them hear the creaking of your mental machinery. You must be infallible.

You must be in the secret of the mystery, and your audience should have no creeping doubts as to your complete initiation into the secrets of the happenings you relate.

Obviously, there can be lapses of memory so complete, so all-embracing, that frank failure is the only outcome; but these are so few as not to need consideration, when dealing with so simple material as that of children's stories

Never let children know you've forgotten something. In the matter of a detail of action or description, how completely unimportant is accuracy, compared with the effect of smoothness and the enjoyment of the hearers. They will not remember the detail, for good or bad, nearly as long as they will remember the fact that you did not know it. So, for their sakes, as well as for the success of your story, cover your slips of memory, and pretend they don't exist.

And now I come to two points in method which have to do especially with humorous stories. The first is the power of initiating the appreciation of the joke. Every natural humorist does this by instinct, and the value of the power to a story-teller can hardly be overestimated. To initiate appreciation does not mean that one necessarily gives way to mirth, though even that is sometimes natural and effective; you will be anticipating the humorous climax, and subtly



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suggesting to the hearers that it will soon be "time to laugh." The suggestion usually comes in the form of facial expression, and in the tone. And children are so much simpler, and so much more accustomed to following another's lead than their elders, that the expression can be much more outright and unguarded than would be possible with a more mature audience.

Children like to feel the joke coming; they love the anticipation of a laugh, and they will begin to giggle, often, at your first unconscious suggestion of humour. If it isn't, they are sometimes afraid to follow their own instincts. Especially when you are facing an audience of grown people and children together, you will find that the children are very hesitant about starting to laugh. It is more difficult to make them forget their surroundings then, and more desirable to give them a happy lead. Often at the funniest point you will see some small listener trying extremely hard to hide the laughter which he or she thinks isn't appropriate. Let the children realise that it is "the thing" to laugh, and then everybody will!

Having made your audience laugh, it's important to give them enough time for the full enjoyment of the joke. Every vital point in a tale must be given a certain amount of time: by an anticipatory pause, by some form of vocal or repetitive emphasis, and by actual time. But even more than other tales does the funny story demand this. It cannot be funny without it.

There are two completely different kinds of story which are equally necessary for children, I believe, and which ought to be given in about the proportion of one to three, in favour of the second kind; I make the ratio uneven because the first kind is more dominating in its effect.

The first kind is the type of story which specifically teaches a certain ethical or moral lesson, in the form of a fable or an allegory. Have a look at the "Jolly Old Shadow Man" (www.continue.to/miniscruffies) which teaches the importance of good manners and consideration for others.

The second kind has no moral message and doesn't attempt to affect judgment or to pass on a standard. It simply presents a picture of life, usually in fable or poetic image, and says to the hearer, "These things are." The hearer, then, consciously or otherwise, passes judgment on the facts. His mind says, "These things are good"; or, "This was good, and that, bad"; or, "This thing is desirable," or the contrary.

The story of *The Little Jackal and the Alligator* later in this book is a good illustration of this kind of character-story. In the naïve form of a folk tale, it embodies the observations of a seeing eye, in a country and time when the little jackal and the great alligator were even more vivid images of certain human characters than they now are.



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Again and again, surely, the author or authors of the tales must have seen the weak, small, clever being triumph over the bulky, physically strong, but stupid adversary. Again and again they had laughed at the discomfiture of the latter, perhaps rejoicing in it the more because it removed fear from their own houses. And probably never had they concerned themselves particularly with the basic ethics of the struggle. It was simply one of the things they saw. It was life. So they made a picture of it.

I wish there were more of funny little tales in the world's literature, all ready, as this one is, for telling to the youngest of our listeners. But masterpieces are few in any line, and stories for telling are no exception.

Visit Scruffy's Bookshop www.scruffysbookshop.com for a good selection of stories both for telling and reading.

MISTAKES TO AVOID

A caution which directly concerns the art of story-telling itself, must be added here. There is a definite distinction between the arts of narration and dramatization which must never be overlooked. Do not, yourself, half tell and half act the story; and do not let the children do it.

It is done in very good schools, sometimes, because an enthusiasm for realistic and lively presentation momentarily obscures the faculty of discrimination. A much loved and respected teacher whom I recently listened to, and who will laugh if she recognizes herself here, offers a good "bad example" in this particular. She said to an attentive audience of students that she had at last, with much difficulty, brought herself to the point where she could forget herself in her story: where she could, for instance, hop, like the fox, when she told the story of the "sour grapes."

She said, "It was hard at first, but now it is a matter of course; *and the children do it too, when they tell the story.*" That was the pity! I saw it happen myself a little later.

The child who played fox began with a story: he said, "Once there was an old fox, and he saw some grapes"; then walked to the other side of the room, and looked at an imaginary vine, and said, "He wanted some; he thought they would taste good, so he jumped for them." At this point he did jump, like the fox; then he continued with his story, "but he couldn't get them." So he carried on, constantly switching between narrative and dramatization. This was enough to make you dizzy and totally distracted from his story.



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You also need to be aware of the voice you are using. Beware of both the repressed and the forced voice. The best way to avoid either extreme, is to keep in mind that the ideal is development of one's own natural voice, along its own natural lines. A "quiet, gentle voice" is conscientiously aimed at by many young teachers, with so great zeal that the tone becomes painfully repressed, "breathy," and timid. This is quite as unpleasant as a loud voice, which is, in turn, a frequent result of early admonitions to "speak up." Neither is natural.

It is wise to determine the natural volume and pitch of one's speaking voice by a number of tests, made when one is thoroughly rested, at ease, and alone. Find out where your voice lies when you are by yourself, under favourable conditions, by reading something aloud or by listening to yourself on tape. Then practise keeping it in that general range, unless you have a distinct fault, such as a nervous sharpness, or hoarseness. A quiet voice is good; a hushed voice is abnormal. A clear tone is restful, but a loud one is wearying.

Perhaps the common-sense way of setting a standard for one's own voice is to remember that the purpose of a speaking voice is to communicate with others. For this purpose, a voice should be, first of all, easy to hear; next, pleasant to hear; next, vary enough to express a wide range of meaning; and finally, indicative of personality.

And now we come to the stories!



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STORIES TO TELL TO CHILDREN

TWO LITTLE RIDDLES IN RHYME

There's a garden that I ken,
Full of little gentlemen;
Little caps of blue they wear,
And green ribbons, very fair.
(Flax.)

From house to house he goes,
A messenger small and slight,
And whether it rains or snows,
He sleeps outside in the night.
(The path.)

THE LITTLE YELLOW TULIP

Once there was a little yellow Tulip, and she lived down in a little dark house under the ground. One day she was sitting there, all by herself, and it was very still. Suddenly, she heard a little *tap, tap, tap*, at the door.

"Who is that?" she said.

"It's the Rain, and I want to come in," said a soft, sad, little voice.

"No, you can't come in," the little Tulip said.

By and by she heard another little *tap, tap, tap* on the window-pane.

"Who is there?" she said.

The same soft little voice answered, "It's the Rain, and I want to come in!"

"No, you can't come in," said the little Tulip.

Then it was very still for a long time. At last, there came a little rustling, whispering sound, all round the window: *rustle, whisper, whisper*.

"Who is there?" said the little Tulip.

"It's the Sunshine," said a little, soft, cheery voice, "and I want to come in!"



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"N—no," said the little Tulip, "you can't come in." And she sat still again.

Pretty soon she heard the sweet little rustling noise at the keyhole.

"Who is there?" she said.

"It's the Sunshine," said the cheery little voice, "and I want to come in, I want to come in!"

"No, no," said the little Tulip, "you cannot come in."

By and by, as she sat so still, she heard *tap, tap, tap*, and *rustle, whisper, rustle*, up and down the window-pane, and on the door and at the keyhole.

"*Who is there?*" she said.

"It's the Rain and the Sun, the Rain and the Sun," said two little voices, together, "and we want to come in! We want to come in! We want to come in!"

"Dear, dear!" said the little Tulip, "if there are two of you, I suppose I shall have to let you in."

So she opened the door a little wee crack, and in they came. And one took one of her little hands, and the other took her other little hand, and they ran, ran, ran with her right up to the top of the ground. Then they said,—

"Poke your head through!"

So she poked her head through; and she was in the midst of a beautiful garden. It was early springtime, and few other flowers were to be seen; but she had the birds to sing to her and the sun to shine upon her pretty yellow head. She was so pleased, too, when the children exclaimed with pleasure that now they knew that the beautiful spring had come!

THE COCK-A-DOO-DLE-DOO

A very little boy made this story up "out of his head," and told it to his papa. I think you littlest ones will like it; I do.

Once upon a time there was a little boy, and he wanted to be a cock-a-doodle-doo. So he was a cock-a-doodle-doo. And he wanted to fly up into the sky. So he did fly up into the sky. And he wanted to get wings and a tail So he did get some wings and a tail.



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THE CLOUD

One hot summer morning a little Cloud rose out of the sea and floated lightly and happily across the blue sky. Far below lay the earth, brown, dry, and desolate, from drought. The little Cloud could see the poor people of the earth working and suffering in the hot fields, while she herself floated on the morning breeze, here and there, without a care.

"Oh, if I could only help the poor people down there!" she thought. "If I could but make their work easier, or give the hungry ones food, or the thirsty a drink!"

And as the day passed, and the Cloud became larger, this wish to do something for the people of earth was ever greater in her heart.

On earth it grew hotter and hotter; the sun burned down so fiercely that the people were fainting in its rays; it seemed as if they must die of heat, and yet they were obliged to go on with their work, for they were very poor. Sometimes they stood and looked up at the Cloud, as if they were praying, and saying, "Ah, if you could help us!"

"I will help you; I will!" said the Cloud. And she began to sink softly down toward the earth.

But suddenly, as she floated down, she remembered something which had been told her when she was a tiny Cloud-child, in the lap of Mother Ocean: it had been whispered that if the Clouds go too near the earth they die. When she remembered this she held herself from sinking, and swayed here and there on the breeze, thinking,—thinking. But at last she stood quite still, and spoke boldly and proudly. She said, "Men of earth, I will help you, come what may!"

The thought made her suddenly marvellously big and strong and powerful. Never had she dreamed that she could be so big. Like a mighty angel of blessing she stood above the earth, and lifted her head and spread her wings far over the fields and woods. She was so great, so majestic, that men and animals were awe-struck at the sight; the trees and the grasses bowed before her; yet all the earth-creatures felt that she meant them well.

"Yes, I will help you," cried the Cloud once more. "Take me to yourselves; I will give my life for you!"

As she said the words a wonderful light glowed from her heart, the sound of thunder rolled through the sky, and a love greater than words can tell filled the Cloud; down, down, close to the earth she swept, and gave up her life in a blessed, healing shower of rain.

That rain was the Cloud's great deed; it was her death, too; but it was also her glory. Over the whole country-side, as far as the rain fell, a lovely rainbow sprang



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its arch, and all the brightest rays of heaven made its colours; it was the last greeting of a love so great that it sacrificed itself.

Soon that, too, was gone, but long, long afterward the men and animals who were saved by the Cloud kept her blessing in their hearts.

THE LITTLE RED HEN

The little Red Hen was in the farmyard with her chickens, when she found a grain of wheat.

"Who will plant this wheat?" she said.

"Not I," said the Goose.

"Not I," said the Duck.

"I will, then," said the little Red Hen, and she planted the grain of wheat.

When the wheat was ripe she said, "Who will take this wheat to the mill?"

"Not I," said the Goose.

"Not I," said the Duck.

"I will, then," said the little Red Hen, and she took the wheat to the mill.

When she brought the flour home she said, "Who will make some bread with this flour?"

"Not I," said the Goose.

"Not I," said the Duck.

"I will, then," said the little Red Hen.

When the bread was baked, she said, "Who will eat this bread?"

"I will," said the Goose.

"I will," said the Duck.

"No, you won't," said the little Red Hen. "I shall eat it myself. Cluck! cluck!" And she called her chickens to help her.



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THE GINGERBREAD MAN

Once upon a time there was a little old woman and a little old man, and they lived all alone in a little old house. They hadn't any little girls or any little boys, at all. So one day, the little old woman made a boy out of gingerbread; she made him a chocolate jacket, and put raisins on it for buttons; his eyes were made of fine, fat currants; his mouth was made of rose-coloured sugar; and he had a gay little cap of orange sugar-candy. When the little old woman had rolled him out, and dressed him up, and pinched his gingerbread shoes into shape, she put him in a pan; then she put the pan in the oven and shut the door; and she thought, "Now I shall have a little boy of my own."

When it was time for the Gingerbread Boy to be done she opened the oven door and pulled out the pan. Out jumped the little Gingerbread Boy on to the floor, and away he ran, out of the door and down the street! The little old woman and the little old man ran after him as fast as they could, but he just laughed, and shouted,—

"Run! run! as fast as you can!

"You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

And they couldn't catch him.

The little Gingerbread Boy ran on and on, until he came to a cow, by the roadside. "Stop, little Gingerbread Boy," said the cow; "I want to eat you." The little Gingerbread Boy laughed and said,—

"I have run away from a little old woman,

"And a little old man,

"And I can run away from you, I can!"

And, as the cow chased him, he looked over his shoulder and cried,—

"Run! run! as fast as you can!

"You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

And the cow couldn't catch him.

The little Gingerbread Boy ran on, and on, and on, till he came to a horse, in the pasture. "Please stop, little Gingerbread Boy," said the horse, "you look very good to eat." But the little Gingerbread Boy laughed out loud. "Oho! oho!" he said,—

"I have run away from a little old woman,



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"A little old man,

"A cow,

"And I can run away from you, I can!"

And, as the horse chased him, he looked over his shoulder and cried,—

"Run! run! as fast as you can!

"You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

And the horse couldn't catch him.

By and by the little Gingerbread Boy came to a barn full of threshers. When the threshers smelt the Gingerbread Boy, they tried to pick him up, and said, "Don't run so fast, little Gingerbread Boy; you look very good to eat."

But the little Gingerbread Boy ran harder than ever, and as he ran he cried out,—

"I have run away from a little old woman,

"A little old man,

"A cow,

"A horse,

"And I can run away from you, I can!"

And when he found that he was ahead of the threshers, he turned and shouted back to them,—

"Run! run! as fast as you can!

"You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

And the threshers couldn't catch him.

Then the little Gingerbread Boy ran faster than ever. He ran and ran until he came to a field full of mowers. When the mowers saw how fine he looked, they ran after him, calling out, "Wait a bit! wait a bit, little Gingerbread Boy, we wish to eat you!" But the little Gingerbread Boy laughed harder than ever, and ran like the wind. "Oho! oho!" he said,—

"I have run away from a little old woman,

"A little old man,

"A cow,



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"A horse,

"A barn full of threshers,

"And I can run away from you, I can!"

And when he found that he was ahead of the mowers, he turned and shouted back to them,—

"Run! run! as fast as you can!

"You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

And the mowers couldn't catch him.

By this time the little Gingerbread Boy was so proud that he didn't think anybody could catch him. Pretty soon he saw a fox coming across a field. The fox looked at him and began to run. But the little Gingerbread Boy shouted across to him, "You can't catch me!" The fox began to run faster, and the little Gingerbread Boy ran faster, and as he ran he chuckled,—

"I have run away from a little old woman,

"A little old man,

"A cow,

"A horse,

"A barn full of threshers,

"A field full of mowers,

"And I can run away from you, I can!

"Run! run! as fast as you can!

"You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

"Why," said the fox, "I would not catch you if I could. I would not think of disturbing you."

Just then, the little Gingerbread Boy came to a river. He could not swim across, and he wanted to keep running away from the cow and the horse and the people.

"Jump on my tail, and I will take you across," said the fox.

So the little Gingerbread Boy jumped on the fox's tail, and the fox began to swim the river. When he was a little way from the bank he turned his head, and



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said, "You are too heavy on my tail, little Gingerbread Boy, I fear I shall let you get wet; jump on my back."

The little Gingerbread Boy jumped on his back.

A little farther out, the fox said, "I am afraid the water will cover you, there; jump on my shoulder."

The little Gingerbread Boy jumped on his shoulder.

In the middle of the stream the fox said, "Oh, dear! little Gingerbread Boy, my shoulder is sinking; jump on my nose, and I can hold you out of water."

So the little Gingerbread Boy jumped on his nose.

The minute the fox reached the bank he threw back his head, and gave a snap!

"Dear me!" said the little Gingerbread Boy, "I am a quarter gone!" The next minute he said, "Why, I am half gone!" The next minute he said, "My goodness gracious, I am three quarters gone!"

And after that, the little Gingerbread Boy never said anything more at all.

THE LITTLE JACKALS AND THE LION

Once there was a great big jungle; and in the jungle there was a great big Lion; and the Lion was king of the jungle. Whenever he wanted anything to eat, all he had to do was to come up out of his cave in the stones and earth and *roar*. When he had roared a few times all the little people of the jungle were so frightened that they came out of their holes and hiding-places and ran, this way and that, to get away. Then, of course, the Lion could see where they were. And he pounced on them, killed them, and gobbled them up.

He did this so often that at last there was not a single thing left alive in the jungle besides the Lion, except two little Jackals,—a little father Jackal and a little mother Jackal.

They had run away so many times that they were quite thin and very tired, and they could not run so fast any more. And one day the Lion was so near that the little mother Jackal grew frightened; she said,—

"Oh, Father Jackal, Father Jackal! I believe our time has come! the Lion will surely catch us this time!"



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"Pooh! nonsense, mother!" said the little father Jackal. "Come, we'll run on a bit!"

And they ran, ran, ran very fast, and the Lion did not catch them that time.

But at last a day came when the Lion was nearer still and the little mother Jackal was frightened almost to death.

"Oh, Father Jackal, Father Jackal!" she cried; "I'm sure our time has come! The Lion's going to eat us this time!"

"Now, mother, don't you fret," said the little father Jackal; "you do just as I tell you, and it will be all right."

Then what did those cunning little Jackals do but take hold of hands and run up towards the Lion, as if they had meant to come all the time. When he saw them coming he stood up, and roared in a terrible voice,—

"You miserable little wretches, come here and be eaten, at once! Why didn't you come before?"

The father Jackal bowed very low.

"Indeed, Father Lion," he said, "we meant to come before; we knew we ought to come before; and we wanted to come before; but every time we started to come, a dreadful great lion came out of the woods and roared at us, and frightened us so that we ran away."

"What do you mean?" roared the Lion. "There's no other lion in this jungle, and you know it!"

"Indeed, indeed, Father Lion," said the little Jackal, "I know that is what everybody thinks; but indeed and indeed there is another lion! And he is as much bigger than you as you are bigger than I! His face is much more terrible, and his roar far, far more dreadful. Oh, he is far more fearful than you!"

At that the Lion stood up and roared so that the jungle shook.

"Take me to this Lion," he said; "I'll eat him up and then I'll eat you up."

The little Jackals danced on ahead, and the Lion stalked behind. They led him to a place where there was a round, deep well of clear water. They went round on one side of it, and the Lion stalked up to the other.

"He lives down there, Father Lion!" said the little Jackal. "He lives down there!"

The Lion came close and looked down into the water,—and a lion's face looked back at him out of the water!



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When he saw that, the Lion roared and shook his mane and showed his teeth. And the lion in the water shook his mane and showed his teeth. The Lion above shook his mane again and growled again, and made a terrible face. But the lion in the water made just as terrible a one, back. The Lion above couldn't stand that. He leaped down into the well after the other lion.

But, of course, as you know very well, there wasn't any other lion! It was only the reflection in the water!

So the poor old Lion floundered about and floundered about, and as he couldn't get up the steep sides of the well, he was at last drowned. And when he was drowned, the little Jackals took hold of hands and danced round the well, and sang,—

"The Lion is dead! The Lion is dead!

"We have killed the great Lion who would have killed us!

"The Lion is dead! The Lion is dead!

"Ao! Ao! Ao!"

THE COUNTRY MOUSE AND THE CITY MOUSE

Once a little mouse who lived in the country invited a little mouse from the city to visit him. When the little City Mouse sat down to dinner he was surprised to find that the Country Mouse had nothing to eat except barley and grain.

"Really," he said, "you do not live well at all; you should see how I live! I have all sorts of fine things to eat every day. You must come to visit me and see how nice it is to live in the city."

The little Country Mouse was glad to do this, and after a while he went to the city to visit his friend.

The very first place that the City Mouse took the Country Mouse to see was the kitchen cupboard of the house where he lived. There, on the lowest shelf, behind some stone jars, stood a big paper bag of brown sugar. The little City Mouse gnawed a hole in the bag and invited his friend to nibble for himself.

The two little mice nibbled and nibbled, and the Country Mouse thought he had never tasted anything so delicious in his life. He was just thinking how lucky the City Mouse was, when suddenly the door opened with a bang, and in came the cook to get some flour.



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"Run!" whispered the City Mouse. And they ran as fast as they could to the little hole where they had come in. The little Country Mouse was shaking all over when they got safely away, but the little City Mouse said, "That is nothing; she will soon go away and then we can go back."

After the cook had gone away and shut the door they stole softly back, and this time the City Mouse had something new to show: he took the little Country Mouse into a corner on the top shelf, where a big jar of dried prunes stood open. After much tugging and pulling they got a large dried prune out of the jar on to the shelf and began to nibble at it. This was even better than the brown sugar. The little Country Mouse liked the taste so much that he could hardly nibble fast enough. But all at once, in the midst of their eating, there came a scratching at the door and a sharp, loud *miaouw*!

"What is that?" said the Country Mouse. The City Mouse just whispered, "Sh!" and ran as fast as he could to the hole. The Country Mouse ran after, you may be sure, as fast as *he* could. As soon as they were out of danger the City Mouse said, "That was the old Cat; she is the best mouser in town,—if she once gets you, you are lost."

"This is very terrible," said the little Country Mouse; "let us not go back to the cupboard again."

"No," said the City Mouse, "I will take you to the cellar; there is something specially fine there."

So the City Mouse took his little friend down the cellar stairs and into a big cupboard where there were many shelves. On the shelves were jars of butter, and cheeses in bags and out of bags. Overhead hung bunches of sausages, and there were spicy apples in barrels standing about. It smelt so good that it went to the little Country Mouse's head. He ran along the shelf and nibbled at a cheese here, and a bit of butter there, until he saw an especially rich, very delicious-smelling piece of cheese on a queer little stand in a corner. He was just on the point of putting his teeth into the cheese when the City Mouse saw him.

"Stop! stop!" cried the City Mouse. "That is a trap!"

The little Country Mouse stopped and said, "What is a trap?"

"That thing is a trap," said the little City Mouse. "The minute you touch the cheese with your teeth something comes down on your head hard, and you're dead."

The little Country Mouse looked at the trap, and he looked at the cheese, and he looked at the little City Mouse. "If you'll excuse me," he said, "I think I will go home. I'd rather have barley and grain to eat and eat it in peace and comfort,



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than have brown sugar and dried prunes and cheese,—and be frightened to death all the time!"

So the little Country Mouse went back to his home, and there he stayed all the rest of his life.

HOW BROTHER RABBIT FOOLED THE WHALE AND THE ELEPHANT

One day little Brother Rabbit was running along on the sand, lippety, lippety, when he saw the Whale and the Elephant talking together. Little Brother Rabbit crouched down and listened to what they were saying. This was what they were saying:—

"You are the biggest thing on the land, Brother Elephant," said the Whale, "and I am the biggest thing in the sea; if we join together we can rule all the animals in the world, and have our way about everything."

"Very good, very good," trumpeted the Elephant; "that suits me; we will do it."

Little Brother Rabbit sniggered to himself. "They won't rule me," he said. He ran away and got a very long, very strong rope, and he got his big drum, and hid the drum a long way off in the bushes. Then he went along the beach till he came to the Whale.

"Oh, please, dear, strong Mr Whale," he said, "will you have the great kindness to do me a favour? My cow is stuck in the mud, a quarter of a mile from here. And I can't pull her out. But you are so strong and so helpful, that I hope you will be able to help me out."

The Whale was so pleased with the compliment that he said, "Yes," at once.

"Then," said the Rabbit, "I will tie this end of my long rope to you, and I will run away and tie the other end round my cow, and when I am ready I will beat my big drum. When you hear that, pull very, very hard, for the cow is stuck very deep in the mud."

"Huh!" grunted the Whale, "I'll pull her out, if she is stuck to the horns."

Little Brother Rabbit tied the rope-end to the Whale, and ran off, lippety, lippety, till he came to the place where the Elephant was.

"Oh, please, mighty and kindly Elephant," he said, making a very low bow, "will you do me a favour?"



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"What is it?" asked the Elephant.

"My cow is stuck in the mud, about a quarter of a mile from here," said little Brother Rabbit, "and I cannot pull her out. Of course you could. If you will be so very obliging as to help me——"

"Certainly," said the Elephant grandly, "certainly."

"Then," said little Brother Rabbit, "I will tie one end of this long rope to your trunk, and the other to my cow, and as soon as I have tied her tightly I will beat my big drum. When you hear that, pull; pull as hard as you can, for my cow is very heavy."

"Never fear," said the Elephant, "I could pull twenty cows."

"I am sure you could," said the Rabbit, politely, "only be sure to begin gently, and pull harder and harder till you get her."

Then he tied the end of the rope tightly round the Elephant's trunk, and ran away into the bushes. There he sat down and beat the big drum.

The Whale began to pull, and the Elephant began to pull, and in a jiffy the rope tightened till it was stretched as hard as could be.

"This is a remarkably heavy cow," said the Elephant; "but I'll fetch her!" And he braced his forefeet in the earth, and gave a tremendous pull.

"Dear me!" said the Whale. "That cow must be stuck mighty tight"; and he drove his tail deep in the water, and gave a marvellous pull.

He pulled harder; the Elephant pulled harder. Pretty soon the Whale found himself sliding toward the land. The reason was, of course, that the Elephant had something solid to brace against, and, beside, as fast as he pulled the rope in a little, he took a turn with it round his trunk!

But when the Whale found himself sliding toward the land he was so provoked with the cow that he dived head first, down to the bottom of the sea. That was a pull! The Elephant was jerked off his feet, and came slipping and sliding to the beach, and into the surf. He was terribly angry. He braced himself with all his might, and pulled his best. At the jerk, up came the Whale out of the water.

"Who is pulling me?" spouted the Whale.

"Who is pulling me?" trumpeted the Elephant.

And then each saw the rope in the other's hold.

"I'll teach you to play cow!" roared the Elephant.



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"I'll show you how to fool me!" fumed the Whale. And they began to pull again. But this time the rope broke, the Whale turned a somersault, and the Elephant fell over backward.

At that, they were both so ashamed that neither would speak to the other. So that broke up the bargain between them.

And little Brother Rabbit sat in the bushes and laughed, and laughed, and laughed.

THE FAIRIES

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men.
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

Down along the rocky shore
Some make their home—
They live on crispy pancakes
Of yellow tide-foam;
Some in the reeds
Of the black mountain-lake,
With frogs for their watch-dogs,
All night awake.

High on the hilltop
The old King sits;
He is now so old and gray,
He's nigh lost his wits.
With a bridge of white mist
Columbkil he crosses,
On his stately journeys
From Slieveleague to Rosses;
Or going up with music
On cold starry nights,
To sup with the Queen
Of the gay Northern Lights.



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They stole little Bridget
For seven years long;
When she came down again
Her friends were all gone.
They took her lightly back,
Between the night and morrow;
They thought that she was fast asleep,
But she was dead with sorrow.
They have kept her ever since
Deep within the lake,
On a bed of flag-leaves,
Watching till she wake.

By the craggy hillside,
Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn-trees,
For pleasure here and there.
Is any man so daring
As dig them up in spite,
He shall find their sharpest thorns
In his bed at night.

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men.
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!



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THE ADVENTURES OF THE LITTLE FIELD MOUSE

Once upon a time, there was a little brown Field Mouse; and one day he was out in the fields to see what he could find. He was running along in the grass, poking his nose into everything and looking with his two eyes all about, when he saw a smooth, shiny acorn, lying in the grass. It was such a fine shiny little acorn that he thought he would take it home with him; so he put out his paw to touch it, but the little acorn rolled away from him. He ran after it, but it kept rolling on, just ahead of him, till it came to a place where a big oak-tree had its roots spread all over the ground. Then it rolled under a big round root.

Little Mr Field Mouse ran to the root and poked his nose under after the acorn, and there he saw a small round hole in the ground. He slipped through and saw some stairs going down into the earth. The acorn was rolling down, with a soft tapping sound, ahead of him, so down he went too. Down, down, down, rolled the acorn, and down, down, down, went the Field Mouse, until suddenly he saw a tiny door at the foot of the stairs.

The shiny acorn rolled to the door and struck against it with a tap. Quickly the little door opened and the acorn rolled inside. The Field Mouse hurried as fast as he could down the last stairs, and pushed through just as the door was closing. It shut behind him, and he was in a little room. And there, before him, stood a queer little Red Man! He had a little red cap, and a little red jacket, and odd little red shoes with points at the toes.

"You are my prisoner," he said to the Field Mouse.

"What for?" said the Field Mouse.

"Because you tried to steal my acorn," said the little Red Man.

"It is my acorn," said the Field Mouse; "I found it."

"No, it isn't," said the little Red Man, "I have it; you will never see it again."

The little Field Mouse looked all about the room as fast as he could, but he could not see any acorn. Then he thought he would go back up the tiny stairs to his own home. But the little door was locked, and the little Red Man had the key. And he said to the poor mouse,—

"You shall be my servant; you shall make my bed and sweep my room and cook my broth."

So the little brown Mouse was the little Red Man's servant, and every day he made the little Red Man's bed and swept the little Red Man's room and cooked



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the little Red Man's broth. And every day the little Red Man went away through the tiny door, and did not come back till afternoon. But he always locked the door after him, and carried away the key.

At last, one day he was in such a hurry that he turned the key before the door was quite latched, which, of course, didn't lock it at all. He went away without noticing,—he was in such a hurry.

The little Field Mouse knew that his chance had come to run away home. But he didn't want to go without the pretty, shiny acorn. Where it was he didn't know, so he looked everywhere. He opened every little drawer and looked in, but it wasn't in any of the drawers; he peeped on every shelf, but it wasn't on a shelf; he hunted in every closet, but it wasn't in there. Finally, he climbed up on a chair and opened a tiny little door in the chimney-piece,—and there it was!

He took it quickly in his forepaws, and then he took it in his mouth, and then he ran away. He pushed open the little door; he climbed up, up, up the little stairs; he came out through the hole under the roof; he ran and ran through the fields; and at last he came to his own house.

When he was in his own house he set the shiny acorn on the table. I expect he set it down hard, for all at once, with a little snap, it opened!—exactly like a little box.

And what do you think! There was a tiny necklace inside! It was a most beautiful tiny necklace, all made of jewels, and it was just big enough for a lady mouse. So the little Field Mouse gave the tiny necklace to his little Mouse-sister. She thought it was perfectly lovely. And when she wasn't wearing it she kept it in the shiny acorn box.

And the little Red Man never knew what had become of it, because he didn't know where the little Field Mouse lived.

ANOTHER LITTLE RED HEN

Once upon a time there was a little Red Hen, who lived on a farm all by herself. An old Fox, crafty and sly, had a den in the rocks, on a hill near her house. Many and many a night this old Fox used to lie awake and think to himself how good that little Red Hen would taste if he could once get her in his big kettle and boil her for dinner. But he couldn't catch the little Red Hen, because she was too wise for him. Every time she went out to market she locked the door of the house behind her, and as soon as she came in again she locked



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the door behind her and put the key in her apron pocket, where she kept her scissors and some sugar candy.

At last the old Fox thought out a way to catch the little Red Hen. Early in the morning he said to his old mother, "Have the kettle boiling when I come home to-night, for I'll be bringing the little Red Hen for supper." Then he took a big bag and slung it over his shoulder, and walked till he came to the little Red Hen's house. The little Red Hen was just coming out of her door to pick up a few sticks for firewood. So the old Fox hid behind the wood-pile, and as soon as she bent down to get a stick, into the house he slipped, and scurried behind the door.

In a minute the little Red Hen came quickly in, and shut the door and locked it. "I'm glad I'm safely in," she said. Just as she said it, she turned round, and there stood the ugly old Fox, with his big bag over his shoulder. Whiff! how scared the little Red Hen was! She dropped her sticks, and flew up to the big beam across the ceiling. There she perched, and she said to the old Fox, down below, "You may as well go home, for you can't get me."

"Can't I, though!" said the Fox. And what do you think he did? He stood on the floor underneath the little Red Hen and twirled round in a circle after his own tail. And as he spun, and spun, and spun, faster, and faster, and faster, the poor little Red Hen got so dizzy watching him that she couldn't hold on to the perch. She dropped off, and the old Fox picked her up and put her in his bag, slung the bag over his shoulder, and started for home, where the kettle was boiling.

He had a very long way to go, up hill, and the little Red Hen was still so dizzy that she didn't know where she was. But when the dizziness began to go off, she whisked her little scissors out of her apron pocket, and snip! she cut a little hole in the bag; then she poked her head out and saw where she was, and as soon as they came to a good spot she cut the hole bigger and jumped out herself. There was a great big stone lying there, and the little Red Hen picked it up and put it in the bag as quick as a wink. Then she ran as fast as she could till she came to her own little farmhouse, and she went in and locked the door with the big key.

The old Fox went on carrying the stone and never knew the difference. My, but it bumped him well! He was pretty tired when he got home. But he was so pleased to think of the supper he was going to have that he did not mind that at all. As soon as his mother opened the door he said, "Is the kettle boiling?"

"Yes," said his mother; "have you got the little Red Hen?"

"I have," said the old Fox. "When I open the bag you hold the cover off the kettle and I'll shake the bag so that the Hen will fall in, and then you pop the cover on, before she can jump out."



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"All right," said his mean old mother; and she stood close by the boiling kettle, ready to put the cover on.

The Fox lifted the big, heavy bag up till it was over the open kettle, and gave it a shake. Splash! thump! splash! In went the stone and out came the boiling water, all over the old Fox and the old Fox's mother!

And they were scalded to death.

But the little Red Hen lived happily ever after, in her own little farmhouse.

THE BOY WHO CRIED "WOLF!"

There was once a shepherd-boy who kept his flock at a little distance from the village. Once he thought he would play a trick on the villagers and have some fun at their expense. So he ran toward the village crying out, with all his might,—

"Wolf! Wolf! Come and help! The wolves are at my lambs!"

The kind villagers left their work and ran to the field to help him. But when they got there the boy laughed at them for their pains; there was no wolf there.

Still another day the boy tried the same trick, and the villagers came running to help and got laughed at again.

Then one day a wolf did break into the fold and began killing the lambs. In great fright, the boy ran for help. "Wolf! Wolf!" he screamed. "There is a wolf in the flock! Help!"

The villagers heard him, but they thought it was another mean trick; no one paid the least attention, or went near him. And the shepherd-boy lost all his sheep.

That is the kind of thing that happens to people who lie: even when they tell the truth no one believes them.



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THE FROG KING

Did you ever hear the old story about the foolish Frogs? The Frogs in a certain swamp decided that they needed a king; they had always got along perfectly well without one, but they suddenly made up their minds that a king they must have. They sent a messenger to Jove and begged him to send a king to rule over them.

Jove saw how stupid they were, and sent a king who could not harm them: he tossed a big log into the middle of the pond.

At the splash the Frogs were terribly frightened, and dived into their holes to hide from King Log. But after a while, when they saw that the king never moved, they got over their fright and went and sat on him. And as soon as they found he really could not hurt them they began to despise him; and finally they sent another messenger to Jove to ask for a new king.

Jove sent an eel.

The Frogs were much pleased and a good deal frightened when King Eel came wriggling and swimming among them. But as the days went on, and the eel was perfectly harmless, they stopped being afraid; and as soon as they stopped fearing King Eel they stopped respecting him.

Soon they sent a third messenger to Jove, and begged that they might have a better king,—a king who was worth while.

It was too much; Jove was angry at their stupidity at last. "I will give you a king such as you deserve!" he said; and he sent them a Stork.

As soon as the Frogs came to the surface to greet the new king, King Stork caught them in his long bill and gobbled them up. One after another they came bobbing up, and one after another the stork ate them. He was indeed a king worthy of them!



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THE SUN AND THE WIND

The Sun and the Wind once had a quarrel as to which was the stronger. Each believed himself to be the more powerful. While they were arguing they saw a traveller walking along the country highway, wearing a great cloak.

"Here is a chance to test our strength," said the Wind; "let us see which of us is strong enough to make that traveller take off his cloak; the one who can do that shall be acknowledged the more powerful."

"Agreed," said the Sun.

Instantly the Wind began to blow; he puffed and tugged at the man's cloak, and raised a storm of hail and rain, to beat at it. But the colder it grew and the more it stormed, the tighter the traveller held his cloak around him. The Wind could not get it off.

Now it was the Sun's turn. He shone with all his beams on the man's shoulders. As it grew hotter and hotter, the man unfastened his cloak; then he threw it back; at last he took it off! The Sun had won.

THE LITTLE JACKAL AND THE ALLIGATOR

The little Jackal was very fond of shell-fish. He used to go down by the river and hunt along the edges for crabs and such things. And once, when he was hunting for crabs, he was so hungry that he put his paw into the water after a crab without looking first,—which you never should do! The minute he put in his paw, *snap!*—the big Alligator who lives in the mud down there had it in his jaws.

"Oh, dear!" thought the little Jackal; "the big Alligator has my paw in his mouth! In another minute he will pull me down and gobble me up! What shall I do? what shall I do?" Then he thought, suddenly, "I'll deceive him!"

So he put on a very cheerful voice, as if nothing at all were the matter, and he said,—

"Ho! ho! Clever Mr Alligator! Smart Mr Alligator, to take that old bulrush root for my paw! I hope you'll find it very tender!"

The old Alligator was hidden away beneath the mud and bulrush leaves, and he couldn't see anything. He thought, "Pshaw! I've made a mistake." So he opened his mouth and let the little Jackal go.

The little Jackal ran away as fast as he could, and as he ran he called out,—



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"Thank you, Mr Alligator! Kind Mr Alligator! So kind of you to let me go!"

The old Alligator lashed with his tail and snapped with his jaws, but it was too late; the little Jackal was out of reach.

After this the little Jackal kept away from the river, out of danger. But after about a week he got such an appetite for crabs that nothing else would do at all; he felt that he must have a crab. So he went down by the river and looked all around, very carefully. He didn't see the old Alligator, but he thought to himself, "I think I'll not take any chances." So he stood still and began to talk out loud to himself. He said,—

"When I don't see any little crabs on the land I generally see them sticking out of the water, and then I put my paw in and catch them. I wonder if there are any fat little crabs in the water to-day?"

The old Alligator was hidden down in the mud at the bottom of the river, and when he heard what the little Jackal said, he thought, "Aha! I'll pretend to be a little crab, and when he puts his paw in, I'll make my dinner of him." So he stuck the black end of his snout above the water and waited.

The little Jackal took one look, and then he said,—

"Thank you, Mr Alligator! Kind Mr Alligator! You are *exceedingly* kind to show me where you are! I will have dinner elsewhere." And he ran away like the wind.

The old Alligator foamed at the mouth, he was so angry, but the little Jackal was gone.

For two whole weeks the little Jackal kept away from the river. Then, one day he got a feeling inside him that nothing but crabs could satisfy: he felt that he must have at least one crab. Very cautiously, he went down to the river and looked all around. He saw no sign of the old Alligator. Still, he did not mean to take any chances. So he stood quite still and began to talk to himself,—it was a little way he had. He said,—

"When I don't see any little crabs on the shore, or sticking up out of the water, I usually see them blowing bubbles from under the water; the little bubbles go *puff, puff, puff*, and then they go *pop, pop, pop*, and they show me where the little juicy crabs are, so I can put my paw in and catch them. I wonder if I shall see any little bubbles to-day?"

The old Alligator, lying low in the mud and weeds, heard this, and he thought, "Pooh! *That's* easy enough; I'll just blow some little crab-bubbles, and then he will put his paw in where I can get it."

So he blew, and he blew, a mighty blast, and the bubbles rose in a perfect whirlpool, fizzing and swirling.



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The little Jackal didn't have to be told who was underneath those bubbles: he took one quick look, and off he ran. But as he went, he sang,—

"Thank you, Mr Alligator! Kind Mr Alligator! You are the kindest Alligator in the world, to show me where you are, so nicely! I'll breakfast at another part of the river."

The old Alligator was so furious that he crawled up on the bank and went after the little Jackal; but, dear, dear, he couldn't catch the little Jackal; he ran far too fast.

After this, the little Jackal did not like to risk going near the water, so he ate no more crabs. But he found a garden of wild figs, which were so good that he went there every day, and ate them instead of shell-fish.

Now the old Alligator found this out, and he made up his mind to have the little Jackal for supper, or to die trying. So he crept, and crawled, and dragged himself over the ground to the garden of wild figs. There he made a huge pile of figs under the biggest of the wild fig trees, and hid himself in the pile.

After a while the little Jackal came dancing into the garden, very happy and free from care,—*but* looking all around. He saw the huge pile of figs under the big fig tree.

"H-m," he thought, "that looks singularly like my friend, the Alligator. I'll investigate a bit."

He stood quite still and began to talk to himself,—it was a little way he had. He said,—

"The little figs I like best are the fat, ripe, juicy ones that drop off when the breeze blows; and then the wind blows them about on the ground, this way and that; the great heap of figs over there is so still that I think they must be all bad figs."

The old Alligator, underneath his fig pile, thought,—

"Bother the suspicious little Jackal! I shall have to make these figs roll about, so that he will think the wind moves them." And straight-way he humped himself up and moved, and sent the little figs flying,—and his back showed through.

The little Jackal did not wait for a second look. He ran out of the garden like the wind. But as he ran he called back,—

"Thank you, again, Mr Alligator; very sweet of you to show me where you are; I can't stay to thank you as I should like: good-bye!"

At this the old Alligator was beside himself with rage. He vowed that he would have the little Jackal for supper this time, come what might. So he crept and



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crawled over the ground till he came to the little Jackal's house. Then he crept and crawled inside, and hid himself there in the house, to wait till the little Jackal should come home.

By and by the little Jackal came dancing home, happy and free from care,— *but* looking all around. Presently, as he came along, he saw that the ground was all raked up as if something very heavy had been dragged over it. The little Jackal stopped and looked.

"What's this? what's this?" he said.

Then he saw that the door of his house was crushed at the sides and broken, as if something very big had gone through it.

"What's this? What's this?" the little Jackal said. "I think I'll investigate a little!"

So he stood quite still and began to talk to himself (you remember, it was a little way he had), but loudly. He said,—

"How strange that my little House doesn't speak to me! Why don't you speak to me, little House? You always speak to me, if everything is all right, when I come home. I wonder if anything is wrong with my little House?"

The old Alligator thought to himself that he must certainly pretend to be the little House, or the little Jackal would never come in. So he put on as pleasant a voice as he could (which is not saying much) and said,—

"Hullo, little Jackal!"

Oh! When the little Jackal heard that, he was frightened enough, for once.

"It's the old Alligator," he said, "and if I don't make an end of him this time he will certainly make an end of me. What shall I do?"

He thought very fast. Then he spoke out pleasantly.

"Thank you, little House," he said, "it's good to hear your pretty voice, dear little House, and I will be in with you in a minute; only first I must gather some firewood for dinner."

Then he went and gathered firewood, and more firewood, and more firewood; and he piled it all up solid against the door and round the house; and then he set fire to it!

And it smoked and burned till it smoked that old Alligator to smoked herring!



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THE LARKS IN THE CORNFIELD

There was once a family of little Larks who lived with their mother in a nest in a cornfield. When the corn was ripe the mother Lark watched very carefully to see if there were any sign of the reapers' coming, for she knew that when they came their sharp knives would cut down the nest and hurt the baby Larks. So every day, when she went out for food, she told the little Larks to look and listen very closely to everything that went on, and to tell her all they saw and heard when she came home.

One day when she came home the little Larks were much frightened.

"Oh, Mother, dear Mother," they said, "you must move us away to-night! The farmer was in the field to-day, and he said, 'The corn is ready to cut; we must call in the neighbours to help.' And then he told his son to go out to-night and ask all the neighbours to come and reap the corn to-morrow."

The mother Lark laughed. "Don't be frightened," she said; "if he waits for his neighbours to reap the corn we shall have plenty of time to move; tell me what he says to-morrow."

The next night the little Larks were quite trembling with fear; the moment their mother got home they cried out, "Mother, you must surely move us to-night! The farmer came to-day and said, 'The corn is getting too ripe; we cannot wait for our neighbours; we must ask our relatives to help us.' And then he called his son and told him to ask all the uncles and cousins to come to-morrow and cut the corn. Shall we not move to-night?"

"Don't worry," said the mother Lark; "the uncles and cousins have plenty of reaping to do for themselves; we'll not move yet."

The third night, when the mother Lark came home, the baby Larks said, "Mother, dear, the farmer came to the field to-day, and when he looked at the corn he was quite angry; he said, 'This will never do! The corn is getting too ripe; it's no use to wait for our relatives, we shall have to cut this corn ourselves.' And then he called his son and said, 'Go out to-night and hire reapers, and to-morrow we will begin to cut.'"

"Well," said the mother, "that is another story; when a man begins to do his own business, instead of asking somebody else to do it, things get done. I will move you out to-night."



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A TRUE STORY ABOUT A GIRL

Once there were four little girls who lived in a big, bare house, in the country. They were very poor, but they had the happiest times you ever heard of, because they were very rich in everything except money. They had a wonderful, wise father, who knew stories to tell, and who taught them their lessons in such a beautiful way that it was better than play; they had a lovely, merry, kind mother, who was never too tired to help them work or watch them play; and they had all the great green country to play in. There were dark, shadowy woods, and fields of flowers, and a river. And there was a big barn.

One of the little girls was named Louisa. She was very pretty, and ever so strong; she could run for miles through the woods and not get tired. She had a splendid brain in her little head; it liked study, and it thought interesting thoughts all day long.

Louisa liked to sit in a corner by herself, sometimes, and write thoughts in her diary; all the little girls kept diaries. She liked to make up stories out of her own head, and sometimes she made verses.

When the four little sisters had finished their lessons, and had helped their mother wash up and sew, they used to go to the big barn to play; and the best play of all was theatricals. Louisa liked theatricals better than anything.

They made the barn into a theatre, and the grown-up people came to see the plays they acted. They used to climb up on the hay-loft for a stage, and the grown people sat in chairs on the floor. It was great fun. One of the plays they acted was *Jack and the Beanstalk*. They had a ladder from the floor to the loft, and on the ladder they tied a vine all the way up to the loft, to look like the wonderful beanstalk. One of the little girls was dressed up to look like Jack, and she acted that part. When it came to the place in the story where the giant tried to follow Jack, the little girl cut down the beanstalk, and down came the giant tumbling from the loft. The giant was made out of pillows, with a great, fierce head of paper, and funny clothes.

Another story that they acted was *Cinderella*. They made a wonderful big pumpkin out of the wheelbarrow, trimmed with yellow paper, and Cinderella rolled away in it, when the fairy godmother waved her wand.

One other beautiful story they used to play. It was the story of *Pilgrim's Progress*; if you have never heard it, you must be sure to read it as soon as you can read well enough to understand the old-fashioned words. The little girls used



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to put shells in their hats for a sign they were on a pilgrimage, as the old pilgrims used to do; then they made journeys over the hill behind the house, and through the woods, and down the lanes; and when the pilgrimage was over they had apples and nuts to eat, in the happy land of home.

Louisa loved all these plays, and she made some of her own and wrote them down so that the children could act them.

But better than fun or writing Louisa loved her mother, and by and by, as the little girl began to grow into a big girl, she felt very sad to see her dear mother work so hard. She helped all she could with the housework, but nothing could really help the tired mother except money; she needed money for food and clothes, and someone grown up, to help in the house. But there never was enough money for these things, and Louisa's mother grew more and more weary, and sometimes ill. I cannot tell you how much Louisa suffered over this.

At last, as Louisa thought about it, she came to care more about helping her mother and her father and her sisters than about anything else in all the world. And she began to work very hard to earn money. She sewed for people, and when she was a little older she taught some little girls their lessons, and then she wrote stories for the papers. Every bit of money she earned, except what she had to use, she gave to her dear family. It helped very much, but it was so little that Louisa never felt as if she were doing anything.

Every year she grew more unselfish, and every year she worked harder. She liked writing stories best of all her work, but she did not get much money for them, and some people told her she was wasting her time.

At last, one day, a publisher asked Louisa, who was now a woman, to write a book for girls. Louisa was not very well, and she was very tired, but she always said, "I'll try," when she had a chance to work; so she said, "I'll try," to the publisher. When she thought about the book she remembered the good times she used to have with her sisters in the big, bare house in the country. And so she wrote a story and put all that in it; she put her dear mother and her wise father in it, and all the little sisters, and besides the jolly times and the plays, she put the sad, hard times in,—the work and worry and going without things.

When the book was written, she called it *Little Women*, and sent it to the publisher.

And, children, the little book made Louisa famous. It was so sweet and funny and sad and real,—like our own lives,—that everybody wanted to read it. Everybody bought it, and much money came from it. After so many years, little Louisa's wish came true: she bought a nice house for her family; she sent one of her sisters to Europe, to study; she gave her father books; but best of all, she was able to see to it that the beloved mother, so tired and so ill, could have rest



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and happiness. Never again did the dear mother have to do any hard work, and she had pretty things about her all the rest of her life.

Louisa Alcott, for that was Louisa's name, wrote many beautiful books after this, and she became one of the most famous women of America. But I think the most beautiful thing about her is what I have been telling you: that she loved her mother so much that she gave her whole life to make her happy.

MY KINGDOM

The little Louisa I told you about, who wrote verses and stories in her diary, used to like to play that she was a princess, and that her kingdom was her own mind. When she had unkind or dissatisfied thoughts, she tried to get rid of them by playing they were enemies of the kingdom; and she drove them out with soldiers; the soldiers were patience, duty, and love. It used to help Louisa to be good to play this, and I think it may have helped make her the splendid woman she was afterward. Maybe you would like to hear a poem she wrote about it, when she was only fourteen years old.^[20] It will help you, too, to think the same thoughts.

A little kingdom I possess,
Where thoughts and feelings dwell,
And very hard I find the task
Of governing it well;
For passion tempts and troubles me,
A wayward will misleads,
And selfishness its shadow casts
On all my words and deeds.

How can I learn to rule myself,
To be the child I should,
Honest and brave, nor ever tire
Of trying to be good?
How can I keep a sunny soul
To shine along life's way?
How can I tune my little heart
To sweetly sing all day?

Dear Father, help me with the love
That casteth out my fear,
Teach me to lean on Thee, and feel



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That Thou art very near,
That no temptation is unseen,
No childish grief too small,
Since Thou, with patience infinite,
Doth soothe and comfort all.

I do not ask for any crown
But that which all may win,
Nor seek to conquer any world,
Except the one within.
Be Thou my Guide until I find,
Led by a tender hand,
Thy happy kingdom in *myself*,
And dare to take command.

PICCOLA

Poor, sweet Piccola! Did you hear
What happened to Piccola, children dear?
'Tis seldom Fortune such favour grants
As fell to this little maid of France.

'Twas Christmas-time, and her parents poor
Could hardly drive the wolf from the door,
Striving with poverty's patient pain
Only to live till summer again.

No gifts for Piccola! Sad were they
When dawned the morning of Christmas-day;
Their little darling no joy might stir,
St Nicholas nothing would bring to her!

But Piccola never doubted at all
That something beautiful must befall
Every child upon Christmas-day,
And so she slept till the dawn was gray.

And full of faith, when at last she woke,
She stole to her shoe as the morning broke;
Such sounds of gladness filled all the air,



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Twass plain St Nicholas had been there!

In rushed Piccola sweet, half wild:
Never was seen such a joyful child.
"See what the good saint brought!" she cried,
And mother and father must peep inside.

Now such a story who ever heard?
There was a little shivering bird!
A sparrow, that in at the window flew,
Had crept into Piccola's tiny shoe!

"How good poor Piccola must have been!"
She cried, as happy as any queen,
While the starving sparrow she fed and warmed,
And danced with rapture, she was so charmed.

Children, this story I tell to you,
Of Piccola sweet and her bird, is true.
In the far-off land of France, they say,
Still do they live to this very day.

THE LITTLE FIR TREE

When I was a very little girl some one, probably my mother, read to me Hans Christian Andersen's story of the Little Fir Tree. It happened that I did not read it for myself or hear it again during my childhood. One Christmas Day, when I was grown up, I found myself at a loss for the "one more" story called for by some little children with whom I was spending the holiday. In the mental search for buried treasure which ensued, I came upon one or two word-impressions of the experiences of the Little Fir Tree, and forthwith wove them into what I supposed to be something of a reproduction of the original. The latter part of the story had wholly faded from my memory, so that I "made up" to suit the tastes of my audience. Afterward I told the story to a good many children, at one time or another, and it gradually took the shape it has here. It was not until several years later that, in rereading Andersen for other purposes, I came upon the real story of the Little Fir Tree, and read it for myself. Then indeed I was amused, and somewhat distressed, to find how far I had wandered from the text.

I give this explanation that the reader may know I do not presume to offer the little tale which follows as an "adaptation" of Andersen's famous story. I offer it



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plainly as a story which children have liked, and which grew out of my early memories of Andersen's *The Little Fir Tree*.

Once there was a Little Fir Tree, slim and pointed, and shiny, which stood in the great forest in the midst of some big fir trees, broad, and tall, and shadowy green. The Little Fir Tree was very unhappy because he was not big like the others. When the birds came flying into the woods and lit on the branches of the big trees and built their nests there, he used to call up to them,—

"Come down, come down, rest in my branches!" But they always said,—

"Oh, no, no; you are too little!"

When the splendid wind came blowing and singing through the forest, it bent and rocked and swung the tops of the big trees, and murmured to them. Then the Little Fir Tree looked up, and called,—

"Oh, please, dear wind, come down and play with me!" But he always said,—

"Oh, no; you are too little, you are too little!"

In the winter the white snow fell softly, softly, and covered the great trees all over with wonderful caps and coats of white. The Little Fir Tree, close down in the cover of the others, would call up,—

"Oh, please, dear snow, give me a cap, too! I want to play, too!" But the snow always said,—

"Oh no, no, no; you are too little, you are too little!"

The worst of all was when men came into the wood, with sledges and teams of horses. They came to cut the big trees down and carry them away. Whenever one had been cut down and carried away the others talked about it, and nodded their heads, and the Little Fir Tree listened, and heard them say that when you were carried away so, you might become the mast of a mighty ship, and go far away over the ocean, and see many wonderful things; or you might be part of a fine house in a great city, and see much of life. The Little Fir Tree wanted greatly to see life, but he was always too little; the men passed him by.

But by and by, one cold winter's morning, men came with a sledge and horses, and after they had cut here and there they came to the circle of trees round the Little Fir Tree, and looked all about.

"There are none little enough," they said.

Oh! how the Little Fir Tree pricked up his needles!

"Here is one," said one of the men, "it is just little enough." And he touched the Little Fir Tree.



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The Little Fir Tree was happy as a bird, because he knew they were about to cut him down. And when he was being carried away on the sledge he lay wondering, so contentedly, whether he should be the mast of a ship or part of a fine city house. But when they came to the town he was taken out and set upright in a tub and placed on the edge of a path in a row of other fir trees, all small, but none so little as he. And then the Little Fir Tree began to see life.

People kept coming to look at the trees and to take them away. But always when they saw the Little Fir Tree they shook their heads and said,—

"It is too little, too little."

Until, finally, two children came along, hand in hand, looking carefully at all the small trees. When they saw the Little Fir Tree they cried out,—

"We'll take this one; it is just little enough!"

They took him out of his tub and carried him away, between them. And the happy Little Fir Tree spent all his time wondering what it could be that he was just little enough for; he knew it could hardly be a mast or a house, since he was going away with children.

He kept wondering, while they took him in through some big doors, and set him up in another tub, on the table, in a bare little room. Very soon they went away, and came back again with a big basket, which they carried between them. Then some pretty ladies, with white caps on their heads and white aprons over their blue dresses, came bringing little parcels. The children took things out of the basket and began to play with the Little Fir Tree, just as he had often begged the wind and the snow and the birds to do. He felt their soft little touches on his head and his twigs and his branches. When he looked down at himself, as far as he could look, he saw that he was all hung with gold and silver chains! There were strings of white fluffy stuff drooping around him; his twigs held little gold nuts and pink, rosy balls and silver stars; he had pretty little pink and white candles in his arms; but last, and most wonderful of all, the children hung a beautiful white, floating doll-angel over his head! The Little Fir Tree could not breathe, for joy and wonder. What was it that he was, now? Why was this glory for him?

After a time every one went away and left him. It grew dusk, and the Little Fir Tree began to hear strange sounds through the closed doors. Sometimes he heard a child crying. He was beginning to be lonely. It grew more and more shadowy.

All at once, the doors opened and the two children came in. Two of the pretty ladies were with them. They came up to the Little Fir Tree and quickly lighted all the little pink and white candles. Then the two pretty ladies took hold of the table with the Little Fir Tree on it and pushed it, very smoothly and quickly, out of the doors, across a hall, and in at another door.



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The Little Fir Tree had a sudden sight of a long room with many little white beds in it, of children propped up on pillows in the beds, and of other children in great wheeled chairs, and others hobbling about or sitting in little chairs. He wondered why all the little children looked so white and tired; he did not know that he was in a hospital. But before he could wonder any more his breath was quite taken away by the shout those little white children gave.

"Oh! oh! m-m! m-m!" they cried.

"How pretty! How beautiful! Oh, isn't it lovely!"

He knew they must mean him, for all their shining eyes were looking straight at him. He stood as straight as a mast, and quivered in every needle, for joy. Presently one little weak child-voice called out,—

"It's the nicest Christmas tree I ever saw!"

And then, at last, the Little Fir Tree knew what he was; he was a Christmas tree! And from his shiny head to his feet he was glad, through and through, because he was just little enough to be the nicest kind of tree in the world!

HOW MOSES WAS SAVED

Thousands of years ago, many years before David lived, there was a very wise and good man of his people who was a friend and adviser of the king of Egypt. And for love of this friend, the king of Egypt had let numbers of the Israelites settle in his land. But after the king and his Israelite friend were dead, there was a new king, who hated the Israelites. When he saw how strong they were, and how many there were of them, he began to be afraid that some day they might number more than the Egyptians, and might take his land from him.

Then he and his rulers did a wicked thing. They made the Israelites slaves. And they gave them terrible tasks to do, without proper rest, or food, or clothes. For they hoped that the hardship would kill off the Israelites. They thought the old men would die and the young men be so ill and weary that they could not bring up families, and so the race would dwindle away.

But in spite of the work and suffering, the Israelites remained strong, and more and more boys grew up, to make the king afraid.

Then he did the most wicked thing of all. He ordered his soldiers to kill every boy baby that should be born in an Israelite family; he did not care about the girls, because they could not grow up to fight.



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Very soon after this wicked order, a boy baby was born in a certain Israelite family. When his mother first looked at him her heart was nearly broken, for he was even more beautiful than most babies are,—so strong and fair and sweet. But he was a boy! How could she save him from death?

Somehow, she contrived to keep him hidden for three whole months. But at the end of that time, she saw that it would not be possible to keep him safe any longer. She had been thinking all this time about what she should do, and now she carried out her plan.

First, she took a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it all over with pitch, so that it was water-tight, and then she laid the baby in it; then she carried it to the edge of the river and laid it in the flags by the river's edge. It did not show at all, unless you were quite near it. Then she kissed her little son and left him there. But his sister stood far off, not seeming to watch, but really watching carefully to see what would happen to the baby.

Soon there was the sound of talk and laughter, and a train of beautiful women came down to the water's edge. It was the king's daughter, come down to bathe in the river, with her maidens. The maidens walked along by the river side.

As the king's daughter came near to the water, she saw the strange little basket lying in the flags, and she sent her maid to bring it to her. And when she had opened it, she saw the child; the poor baby was crying. When she saw him, so helpless and so beautiful, crying for his mother, the king's daughter pitied him and loved him. She knew the cruel order of her father, and she said at once, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

At that moment the baby's sister came to the princess and said, "Shall I go and find you a nurse from the Hebrew women, so that she may nurse the child for thee?" Not a word did she say about whose child it was, but perhaps the princess guessed; I don't know. At all events, she told the little girl to go.

So the maiden went, and brought her mother!

Then the king's daughter said to the baby's mother, "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give you wages."

Wasn't that a strange thing? And can you think how happy the baby's mother was? For now the baby would be known only as the princess's adopted child, and would be safe.

And it was so. The mother kept him until he was old enough to be taken to the princess's palace. Then he was brought and given to the king's daughter, and he became her son. And she named him Moses.



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But the strangest part of the whole story is, that when Moses grew to be a man he became so strong and wise that it was he who at last saved his people from the king and rescued them from the Egyptians. The one child saved by the king's own daughter was the very one the king would most have wanted to kill, if he had known.

THE TEN FAIRIES

Once upon a time there was a dear little girl, whose name was Elsa. Elsa's father and mother worked very hard and became rich. But they loved Elsa so much that they did not like her to do any work; very foolishly, they let her play all the time. So when Elsa grew up, she did not know how to do anything; she could not make bread, she could not sweep a room, she could not sew a seam; she could only laugh and sing. But she was so sweet and merry that everybody loved her. And by and by, she married one of the people who loved her, and had a house of her own to take care of.

Then, then, my dears, came hard times for Elsa! There were so many things to be done in the house, and she did not know how to do any of them! And because she had never worked at all it made her very tired even to try; she was tired before the morning was over, every day. The maid would come and say, "How shall I do this?" or "How shall I do that?" and Elsa would have to say, "I don't know." Then the maid would pretend that she did not know, either; and when she saw her mistress sitting about doing nothing, she, too, sat about, idle.

Elsa's husband had a hard time of it; he had only poor food to eat, and it was not ready at the right time, and the house looked all in a muddle. It made him sad, and that made Elsa sad, for she wanted to do everything just right.

At last, one day, Elsa's husband went away quite cross; he said to her, as he went out of the door, "It is no wonder that the house looks so, when you sit all day with your hands in your lap!"

Little Elsa cried bitterly when he was gone, for she did not want to make her husband unhappy and cross, and she wanted the house to look nice. "Oh, dear," she sobbed, "I wish I could do things right! I wish I could work! I wish—I wish I had ten good fairies to work for me! Then I could keep the house!"

As she said the words, a great grey man stood before her; he was wrapped in a strange grey cloak that covered him from head to foot; and he smiled at Elsa. "What is the matter, dear?" he said. "Why do you cry?"



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"Oh, I am crying because I do not know how to keep the house," said Elsa. "I cannot make bread, I cannot sweep, I cannot sew a seam; when I was a little girl I never learned to work, and now I cannot do anything right. I wish I had ten good fairies to help me!"

"You shall have them, dear," said the grey man, and he shook his strange grey cloak. Pouf! Out hopped ten tiny fairies, no bigger than that!

"These shall be your servants, Elsa," said the grey man; "they are faithful and clever, and they will do everything you want them to, just right. But the neighbours might stare and ask questions if they saw these little chaps running about your house, so I will hide them away for you. Give me your little useless hands."

Wondering, Elsa stretched out her pretty, little, white hands.

"Now stretch out your little useless fingers, dear!"

Elsa stretched out her pretty pink fingers.

The grey man touched each one of the ten little fingers, and as he touched them he said their names: "Little Thumb; Forefinger; Thimble-finger; Ring-finger; Little Finger; Little Thumb; Forefinger; Thimble-finger; Ring-finger; Little Finger!" And as he named the fingers, one after another, the tiny fairies bowed their tiny heads; there was a fairy for every name.

"Hop! hide yourselves away!" said the grey man.

Hop, hop! The fairies sprang to Elsa's knee, then to the palms of her hands, and then—whisk! they were all hidden away in her little pink fingers, a fairy in every finger! And the grey man was gone.

Elsa sat and looked with wonder at her little white hands and the ten useless fingers. But suddenly the little fingers began to stir. The tiny fairies who were hidden away there were not used to remaining still, and they were getting restless. They stirred so that Elsa jumped up and ran to the cooking table, and took hold of the bread board. No sooner had she touched the bread board than the little fairies began to work: they measured the flour, mixed the bread, kneaded the loaves, and set them to rise, quicker than you could wink; and when the bread was done, it was as nice as you could wish. Then the little fairy-fingers seized the broom, and in a twinkling they were making the house clean. And so it went, all day. Elsa flew about from one thing to another, and the ten fairies did the work, just right.

When the maid saw her mistress working, she began to work, too; and when she saw how beautifully everything was done, she was ashamed to do anything



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badly herself. In a little while the housework was going smoothly, and Elsa could laugh and sing again.

There was no more crossness in that house. Elsa's husband grew so proud of her that he went about saying to everybody, "My grandmother was a fine housekeeper, and my mother was a fine housekeeper, but neither of them could hold a candle to my wife. She has only one maid, but, to see the work done, you would think she had as many servants as she has fingers on her hands!"

When Elsa heard that, she used to laugh, but she never, never told.

THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER

Once upon a time there was an honest shoemaker, who was very poor. He worked as hard as he could, and still he could not earn enough to keep himself and his wife. At last there came a day when he had nothing left but one piece of leather, big enough to make one pair of shoes. He cut out the shoes, ready to stitch, and left them on the bench; then he said his prayers and went to bed, trusting that he could finish the shoes on the next day and sell them.

Bright and early the next morning, he rose and went to his work bench. There lay a pair of shoes, beautifully made, and the leather was gone! There was no sign of anyone having been there. The shoemaker and his wife did not know what to make of it. But the first customer who came was so pleased with the beautiful shoes that he bought them, and paid so much that the shoemaker was able to buy leather enough for two pairs.

Happily, he cut them out, and then, as it was late, he left the pieces on the bench, ready to sew in the morning. But when morning came, two pairs of shoes lay on the bench, most beautifully made, and no sign of anyone who had been there. The shoemaker and his wife were quite at a loss.

That day a customer came and bought both pairs, and paid so much for them that the shoemaker bought leather for four pairs, with the money.

Once more he cut out the shoes and left them on the bench. And in the morning all four pairs were made.

It went on like this until the shoemaker and his wife were prosperous people. But they could not be satisfied to have so much done for them and not know to whom they should be grateful. So one night, after the shoemaker had left the pieces of leather on the bench, he and his wife hid themselves behind a curtain, and left a light in the room.



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Just as the clock struck twelve the door opened softly, and two tiny elves came dancing into the room, hopped on to the bench, and began to put the pieces together. They were quite naked, but they had wee little scissors and hammers and thread. Tap! tap! went the little hammers; stitch, stitch, went the thread, and the little elves were hard at work. No one ever worked so fast as they. In almost no time all the shoes were stitched and finished. Then the tiny elves took hold of each other's hands and danced round the shoes on the bench, till the shoemaker and his wife had hard work not to laugh aloud. But as the clock struck two, the little creatures whisked away out of the window, and left the room all as it was before.

The shoemaker and his wife looked at each other, and said, "How can we thank the little elves who have made us happy and prosperous?"

"I should like to make them some pretty clothes," said the wife, "they are quite naked."

"I will make the shoes if you will make the coats," said her husband.

That very day they commenced their task. The wife cut out two tiny, tiny coats of green, two weeny, weeny waistcoats of yellow, two little pairs of trousers, of white, two bits of caps, bright red (for every one knows the elves love bright colours), and her husband made two little pairs of shoes with long, pointed toes. They made the wee clothes as dainty as could be, with nice little stitches and pretty buttons; and by Christmas time, they were finished.

On Christmas eve, the shoemaker cleaned his bench, and on it, instead of leather, he laid the two sets of gay little fairy-clothes. Then he and his wife hid away as before, to watch.

Promptly at midnight, the little naked elves came in. They hopped upon the bench; but when they saw the little clothes there, they laughed and danced for joy. Each one caught up his little coat and things and began to put them on. Then they looked at each other and made all kinds of funny motions in their delight. At last they began to dance, and when the clock struck two, they danced quite away, out of the window.

They never came back any more, but from that day they gave the shoemaker and his wife good luck, so that they never needed any more help.



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WHO KILLED THE OTTER'S BABIES?

Once the Otter came to the Mouse-deer and said, "Friend Mouse-deer, will you please take care of my babies while I go to the river, to catch fish?"

"Certainly," said the Mouse-deer, "go along."

But when the Otter came back from the river, with a string of fish, he found his babies crushed flat.

"What does this mean, Friend Mouse-deer?" he said. "Who killed my children while you were taking care of them?"

"I am very sorry," said the Mouse-deer, "but you know I am Chief Dancer of the War-dance, and the Woodpecker came and sounded the war-gong, so I danced. I forgot your children, and trod on them."

"I shall go to King Solomon," said the Otter, "and you shall be punished."

Soon the Mouse-deer was called before King Solomon.

"Did you kill the Otter's babies?" said the king.

"Yes, your Majesty," said the Mouse-deer, "but I did not mean to."

"How did it happen?" said the king.

"Your Majesty knows," said the Mouse-deer, "that I am Chief Dancer of the War-dance. The Woodpecker came and sounded the war-gong, and I had to dance; and as I danced I trod on the Otter's children."

"Send for the Woodpecker," said King Solomon. When the Woodpecker came, he said to him, "Was it you who sounded the war-gong?"

"Yes, your Majesty," said the Woodpecker, "but I had to."

"Why?" said the king.

"Your Majesty knows," said the Woodpecker, "that I am Chief Beater of the War-gong, and I sounded the gong because I saw the Great Lizard wearing his sword."

"Send for the Great Lizard," said King Solomon. When the Great Lizard came, he asked him, "Was it you who were wearing your sword?"

"Yes, your Majesty," said the Great Lizard; "but I had to."



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"Why?" said the king.

"Your Majesty knows," said the Great Lizard, "that I am Chief Protector of the Sword. I wore my sword because the Tortoise came wearing his coat of mail."

So the Tortoise was sent for.

"Why did you wear your coat of mail?" said the king.

"I put it on, your Majesty," said the Tortoise, "because I saw the King-crab trailing his three-edged pike."

Then the King-crab was sent for.

"Why were you trailing your three-edged pike?" said King Solomon.

"Because, your Majesty," said the King-crab, "I saw that the Crayfish had shouldered his lance."

Immediately the Crayfish was sent for.

"Why did you shoulder your lance?" said the king.

"Because, your Majesty," said the Crayfish, "I saw the Otter coming down to the river to kill my children."

"Oh," said King Solomon, "if that is the case, the Otter killed the Otter's children. And the Mouse-deer cannot be blamed, by the law of the land!"

THE BRAHMIN, THE TIGER, AND THE JACKAL

Do you know what a Brahmin is? A Brahmin is a very good and gentle kind of man who lives in India, and who treats all the beasts as if they were his brothers. There is a great deal more to know about Brahmins, but that is enough for the story.

One day a Brahmin was walking along a country road when he came upon a Tiger, shut up in a strong iron cage. The villagers had caught him and shut him up there for his wickedness.

"Oh, Brother Brahmin, Brother Brahmin," said the Tiger, "please let me out, to get a little drink! I am so thirsty, and there is no water here."

"But Brother Tiger," said the Brahmin, "you know if I should let you out, you would spring on me and eat me up."

"Never, Brother Brahmin!" said the Tiger. "Never in the world would I do such an ungrateful thing! Just let me out a little minute, to get a little, little drink of water, Brother Brahmin!"



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So the Brahmin unlocked the door and let the Tiger out. The moment he was out he sprang on the Brahmin, and was about to eat him up.

"But, Brother Tiger," said the Brahmin, "you promised you would not. It is not fair or just that you should eat me, when I set you free."

"It is perfectly right and just," said the Tiger, "and I shall eat you up."

However, the Brahmin argued so hard that at last the Tiger agreed to wait and ask the first five whom they should meet, whether it was fair for him to eat the Brahmin, and to abide by their decision.

The first thing they came to, to ask, was an old Banyan Tree, by the wayside. (A banyan tree is a kind of fruit tree.)

"Brother Banyan," said the Brahmin, eagerly, "does it seem to you right or just that this Tiger should eat me, when I set him free from his cage?"

The Banyan Tree looked down at them and spoke in a tired voice.

"In the summer," he said, "when the sun is hot, men come and sit in the cool of my shade and refresh themselves with the fruit of my branches. But when evening falls, and they are rested, they break my twigs and scatter my leaves, and stone my boughs for more fruit. Men are an ungrateful race. Let the Tiger eat the Brahmin."

The Tiger sprang to eat the Brahmin, but the Brahmin said,—

"Wait, wait; we have asked only one. We have still four to ask."

Presently they came to a place where an old Bullock was lying by the road. The Brahmin went up to him and said,—

"Brother Bullock, oh, Brother Bullock, does it seem to you a fair thing that this Tiger should eat me up, after I have just freed him from a cage?"

The Bullock looked up, and answered in a deep, grumbling voice,—

"When I was young and strong my master used me hard, and I served him well. I carried heavy loads and carried them far. Now that I am old and weak and cannot work, he leaves me without food or water, to die by the wayside. Men are a thankless lot. Let the Tiger eat the Brahmin."

The Tiger sprang, but the Brahmin spoke very quickly,—

"Oh, but this is only the second, Brother Tiger; you promised to ask five."

The Tiger grumbled a good deal, but at last he went on again with the Brahmin. And after a time they saw an Eagle, high overhead. The Brahmin called up to him imploringly,—



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"Oh, Brother Eagle, Brother Eagle! Tell us if it seems to you fair that this Tiger should eat me up, when I have just saved him from a frightful cage?"

The Eagle soared slowly overhead a moment, then he came lower, and spoke in a thin, clear voice.

"I live high in the air," he said, "and I do no man any harm. Yet as often as they find my eyrie, men stone my young and rob my nest and shoot at me with arrows. Men are a cruel breed. Let the Tiger eat the Brahmin!"

The Tiger sprang upon the Brahmin, to eat him up; and this time the Brahmin had very hard work to persuade him to wait. At last he did persuade him, however, and they walked on together. And in a little while they saw an old Alligator, lying half buried in mud and slime, at the river's edge.

"Brother Alligator, oh, Brother Alligator!" said the Brahmin, "does it seem at all right or fair to you that this Tiger should eat me up, when I have just now let him out of a cage?"

The old Alligator turned in the mud, and grunted, and snorted; then he said,—

"I lie here in the mud all day, as harmless as a pigeon; I hunt no man, yet every time a man sees me, he throws stones at me, and pokes me with sharp sticks, and jeers at me. Men are a worthless lot. Let the Tiger eat the Brahmin!"

At this the Tiger was going to eat the Brahmin at once. The poor Brahmin had to remind him, again and again, that they had asked only four.

"Wait till we've asked one more! Wait until we see a fifth!" he begged.

Finally, the Tiger walked on with him.

After a time, they met the little Jackal, coming gaily down the road toward them.

"Oh, Brother Jackal, dear Brother Jackal," said the Brahmin, "give us your opinion! Do you think it right or fair that this Tiger should eat me, when I set him free from a terrible cage?"

"Beg pardon?" said the little Jackal.

"I said," said the Brahmin, raising his voice, "do you think it is fair that the Tiger should eat me, when I set him free from his cage?"

"Cage?" said the little Jackal, vacantly.

"Yes, yes, his cage," said the Brahmin. "We want your opinion. Do you think—
—"



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"Oh," said the little Jackal, "you want my opinion? Then may I beg you to speak a little more loudly, and make the matter quite clear? I am a little slow of understanding. Now what was it?"

"Do you think," said the Brahmin, "it is right for this Tiger to eat me, when I set him free from his cage?"

"What cage?" said the little Jackal.

"Why, the cage he was in," said the Brahmin. "You see——"

"But I don't altogether understand," said the little Jackal. "You 'set him free,' you say?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" said the Brahmin. "It was this way: I was walking along, and I saw the Tiger——"

"Oh, dear, dear!" interrupted the little Jackal; "I never can see through it, if you go on like that, with a long story. If you really want my opinion you must make the matter clear. What sort of cage was it?"

"Why, a big, ordinary cage, an iron cage," said the Brahmin.

"That gives me no idea at all," said the little Jackal. "See here, my friends, if we are to get on with this matter you'd best show me the spot. Then I can understand in a jiffy. Show me the cage."

So the Brahmin, the Tiger, and the little Jackal walked back together to the spot where the cage was.

"Now, let us understand the situation," said the little Jackal. "Friend Brahmin, where were you?"

"I stood just here by the roadside," said the Brahmin.

"Tiger, and where were you?" said the little Jackal.

"Why, in the cage, of course," roared the Tiger.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Father Tiger," said the little Jackal, "I really am so stupid; I cannot *quite* understand what happened. If you will have a little patience,—*how* were you in the cage? What position were you in?"

"I stood here," said the Tiger, leaping into the cage, "with my head over my shoulder, so."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," said the little Jackal, "that makes it *much* clearer; but I still don't *quite* understand—forgive my slow mind—why did you not come out, by yourself?"



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"Can't you see that the door shut me in?" said the Tiger.

"Oh, I do beg your pardon," said the little Jackal. "I know I am very slow; I can never understand things well unless I see just how they were; if you could show me now exactly how that door works I am sure I could understand. How does it shut?"

"It shuts like this," said the Brahmin, pushing it to.

"Yes; but I don't see any lock," said the little Jackal, "does it lock on the outside?"

"It locks like this," said the Brahmin. And he shut and bolted the door!

"Oh, does it, indeed?" said the little Jackal. "Does it, *indeed!* Well, Brother Brahmin, now that it is locked, I should advise you to let it stay locked! As for you, my friend," he said to the Tiger, "I think you will wait a good while before you'll find anyone to let you out again!" Then he made a very low bow to the Brahmin.

"Good-bye, Brother," he said. "Your way lies that way, and mine lies this; good-bye!"

THE LITTLE JACKAL AND THE CAMEL

All these stories about the little Jackal that I have told you, show how clever the little Jackal was. But you know—if you don't, you will when you are grown up—that no matter how clever you are, sooner or later you surely meet some one who is more clever. It is always so in life. And it was so with the little Jackal. This is what happened.

The little Jackal was, as you know, exceedingly fond of shell-fish, especially of river crabs. Now there came a time when he had eaten all the crabs to be found on his own side of the river. He knew there must be plenty on the other side, if he could only get to them, but he could not swim.

One day he thought of a plan. He went to his friend the Camel, and said,—

"Friend Camel, I know a spot where the sugar-cane grows thick; I'll show you the way, if you will take me there."

"Indeed I will," said the Camel, who was very fond of sugar-cane. "Where is it?"



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"It is on the other side of the river," said the little Jackal; "but we can manage it nicely, if you will take me on your back and swim over."

The Camel was perfectly willing, so the little Jackal jumped on his back, and the Camel swam across the river, carrying him. When they were safely over, the little Jackal jumped down and showed the Camel the sugar-cane field; then he ran swiftly along the river bank, to hunt for crabs; the Camel began to eat sugar-cane. He ate happily, and noticed nothing around him.

Now, you know, a Camel is very big, and a Jackal is very little. Consequently, the little Jackal had eaten his fill by the time the Camel had barely taken a mouthful. The little Jackal had no mind to wait for his slow friend; he wanted to be off home again, about his business. So he ran round and round the sugar-cane field, and as he ran he sang and shouted, and made a great hullabaloo.

Of course, the villagers heard him at once.

"There is a Jackal in the sugar-cane," they said; "he will dig holes and destroy the roots; we must go down and drive him out." So they came down, with sticks and stones. When they got there, there was no Jackal to be seen; but they saw the great Camel, eating away at the juicy sugar-cane. They ran at him and beat him, and stoned him, and drove him away half dead.

When they had gone, leaving the poor Camel half killed, the little Jackal came dancing back from somewhere or other.

"I think it's time to go home, now," he said; "don't you?"

"Well, you *are* a pretty friend!" said the Camel. "The idea of your making such a noise, with your shouting and singing! You brought this upon me. What in the world made you do it? Why did you shout and sing?"

"Oh, I don't know *why*" said the little Jackal,— "I always sing after dinner!"

"So?" said the Camel. "Ah, very well, let us go home now."

He took the little Jackal kindly on his back and started into the water. When he began to swim he swam out to where the river was the very deepest. There he stopped, and said,—

"Oh, Jackal!"

"Yes," said the little Jackal.

"I have the strangest feeling," said the Camel,— "I feel as if I must roll over."

"Roll over!" cried the Jackal. "My goodness, don't do that! If you do that, you'll drown me! What in the world makes you want to do such a crazy thing? Why should you want to roll over?"



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"Oh, I don't know *why*," said the Camel slowly, "but I always roll over after dinner!"

So he rolled over.

And the little Jackal was drowned, for his sins, but the Camel came safely home.

THE GULLS OF SALT LAKE

The story I am going to tell you is about something that really happened, many years ago.

A brave little company of pioneers from the Atlantic coast crossed the Mississippi River and journeyed across the plains of Central North America in big covered wagons with many horses, and finally succeeded in climbing to the top of the great Rockies and down again into a valley in the very midst of the mountains. It was a valley of brown, bare, desert soil, in a climate where almost no rain falls; but the snow on the mountain-tops sent down little streams of pure water, the winds were gentle, and lying like a blue jewel at the foot of the western hills was a marvellous lake of salt water,—an inland sea. So the pioneers settled there and built themselves huts and cabins for the first winter.

It had taken them many months to make the terrible journey; many had died of weariness and illness on the way; many died of hardship during the winter; and the provisions they had brought in their wagons were so nearly gone that, by spring, they were living partly on roots, dug from the ground. All their lives now depended on the crops of grain and vegetables which they could raise in the valley. They made the barren land fertile by spreading water from the little streams over it,—what we call "irrigating"; and they planted enough corn and grain and vegetables for all the people. Every one helped, and every one watched for the sprouting, with hopes, and prayers, and careful eyes.

In good time the seeds sprouted, and the dry, brown earth was covered with a carpet of tender, green, growing things. No farmer's garden could have looked better than the great garden of the desert valley. And from day to day the little shoots grew and flourished till they were all well above the ground.

Then a terrible thing happened. One day, the men who were watering the crops saw a great number of crickets swarming over the ground at the edge of the gardens nearest the mountains. They were hopping from the barren places into the young, green crops, and as they settled down they ate the tiny shoots and leaves to the ground. More came, and more, and ever more, and as they



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came they spread out till they covered a big corner of the grain field. And still more and more, till it was like an army of black, hopping, crawling crickets, streaming down the side of the mountain to kill the crops.

The men tried to kill the crickets by beating them down, but the numbers were so great that it was like beating at the sea. Then they ran and told the terrible news, and all the village came to help. They started fires; they dug trenches and filled them with water; they ran wildly about in the fields, killing what they could. But while they fought in one place new armies of crickets marched down the mountain-sides and attacked the fields in other places. And at last the people fell on their knees and wept and cried in despair, for they saw starvation and death in the fields.

A few knelt to pray. Others gathered round and joined them, weeping. More left their useless struggles and knelt beside their neighbours. At last nearly all the people were kneeling on the desolate fields praying for deliverance from the plague of crickets.

Suddenly, from far off in the air toward the great salt lake, there was the sound of flapping wings. It grew louder. Some of the people looked up, startled. They saw, like a white cloud rising from the lake, a flock of sea gulls flying toward them. Snow-white in the sun, with great wings beating and soaring, in hundreds and hundreds, they rose and circled and came on.

"The gulls! the gulls!" was the cry. "What does it mean?"

The gulls flew overhead, with a shrill chorus of whimpering cries, and then, in a marvellous white cloud of outspread wings and hovering breasts, they settled down over the cultivated ground.

"Oh! woe! woe!" cried the people. "The gulls are eating what the crickets have left! they will strip root and branch!"

But all at once, someone called out,—

"No, no! See! they are eating the crickets! They are eating only the crickets!"

It was true. The gulls devoured the crickets in dozens, in hundreds, in swarms. They ate until they were gorged, and then they flew heavily back to the lake, only to come again with new appetite. And when at last they finished, they had stripped the fields of the army of crickets; and the people were saved.

To this day, in the beautiful city of Salt Lake, which grew out of that pioneer village, the little children are taught to love the sea gulls. And when they learn drawing and weaving in the schools, their first design is often a picture of a cricket and a gull.



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THE NIGHTINGALE

A long, long time ago, as long ago as when there were fairies, there lived an emperor in China, who had a most beautiful palace, all made of crystal. Outside the palace was the loveliest garden in the whole world, and farther away was a forest where the trees were taller than any other trees in the world, and farther away, still, was a deep wood. And in this wood lived a little Nightingale. The Nightingale sang so beautifully that everybody who heard her remembered her song better than anything else that he heard or saw. People came from all over the world to see the crystal palace and the wonderful garden and the great forest; but when they went home and wrote books about these things they always wrote, "But the Nightingale is the best of all."

At last it happened that the Emperor found a book which said this, and he at once sent for his Chamberlain.

"Who is this Nightingale?" said the Emperor. "Why have I never heard him sing?"

The Chamberlain, who was a very important person, said, "There cannot be any such person; I have never heard his name."

"The book says there is a Nightingale," said the Emperor. "I command that the Nightingale be brought here to sing for me this evening."

The Chamberlain went out and asked all the great lords and ladies and pages where the Nightingale could be found, but not one of them had ever heard of him. So the Chamberlain went back to the Emperor and said, "There is no such person."

"The book says there is a Nightingale," said the Emperor; "if the Nightingale is not here to sing for me this evening I will have the court trampled upon, immediately after supper."

The Chamberlain did not want to be trampled upon, so he ran out and asked everybody in the palace about the Nightingale. At last, a little girl who worked in the kitchen to help the cook, said, "Oh, yes, I know the Nightingale very well. Every night, when I go to carry scraps from the kitchen to my mother, who lives in the wood beyond the forest, I hear the Nightingale sing."

The Chamberlain asked the maid to take him to the Nightingale's home, and many of the lords and ladies followed after. When they had gone a little way, they heard a cow moo.



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"Ah!" said the lords and ladies, "that must be the Nightingale; what a large voice for so small a creature!"

"Oh, no," said the little girl, "that is just a cow, mooing."

A little farther on they heard some bullfrogs, in a swamp. "Surely that is the Nightingale," said the courtiers; "it really sounds like church-bells!"

"Oh, no," said the little girl, "those are bullfrogs, croaking."

At last they came to the wood where the Nightingale was. "Hush!" said the little girl, "she is going to sing." And, sure enough, the little Nightingale began to sing. She sang so beautifully that you have never in all your life heard anything like it.

"Dear, dear," said the courtiers, "that is very pleasant; does that little grey bird really make all that noise? She is so pale that I think she has lost her colour for fear of us."

The Chamberlain asked the little Nightingale to come and sing for the Emperor. The little Nightingale said she could sing better in her own greenwood, but she was so sweet and kind that she came with them.

That evening the palace was all trimmed with the most beautiful flowers you can imagine, and rows and rows of little silver bells, that tinkled when the wind blew in, and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of wax candles, that shone like tiny stars. In the great hall there was a gold perch for the Nightingale, beside the Emperor's throne.

When all the people were there, the Emperor asked the Nightingale to sing. Then the little grey Nightingale filled her throat full, and sang. And, my dears, she sang so beautifully that the Emperor's eyes filled up with tears! And, you know, emperors do not cry at all easily. So he asked her to sing again, and this time she sang so marvellously that the tears came out of his eyes and ran down his cheeks. That was a great success. They asked the little Nightingale to sing, over and over again, and when they had listened enough the Emperor said that she should be made "Singer in Chief to the Court." She was to have a golden perch near the Emperor's bed, and a little golden cage, and was to be allowed to go out twice every day. But there were twelve servants appointed to wait on her, and those twelve servants went with her every time she went out, and each of the twelve had hold of the end of a silken string which was tied to the little Nightingale's leg! It was not so very much fun to go out that way!

For a long, long time the Nightingale sang every evening to the Emperor and his court, and they liked her so much that the ladies all tried to sing like her; they used to put water in their mouths and then make little sounds like this: *glu-glu-*



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glug. And when the courtiers met each other in the halls, one would say "Night," and the other would say "ingale," and that was supposed to be conversation.

At last, one day, there came a little package to the Emperor, on the outside of which was written, "The Nightingale." Inside was an artificial bird, something like a Nightingale, only it was made of gold, and silver, and rubies, and emeralds, and diamonds. When it was wound up it played a waltz tune, and as it played it moved its little tail up and down. Everybody in the court was filled with delight at the music of the new nightingale. They made it sing that same tune thirty-three times, and still they had not had enough. They would have made it sing the tune thirty-four times, but the Emperor said, "I should like to hear the real Nightingale sing, now."

But when they looked about for the real little Nightingale, they could not find her anywhere! She had taken the chance, while everybody was listening to the waltz tunes, to fly away through the window to her own greenwood.

"What a very ungrateful bird!" said the lords and ladies. "But it does not matter; the new nightingale is just as good."

So the artificial nightingale was given the real Nightingale's little gold perch, and every night the Emperor wound her up, and she sang waltz tunes to him. The people in the court liked her even better than the old Nightingale, because they could all whistle her tunes,—which you can't do with real nightingales.

About a year after the artificial nightingale came, the Emperor was listening to her waltz tune, when there was a *snap* and *whir-r-r* inside the bird, and the music stopped. The Emperor ran to his doctor, but he could not do anything. Then he ran to his clock-maker, but he could not do much. Nobody could do much. The best they could do was to patch the gold nightingale up so that it could sing once a year; even that was almost too much, and the tune was very shaky. Still, the Emperor kept the gold nightingale on the perch in his own room.

A long time went by, and then, at last, the Emperor grew very ill, and was about to die. When it was sure that he could not live much longer, the people chose a new emperor and waited for the old one to die. The poor Emperor lay, quite cold and pale, in his great big bed, with velvet curtains and tall candlesticks all about. He was quite alone, for all the courtiers had gone to congratulate the new emperor, and all the servants had gone to talk it over.

When the Emperor woke up, he felt a terrible weight on his chest. He opened his eyes, and there was Death, sitting on his heart. Death had put on the Emperor's gold crown, and he had the gold sceptre in one hand, and the silken banner in the other; and he looked at the Emperor with his great hollow eyes. The room was full of shadows, and the shadows were full of faces. Everywhere the Emperor looked, there were faces. Some were very, very ugly, and some



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were sweet and lovely; they were all the things the Emperor had done in his life, good and bad. And as he looked at them they began to whisper. They whispered, "*Do you remember this?*" "*Do you remember that?*" The Emperor remembered so much that he cried out loud, "Oh, bring the great drum! Make music, so that I may not hear these dreadful whispers!" But there was nobody there to bring the drum.

Then the Emperor cried, "You little gold nightingale, can you not sing something for me? I have given you gifts of gold and jewels, and kept you always by my side; will you not help me now?" But there was nobody to wind the little gold nightingale up, and of course it could not sing.

The Emperor's heart grew colder and colder where Death crouched upon it, and the dreadful whispers grew louder and louder, and the Emperor's life was almost gone. Suddenly, through the open window, there came a most lovely song. It was so sweet and so loud that the whispers died quite away. Presently the Emperor felt his heart grow warm, then he felt the blood flow through his limbs again; he listened to the song until the tears ran down his cheeks; he knew that it was the little real Nightingale who had flown away from him when the gold nightingale came.

Death was listening to the song, too; and when it was done and the Emperor begged for more, Death, too, said, "Please sing again, little Nightingale!"

"Will you give me the Emperor's gold crown for a song?" said the little Nightingale.

"Yes," said Death; and the little Nightingale bought the Emperor's crown for a song.

"Oh, sing again, little Nightingale," begged Death.

"Will you give me the Emperor's sceptre for another song?" said the little grey Nightingale.

"Yes," said Death; and the little Nightingale bought the Emperor's sceptre for another song.

Once more Death begged for a song, and this time the little Nightingale obtained the banner for her singing. Then she sang one more song, so sweet and so sad that it made Death think of his garden in the churchyard, where he always liked best to be. And he rose from the Emperor's heart and floated away through the window.

When Death was gone, the Emperor said to the little Nightingale, "Oh, dear little Nightingale, you have saved me from Death! Do not leave me again. Stay with me on this little gold perch, and sing to me always!"



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"No, dear Emperor," said the little Nightingale, "I sing best when I am free; I cannot live in a palace. But every night when you are quite alone, I will come and sit in the window and sing to you, and tell you everything that goes on in your kingdom: I will tell you where the poor people are who ought to be helped, and where the wicked people are who ought to be punished. Only, dear Emperor, be sure that you never let anybody know that you have a little bird who tells you everything."

After the little Nightingale had flown away, the Emperor felt so well and strong that he dressed himself in his royal robes and took his gold sceptre in his hand. And when the courtiers came in to see if he were dead, there stood the Emperor with his sword in one hand and his sceptre in the other, and said, "Good-morning!"

THE TALKATIVE TORTOISE

Once upon a time, a Tortoise lived in a pond with two Ducks, who were her very good friends. She enjoyed the company of the Ducks, because she could talk with them to her heart's content; the Tortoise liked to talk. She always had something to say, and she liked to hear herself say it.

After many years of this pleasant living, the pond became very low, in a dry season; and finally it dried up. The two Ducks saw that they could no longer live there, so they decided to fly to another region, where there was more water. They went to the Tortoise to bid her good-bye.

"Oh, don't leave me behind!" begged the Tortoise. "Take me with you; I must die if I am left here."

"But you cannot fly!" said the Ducks. "How can we take you with us?"

"Take me with you! take me with you!" said the Tortoise.

The Ducks felt so sorry for her that at last they thought of a way to take her. "We have thought of a way which will be possible," they said, "if only you can manage to keep still long enough. We will each take hold of one end of a stout stick, and do you take the middle in your mouth; then we will fly up in the air with you and carry you with us. But remember not to talk! If you open your mouth, you are lost."

The Tortoise said she would not say a word; she would not so much as move her mouth; and she was very grateful. So the Ducks brought a strong little stick



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and took hold of the ends, while the Tortoise bit firmly on the middle. Then the two Ducks rose slowly in the air and flew away with their burden.

When they were above the treetops, the Tortoise wanted to say, "How high we are!" But she remembered, and kept still. When they passed the church steeple she wanted to say, "What is that which shines?" But she remembered, and held her peace. Then they came over the village square, and the people looked up and saw them. "Look at the Ducks carrying a Tortoise!" they shouted; and every one ran to look. The Tortoise wanted to say, "What business is it of yours?" But she didn't. Then she heard the people shout, "Isn't it strange! Look at it! Look!"

The Tortoise forgot everything except that she wanted to say, "Hush, you foolish people!" She opened her mouth,—and fell to the ground. And that was the end of the Tortoise.

It is a very good thing to be able to hold one's tongue!

PRINCE CHERRY

There was once an old king, so wise and kind and true that the most powerful good fairy of his land visited him and asked him to name the dearest wish of his heart, that she might grant it.

"Surely you know it," said the good king; "it is for my only son, Prince Cherry; do for him whatever you would have done for me."

"Gladly," said the great fairy; "choose what I shall give him. I can make him the richest, the most beautiful, or the most powerful prince in the world; choose."

"None of those things are what I want," said the king. "I want only that he shall be good. Of what use will it be to him to be beautiful, rich, or powerful, if he grows into a bad man? Make him the best prince in the world, I beg you!"

"Alas, I cannot make him good," said the fairy; "he must do that for himself. I can give him good advice, reprove him when he does wrong, and punish him if he will not punish himself; I can and will be his best friend, but I cannot make him good unless he wills it."

The king was sad to hear this, but he rejoiced in the friendship of the fairy for his son. And when he died, soon after, he was happy to know that he left Prince Cherry in her hands.



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Prince Cherry grieved for his father, and often lay awake at night, thinking of him. One night, when he was all alone in his room, a soft and lovely light suddenly shone before him, and a beautiful vision stood at his side. It was the good fairy. She was clad in robes of dazzling white, and on her shining hair she wore a wreath of white roses.

"I am the Fairy Candide," she said to the prince. "I promised your father that I would be your best friend, and as long as you live I shall watch over your happiness. I have brought you a gift; it is not wonderful to look at, but it has a wonderful power for your welfare; wear it, and let it help you."

As she spoke, she placed a small gold ring on the prince's little finger. "This ring," she said, "will help you to be good; when you do evil, it will prick you, to remind you. If you do not heed its warnings a worse thing will happen to you, for I shall become your enemy." Then she vanished.

Prince Cherry wore his ring, and said nothing to anyone of the fairy's gift. It did not prick him for a long time, because he was good and merry and happy. But Prince Cherry had been rather spoiled by his nurse when he was a child; she had always said to him that when he should become king he could do exactly as he pleased. Now, after a while, he began to find out that this was not true, and it made him angry.

The first time that he noticed that even a king could not always have his own way was on a day when he went hunting. It happened that he got no game. This put him in such a bad temper that he grumbled and scolded all the way home. The little gold ring began to feel tight and uncomfortable. When he reached the palace his pet dog ran to meet him.

"Go away!" said the prince, crossly.

But the little dog was so used to being petted that he only jumped up on his master, and tried to kiss his hand. The prince turned and kicked the little creature. At the instant, he felt a sharp prick in his little finger, like a pin prick.

"What nonsense!" said the prince to himself. "Am I not king of the whole land? May I not kick my own dog, if I choose? What evil is there in that?"

A silver voice spoke in his ear: "The king of the land has a right to do good, but not evil; you have been guilty of bad temper and of cruelty to-day; see that you do better to-morrow."

The prince turned sharply, but no one was to be seen; yet he recognised the voice as that of Fairy Candide.

He followed her advice for a little, but presently he forgot, and the ring pricked him so sharply that his finger had a drop of blood on it. This happened again and



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again, for the prince grew more self-willed and headstrong every day; he had some bad friends, too, who urged him on, in the hope that he would ruin himself and give them a chance to seize the throne. He treated his people carelessly and his servants cruelly, and everything he wanted he felt that he must have.

The ring annoyed him terribly; it was embarrassing for a king to have a drop of blood on his finger all the time! At last he took the ring off and put it out of sight. Then he thought he should be perfectly happy, having his own way; but instead, he grew more unhappy as he grew less good. Whenever he was crossed, or could not have his own way instantly, he flew into a passion.

Finally, he wanted something that he really could not have. This time it was a most beautiful young girl, named Zelia; the prince saw her, and loved her so much that he wanted at once to make her his queen. To his great astonishment, she refused.

"Am I not pleasing to you?" asked the prince in surprise.

"You are very handsome, very charming, prince," said Zelia; "but you are not like the good king, your father; I fear you would make me very miserable if I were your queen."

In a great rage, Prince Cherry ordered the young girl to be put in prison; and the key of her dungeon he kept. He told one of his friends, a wicked man who flattered him for his own purposes, about the thing, and asked his advice.

"Are you not king?" said the bad friend. "May you not do as you will? Keep the girl in a dungeon till she does as you command, and if she will not, sell her as a slave."

"But would it not be a disgrace for me to harm an innocent creature?" said the prince.

"It would be a disgrace to you to have it said that one of your subjects dared disobey you!" said the courtier.

He had cleverly touched the prince's worst trait, his pride. Prince Cherry went at once to Zelia's dungeon, prepared to do this cruel thing.

Zelia was gone. No one had the key save the prince himself; yet she was gone. The only person who could have dared to help her, thought the prince, was his old tutor, Suliman, the only man left who ever rebuked him for anything. In fury, he ordered Suliman to be put in fetters and brought before him.

As his servants left him, to carry out the wicked order, there was a clash, as of thunder, in the room, and then a blinding light. Fairy Candide stood before him. Her beautiful face was stern, and her silver voice rang like a trumpet, as she said, "Wicked and selfish prince, you have become baser than the beasts you



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hunt; you are furious as a lion, revengeful as a serpent, greedy as a wolf, and brutal as a bull; take, therefore, the shape of those beasts whom you resemble!"

With horror, the prince felt himself being transformed into a monster. He tried to rush upon the fairy and kill her, but she had vanished with her words. As he stood, her voice came from the air, saying, sadly, "Learn to conquer your pride by being in submission to your own subjects." At the same moment, Prince Cherry felt himself being transported to a distant forest, where he was set down by a clear stream. In the water he saw his own terrible image; he had the head of a lion, with bull's horns, the feet of a wolf, and a tail like a serpent. And as he gazed in horror, the fairy's voice whispered, "Your soul has become more ugly than your shape is; you yourself have deformed it."

The poor beast rushed away from the sound of her words, but in a moment he stumbled into a trap, set by bear-catchers. When the trappers found him they were delighted to have caught a curiosity, and they immediately dragged him to the palace courtyard. There he heard the whole court buzzing with gossip. Prince Cherry had been struck by lightning and killed, was the news, and the five favourite courtiers had struggled to make themselves rulers, but the people had refused them, and offered the crown to Suliman, the good old tutor.

Even as he heard this, the prince saw Suliman on the steps of the palace, speaking to the people. "I will take the crown to keep in trust," he said. "Perhaps the prince is not dead."

"He was a bad king; we do not want him back," said the people.

"I know his heart," said Suliman, "it is not all bad; it is tainted, but not corrupt; perhaps he will repent and come back to us a good king."

When the beast heard this, it touched him so much that he stopped tearing at his chains, and became gentle. He let his keepers lead him away to the royal menagerie without hurting them.

Life was very terrible to the prince, now, but he began to see that he had brought all his sorrow on himself, and he tried to bear it patiently. The worst to bear was the cruelty of the keeper. At last, one night, this keeper was in great danger; a tiger got loose, and attacked him. "Good enough! Let him die!" thought Prince Cherry. But when he saw how helpless the keeper was, he repented, and sprang to help. He killed the tiger and saved the keeper's life.

As he crouched at the keeper's feet, a voice said, "Good actions never go unrewarded!" And the terrible monster was changed into a pretty little white dog.

The keeper carried the beautiful little dog to the court and told the story, and from then on, Cherry was carefully treated, and had the best of everything. But in order to keep the little dog from growing, the queen ordered that he should be



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fed very little, and that was pretty hard for the poor prince. He was often half starved, although so much petted.

One day he had carried his crust of bread to a retired spot in the palace woods, where he loved to be, when he saw a poor old woman hunting for roots, and seeming almost starved.

"Poor thing," he thought, "she is even more hungry than I"; and he ran up and dropped the crust at her feet.

The woman ate it, and seemed greatly refreshed.

Cherry was glad of that, and he was running happily back to his kennel when he heard cries of distress, and suddenly he saw some rough men dragging along a young girl, who was weeping and crying for help. What was his horror to see that the young girl was Zelia! Oh, how he wished he were the monster once more, so that he could kill the men and rescue her! But he could do nothing except bark, and bite at the heels of the wicked men. That did not stop them; they drove him off, with blows, and carried Zelia into a palace in the wood.

Poor Cherry crouched by the steps, and watched. His heart was full of pity and rage. But suddenly he thought, "I was as bad as these men; I myself put Zelia in prison, and would have treated her worse still, if I had not been prevented." The thought made him so sorry and ashamed that he repented bitterly the evil he had done.

Presently a window opened, and Cherry saw Zelia lean out and throw down a piece of meat. He seized it and was just going to devour it, when the old woman to whom he had given his crust snatched it away and took him in her arms. "No, you shall not eat it, you poor little thing," she said, "for every bit of food in that house is poisoned."

At the same moment, a voice said, "Good actions never go unrewarded!" And instantly Prince Cherry was transformed into a little white dove.

With great joy, he flew to the open palace window to seek out his Zelia, to try to help her. But though he hunted in every room, no Zelia was to be found. He had to fly away, without seeing her. He wanted more than anything else to find her, and stay near her, so he flew out into the world, to seek her.

He sought her in many lands, until one day, in a far eastern country, he found her sitting in a tent, by the side of an old, white-haired hermit. Cherry was wild with delight. He flew to her shoulder, caressed her hair with his beak, and cooed in her ear.

"You dear, lovely little thing!" said Zelia. "Will you stay with me? If you will, I will love you always."



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"Ah, Zelia, see what you have done!" laughed the hermit. At that instant, the white dove vanished, and Prince Cherry stood there, as handsome and charming as ever, and with a look of kindness and modesty in his eyes which had never been there before. At the same time, the hermit stood up, his flowing hair changed to shining gold, and his face became a lovely woman's face; it was the Fairy Candide. "Zelia has broken your spell," she said to the prince, "as I meant she should, when you were worthy of her love."

Zelia and Prince Cherry fell at the fairy's feet. But with a beautiful smile she bade them come to their kingdom. In a trice, they were transported to the prince's palace, where King Suliman greeted them with tears of joy. He gave back the throne with all his heart, and King Cherry ruled again, with Zelia for his queen.

He wore the little gold ring all the rest of his life, but never once did it have to prick him hard enough to make his finger bleed.

THE GOLD IN THE ORCHARD

There was once a farmer who had a fine olive orchard. He was very industrious, and the farm always prospered under his care. But he knew that his three sons despised the farm work, and were eager to make wealth fast, through adventure.

When the farmer was old, and felt that his time had come to die, he called the three sons to him and said, "My sons, there is a pot of gold hidden in the olive orchard. Dig for it, if you wish it."

The sons tried to get him to tell them in what part of the orchard the gold was hidden; but he would tell them nothing more.

After the farmer was dead, the sons went to work to find the pot of gold; since they did not know where the hiding-place was, they agreed to begin in a line, at one end of the orchard, and to dig until one of them should find the money.

They dug until they had turned up the soil from one end of the orchard to the other, round the tree-roots and between them. But no pot of gold was to be found. It seemed as if some one must have stolen it, or as if the farmer had been wandering in his wits. The three sons were bitterly disappointed to have all their work for nothing.

The next olive season, the olive trees in the orchard bore more fruit than they had ever given before; the fine cultivating they had had from the digging brought



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so much fruit, and of so fine a quality, that when it was sold it gave the sons a whole pot of gold!

And when they saw how much money had come from the orchard, they suddenly understood what the wise father had meant when he said, "There is gold hidden in the orchard; dig for it."

MARGARET OF NEW ORLEANS

If you ever go to the beautiful city of New Orleans, somebody will be sure to take you down into the old business part of the city, where there are banks and shops and hotels, and show you a statue which stands in a little square there. It is the statue of a woman, sitting in a low chair, with her arms around a child, who leans against her. The woman is not at all pretty: she wears thick, common shoes, a plain dress, with a little shawl, and a sun-bonnet; she is stout and short, and her face is a square-chinned Irish face; but her eyes look at you like your mother's.

Now there is something very surprising about this statue: it was the first one that was ever made in America in honour of a woman. Even in Europe there are not many monuments to women, and most of the few are to great queens or princesses, very beautiful and very richly dressed. You see, this statue in New Orleans is not quite like anything else.

It is the statue of a woman named Margaret. Her whole name was Margaret Haughery, but no one in New Orleans remembers her by it, any more than you think of your dearest sister by her full name; she is just Margaret. This is her story, and it tells why people made a monument for her.

When Margaret was a tiny baby, her father and mother died, and she was adopted by two young people as poor and as kind as her own parents. She lived with them until she grew up. Then she married, and had a little baby of her own. But very soon her husband died, and then the baby died, too, and Margaret was all alone in the world. She was poor, but she was strong, and knew how to work.

All day, from morning until evening, she ironed clothes in a laundry. And every day, as she worked by the window, she saw the little motherless children from the orphan asylum, near by, working and playing about. After a while, there came a great sickness upon the city, and so many mothers and fathers died that there were more orphans than the asylum could possibly take care of. They needed a good friend, now. You would hardly think, would you, that a poor woman who worked in a laundry could be much of a friend to them? But Margaret was. She



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went straight to the kind Sisters who had the asylum and told them she was going to give them part of her wages and was going to work for them, besides. Pretty soon she had worked so hard that she had some money saved from her wages. With this, she bought two cows and a little delivery cart. Then she carried her milk to her customers in the little cart every morning; and as she went, she begged the pieces of food left over from the hotels and rich houses, and brought it back in the cart to the hungry children in the asylum. In the very hardest times that was often all the food the poor children had.

A part of the money Margaret earned went every week to the asylum, and after a few years that was made very much larger and better. Margaret was so careful and so good at business that, in spite of her giving, she bought more cows and earned more money. With this, she built a home for orphan babies; she called it her baby house.

After a time, Margaret had a chance to get a bakery, and then she became a bread-woman instead of a milk-woman. She carried the bread just as she had carried the milk, in her cart. And still she kept giving money to the asylum. Then the great war came, the Civil War. In all the trouble and sickness and fear of that time, Margaret drove her cart of bread; and somehow she had always enough to give the starving soldiers, and for her babies, beside what she sold. And despite all this, she earned enough so that when the war was over she built a big steam factory for her bread. By this time everybody in the city knew her. The children all over the city loved her; the business men were proud of her; the poor people all came to her for advice. She used to sit at the open door of her office, in a calico gown and a little shawl, and give a good word to everybody, rich or poor.

Then, by and by, one day, Margaret died. And when it was time to read her will, the people found that, with all her giving, she had still saved a great deal of money, and that she had left every penny of it to the different orphan asylums of the city,—each one of them was given something. Whether they were for white children or black, for Jews, Catholics, or Protestants, made no difference; for Margaret always said, "They are all orphans alike." And just think, dears, that splendid, wise will was signed with a cross instead of a name, for Margaret had never learned to read or write!

When the people of New Orleans knew that Margaret was dead, they said, "She was a mother to the motherless; she was a friend to those who had no friends; she had wisdom greater than schools can teach; we will not let her memory go from us." So they made a statue of her, just as she used to look, sitting in her own office door, or driving in her own little cart. And there it stands to-day, in memory of the great love and the great power of plain Margaret Haughery, of New Orleans.



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HOW THE SEA BECAME SALT

This story was told long ago by our Northern forefathers who brought it with them in their dragon ships when they crossed the North Sea to settle in England. In those days men were apt to invent stories to account for things about them which seemed peculiar, and loving the sea as they did, it is not strange that they had remarked the peculiarity of the ocean water and had found a reason why it is so different from the water in the rivers and streams.

This is not the only story that has come down to tell us how people of old accounted for the sea being salt. There are many such stories, each different from the other, all showing that the same childlike spirit of inquiry was at work in different places, striving to find an answer to this riddle of nature.

There sprang from the sons of Odin a race of men who became mighty kings of the earth, and one of these, named Frode, ruled over the lands that are called Denmark.

Now about this time were found in Denmark two great millstones, so large that no one had the strength to turn them. So Frode sent for all the wise men of the land and bade them examine the stones and tell him of what use they were, since no one could grind with them.

And after the wise men had looked closely at them and read the magic letters which were cut upon their edge, they said that the millstones were precious indeed, since they would grind out of nothing anything that the miller might wish.

So King Frode sent messengers over the world to find for him two servants who would be strong enough to grind with the millstones, and after a long, long time his messengers found him two maid-servants, who were bigger and stronger than anyone in Denmark had ever seen. But no one guessed that these were really Giant-Maidens who bore a grudge against all of the race of Odin.

Directly the Giant-Maidens were brought before Frode, and before they had rested after their long journey, or satisfied their hunger, he bade them go to the mill, and grind for him gold and peace and happiness.

"They sang and swung
The swift mill stone,
And with loud voice
They made their moan.
'We grind for Frode
Wealth and gold



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Abundant riches
He shall behold."

Presently Frode came into the mill to see that the new servants were performing their task diligently. And as he watched them from the shadow by the door, the maidens stayed their grinding for a while to rest.

The greedy man could not bear to see even an instant's pause, and he came out of the shadow, and bade them, with harsh words, go on grinding, and cease not except for so long as the cuckoo was silent, or while he himself sang a song. Now it was early summer-time, and the cuckoo was calling all the day and most of the night.

So the Giant-Maidens waxed very wroth with King Frode, and as they resumed their labours they sang a song of the hardness of their lot in the household of this pitiless King.

They had been grinding out wealth and happiness and peace, but now they bade the magic stones to grind something very different.

Presently, as the great stones moved round and round, Frode, who still stood by, heard one chant in a low, sing-song voice,—

"I see a fire east of the town—the curlews awake and sound a note of warning. A host approaches in haste, to burn the dwelling of the king."

And the next took up her song,—

"No longer will Frode sit on his throne, and rule over rings of red gold and mighty millstones. Now must we grind with all our might—and, behold! red warriors come forth—and revenge, and bloodshed, and ruin."

Then Frode shook from head to foot in his terror, for he heard the tramp of a mighty host of warriors advancing from the sea. And as he looked for a way of escape, the braces of the millstones broke with the strong grinding, and fell in two. And the whole world shook and trembled with the mighty shock of that breaking.

But through the crash and din came the voices of the Giant-Maidens, loudly chanting,—

"We have turned the stone round;
Though weary the maidens,
See what they have ground!"

And that same night a mighty sea-king came up and slew Frode and plundered his city.



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When he had sacked the city, the sea-king took on board his ship the two Giant-Maidens, and with them the broken millstones. And he bade them begin at once to grind salt, for of this he had very scanty store.

So they ground and ground; and in the middle of the night, being weary, they asked the sea-king if he had not got salt enough.

But the sea-king was hard of heart, like Frode, and he roughly bade them go on grinding. And the maidens did so, and worked to such effect that within a short time the millstones had ground out so much salt that the weight of it began to sink the ship. Down, down it sank, ship and giants and millstones, and in that spot, in the very middle of the ocean, arose a whirlpool, from whence the salt is carried north and south, east and west, throughout the waters of the earth.

And that is how the sea became salt.

THE CASTLE OF FORTUNE

One lovely summer morning, just as the sun rose, two travellers started on a journey. They were both strong young men, but one was a lazy fellow and the other was a worker.

As the first sunbeams came over the hills, they shone on a great castle standing on the heights, as far away as the eye could see. It was a wonderful and beautiful castle, all glistening towers that gleamed like marble, and glancing windows that shone like crystal. The two young men looked at it eagerly, and longed to go nearer.

Suddenly, out of the distance, something like a great butterfly, of white and gold, swept toward them. And when it came nearer, they saw that it was a most beautiful lady, dressed in floating garments as fine as cobwebs and wearing on her head a crown so bright that no one could tell whether it was of diamonds or of dew. She stood, light as air, on a great, shining, golden ball, which rolled along with her, swifter than the wind. As she passed the travellers, she turned her face to them and smiled.

"Follow me!" she said.

The lazy man sat down in the grass with a discontented sigh. "She has an easy time of it!" he said.

But the industrious man ran after the lovely lady and caught the hem of her floating robe in his grasp. "Who are you, and whither are you going?" he asked.



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"I am the Fairy of Fortune," the beautiful lady said, "and that is my castle. You may reach it to-day, if you will; there is time, if you waste none. If you reach it before the last stroke of midnight, I will receive you there, and will be your friend. But if you come one second after midnight, it will be too late."

When she had said this, her robe slipped from the traveller's hand and she was gone.

The industrious man hurried back to his friend, and told him what the fairy had said.

"The idea!" said the lazy man, and he laughed; "of course, if we had a horse there would be some chance, but *walk* all that way? No, thank you!"

"Then good-bye," said his friend, "I am off." And he set out, down the road toward the shining castle, with a good steady stride, his eyes straight ahead.

The lazy man lay down in the soft grass, and looked rather wistfully at the far-away towers. "If only I had a good horse!" he sighed.

Just at that moment he felt something warm nosing about at his shoulder, and heard a little whinny. He turned round, and there stood a little horse! It was a dainty creature, gentle-looking, and finely built, and it was saddled and bridled.

"Hello!" said the lazy man. "Luck often comes when one isn't looking for it!" And in an instant he had leaped on the horse, and headed him for the castle of fortune. The little horse started at a fine pace, and in a very few minutes they overtook the other traveller, plodding along on foot.

"How do you like shank's pony?" laughed the lazy man, as he passed his friend.

The industrious man only nodded, and kept on with his steady stride, eyes straight ahead.

The horse kept his good pace, and by noon the towers of the castle stood out against the sky, much nearer and more beautiful. Exactly at noon, the horse turned aside from the road, into a shady grove on a hill, and stopped.

"Wise beast," said his rider: "'haste makes waste,' and all things are better in moderation. I'll follow your example, and eat and rest a bit." He dismounted and sat down in the cool moss, with his back against a tree. He had a lunch in his traveller's pouch, and he ate it comfortably. Then he felt drowsy from the heat and the early ride, so he pulled his hat over his eyes, and settled himself for a nap. "It will go all the better for a little rest," he said.

That was a sleep! He slept like the seven sleepers, and he dreamed the most beautiful things you could imagine. At last, he dreamed that he had entered the



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castle of fortune and was being received with great festivities. Everything he wanted was brought to him, and music played while fireworks were set off in his honour. The music was so loud that he awoke. He sat up, rubbing his eyes, and behold, the fireworks were the very last rays of the setting sun, and the music was the voice of the other traveller, passing the grove on foot!

"Time to be off," said the lazy man, and looked about him for the pretty horse. No horse was to be found. The only living thing near was an old, bony, grey donkey. The man called, and whistled, and looked, but no little horse appeared. After a long while he gave it up, and, since there was nothing better to do, he mounted the old grey donkey and set out again.

The donkey was slow, and he was hard to ride, but he was better than nothing; and gradually the lazy man saw the towers of the castle draw nearer.

Now it began to grow dark; in the castle windows the lights began to show. Then came trouble! Slower, and slower, went the grey donkey; slower, and slower, till, in the very middle of a pitch-black wood, he stopped and stood still. Not a step would he budge for all the coaxing and scolding and beating his rider could give. At last the rider kicked him, as well as beat him, and at that the donkey felt that he had had enough. Up went his hind heels, and down went his head, and over it went the lazy man on to the stony ground.

There he lay groaning for many minutes, for it was not a soft place, I can assure you. How he wished he were in a soft, warm bed, with his aching bones comfortable in blankets! The very thought of it made him remember the Castle of Fortune, for he knew there must be fine beds there. To get to those beds he was even willing to bestir his poor limbs, so he sat up and felt about him for the donkey.

No donkey was to be found.

The lazy man crept round and round the spot where he had fallen, scratched his hands on the stumps, tore his face in the briers, and bumped his knees on the stones. But no donkey was there. He would have laid down to sleep again, but he could hear now the howls of hungry wolves in the woods; that it did not sound pleasant. Finally, his hand struck against something that felt like a saddle. He grasped it, thankfully, and started to mount his donkey.

The beast he took hold of seemed very small, and, as he mounted, he felt that its sides were moist and slimy. It gave him a shudder, and he hesitated; but at that moment he heard a distant clock strike. It was striking eleven! There was still time to reach the castle of fortune, but no more than enough; so he mounted his new steed and rode on once more. The animal was easier to sit on than the donkey, and the saddle seemed remarkably high behind; it was good to lean against. But even the donkey was not so slow as this; the new steed was slower



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than he. After a while, however, he pushed his way out of the woods into the open, and there stood the castle, only a little way ahead! All its windows were ablaze with lights. A ray from them fell on the lazy man's beast, and he saw what he was riding: it was a gigantic snail! a snail as large as a calf!

A cold shudder ran over the lazy man's body, and he would have got off his horrid animal then and there, but just then the clock struck once more. It was the first of the long, slow strokes that mark midnight! The man grew frantic when he heard it. He drove his heels into the snail's sides, to make him hurry. Instantly, the snail drew in his head, curled up in his shell, and left the lazy man sitting in a heap on the ground!

The clock struck twice. If the man had run for it, he could still have reached the castle, but, instead, he sat still and shouted for a horse.

"A beast, a beast!" he wailed, "any kind of a beast that will take me to the castle!"

The clock struck three times. And as it struck the third note, something came rustling and rattling out of the darkness, something that sounded like a horse with harness. The lazy man jumped on its back, a very queer, low back. As he mounted, he saw the doors of the castle open, and saw his friend standing on the threshold, waving his cap and beckoning to him.

The clock struck four times, and the new steed began to stir; as it struck five, he moved a pace forward; as it struck six, he stopped; as it struck seven, he turned himself about; as it struck eight, he began to move backward, away from the castle!

The lazy man shouted, and beat him, but the beast went slowly backward. And the clock struck nine. The man tried to slide off, then, but from all sides of his strange animal great arms came reaching up and held him fast. And in the next ray of moonlight that broke the dark clouds, he saw that he was mounted on a monster crab!

One by one, the lights went out, in the castle windows. The clock struck ten. Backward went the crab. Eleven! Still the crab went backward. The clock struck twelve! Then the great doors shut with a clang, and the castle of fortune was closed for ever to the lazy man.

What became of him and his crab no one knows to this day, and no one cares. But the industrious man was received by the Fairy of Fortune, and made happy in the castle as long as he wanted to stay. And ever afterward she was his friend, helping him not only to happiness for himself, but also showing him how to help others, wherever he went.