1. Rapunzel

The Brothers Grimm (German)

ONCE upon a time there lived a man and his wife who were very unhappy because they had no children. These good people had a little window at the back of their house, which looked into the most lovely garden, full of all manner of beautiful flowers and vegetables; but the garden was surrounded by a high wall, and no one dared to enter it, for it belonged to a witch of great power, who was feared by the whole world.

One day the woman stood at the window overlooking the garden, and saw there a bed full of the finest rampion: the leaves looked so fresh and green that she longed to eat them. The desire grew day by day, and just because she knew she couldn't possibly get any, she pined away and became quite pale and wretched. Then her husband grew alarmed and said:

"What ails you, dear wife?"

"Oh," she answered, "if I don't get some rampion to eat out of the garden behind the house, I know I shall die."

The man, who loved her dearly, thought to himself, "Come! rather than let your wife die you shall fetch her some rampion, no matter the cost." So at dusk he climbed over the wall into the witch's garden, and, hastily gathering a handful of rampion leaves, he returned with them to his wife. She made them into a salad, which tasted so good that her longing for the forbidden food was greater than ever. If she were to know any peace of mind, there was nothing for it but that her husband should climb over the garden wall again, and fetch her some more. So at dusk over he got, but when he reached the other side he drew back in terror, for there, standing before him, was the old witch.

"How dare you," she said, with a wrathful glance, "climb into my garden and steal my rampion like a common thief? You shall suffer for your foolhardiness."

"Oh!" he implored, "pardon my presumption; necessity alone drove me to the deed. My wife saw your rampion from her window, and conceived such a desire for it that she would certainly have died if her wish had not been gratified." Then the Witch's anger was a little appeased, and she said:

"If it's as you say, you may take as much rampion away with you as you like, but on one condition only -- that you give me the child your wife will shortly bring into the world. All shall go well with it, and I will look after it like a mother."

The man in his terror agreed to everything she asked, and as soon as the child was born the Witch appeared, and having given it the name of Rapunzel, which is the same as rampion, she carried it off with her.
Rapunzel was the most beautiful child under the sun. When she was twelve years old, the Witch shut her up in a tower, in the middle of a great wood, and the tower had neither stairs nor doors, only high up at the very top a small window. When the old Witch wanted to get in she stood underneath and called out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your golden hair,"

for Rapunzel had wonderful long hair, and it was as fine as spun gold. Whenever she heard the Witch's voice she unloosed her plaits, and let her hair fall down out of the window about twenty yards below, and the old Witch climbed up by it.

After they had lived like this for a few years, it happened one day that a Prince was riding through the wood and passed by the tower. As he drew near it he heard someone singing so sweetly that he stood still spell-bound, and listened. It was Rapunzel in her loneliness trying to while away the time by letting her sweet voice ring out into the wood. The Prince longed to see the owner of the voice, but he sought in vain for a door in the tower. He rode home, but he was so haunted by the song he had heard that he returned every day to the wood and listened. One day, when he was standing thus behind a tree, he saw the old Witch approach and heard her call out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your golden hair."

Then Rapunzel let down her plaits, and the Witch climbed up by them.

"So that's the staircase, is it?" said the Prince. "Then I too will climb it and try my luck."

So on the following day, at dusk, he went to the foot of the tower and cried:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your golden hair,"

and as soon as she had let it down the Prince climbed up.

At first Rapunzel was terribly frightened when a man came in, for she had never seen one before; but the Prince spoke to her so kindly, and told her at once that his heart had been so touched by her singing, that he felt he should know no peace of mind till he had seen her. Very soon Rapunzel forgot her fear, and when he asked her to marry him she consented at once. "For," she thought, "he is young and handsome, and I'll certainly be happier with him than with the old Witch." So she put her hand in his and said:

"Yes, I will gladly go with you, only how am I to get down out of the tower? Every time you come to see me you must bring a skein of silk with you, and I will make a ladder of them, and when it is finished I will climb down by it, and you will take me away on your horse."
They arranged that till the ladder was ready, he was to come to her every evening, because the old woman was with her during the day. The old Witch, of course, knew nothing of what was going on, till one day Rapunzel, not thinking of what she was about, turned to the Witch and said:

"How is it, good mother, that you are so much harder to pull up than the young Prince? He is always with me in a moment."

"Oh! you wicked child," cried the Witch. "What is this I hear? I thought I had hidden you safely from the whole world, and in spite of it you have managed to deceive me."

In her wrath she seized Rapunzel's beautiful hair, wound it round and round her left hand, and then grasping a pair of scissors in her right, snip snap, off it came, and the beautiful plaits lay on the ground. And, worse than this, she was so hard-hearted that she took Rapunzel to a lonely desert place, and there left her to live in loneliness and misery.

But on the evening of the day in which she had driven poor Rapunzel away, the Witch fastened the plaits on to a hook in the window, and when the Prince came and called out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Let down your golden hair,"

she let them down, and the Prince climbed up as usual, but instead of his beloved Rapunzel he found the old Witch, who fixed her evil, glittering eyes on him, and cried mockingly:

"Ah, ah! you thought to find your lady love, but the pretty bird has flown and its song is dumb; the cat caught it, and will scratch out your eyes too. Rapunzel is lost to you for ever -- you will never see her more."

The Prince was beside himself with grief, and in his despair jumped right down from the tower, and, though he escaped with his life, the thorns among which he fell pierced his eyes out. Then he wandered, blind and miserable, through the wood, eating nothing but roots and berries, and weeping and lamenting the loss of his lovely bride. So he wandered about for some years, as wretched and unhappy as he could well be, and at last he came to the desert place where Rapunzel was living. Of a sudden he heard a voice which seemed strangely familiar to him. He walked eagerly in the direction of the sound, and when he was quite close, Rapunzel recognised him and fell on his neck and wept. But two of her tears touched his eyes, and in a moment they became quite clear again, and he saw as well as he had ever done. Then he led her to his kingdom, where they were received and welcomed with great joy, and they lived happily ever after.
2.  *Aschenputtel (Cinderella)*

by the Brothers Grimm

(*Germanic Fairy Tale*)

The wife of a rich man fell sick, and as she felt that her end was drawing near, she called her only daughter to her bedside and said, "Dear child, be good and pious, and then the good God will always protect you, and I will look down on you from heaven and be near you."

Thereupon she closed her eyes and departed. Every day the maiden went out to her mother's grave, and wept, and she remained pious and good. When winter came the snow spread a white sheet over the grave, and by the time the spring sun had drawn it off again, the man had taken another wife.

The woman had brought with her into the house two daughters, who were beautiful and fair of face, but vile and black of heart. Now began a bad time for the poor step-child. "Is the stupid goose to sit in the parlor with us," they said. "He who wants to eat bread must earn it. Out with the kitchen-wench." They took her pretty clothes away from her, put an old grey bedgown on her, and gave her wooden shoes.

"Just look at the proud princess, how decked out she is," they cried, and laughed, and led her into the kitchen. There she had to do hard work from morning till night, get up before daybreak, carry water, light fires, cook and wash. Besides this, the sisters did her every imaginable injury - they mocked her and emptied her peas and lentils into the ashes, so that she was forced to sit and pick them out again. In the evening when she had worked till she was weary she had no bed to go to, but had to sleep by the hearth in the cinders. And as on that account she always looked dusty and dirty, they called her Cinderella.
It happened that the father was once going to the fair, and he asked his two step-daughters what he should bring back for them.

"Beautiful dresses," said one, "Pearls and jewels," said the second.

"And you, Cinderella," said he, "what will you have?"

"Father break off for me the first branch which knocks against your hat on your way home."

So he bought beautiful dresses, pearls and jewels for his two step-daughters, and on his way home, as he was riding through a green thicket, a hazel twig brushed against him and knocked off his hat. Then he broke off the branch and took it with him. When he reached home he gave his step-daughters the things which they had wished for, and to Cinderella he gave the branch from the hazel-bush. Cinderella thanked him, went to her mother's grave and planted the branch on it, and wept so much that the tears fell down on it and watered it. And it grew and became a handsome tree. Thrice a day Cinderella went and sat beneath it, and wept and prayed, and a little white bird always came on the tree, and if Cinderella expressed a wish, the bird threw down to her what she had wished for.

It happened, however, that the king gave orders for a festival which was to last three days, and to which all the beautiful young girls in the country were invited, in order that his son might choose himself a bride. When the two step-sisters heard that they too were to appear among the number, they were delighted, called Cinderella and said, "comb our hair for us, brush our shoes and fasten our buckles, for we are going to the wedding at the king's palace."

Cinderella obeyed, but wept, because she too would have liked to go with them to the dance, and begged her step-mother to allow her to do so.

"You go, Cinderella," said she, "covered in dust and dirt as you are, and would go to the festival. You have no clothes and shoes, and yet would dance." As, however, Cinderella went on asking, the step-mother said at last, "I have emptied a dish of lentils into the ashes for you, if you have picked them out again in two hours, you shall go with us."
The maiden went through the back-door into the garden, and called, "You tame pigeons, you turtle-doves, and all you birds beneath the sky, come and help me to pick

the good into the pot,
the bad into the crop."

Then two white pigeons came in by the kitchen window, and afterwards the turtle-doves, and at last all the birds beneath the sky, came whirring and crowding in, and alighted amongst the ashes. And the pigeons nodded with their heads and began pick, pick, pick, pick, and the rest began also pick, pick, pick, pick, and gathered all the good grains into the dish. Hardly had one hour passed before they had finished, and all flew out again.

Then the girl took the dish to her step-mother, and was glad, and believed that now she would be allowed to go with them to the festival.

But the step-mother said, "No, Cinderella, you have no clothes and you can not dance. You would only be laughed at." And as Cinderella wept at this, the step-mother said, if you can pick two dishes of lentils out of the ashes for me in one hour, you shall go with us. And she thought to herself, that she most certainly cannot do again.

When the step-mother had emptied the two dishes of lentils amongst the ashes, the maiden went through the back-door into the garden and cried, "You tame pigeons, you turtle-doves, and all you birds beneath the sky, come and help me to pick

the good into the pot,
the bad into the crop."

Then two white pigeons came in by the kitchen-window, and afterwards the turtle-doves, and at length all the birds beneath the sky, came whirring and crowding in, and alighted amongst the ashes. And the doves nodded with their heads and began pick, pick, pick, pick, and the others began also pick, pick, pick, pick, and gathered all the good seeds into the dishes, and before half an hour was over they had already finished, and all flew out again. Then the maiden was delighted, and believed that she might now go with them to the wedding.
But the step-mother said, "All this will not help. You cannot go with us, for you have no clothes and cannot dance. We should be ashamed of you." On this she turned her back on Cinderella, and hurried away with her two proud daughters.

As no one was now at home, Cinderella went to her mother's grave beneath the hazel-tree, and cried,

"Shiver and quiver, little tree, 
Silver and gold throw down over me."

Then the bird threw a gold and silver dress down to her, and slippers embroidered with silk and silver. She put on the dress with all speed, and went to the wedding. Her step-sisters and the step-mother however did not know her, and thought she must be a foreign princess, for she looked so beautiful in the golden dress. They never once thought of Cinderella, and believed that she was sitting at home in the dirt, picking lentils out of the ashes. The prince approached her, took her by the hand and danced with her. He would dance with no other maiden, and never let loose of her hand, and if any one else came to invite her, he said, "This is my partner."

She danced till it was evening, and then she wanted to go home. But the king's son said, "I will go with you and bear you company," for he wished to see to whom the beautiful maiden belonged. She escaped from him, however, and sprang into the pigeon-house. The king's son waited until her father came, and then he told him that the unknown maiden had leapt into the pigeon-house. The old man thought, "Can it be Cinderella." And they had to bring him an axe and a pickaxe that he might hew the pigeon-house to pieces, but no one was inside it. And when they got home Cinderella lay in her dirty clothes among the ashes, and a dim little oil-lamp was burning on the mantle-piece, for Cinderella had jumped quickly down from the back of the pigeon-house and had run to the little hazel-tree, and there she had taken off her beautiful clothes and laid them on the grave, and the bird had taken them away again, and then she had seated herself in the kitchen amongst the ashes in her grey gown.

Next day when the festival began afresh, and her parents and the step-sisters had gone once more, Cinderella went to the hazel-tree and said,
"Shiver and quiver, my little tree,  
Silver and gold throw down over me."

Then the bird threw down a much more beautiful dress than on the preceding day. And when Cinderella appeared at the wedding in this dress, every one was astonished at her beauty. The king's son had waited until she came, and instantly took her by the hand and danced with no one but her. When others came and invited her, he said, "This is my partner." When evening came she wished to leave, and the king's son followed her and wanted to see into which house she went. But she sprang away from him, and into the garden behind the house. Therein stood a beautiful tall tree on which hung the most magnificent pears. She clambered so nimbly between the branches like a squirrel that the king's son did not know where she was gone.

He waited until her father came, and said to him, "The unknown maiden has escaped from me, and I believe she has climbed up the pear-tree." The father thought, "Can it be Cinderella." And had an axe brought and cut the tree down, but no one was on it. And when they got into the kitchen, Cinderella lay there among the ashes, as usual, for she had jumped down on the other side of the tree, had taken the beautiful dress to the bird on the little hazel-tree, and put on her grey gown.

On the third day, when the parents and sisters had gone away, Cinderella went once more to her mother's grave and said to the little tree,

"Shiver and quiver, my little tree,  
silver and gold throw down over me."

And now the bird threw down to her a dress which was more splendid and magnificent than any she had yet had, and the slippers were golden. And when she went to the festival in the dress, no one knew how to speak for astonishment. The king's son danced with her only, and if any one invited her to dance, he said this is my partner.

When evening came, Cinderella wished to leave, and the king's son was anxious to go with her, but she escaped from him so quickly that he could not follow her. The king's son, however, had employed a ruse, and had caused the whole staircase to be smeared with pitch, and there, when she ran down, had the maiden's left slipper remained
stuck. The king's son picked it up, and it was small and dainty, and all golden.

Next morning, he went with it to the father, and said to him, no one shall be my wife but she whose foot this golden slipper fits. Then were the two sisters glad, for they had pretty feet. The eldest went with the shoe into her room and wanted to try it on, and her mother stood by. But she could not get her big toe into it, and the shoe was too small for her. Then her mother gave her a knife and said, "Cut the toe off, when you are queen you will have no more need to go on foot." The maiden cut the toe off, forced the foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the king's son. Then he took her on his horse as his bride and rode away with her. They were obliged, however, to pass the grave, and there, on the hazel-tree, sat the two pigeons and cried,

"Turn and peep, turn and peep,
there's blood within the shoe,
the shoe it is too small for her,
the true bride waits for you."

Then he looked at her foot and saw how the blood was trickling from it. He turned his horse round and took the false bride home again, and said she was not the true one, and that the other sister was to put the shoe on. Then this one went into her chamber and got her toes safely into the shoe, but her heel was too large. So her mother gave her a knife and said, "Cut a bit off your heel, when you are queen you will have no more need to go on foot." The maiden cut a bit off her heel, forced her foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the king's son. He took her on his horse as his bride, and rode away with her, but when they passed by the hazel-tree, the two pigeons sat on it and cried,

"Turn and peep, turn and peep,
there's blood within the shoe,
the shoe it is too small for her,
the true bride waits for you."

He looked down at her foot and saw how the blood was running out of her shoe, and how it had stained her white stocking quite red. Then he turned his horse and took the false bride home again. "This also is not the right one," said he, "have you no other daughter." "No," said the man, "there is still a little stunted kitchen-wench which my late wife left behind her, but she cannot possibly be the
bride." The king's son said he was to send her up to him, but the mother answered, oh, no, she is much too dirty, she cannot show herself. But he absolutely insisted on it, and Cinderella had to be called.

She first washed her hands and face clean, and then went and bowed down before the king's son, who gave her the golden shoe. Then she seated herself on a stool, drew her foot out of the heavy wooden shoe, and put it into the slipper, which fitted like a glove. And when she rose up and the king's son looked at her face he recognized the beautiful maiden who had danced with him and cried, "That is the true bride." The step-mother and the two sisters were horrified and became pale with rage, he, however, took Cinderella on his horse and rode away with her. As they passed by the hazel-tree, the two white doves cried,

"Turn and peep, turn and peep,
no blood is in the shoe,
the shoe is not too small for her,
the true bride rides with you."

And when they had cried that, the two came flying down and placed themselves on Cinderella's shoulders, one on the right, the other on the left, and remained sitting there. When the wedding with the king's son was to be celebrated, the two false sisters came and wanted to get into favor with Cinderella and share her good fortune. When the betrothed couple went to church, the elder was at the right side and the younger at the left, and the pigeons pecked out one eye from each of them. Afterwards as they came back the elder was at the left, and the younger at the right, and then the pigeons pecked out the other eye from each. And thus, for their wickedness and falsehood, they were punished with blindness all their days.
3. Schneewittchen (Snow White)

By: The Brothers Grimm

(Germanic Fairy Tale)

It was the middle of winter, and the snow-flakes were falling like feathers from the sky, and a queen sat at her window working, and her embroidery-frame was of ebony. And as she worked, gazing at times out on the snow, she pricked her finger, and there fell from it three drops of blood on the snow. And when she saw how bright and red it looked, she said to herself, "Oh that I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the embroidery frame!" Not very long after she had a daughter, with a skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony, and she was named Snow-white. And when she was born the queen died. After a year had gone by the king took another wife, a beautiful woman, but proud and overbearing, and she could not bear to be surpassed in beauty by any one. She had a magic looking-glass, and she used to stand before it, and look in it, and say,

"Looking-glass upon the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?"

And the looking-glass would answer,

"You are fairest of them all."
And she was contented, for she knew that the looking-glass spoke the truth. Now, Snow-white was growing prettier and prettier, and when she was seven years old she was as beautiful as day, far more so than the queen herself. So one day when the queen went to her mirror and said,

"Looking-glass upon the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?"

It answered,

"Queen, you are full fair, 'tis true,
But Snow-white fairer is than you."

This gave the queen a great shock, and she became yellow and green with envy, and from that hour her heart turned against Snow-white, and she hated her. And envy and pride like ill weeds grew in her heart higher every day, until she had no peace day or night. At last she sent for a huntsman, and said, "Take the child out into the woods, so that I may set eyes on her no more. You must put her to death, and bring me her heart for a token." The huntsman consented, and led her away; but when he drew his cutlass to pierce Snow-white's innocent heart, she began to weep, and to say, "Oh, dear huntsman, do not take my life; I will go away into the wild wood, and never come home again." And as she was so lovely the huntsman had pity on her, and said, "Away with you then, poor child;" for he thought the wild animals would be sure to devour her, and it was as if a stone had been rolled away from his heart when he spared to put her to death. Just at that moment a young wild boar came running by, so he caught and killed it, and taking
out its heart, he brought it to the queen for a token. And it was salted and cooked, and the wicked woman ate it up, thinking that there was an end of Snow-white.

Now, when the poor child found herself quite alone in the wild woods, she felt full of terror, even of the very leaves on the trees, and she did not know what to do for fright. Then she began to run over the sharp stones and through the thorn bushes, and the wild beasts after her, but they did her no harm. She ran as long as her feet would carry her; and when the evening drew near she came to a little house, and she went inside to rest. Everything there was very small, but as pretty and clean as possible. There stood the little table ready laid, and covered with a white cloth, and seven little plates, and seven knives and forks, and drinking-cups. By the wall stood seven little beds, side by side, covered with clean white quilts. Snow-white, being very hungry and thirsty, ate from each plate a little porridge and bread, and drank out of each little cup a drop of wine, so as not to finish up one portion alone. After that she felt so tired that she lay down on one of the beds, but it did not seem to suit her; one was too long, another too short, but at last the seventh was quite right; and so she lay down upon it, committed herself to heaven, and fell asleep.

When it was quite dark, the masters of the house came home. They were seven dwarfs, whose occupation was to dig underground among the mountains. When they had lighted their seven candles, and it was quite light in the little house, they saw that some one must have been in, as everything was not in the same order in which they left it. The first said, "Who has been sitting in my little chair?" The second said, "Who has been eating from my little plate?" The third said, "Who has been taking my little loaf?" The fourth said, "Who has been tasting my porridge?" The
fifth said, "Who has been using my little fork?" The sixth said, "Who has been cutting with my little knife?" The seventh said, "Who has been drinking from my little cup?" Then the first one, looking round, saw a hollow in his bed, and cried, "Who has been lying on my bed?" And the others came running, and cried, "Some one has been on our beds too!" But when the seventh looked at his bed, he saw little Snow-white lying there asleep. Then he told the others, who came running up, crying out in their astonishment, and holding up their seven little candles to throw a light upon Snow-white. "O goodness! O gracious!" cried they, "what beautiful child is this?" and were so full of joy to see her that they did not wake her, but let her sleep on. And the seventh dwarf slept with his comrades, an hour at a time with each, until the night had passed. When it was morning, and Snow-white awoke and saw the seven dwarfs, she was very frightened; but they seemed quite friendly, and asked her what her name was, and she told them; and then they asked how she came to be in their house. And she related to them how her step-mother had wished her to be put to death, and how the huntsman had spared her life, and how she had run the whole day long, until at last she had found their little house. Then the dwarfs said, "If you will keep our house for us, and cook, and wash, and make the beds, and sew and knit, and keep everything tidy and clean, you may stay with us, and you shall lack nothing." - "With all my heart," said Snow-white; and so she stayed, and kept the house in good order. In the morning the dwarfs went to the mountain to dig for gold; in the evening they came home, and their supper had to be ready for them. All the day long the maiden was left alone, and the good little dwarfs warned her, saying, "Beware of your step-mother, she will soon know you are here. Let no one into the house." Now the queen, having eaten Snow-white's heart, as she supposed, felt quite sure that now she was the first and fairest, and so she came to her mirror, and said,
"Looking-glass upon the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?"

And the glass answered,

"Queen, thou art of beauty rare,
But Snow-white living in the glen
With the seven little men
Is a thousand times more fair."

Then she was very angry, for the glass always spoke the truth, and she knew that the huntsman must have deceived her, and that Snow-white must still be living. And she thought and thought how she could manage to make an end of her, for as long as she was not the fairest in the land, envy left her no rest. At last she thought of a plan; she painted her face and dressed herself like an old pedlar woman, so that no one would have known her. In this disguise she went across the seven mountains, until she came to the house of the seven little dwarfs, and she knocked at the door and cried, "Fine wares to sell! fine wares to sell!" Snow-white peeped out of the window and cried, "Good-day, good woman, what have you to sell?" - "Good wares, fine wares," answered she, "laces of all colours;"and she held up a piece that was woven of variegated silk. "I need not be afraid of letting in this good woman," thought Snow-white, and she unbarred the door and bought the pretty lace. "What a figure you are, child!" said the old woman, "come and let me lace you properly for once." Snow-white, suspecting nothing, stood up before her, and let her lace her with the new lace; but the old woman laced so quick and tight that it took Snow-
white's breath away, and she fell down as dead. "Now you have done with being the fairest," said
the old woman as she hastened away. Not long after that, towards evening, the seven dwarfs
came home, and were terrified to see their dear Snow-white lying on the ground, without life or
motion; they raised her up, and when they saw how tightly she was laced they cut the lace in
two; then she began to draw breath, and little by little she returned to life. When the dwarfs heard
what had happened they said, "The old pedlar woman was no other than the wicked queen; you
must beware of letting any one in when we are not here!" And when the wicked woman got
home she went to her glass and said,

"Looking-glass against the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?"

And it answered as before,

"Queen, thou art of beauty rare,
But Snow-white living in the glen
With the seven little men
Is a thousand times more fair."

When she heard that she was so struck with surprise that all the blood left her heart, for she knew
that Snow-white must still be living. "But now," said she, "I will think of something that will be
her ruin." And by witchcraft she made a poisoned comb. Then she dressed herself up to look like
another different sort of old woman. So she went across the seven mountains and came to the
house of the seven dwarfs, and knocked at the door and cried, "Good wares to sell! good wares to sell!" Snow-white looked out and said, "Go away, I must not let anybody in." - "But you are not forbidden to look," said the old woman, taking out the poisoned comb and holding it up. It pleased the poor child so much that she was tempted to open the door; and when the bargain was made the old woman said, "Now, for once your hair shall be properly combed." Poor Snow-white, thinking no harm, let the old woman do as she would, but no sooner was the comb put in her hair than the poison began to work, and the poor girl fell down senseless. "Now, you paragon of beauty," said the wicked woman, "this is the end of you," and went off. By good luck it was now near evening, and the seven little dwarfs came home. When they saw Snow-white lying on the ground as dead, they thought directly that it was the step-mother's doing, and looked about, found the poisoned comb, and no sooner had they drawn it out of her hair than Snow-white came to herself, and related all that had passed. Then they warned her once more to be on her guard, and never again to let any one in at the door. And the queen went home and stood before the looking-glass and said,

"Looking-glass against the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?"

And the looking-glass answered as before,

"Queen, thou art of beauty rare,
But Snow-white living in the glen
With the seven little men
Is a thousand times more fair."

When she heard the looking-glass speak thus she trembled and shook with anger. "Snow-white shall die," cried she, "though it should cost me my own life!" And then she went to a secret lonely chamber, where no one was likely to come, and there she made a poisonous apple. It was beautiful to look upon, being white with red cheeks, so that any one who should see it must long for it, but whoever ate even a little bit of it must die. When the apple was ready she painted her face and clothed herself like a peasant woman, and went across the seven mountains to where the seven dwarfs lived. And when she knocked at the door Snow-white put her head out of the window and said, "I dare not let anybody in; the seven dwarfs told me not." - "All right," answered the woman; "I can easily get rid of my apples elsewhere. There, I will give you one." - "No," answered Snow-white, "I dare not take anything." - "Are you afraid of poison?" said the woman, "look here, I will cut the apple in two pieces; you shall have the red side, I will have the white one." For the apple was so cunningly made, that all the poison was in the rosy half of it. Snow-white longed for the beautiful apple, and as she saw the peasant woman eating a piece of it she could no longer refrain, but stretched out her hand and took the poisoned half. But no sooner had she taken a morsel of it into her mouth than she fell to the earth as dead. And the queen, casting on her a terrible glance, laughed aloud and cried, "As white as snow, as red as blood, as black as ebony! this time the dwarfs will not be able to bring you to life again." And when she went home and asked the looking-glass,

"Looking-glass against the wall,

Who is fairest of us all?"
at last it answered,

"You are the fairest now of all."

Then her envious heart had peace, as much as an envious heart can have. The dwarfs, when they came home in the evening, found Snow-white lying on the ground, and there came no breath out of her mouth, and she was dead. They lifted her up, sought if anything poisonous was to be found, cut her laces, combed her hair, washed her with water and wine, but all was of no avail, the poor child was dead, and remained dead. Then they laid her on a bier, and sat all seven of them round it, and wept and lamented three whole days. And then they would have buried her, but that she looked still as if she were living, with her beautiful blooming cheeks. So they said, "We cannot hide her away in the black ground." And they had made a coffin of clear glass, so as to be looked into from all sides, and they laid her in it, and wrote in golden letters upon it her name, and that she was a king's daughter. Then they set the coffin out upon the mountain, and one of them always remained by it to watch. And the birds came too, and mourned for Snow-white, first an owl, then a raven, and lastly, a dove. Now, for a long while Snow-white lay in the coffin and never changed, but looked as if she were asleep, for she was still as' white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony. It happened, however, that one day a king's son rode through the wood and up to the dwarfs' house, which was near it. He saw on the mountain the coffin, and beautiful Snow-white within it, and he read what was written in golden letters upon it. Then he said to the dwarfs, "Let me have the coffin, and I will give you whatever you like to ask for it." But the dwarfs told him that they could not part with it for all the gold in the
world. But he said, "I beseech you to give it me, for I cannot live without looking upon Snow-white; if you consent I will bring you to great honour, and care for you as if you were my brethren." When he so spoke the good little dwarfs had pity upon him and gave him the coffin, and the king's son called his servants and bid them carry it away on their shoulders. Now it happened that as they were going along they stumbled over a bush, and with the shaking the bit of poisoned apple flew out of her throat. It was not long before she opened her eyes, threw up the cover of the coffin, and sat up, alive and well. "Oh dear! where am I?" cried she. The king's son answered, full of joy, "You are near me," and, relating all that had happened, he said, "I would rather have you than anything in the world; come with me to my father's castle and you shall be my bride." And Snow-white was kind, and went with him, and their wedding was held with pomp and great splendour. But Snow-white's wicked step-mother was also bidden to the feast, and when she had dressed herself in beautiful clothes she went to her looking-glass and said, "Looking-glass upon the wall, Who is fairest of us all?"

The looking-glass answered, "O Queen, although you are of beauty rare, The young bride is a thousand times more fair."

Then she railed and cursed, and was beside herself with disappointment and anger. First she thought she would not go to the wedding; but then she felt she should have no peace until she went and saw the bride. And when she saw her she knew her for Snow-white, and could not stir from the place for anger and terror. For they had ready red-hot iron shoes, in which she had to dance until she fell down dead.
Once upon a time there was a dear little girl who was loved by everyone who looked at her, but most of all by her grandmother, and there was nothing that she would not have given to the child. Once she gave her a little riding hood of red velvet, which suited her so well that she would never wear anything else; so she was always called 'Little Red Riding Hood.'

One day her mother said to her: 'Come, Little Red Riding Hood, here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine; take them to your grandmother, she is ill and weak, and they will do her good. Set out before it gets hot, and when you are going, walk nicely and quietly and do not run off the path, or you may fall and break the bottle, and then your grandmother will get nothing; and when you go into her room, don't forget to say, "Good morning", and don't peep into every corner before you do it.'

'I will take great care,' said Little Red Riding Hood to her mother, and gave her hand on it.

The grandmother lived out in the wood, half a league from the village, and just as Little Red Riding Hood entered the wood, a wolf met her. Red Riding Hood did not know what a wicked creature he was, and was not at all afraid of him.

'Good day, Little Red Riding Hood,' said he.

'Thank you kindly, wolf.'

'Whither away so early, Little Red Riding Hood?'

'To my grandmother's.'

'What have you got in your apron?'

'Cake and wine; yesterday was baking-day, so poor sick grandmother is to have something good, to make her stronger.'

'Where does your grandmother live, Little Red Riding Hood?'

'A good quarter of a league farther on in the wood; her house stands under the three large oak-trees, the nut-trees are just below; you surely must know it,' replied Little Red Riding Hood.

The wolf thought to himself: 'What a tender young creature! what a nice plump mouthful - she will be better to eat than the old woman. I must act craftily, so as to catch both.'

So he walked for a short time by the side of Little Red Riding Hood, and then he said: 'See, Little Red Riding Hood, how pretty the flowers are about here - why do you not look round? I believe, too, that you do not hear how sweetly the little birds are singing; you walk gravely along as if you were going to school, while everything else out here in the wood is merry.'

Little Red Riding Hood raised her eyes, and when she saw the sunbeams dancing here and there through the trees, and pretty flowers growing everywhere, she thought: 'Suppose I take grandmother a fresh nosegay; that would please her too. It is so early in the day that I shall still get there in good time.'
So she ran from the path into the wood to look for flowers. And whenever she had picked one, she fancied that she saw a still prettier one farther on, and ran after it, and so got deeper and deeper into the wood.

Meanwhile the wolf ran straight to the grandmother's house and knocked at the door.

'Who is there?'

'Little Red Riding Hood,' replied the wolf. 'She is bringing cake and wine; open the door.'

'Lift the latch,' called out the grandmother, 'I am too weak, and cannot get up.'

The wolf lifted the latch, the door sprang open, and without saying a word he went straight to the grandmother's bed, and devoured her. Then he put on her clothes, dressed himself in her cap, laid himself in bed and drew the curtains.

Little Red Riding Hood, however, had been running about picking flowers, and when she had gathered so many that she could carry no more, she remembered her grandmother, and set out on the way to her.

She was surprised to find the cottage-door standing open, and when she went into the room, she had such a strange feeling that she said to herself: 'Oh dear! how uneasy I feel today, and at other times I like being with grandmother so much.' She called out: 'Good morning,' but received no answer; so she went to the bed and drew back the curtains. There lay her grandmother with her cap pulled far over her face, and looking very strange.

'Oh! grandmother,' she said, 'what big ears you have!'

'All the better to hear you with, my child,' was the reply.

'But, grandmother, what big eyes you have!' she said.

'All the better to see you with, my dear.'

'But, grandmother, what large hands you have!'

'All the better to hug you with.'

'Oh! but, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!'

'All the better to eat you with!'

And scarcely had the wolf said this, than with one bound he was out of bed and swallowed up Red Riding Hood.

When the wolf had appeased his appetite, he lay down again in the bed, fell asleep and began to snore very loud.

The huntsman was just passing the house, and thought to himself: 'How the old woman is snoring! I must just see if she wants anything.' So he went into the room, and when he came to the bed, he saw that the wolf was lying in it.

'Do I find you here, you old sinner!' said he. 'I have long sought you!' But just as he was going to fire at him, it occurred to him that the wolf might have devoured the grandmother, and that
she might still be saved, so he did not fire, but took a pair of scissors, and began to cut open the stomach of the sleeping wolf.

When he had made two snips, he saw the little red riding hood shining, and then he made two snips more, and the little girl sprang out, crying: 'Ah, how frightened I have been! How dark it was inside the wolf.'

After that the aged grandmother came out alive also, but scarcely able to breathe. Red Riding Hood, however, quickly fetched great stones with which they filled the wolf's belly, and when he awoke, he wanted to run away, but the stones were so heavy that he collapsed at once, and fell dead.

Then all three were delighted. The huntsman drew off the wolf's skin and went home with it; the grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine which Red Riding Hood had brought, and revived. But Red Riding Hood thought to herself: 'As long as I live, I will never leave the path by myself to run into the wood, when my mother has forbidden me to do so.'

It is also related that once, when Red Riding Hood was again taking cakes to the old grandmother, another wolf spoke to her, and tried to entice her from the path. Red Riding Hood, however, was on her guard, and went straight forward on her way, and told her grandmother that she had met the wolf, and that he had said 'good morning' to her, but with such a wicked look in his eyes, that if they had not been on the public road she was certain he would have eaten her up.

'Well,' said the grandmother, 'we will shut the door, so that he can not come in.'

Soon afterwards the wolf knocked, and cried: 'Open the door, grandmother, I am Little Red Riding Hood, and am bringing you some cakes.'

But they did not speak, or open the door, so the grey-beard stole twice or thrice round the house, and at last jumped on the roof, intending to wait until Red Riding Hood went home in the evening, and then to steal after her and devour her in the darkness. But the grandmother saw what was in his thoughts.

In front of the house was a great stone trough, so she said to the child: 'Take the pail, Red Riding Hood; I made some sausages yesterday, so carry the water in which I boiled them to the trough.'

Red Riding Hood carried until the great trough was quite full. Then the smell of the sausages reached the wolf, and he sniffed and peeped down, and at last stretched out his neck so far that he could no longer keep his footing and began to slip, and slipped down from the roof straight into the great trough, and was drowned. But Red Riding Hood went joyously home, and no one ever did anything to harm her again.
Far out in the ocean the water is as blue as the petals of the loveliest cornflower, and as clear as the purest glass. But it is very deep too. It goes down deeper than any anchor rope will go, and many, many steeples would have to be stacked one on top of another to reach from the bottom to the surface of the sea. It is down there that the sea folk live.

Now don't suppose that there are only bare white sands at the bottom of the sea. No indeed! The most marvelous trees and flowers grow down there, with such pliant stalks and leaves that the least stir in the water makes them move about as though they were alive. All sorts of fish, large and small, dart among the branches, just as birds flit through the trees up here. From the deepest spot in the ocean rises the palace of the sea king. Its walls are made of coral and its high pointed windows of the clearest amber, but the roof is made of mussel shells that open and shut with the tide. This is a wonderful sight to see, for every shell holds glistening pearls, any one of which would be the pride of a queen's crown.

The sea king down there had been a widower for years, and his old mother kept house for him. She was a clever woman, but very proud of her noble birth. Therefore she flaunted twelve oysters on her tail while the other ladies of the court were only allowed to wear six. Except for this she was an altogether praiseworthy person, particularly so because she was extremely fond of her granddaughters, the little sea princesses. They were six lovely girls, but the youngest was the most beautiful of them all. Her skin was as soft and tender as a rose petal, and her eyes were as blue as the deep sea, but like all the others she had no feet. Her body ended in a fish tail.

The whole day long they used to play in the palace, down in the great halls where live flowers grew on the walls. Whenever the high amber windows were thrown open the fish would swim in, just as swallows dart into our rooms when we open the windows. But these fish, now, would swim right up to the little princesses to eat out of their hands and let themselves be petted.

Outside the palace was a big garden, with flaming red and deep-blue trees. Their fruit glittered like gold, and their blossoms flamed like fire on their constantly waving stalks. The soil was very fine sand indeed, but as blue as burning brimstone. A strange blue veil lay over everything down there. You would have thought yourself aloft in the air with only the blue sky above and beneath you, rather than down at the bottom of the sea. When there was a dead calm, you could just see the sun, like a scarlet flower with light streaming from its calyx.

Each little princess had her own small garden plot, where she could dig and plant whatever she liked. One of them made her little flower bed in the shape of a whale, another thought it neater to shape hers like a little mermaid, but the youngest of them made hers as round as the sun, and there she grew only flowers which were as red as the sun itself. She was an unusual child, quiet and wistful, and when her sisters decorated their gardens with all kinds of odd things they had found in sunken ships, she would allow nothing in hers except flowers as red as the sun, and a pretty marble statue. This figure of a handsome boy, carved in pure white marble, had sunk down to the bottom of the sea from some ship that was wrecked. Beside the statue she planted a rose-colored weeping willow tree, which thrived so well that its graceful branches shaded the statue and hung down to the blue
sand, where their shadows took on a violet tint, and swayed as the branches swayed. It looked as if the roots and the tips of the branches were kissing each other in play.

Nothing gave the youngest princess such pleasure as to hear about the world of human beings up above them. Her old grandmother had to tell her all she knew about ships and cities, and of people and animals. What seemed nicest of all to her was that up on land the flowers were fragrant, for those at the bottom of the sea had no scent. And she thought it was nice that the woods were green, and that the fish you saw among their branches could sing so loud and sweet that it was delightful to hear them. Her grandmother had to call the little birds "fish," or the princess would not have known what she was talking about, for she had never seen a bird.

"When you get to be fifteen," her grandmother said, "you will be allowed to rise up out of the ocean and sit on the rocks in the moonlight, to watch the great ships sailing by. You will see woods and towns, too."

Next year one of her sisters would be fifteen, but the others - well, since each was a whole year older than the next the youngest still had five long years to wait until she could rise up from the water and see what our world was like. But each sister promised to tell the others about all that she saw, and what she found most marvelous on her first day. Their grandmother had not told them half enough, and there were so many thing that they longed to know about.

The most eager of them all was the youngest, the very one who was so quiet and wistful. Many a night she stood by her open window and looked up through the dark blue water where the fish waved their fins and tails. She could just see the moon and stars. To be sure, their light was quite dim, but looked at through the water they seemed much bigger than they appear to us. Whenever a cloud-like shadow swept across them, she knew that it was either a whale swimming overhead, or a ship with many human beings aboard it. Little did they dream that a pretty young mermaid was down below, stretching her white arms up toward the keel of their ship.

The eldest princess had her fifteenth birthday, so now she received permission to rise up out of the water. When she got back she had a hundred things to tell her sisters about, but the most marvelous thing of all, she said, was to lie on a sand bar in the moonlight, when the sea was calm, and to gaze at the large city on the shore, where the lights twinkled like hundreds of stars; to listen to music; to hear the chatter and clamor of carriages and people; to see so many church towers and spires; and to hear the ringing bells. Because she could not enter the city, that was just what she most dearly longed to do.

Oh, how intently the youngest sister listened. After this, whenever she stood at her open window at night and looked up through the dark blue waters, she thought of that great city with all of its clatter and clamor, and even fancied that in these depths she could hear the church bells ring.

The next year, her second sister had permission to rise up to the surface and swim wherever she pleased. She came up just at sunset, and she said that this spectacle was the most marvelous sight she had ever seen. The heavens had a golden glow, and as for the clouds - she could not find words to describe their beauty. Splashed with red and tinted with violet, they sailed over her head. But much faster than the sailing clouds were wild swans in a flock. Like a long white veil trailing above the sea, they flew toward the setting sun. She
too swam toward it, but down it went, and all the rose-colored glow faded from the sea and sky.

The following year, her third sister ascended, and as she was the boldest of them all she swam up a broad river that flowed into the ocean. She saw gloriously green, vine-colored hills. Palaces and manor houses could be glimpsed through the splendid woods. She heard all the birds sing, and the sun shone so brightly that often she had to dive under the water to cool her burning face. In a small cove she found a whole school of mortal children, paddling about in the waterquite naked. She wanted to play with them, but they took fright and ran away. Then along came a little black animal - it was a dog, but she had never seen a dog before. It barked at her so ferociously that she took fright herself, and fled to the open sea. But never could she forget the splendid woods, the green hills, and the nice children who could swim in the water although they didn't wear fish tails.

The fourth sister was not so venturesome. She stayed far out among the rough waves, which she said was a marvelous place. You could see all around you for miles and miles, and the heavens up above you were like a vast dome of glass. She had seen ships, but they were so far away that they looked like sea gulls. Playful dolphins had turned somersaults, and monstrous whales had spouted water through their nostrils so that it looked as if hundreds of fountains were playing all around them.

Now the fifth sister had her turn. Her birthday came in the wintertime, so she saw things that none of the others had seen. The sea was a deep green color, and enormous icebergs drifted about. Each one glistened like a pearl, she said, but they were more lofty than any church steeple built by man. They assumed the most fantastic shapes, and sparkled like diamonds. She had seated herself on the largest one, and all the ships that came sailing by sped away as soon as the frightened sailors saw her there with her long hair blowing in the wind.

In the late evening clouds filled the sky. Thunder cracked and lightning darted across the heavens. Black waves lifted those great bergs of ice on high, where they flashed when the lightning struck.

On all the ships the sails were reefed and there was fear and trembling. But quietly she sat there, upon her drifting iceberg, and watched the blue forked lightning strike the sea.

Each of the sisters took delight in the lovely new sights when she first rose up to the surface of the sea. But when they became grown-up girls, who were allowed to go wherever they liked, they became indifferent to it. They would become homesick, and in a month they said that there was no place like the bottom of the sea, where they felt so completely at home.

On many an evening the older sisters would rise to the surface, arm in arm, all five in a row. They had beautiful voices, more charming than those of any mortal beings. When a storm was brewing, and they anticipated a shipwreck, they would swim before the ship and sing most seductively of how beautiful it was at the bottom of the ocean, trying to overcome the prejudice that the sailors had against coming down to them. But people could not understand their song, and mistook it for the voice of the storm. Nor was it for them to see the glories of the deep. When their ship went down they were drowned, and it was as dead men that they reached the sea king's palace.
On the evenings when the mermaids rose through the water like this, arm in arm, their youngest sister stayed behind all alone, looking after them and wanting to weep. But a mermaid has no tears, and therefore she suffers so much more.

"Oh, how I do wish I were fifteen!" she said. "I know I shall love that world up there and all the people who live in it."

And at last she too came to be fifteen.

"Now I'll have you off my hands," said her grandmother, the old queen dowager. "Come, let me adorn you like your sisters." In the little maid's hair she put a wreath of white lilies, each petal of which was formed from half of a pearl. And the old queen let eight big oysters fasten themselves to the princess's tail, as a sign of her high rank.

"But that hurts!" said the little mermaid.

"You must put up with a good deal to keep up appearances," her grandmother told her.

Oh, how gladly she would have shaken off all these decorations, and laid aside the cumbersome wreath! The red flowers in her garden were much more becoming to her, but she didn't dare to make any changes. "Good-by," she said, and up she went through the water, as light and as sparkling as a bubble.

The sun had just gone down when her head rose above the surface, but the clouds still shone like gold and roses, and in the delicately tinted sky sparkled the clear gleam of the evening star. The air was mild and fresh and the sea unruffled. A great three-master lay in view with only one of all its sails set, for there was not even the whisper of a breeze, and the sailors idled about in the rigging and on the yards. There was music and singing on the ship, and as night came on they lighted hundreds of such brightly colored lanterns that one might have thought the flags of all nations were swinging in the air.

The little mermaid swam right up to the window of the main cabin, and each time she rose with the swell she could peep in through the clear glass panes at the crowd of brilliantly dressed people within. The handsomest of them all was a young Prince with big dark eyes. He could not be more than sixteen years old. It was his birthday and that was the reason for all the celebration. Up on deck the sailors were dancing, and when the Prince appeared among them a hundred or more rockets flew through the air, making it as bright as day. These startled the little mermaid so badly that she ducked under the water. But she soon peeped up again, and then it seemed as if all the stars in the sky were falling around her. Never had she seen such fireworks. Great suns spun around, splendid fire-fish floated through the blue air, and all these things were mirrored in the crystal clear sea. It was so brilliantly bright that you could see every little rope of the ship, and the people could be seen distinctly. Oh, how handsome the young Prince was! He laughed, and he smiled and shook people by the hand, while the music rang out in the perfect evening.

It got very late, but the little mermaid could not take her eyes off the ship and the handsome Prince. The brightly colored lanterns were put out, no more rockets flew through the air, and no more cannon boomed. But there was a mutter and rumble deep down in the sea, and the swell kept bouncing her up so high that she could look into the cabin.
Now the ship began to sail. Canvas after canvas was spread in the wind, the waves rose high, great clouds gathered, and lightning flashed in the distance. Ah, they were in for a terrible storm, and the mariners made haste to reef the sails. The tall ship pitched and rolled as it sped through the angry sea. The waves rose up like towering black mountains, as if they would break over the masthead, but the swan-like ship plunged into the valleys between such waves, and emerged to ride their lofty heights. To the little mermaid this seemed good sport, but to the sailors it was nothing of the sort. The ship creaked and labored, thick timbers gave way under the heavy blows, waves broke over the ship, the mainmast snapped in two like a reed, the ship listed over on its side, and water burst into the hold.

Now the little mermaid saw that people were in peril, and that she herself must take care to avoid the beams and wreckage tossed about by the sea. One moment it would be black as pitch, and she couldn't see a thing. Next moment the lightning would flash so brightly that she could distinguish every soul on board. Everyone was looking out for himself as best he could. She watched closely for the young Prince, and when the ship split in two she saw him sink down in the sea. At first she was overjoyed that he would be with her, but then she recalled that human people could not live under the water, and he could only visit her father's palace as a dead man. No, he should not die! So she swam in among all the floating planks and beams, completely forgetting that they might crush her. She dived through the waves and rode their crests, until at length she reached the young Prince, who was no longer able to swim in that raging sea. His arms and legs were exhausted, his beautiful eyes were closing, and he would have died if the little mermaid had not come to help him. She held his head above water, and let the waves take them wherever the waves went.

At daybreak, when the storm was over, not a trace of the ship was in view. The sun rose out of the waters, red and bright, and its beams seemed to bring the glow of life back to the cheeks of the Prince, but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his high and shapely forehead. As she stroked his wet hair in place, it seemed to her that he looked like that marble statue in her little garden. She kissed him again and hoped that he would live.

She saw dry land rise before her in high blue mountains, topped with snow as glistening white as if a flock of swans were resting there. Down by the shore were splendid green woods, and in the foreground stood a church, or perhaps a convent; she didn't know which, but anyway it was a building. Orange and lemon trees grew in its garden, and tall palm trees grew beside the gateway. Here the sea formed a little harbor, quite calm and very deep. Fine white sand had been washed up below the cliffs. She swam there with the handsome Prince, and stretched him out on the sand, taking special care to pillow his head up high in the warm sunlight.

The bells began to ring in the great white building, and a number of young girls came out into the garden. The little mermaid swam away behind some tall rocks that stuck out of the water. She covered her hair and her shoulders with foam so that no one could see her tiny face, and then she watched to see who would find the poor Prince.

In a little while one of the young girls came upon him. She seemed frightened, but only for a minute; then she called more people. The mermaid watched the Prince regain consciousness, and smile at everyone around him. But he did not smile at her, for he did not even know that she had saved him. She felt very unhappy, and when they led him away to the big building she dived sadly down into the water and returned to her father's palace.
She had always been quiet and wistful, and now she became much more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen on her first visit up to the surface, but she would not tell them a thing.

Many evenings and many mornings she revisited the spot where she had left the Prince. She saw the fruit in the garden ripened and harvested, and she saw the snow on the high mountain melted away, but she did not see the Prince, so each time she came home sadder than she had left. It was her one consolation to sit in her little garden and throw her arms about the beautiful marble statue that looked so much like the Prince. But she took no care of her flowers now. They overgrew the paths until the place was a wilderness, and their long stalks and leaves became so entangled in the branches of the tree that it cast a gloomy shade.

Finally she couldn't bear it any longer. She told her secret to one of her sisters. Immediately all the other sisters heard about it. No one else knew, except a few more mermaids who told no one except their most intimate friends. One of these friends knew who the Prince was. She too had seen the birthday celebration on the ship. She knew where he came from and where his kingdom was.

"Come, little sister!" said the other princesses. Arm in arm, they rose from the water in a long row, right in front of where they knew the Prince's palace stood. It was built of pale, glistening, golden stone with great marble staircases, one of which led down to the sea. Magnificent gilt domes rose above the roof, and between the pillars all around the building were marble statues that looked most lifelike. Through the clear glass of the lofty windows one could see into the splendid halls, with their costly silk hangings and tapestries, and walls covered with paintings that were delightful to behold. In the center of the main hall a large fountain played its columns of spray up to the glass-domed roof, through which the sun shone down on the water and upon the lovely plants that grew in the big basin.

Now that she knew where he lived, many an evening and many a night she spent there in the sea. She swam much closer to shore than any of her sisters would dare venture, and she even went far up a narrow stream, under the splendid marble balcony that cast its long shadow in the water. Here she used to sit and watch the young Prince when he thought himself quite alone in the bright moonlight.

On many evenings she saw him sail out in his fine boat, with music playing and flags a-flutter. She would peep out through the green rushes, and if the wind blew her long silver veil, anyone who saw it mistook it for a swan spreading its wings.

On many nights she saw the fishermen come out to sea with their torches, and heard them tell about how kind the young Prince was. This made her proud to think that it was she who had saved his life when he was buffeted about, half dead among the waves. And she thought of how softly his head had rested on her breast, and how tenderly she had kissed him, though he knew nothing of all this nor could he even dream of it.

Increasingly she grew to like human beings, and more and more she longed to live among them. Their world seemed so much wider than her own, for they could skim over the sea in ships, and mount up into the lofty peaks high over the clouds, and their lands stretched out in woods and fields farther than the eye could see. There was so much she wanted to know. Her sisters could not answer all her questions, so she asked her old grandmother, who knew about the "upper world," which was what she said was the right name for the countries above the sea.
"If men aren't drowned," the little mermaid asked, "do they live on forever? Don't they die, as we do down here in the sea?"

"Yes," the old lady said, "they too must die, and their lifetimes are even shorter than ours. We can live to be three hundred years old, but when we perish we turn into mere foam on the sea, and haven't even a grave down here among our dear ones. We have no immortal soul, no life hereafter. We are like the green seaweed - once cut down, it never grows again. Human beings, on the contrary, have a soul which lives forever, long after their bodies have turned to clay. It rises through thin air, up to the shining stars. Just as we rise through the water to see the lands on earth, so men rise up to beautiful places unknown, which we shall never see."

"Why weren't we given an immortal soul?" the little mermaid sadly asked. "I would gladly give up my three hundred years if I could be a human being only for a day, and later share in that heavenly realm."

"You must not think about that," said the old lady. "We fare much more happily and are much better off than the folk up there."

"Then I must also die and float as foam upon the sea, not hearing the music of the waves, and seeing neither the beautiful flowers nor the red sun! Can't I do anything at all to win an immortal soul?"

"No," her grandmother answered, "not unless a human being loved you so much that you meant more to him than his father and mother. If his every thought and his whole heart cleaved to you so that he would let a priest join his right hand to yours and would promise to be faithful here and throughout all eternity, then his soul would dwell in your body, and you would share in the happiness of mankind. He would give you a soul and yet keep his own. But that can never come to pass. The very thing that is your greatest beauty here in the sea - your fish tail - would be considered ugly on land. They have such poor taste that to be thought beautiful there you have to have two awkward props which they call legs."

The little mermaid sighed and looked unhappily at her fish tail.

"Come, let us be gay!" the old lady said. "Let us leap and bound throughout the three hundred years that we have to live. Surely that is time and to spare, and afterwards we shall be glad enough to rest in our graves. - We are holding a court ball this evening."

This was a much more glorious affair than is ever to be seen on earth. The walls and the ceiling of the great ballroom were made of massive but transparent glass. Many hundreds of huge rose-red and grass-green shells stood on each side in rows, with the blue flames that burned in each shell illuminating the whole room and shining through the walls so clearly that it was quite bright in the sea outside. You could see the countless fish, great and small, swimming toward the glass walls. On some of them the scales gleamed purplish-red, while others were silver and gold. Across the floor of the hall ran a wide stream of water, and upon this the mermaids and mermen danced to their own entrancing songs. Such beautiful voices are not to be heard among the people who live on land. The little mermaid sang more sweetly than anyone else, and everyone applauded her. For a moment her heart was happy, because she knew she had the loveliest voice of all, in the sea or on the land. But her thoughts soon strayed to the world up above. She could not forget the charming Prince, nor her sorrow that she did not have an immortal soul like his. Therefore she stole out of
her father's palace and, while everything there was song and gladness, she sat sadly in her own little garden.

Then she heard a bugle call through the water, and she thought, "That must mean he is sailing up there, he whom I love more than my father or mother, he of whom I am always thinking, and in whose hands I would so willingly trust my lifelong happiness. I dare do anything to win him and to gain an immortal soul. While my sisters are dancing here, in my father's palace, I shall visit the sea witch of whom I have always been so afraid. Perhaps she will be able to advise me and help me."

The little mermaid set out from her garden toward the whirlpools that raged in front of the witch's dwelling. She had never gone that way before. No flowers grew there, nor any seaweed. Bare and gray, the sands extended to the whirlpools, where like roaring mill wheels the waters whirled and snatched everything within their reach down to the bottom of the sea. Between these tumultuous whirlpools she had to thread her way to reach the witch's waters, and then for a long stretch the only trail lay through a hot seething mire, which the witch called her peat marsh. Beyond it her house lay in the middle of a weird forest, where all the trees and shrubs were polyps, half animal and half plant. They looked like hundred-headed snakes growing out of the soil. All their branches were long, slimy arms, with fingers like wriggling worms. They squirmed, joint by joint, from their roots to their outermost tentacles, and whatever they could lay hold of they twined around and never let go. The little mermaid was terrified, and stopped at the edge of the forest. Her heart thumped with fear and she nearly turned back, but then she remembered the Prince and the souls that men have, and she summoned her courage. She bound her long flowing locks closely about her head so that the polyps could not catch hold of them, folded her arms across her breast, and darted through the water like a fish, in among the slimy polyps that stretched out their writhing arms and fingers to seize her. She saw that every one of them held something that it had caught with its hundreds of little tentacles, and to which it clung as with strong hoops of steel. The white bones of men who had perished at sea and sunk to these depths could be seen in the polyps' arms. Ships' rudders, and seamen's chests, and the skeletons of land animals had also fallen into their clutches, but the most ghastly sight of all was a little mermaid whom they had caught and strangled.

She reached a large muddy clearing in the forest, where big fat water snakes slithered about, showing their foul yellowish bellies. In the middle of this clearing was a house built of the bones of shipwrecked men, and there sat the sea witch, letting a toad eat out of her mouth just as we might feed sugar to a little canary bird. She called the ugly fat water snakes her little chickabiddies, and let them crawl and sprawl about on her spongy bosom.

"I know exactly what you want," said the sea witch. "It is very foolish of you, but just the same you shall have your way, for it will bring you to grief, my proud princess. You want to get rid of your fish tail and have two props instead, so that you can walk about like a human creature, and have the young Prince fall in love with you, and win him and an immortal soul besides." At this, the witch gave such a loud cackling laugh that the toad and the snakes were shaken to the ground, where they lay writhing.

"You are just in time," said the witch. "After the sun comes up tomorrow, a whole year would have to go by before I could be of any help to you. I shall compound you a draught, and before sunrise you must swim to the shore with it, seat yourself on dry land, and drink the draught down. Then your tail will divide and shrink until it becomes what the people on earth call a pair of shapely legs. But it will hurt; it will feel as if a sharp sword slashed through you. Everyone who sees you will say that you are the most graceful human being
they have ever laid eyes on, for you will keep your gliding movement and no dancer will be able to tread as lightly as you. But every step you take will feel as if you were treading upon knife blades so sharp that blood must flow. I am willing to help you, but are you willing to suffer all this?"

"Yes," the little mermaid said in a trembling voice, as she thought of the Prince and of gaining a human soul.

"Remember!" said the witch. "Once you have taken a human form, you can never be a mermaid again. You can never come back through the waters to your sisters, or to your father's palace. And if you do not win the love of the Prince so completely that for your sake he forgets his father and mother, cleaves to you with his every thought and his whole heart, and lets the priest join your hands in marriage, then you will win no immortal soul. If he marries someone else, your heart will break on the very next morning, and you will become foam of the sea."

"I shall take that risk," said the little mermaid, but she turned as pale as death.

"Also, you will have to pay me," said the witch, "and it is no trifling price that I'm asking. You have the sweetest voice of anyone down here at the bottom of the sea, and while I don't doubt that you would like to captivate the Prince with it, you must give this voice to me. I will take the very best thing that you have, in return for my sovereign draught. I must pour my own blood in it to make the drink as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take my voice," said the little mermaid, "what will be left to me?"

"Your lovely form," the witch told her, "your gliding movements, and your eloquent eyes. With these you can easily enchant a human heart. Well, have you lost your courage? Stick out your little tongue and I shall cut it off. I'll have my price, and you shall have the potent draught."

"Go ahead," said the little mermaid.

The witch hung her caldron over the flames, to brew the draught. "Cleanliness is a good thing," she said, as she tied her snakes in a knot and scoured out the pot with them. Then she pricked herself in the chest and let her black blood splash into the caldron. Steam swirled up from it, in such ghastly shapes that anyone would have been terrified by them. The witch constantly threw new ingredients into the caldron, and it started to boil with a sound like that of a crocodile shedding tears. When the draught at last, it looked as clear as the purest water.

"There's your draught," said the witch. And she cut off the tongue of the little mermaid, who now was dumb and could neither sing nor talk.

"If the polyps should pounce on you when you walk back through my wood," the witch said, "just spill a drop of this brew upon them and their tentacles will break in a thousand pieces." But there was no need of that, for the polyps curled up in terror as soon as they saw the bright draught. It glittered in the little mermaid's hand as if it were a shining star. So she soon traversed the forest, the marsh, and the place of raging whirlpools.
She could see her father's palace. The lights had been snuffed out in the great ballroom, and doubtless everyone in the palace was asleep, but she dared not go near them, now that she was stricken dumb and was leaving her home forever. Her heart felt as if it would break with grief. She tip-toed into the garden, took one flower from each of her sisters' little plots, blew a thousand kisses toward the palace, and then mounted up through the dark blue sea.

The sun had not yet risen when she saw the Prince's palace. As she climbed his splendid marble staircase, the moon was shining clear. The little mermaid swallowed the bitter, fiery draught, and it was as if a two-edged sword struck through her frail body. She swooned away, and lay there as if she were dead. When the sun rose over the sea she awoke and felt a flash of pain, but directly in front of her stood the handsome young Prince, gazing at her with his coal-black eyes. Lowering her gaze, she saw that her fish tail was gone, and that she had the loveliest pair of white legs any young maid could hope to have. But she was naked, so she clothed herself in her own long hair.

The Prince asked who she was, and how she came to be there. Her deep blue eyes looked at him tenderly but very sadly, for she could not speak. Then he took her hand and led her into his palace. Every footstep felt as if she were walking on the blades and points of sharp knives, just as the witch had foretold, but she gladly endured it. She moved as lightly as a bubble as she walked beside the Prince. He and all who saw her marveled at the grace of her gliding walk.

Once clad in the rich silk and muslin garments that were provided for her, she was the loveliest person in all the palace, though she was dumb and could neither sing nor speak. Beautiful slaves, attired in silk and cloth of gold, came to sing before the Prince and his royal parents. One of them sang more sweetly than all the others, and when the Prince smiled at her and clapped his hands, the little mermaid felt very unhappy, for she knew that she herself used to sing much more sweetly.

"Oh," she thought, "if he only knew that I parted with my voice forever so that I could be near him."

Graceful slaves now began to dance to the most wonderful music. Then the little mermaid lifted her shapely white arms, rose up on the tips of her toes, and skimmed over the floor. No one had ever danced so well. Each movement set off her beauty to better and better advantage, and her eyes spoke more directly to the heart than any of the singing slaves could do.

She charmed everyone, and especially the Prince, who called her his dear little foundling. She danced time and again, though every time she touched the floor she felt as if she were treading on sharp-edged steel. The Prince said he would keep her with him always, and that she was to have a velvet pillow to sleep on outside his door.

He had a page's suit made for her, so that she could go with him on horseback. They would ride through the sweet scented woods, where the green boughs brushed her shoulders, and where the little birds sang among the fluttering leaves.

She climbed up high mountains with the Prince, and though her tender feet bled so that all could see it, she only laughed and followed him on until they could see the clouds driving far below, like a flock of birds in flight to distant lands.
At home in the Prince's palace, while the others slept at night, she would go down the broad marble steps to cool her burning feet in the cold sea water, and then she would recall those who lived beneath the sea. One night her sisters came by, arm in arm, singing sadly as they breasted the waves. When she held out her hands toward them, they knew who she was, and told her how unhappy she had made them all. They came to see her every night after that, and once far, far out to sea, she saw her old grandmother, who had not been up to the surface this many a year. With her was the sea king, with his crown upon his head. They stretched out their hands to her, but they did not venture so near the land as her sisters had.

Day after day she became more dear to the Prince, who loved her as one would love a good little child, but he never thought of making her his Queen. Yet she had to be his wife or she would never have an immortal soul, and on the morning after his wedding she would turn into foam on the waves.

"Don't you love me best of all?" the little mermaid's eyes seemed to question him, when he took her in his arms and kissed her lovely forehead.

"Yes, you are most dear to me," said the Prince, "for you have the kindest heart. You love me more than anyone else does, and you look so much like a young girl I once saw but never shall find again. I was on a ship that was wrecked, and the waves cast me ashore near a holy temple, where many young girls performed the rituals. The youngest of them found me beside the sea and saved my life. Though I saw her no more than twice, she is the only person in all the world whom I could love. But you are so much like her that you almost replace the memory of her in my heart. She belongs to that holy temple, therefore it is my good fortune that I have you. We shall never part."

"Alas, he doesn't know it was I who saved his life," the little mermaid thought. "I carried him over the sea to the garden where the temple stands. I hid behind the foam and watched to see if anyone would come. I saw the pretty maid he loves better than me." A sigh was the only sign of her deep distress, for a mermaid cannot cry. "He says that the other maid belongs to the holy temple. She will never come out into the world, so they will never see each other again. It is I who will care for him, love him, and give all my life to him."

Now rumors arose that the Prince was to wed the beautiful daughter of a neighboring King, and that it was for this reason he was having such a superb ship made ready to sail. The rumor ran that the Prince's real interest in visiting the neighboring kingdom was to see the King's daughter, and that he was to travel with a lordly retinue. The little mermaid shook her head and smiled, for she knew the Prince's thoughts far better than anyone else did.

"I am forced to make this journey," he told her. "I must visit the beautiful Princess, for this is my parents' wish, but they would not have me bring her home as my bride against my own will, and I can never love her. She does not resemble the lovely maiden in the temple, as you do, and if I were to choose a bride, I would sooner choose you, my dear mute foundling with those telling eyes of yours." And he kissed her on the mouth, fingered her long hair, and laid his head against her heart so that she came to dream of mortal happiness and an immortal soul.

"I trust you aren't afraid of the sea, my silent child' he said, as they went on board the magnificent vessel that was to carry them to the land of the neighboring King. And he told her stories of storms, of ships becalmed, of strange deep-sea fish, and of the wonders that
divers have seen. She smiled at such stories, for no one knew about the bottom of the sea as well as she did.

In the clear moonlight, when everyone except the man at the helm was asleep, she sat on the side of the ship gazing down through the transparent water, and fancied she could catch glimpses of her father's palace. On the topmost tower stood her old grandmother, wearing her silver crown and looking up at the keel of the ship through the rushing waves. Then her sisters rose to the surface, looked at her sadly, and wrung their white hands. She smiled and waved, trying to let them know that all went well and that she was happy. But along came the cabin boy, and her sisters dived out of sight so quickly that the boy supposed the flash of white he had seen was merely foam on the sea.

Next morning the ship came in to the harbor of the neighboring King's glorious city. All the church bells chimed, and trumpets were sounded from all the high towers, while the soldiers lined up with flying banners and glittering bayonets. Every day had a new festivity, as one ball or levee followed another, but the Princess was still to appear. They said she was being brought up in some far-away sacred temple, where she was learning every royal virtue. But she came at last.

The little mermaid was curious to see how beautiful this Princess was, and she had to grant that a more exquisite figure she had never seen. The Princess's skin was clear and fair, and behind the long, dark lashes her deep blue eyes were smiling and devoted.

"It was you!" the Prince cried. "You are the one who saved me when I lay like a dead man beside the sea." He clasped the blushing bride of his choice in his arms. "Oh, I am happier than a man should be!" he told his little mermaid. "My fondest dream - that which I never dared to hope - has come true. You will share in my great joy, for you love me more than anyone does."

The little mermaid kissed his hand and felt that her heart was beginning to break. For the morning after his wedding day would see her dead and turned to watery foam.

All the church bells rang out, and heralds rode through the streets to announce the wedding. Upon every altar sweet-scented oils were burned in costly silver lamps. The priests swung their censers, the bride and the bridegroom joined their hands, and the bishop blessed their marriage. The little mermaid, clothed in silk and cloth of gold, held the bride's train, but she was deaf to the wedding march and blind to the holy ritual. Her thought turned on her last night upon earth, and on all she had lost in this world.

That same evening, the bride and bridegroom went aboard the ship. Cannon thundered and banners waved. On the deck of the ship a royal pavilion of purple and gold was set up, and furnished with luxurious cushions. Here the wedded couple were to sleep on that calm, clear night. The sails swelled in the breeze, and the ship glided so lightly that it scarcely seemed to move over the quiet sea. All nightfall brightly colored lanterns were lighted, and the mariners merrily danced on the deck. The little mermaid could not forget that first time she rose from the depths of the sea and looked on at such pomp and happiness. Light as a swallow pursued by his enemies, she joined in the whirling dance. Everyone cheered her, for never had she danced so wonderfully. Her tender feet felt as if they were pierced by daggers, but she did not feel it. Her heart suffered far greater pain. She knew that this was the last evening that she ever would see him for whom she had forsaken her home and family, for whom she had sacrificed her lovely voice and suffered such constant torment, while he knew nothing of all these things. It was the last night that she would breathe the
same air with him, or look upon deep waters or the star fields of the blue sky. A never-ending night, without thought and without dreams, awaited her who had no soul and could not get one. The merrymaking lasted long after midnight, yet she laughed and danced on despite the thought of death she carried in her heart. The Prince kissed his beautiful bride and she toyed with his coal-black hair. Hand in hand, they went to rest in the magnificent pavilion.

A hush came over the ship. Only the helmsman remained on deck as the little mermaid leaned her white arms on the bulwarks and looked to the east to see the first red hint of daybreak, for she knew that the first flash of the sun would strike her dead. Then she saw her sisters rise up among the waves. They were as pale as she, and there was no sign of their lovely long hair that the breezes used to blow. It had all been cut off.

'We have given our hair to the witch," they said, "so that she would send you help, and save you from death tonight. She gave us a knife. Here it is. See the sharp blade! Before the sun rises, you must strike it into the Prince's heart, and when his warm blood bathes your feet they will grow together and become a fish tail. Then you will be a mermaid again, able to come back to us in the sea, and live out your three hundred years before you die and turn into dead salt sea foam. Make haste! He or you must die before sunrise. Our old grandmother is so grief-stricken that her white hair is falling fast, just as ours did under the witch's scissors. Kill the Prince and come back to us. Hurry! Hurry! See that red glow in the heavens! In a few minutes the sun will rise and you must die." So saying, they gave a strange deep sigh and sank beneath the waves.

The little mermaid parted the purple curtains of the tent and saw the beautiful bride asleep with her head on the Prince's breast. The mermaid bent down and kissed his shapely forehead. She looked at the sky, fast reddening for the break of day. She looked at the sharp knife and again turned her eyes toward the Prince, who in his sleep murmured the name of his bride. His thoughts were all for her, and the knife blade trembled in the mermaid's hand. But then she flung it from her, far out over the waves. Where it fell the waves were red, as if bubbles of blood seethed in the water. With eyes already glazing she looked once more at the Prince, hurled herself over the bulwarks into the sea, and felt her body dissolve in foam.

The sun rose up from the waters. Its beams fell, warm and kindly, upon the chill sea foam, and the little mermaid did not feel the hand of death. In the bright sunlight overhead, she saw hundreds of fair ethereal beings. They were so transparent that through them she could see the ship's white sails and the red clouds in the sky. Their voices were sheer music, but so spirit-like that no human ear could detect the sound, just as no eye on earth could see their forms. Without wings, they floated as light as the air itself. The little mermaid discovered that she was shaped like them, and that she was gradually rising up out of the foam.

'Who are you, toward whom I rise?" she asked, and her voice sounded like those above her, so spiritual that no music on earth could match it.

"We are the daughters of the air," they answered. "A mermaid has no immortal soul, and can never get one unless she wins the love of a human being. Her eternal life must depend upon a power outside herself. The daughters of the air do not have an immortal soul either, but they can earn one by their good deeds. We fly to the south, where the hot poisonous air kills human beings unless we bring cool breezes. We carry the scent of flowers through the air, bringing freshness and healing balm wherever we go. When for three hundred years we
have tried to do all the good that we can, we are given an immortal soul and a share in mankind's eternal bliss. You, poor little mermaid, have tried with your whole heart to do this too. Your suffering and your loyalty have raised you up into the realm of airy spirits, and now in the course of three hundred years you may earn by your good deeds a soul that will never die.

The little mermaid lifted her clear bright eyes toward God's sun, and for the first time her eyes were wet with tears.

On board the ship all was astir and lively again. She saw the Prince and his fair bride in search of her. Then they gazed sadly into the seething foam, as if they knew she had hurled herself into the waves. Unseen by them, she kissed the bride's forehead, smiled upon the Prince, and rose up with the other daughters of the air to the rose-red clouds that sailed on high.

"This is the way that we shall rise to the kingdom of God, after three hundred years have passed."

"We may get there even sooner," one spirit whispered. "Unseen, we fly into the homes of men, where there are children, and for every day on which we find a good child who pleases his parents and deserves their love, God shortens our days of trial. The child does not know when we float through his room, but when we smile at him in approval one year is taken from our three hundred. But if we see a naughty, mischievous child we must shed tears of sorrow, and each tear adds a day to the time of our trial."
ONCE upon a time there lived by herself, in a city, an old woman who was desperately poor. One day she found that she had only a handful of flour left in the house, and no money to buy more nor hope of earning it. Carrying her little brass pot, very sadly she made her way down to the river to bathe and to obtain some water, thinking afterwards to come home and make herself an unleavened cake of what flour she had left; and after that she did not know what was to become of her.

Whilst she was bathing she left her little brass pot on the river bank covered with a cloth, to keep the inside nice and clean; but when she came up out of the river and took the cloth off to fill the pot with water, she saw inside it the glittering folds of a deadly snake. At once she popped the cloth again into the mouth of the pot and held it there; and then she said to herself:

'Ah, kind death! I will take thee home to my house, and there I will shake thee out of my pot and thou shalt bite me and I will die, and then all my troubles will be ended.'

With these sad thoughts in her mind the poor old woman hurried home, holding her cloth carefully in the mouth of the pot; and when she got home she shut all the doors and windows, and took away the cloth, and turned the pot upside down upon her hearthstone. What was her surprise to find that, instead of the deadly snake which she expected to see fall out of it, there fell out with a rattle and a clang a most magnificent necklace of flashing jewels!

For a few minutes she could hardly think or speak, but stood staring; and then with trembling hands she picked the necklace up, and folding it in the corner of her veil, she hurried off to the king's hall of public audience.

'A petition, O king!' she said. 'A petition for thy private ear alone!' And when her prayer had been granted, and she found herself alone with the king, she shook out her veil at his feet, and there fell from it in glittering coils the splendid necklace. As soon as the king saw it he was filled with amazement and delight; and the more he looked at it the more he felt that he must possess it at once. So he gave the old woman five hundred silver pieces for it, and put it straightway into his pocket. Away she went full of happiness; for the money that the king had given her was enough to keep her for the rest of her life.

As soon as he could leave his business the king hurried off and showed his wife his prize, with which she was as pleased as he, if not more so; and, as soon as they had finished admiring the wonderful necklace, they locked it up in the great chest where the queen's jewellery was kept, the key of which hung always round the king's neck.

A short while afterwards, a neighbouring king sent a message to say that a most lovely girl baby had been born to him; and he invited his neighbours to come to a great feast in honour of the occasion. The queen told her husband that of course they must be present at the banquet, and she would wear the new necklace which he had given her. They had only a short time to prepare for the journey, and at the last moment the king went to the jewel chest to take out the necklace for his wife to wear, but he could see no necklace at all, only, in its place, a fat little boy baby crowing and shouting. The king was so astonished that he nearly fell backwards, but presently he found his voice, and called for his wife so loudly that she came running, thinking that the necklace must at least have been stolen.

'Look here! look!' cried the king, 'haven't we always longed for a son? And now heaven has sent us one!'

'What do you mean?' cried the queen. 'Are you mad?'

'Mad? no, I hope not,' shouted the king, dancing in excitement round the open chest. 'Come here, and look! Look what we've got instead of that necklace!'
Just then the baby let out a great crow of joy, as though he would like to jump up and dance with the king; and the queen gave a cry of surprise, and ran up and looked into the chest.

'Oh!' she gasped, as she looked at the baby, 'what a darling! Where could he have come from?'

'I'm sure I can't say,' said the king; 'all I know is that we locked up a necklace in the chest, and when I unlocked it just now there was no necklace, but a baby, and as fine a baby as ever was seen.'

By this time the queen had the baby in her arms. 'Oh, the blessed one!' she cried, 'fairer ornament for the bosom of a queen than any necklace that ever was wrought. Write,' she continued, 'write to our neighbour and say that we cannot come to his feast, for we have a feast of our own, and a baby of our own! Oh, happy day!'

So the visit was given up; and, in honour of the new baby, the bells of the city, and its guns, and its trumpets, and its people, small and great, had hardly any rest for a week; there was such a ringing, and banging, and blaring, and such fireworks, and feasting, and rejoicing, and merry-making, as had never been seen before.

A few years went by; and, as the king's boy baby and his neighbour's girl baby grew and throve, the two kings arranged that as soon as they were old enough they should marry; and so, with much signing of papers and agreements, and wagging of wise heads, and stroking of grey beards, the compact was made, and signed, and sealed, and lay waiting for its fulfilment. And this too came to pass; for, as soon as the prince and princess were eighteen years of age, the kings agreed that it was time for the wedding; and the young prince journeyed away to the neighbouring kingdom for his bride, and was there married to her with great and renewed rejoicings.

Now, I must tell you that the old woman who had sold the king the necklace had been called in by him to be the nurse of the young prince; and although she loved her charge dearly, and was a most faithful servant, she could not help talking just a little, and so, by-and-by, it began to be rumoured that there was some magic about the young prince's birth; and the rumour of course had come in due time to the ears of the parents of the princess. So now that she was going to be the wife of the prince, her mother (who was curious, as many other people are) said to her daughter on the eve of the ceremony:

'Remember that the first thing you must do is to find out what this story is about the prince. And, in order to do it, you must not speak a word to him whatever he says until he asks you why you are silent; then you must ask him what the truth is about his magic birth; and until he tells you, you must not speak to him again.'

And the princess promised that she would follow her mother's advice.

Therefore when they were married, and the prince spoke to his bride, she did not answer him. He could not think what was the matter, but even about her old home she would not utter a word. At last he asked why she would not speak; and then she said:

'Tell me the secret of your birth.'

Then the prince was very sad and displeased, and although she pressed him sorely he would not tell her, but always reply:

'If I tell you, you will repent that ever you asked me.'

For several months they lived together; and it was not such a happy time for either as it ought to have been, for the secret was still a secret, and lay between them like a cloud between the sun and the earth, making what should be fair, dull and sad.
At length the prince could bear it no longer; so he said to his wife one day: 'At midnight I will tell you my secret if you still wish it; but you will repent it all your life.' However, the princess was overjoyed that she had succeeded, and paid no attention to his warnings.

That night the prince ordered horses to be ready for the princess and himself a little before midnight. He placed her on one, and mounted the other himself, and they rode together down to the river to the place where the old woman had first found the snake in her brass pot. There the prince drew rein and said sadly: 'Do you still insist that I should tell you my secret?' And the princess answered 'Yes.' 'If I do,' answered the prince, 'remember that you will regret it all your life.' But the princess only replied 'Tell me!

'Then,' said the prince, 'know that I am the son of the king of a far country, but by enchantment I was turned into a snake.'

The word 'snake' was hardly out of his lips when he disappeared, and the princess heard a rustle and saw a ripple on the water; and in the faint moonlight she beheld a snake swimming into the river. Soon it disappeared and she was left alone. In vain she waited with beating heart for something to happen, and for the prince to come back to her. Nothing happened and no one came; only the wind mourned through the trees on the river bank, and the night birds cried, and a jackal howled in the distance, and the river flowed black and silent beneath her.

In the morning they found her, weeping and dishevelled, on the river bank; but no word could they learn from her or from anyone as to the fate of her husband. At her wish they built on the river bank a little house of black stone; and there she lived in mourning, with a few servants and guards to watch over her.

A long, long time passed by, and still the princess lived in mourning for her prince, and saw no one, and went nowhere away from her house on the river bank and the garden that surrounded it. One morning, when she woke up, she found a stain of fresh mud upon the carpet. She sent for the guards, who watched outside the house day and night, and asked them who had entered her room while she was asleep. They declared that no one could have entered, for they kept such careful watch that not even a bird could fly in without their knowledge; but none of them could explain the stain of mud. The next morning, again, the princess found another stain of wet mud, and she questioned everyone most carefully; but none could say how the mud came there. The third night the princess determined to lie awake herself and watch; and, for fear that she might fall asleep, she cut her finger with a penknife and rubbed salt into the cut, that the pain of it might keep her from sleeping. So she lay awake, and at midnight she saw a snake come wriggling along the ground with some mud from the river in its mouth; and when it came near the bed, it reared up its head and dropped its muddy head on the bedclothes. She was very frightened, but tried to control her fear, and called out:

'Who are you, and what do you here?'

And the snake answered:

'I am the prince, your husband, and I am come to visit you.'

Then the princess began to weep; and the snake continued:

'Alas! did I not say that if I told you my secret you would repent it? and have you not repented?'

'Oh, indeed!' cried the poor princess, 'I have repented it, and shall repent it all my life! Is there nothing I can do?'

And the snake answered:

'Yes, there is one thing, if you dared to do it.'
'Only tell me,' said the princess, 'and I will do anything!'

'Then,' replied the snake, 'on a certain night you must put a large bowl of milk and sugar in each of the four corners of this room. All the snakes in the river will come out to drink the milk, and the one that leads the way will be the queen of the snakes. You must stand in her way at the door, and say: "Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!" and perhaps she will do it. But if you are frightened, and do not stop her, you will never see me again.' And he glided away.

On the night of which the snake had told her, the princess got four large bowls of milk and sugar, and put one in each corner of the room, and stood in the doorway waiting. At midnight there was a great hissing and rustling from the direction of the river, and presently the ground appeared to be alive with horrible writhing forms of snakes, whose eyes glittered and forked tongues quivered as they moved on in the direction of the princess's house. Foremost among them was a huge, repulsive scaly creature that led the dreadful procession. The guards were so terrified that they all ran away; but the princess stood in the doorway, as white as death, and with her hands clasped tight together for fear she should scream or faint, and fail to do her part. As they came closer and saw her in the way, all the snakes raised their horrid heads and swayed them to and fro, and looked at her with wicked beady eyes, while their breath seemed to poison the very air. Still the princess stood firm, and, when the leading snake was within a few feet of her, she cried: 'Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!' Then all the rustling, writhing crowd of snakes seemed to whisper to one another 'Her husband? her husband?' But the queen of snakes moved on until her head was almost in the princess's face, and her little eyes seemed to flash fire. And still the princess stood in the doorway and never moved, but cried again: 'Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!' Then the queen of snakes replied: 'To-morrow you shall have him - to-morrow! When she heard these words and knew that she had conquered, the princess staggered from the door, and sank upon her bed and fainted. As in a dream, she saw that her room was full of snakes, all jostling and squabbling over the bowls of milk until it was finished. And then they went away.

In the morning the princess was up early, and took off the mourning dress which she had worn for five whole years, and put on gay and beautiful clothes. And she swept the house and cleaned it, and adorned it with garlands and nosegays of sweet flowers and ferns, and prepared it as though she were making ready for her wedding. And when night fell she lit up the woods and gardens with lanterns, and spread a table as for a feast, and lit in the house a thousand wax candles. Then she waited for her husband, not knowing in what shape he would appear. And at midnight there came striding from the river the prince, laughing, but with tears in his eyes; and she ran to meet him, and threw herself into his arms, crying and laughing too.

So the prince came home; and the next day they two went back to the palace, and the old king wept with joy to see them. And the bells, so long silent, were set a-ringing again, and the guns firing, and the trumpets blaring, and there was fresh feasting and rejoicing.

And the old woman who had been the prince's nurse became nurse to the prince's children - at least she was called so; though she was far too old to do anything for them but love them. Yet she still thought that she was useful, and knew that she was happy. And happy, indeed, were the prince and princess, who in due time became king and queen, and lived and ruled long and prosperously.

Asian. Indian. Punjabi story Major Campbell Feroshepore
7. Oisin's Mother

(Irish Fairy Tale)

CHAPTER I

EVENING was drawing nigh, and the Fianna-Finn had decided to hunt no more that day. The hounds were whistled to heel, and a sober, homeward march began. For men will walk soberly in the evening, however they go in the day, and dogs will take the mood from their masters. They were pacing so, through the golden-shafted, tender-coloured eve, when a fawn leaped suddenly from covert, and, with that leap, all quietness vanished: the men shouted, the dogs gave tongue, and a furious chase commenced.

Fionn loved a chase at any hour, and, with Bran and Sceo'lan, he outran the men and dogs of his troop, until nothing remained in the limpid world but Fionn, the two hounds, and the nimble, beautiful fawn. These, and the occasional boulders, round which they raced, or over which they scrambled; the solitary tree which dozed aloof and beautiful in the path, the occasional clump of trees that hived sweet shadow as a hive hoards honey, and the rustling grass that stretched to infinity, and that moved and crept and swung under the breeze in endless, rhythmic billowings.

In his wildest moment Fionn was thoughtful, and now, although running hard, he was thoughtful. There was no movement of his beloved hounds that he did not know; not a twitch or fling of the head, nor a cock of the ears or tail that was not significant to him. But on this chase whatever signs the dogs gave were not understood by their master.

He had never seen them in such eager flight. They were almost utterly absorbed in it, but they did not whine with eagerness, nor did they cast any glance towards him for the encouraging word which he never failed to give when they sought it.

They did look at him, but it was a look which he could not comprehend. There was a question and a statement in those deep eyes, and he could not understand what that question might be, nor what it was they sought to convey. Now and again one of the dogs turned a head in full flight, and stared, not at Fionn, but distantly backwards, over the spreading and swelling plain where their companions of the hunt had disappeared. "They are looking for the other hounds," said Fionn.

"And yet they do not give tongue! Tongue it, a Vran!" he shouted, "Bell it out, a Heo'lan!"

It was then they looked at him, the look which he could not understand and had never seen on a chase. They did not tongue it, nor bell it, but they added silence to silence and speed to speed, until the lean grey bodies were one pucker and lashing of movement.

Fionn marvelled. "They do not want the other dogs to hear or to come on this chase," he murmured, and he wondered what might be passing within those slender heads.
"The fawn runs well," his thought continued. "What is it, a Vran, my heart? After her, a Heo'lan! Hist and away, my loves!"

"There is going and to spare in that beast yet," his mind went on. "She is not stretched to the full, nor half stretched. She may outrun even Bran," he thought ragingly.

They were racing through a smooth valley in a steady, beautiful, speedy flight when, suddenly, the fawn stopped and lay on the grass, and it lay with the calm of an animal that has no fear, and the leisure of one that is not pressed.

"Here is a change," said Fionn, staring in astonishment.

"She is not winded," he said. "What is she lying down for?" But Bran and Sceo'lan did not stop; they added another inch to their long-stretched easy bodies, and came up on the fawn.

"It is an easy kill," said Fionn regretfully. "They have her," he cried.

But he was again astonished, for the dogs did not kill. They leaped and played about the fawn, licking its face, and rubbing delighted noses against its neck.

Fionn came up then. His long spear was lowered in his fist at the thrust, and his sharp knife was in its sheath, but he did not use them, for the fawn and the two hounds began to play round him, and the fawn was as affectionate towards him as the hounds were; so that when a velvet nose was thrust in his palm, it was as often a fawn's muzzle as a hound's.

In that joyous company he came to wide Allen of Leinster, where the people were surprised to see the hounds and the fawn and the Chief and none other of the hunters that had set out with them.

When the others reached home, the Chief told of his chase, and it was agreed that such a fawn must not be killed, but that it should be kept and well treated, and that it should be the pet fawn of the Fianna. But some of those who remembered Bran's parentage thought that as Bran herself had come from the Shi so this fawn might have come out of the Shi also.

CHAPTER II

Late that night, when he was preparing for rest, the door of Fionn's chamber opened gently and a young woman came into the room. The captain stared at her, as he well might, for he had never seen or imagined to see a woman so beautiful as this was. Indeed, she was not a woman, but a young girl, and her bearing was so gently noble, her look so modestly high, that the champion dared scarcely look at her, although he could not by any means have looked away.

As she stood within the doorway, smiling, and shy as a flower, beautifully timid as a fawn, the Chief communed with his heart.
"She is the Sky-woman of the Dawn," he said. "She is the light on the foam. She is white and odorous as an apple-blossom. She smells of spice and honey. She is my beloved beyond the women of the world. She shall never be taken from me."

And that thought was delight and anguish to him: delight because of such sweet prospect, anguish because it was not yet realised, and might not be.

As the dogs had looked at him on the chase with a look that he did not understand, so she looked at him, and in her regard there was a question that baffled him and a statement which he could not follow.

He spoke to her then, mastering his heart to do it.

"I do not seem to know you," he said.

"You do not know me indeed," she replied.

"It is the more wonderful," he continued gently, "for I should know every person that is here. What do you require from me?"

"I beg your protection, royal captain."

"I give that to all," he answered. "Against whom do you desire protection?"

"I am in terror of the Fear Doirche."

"The Dark Man of the Shi?"

"He is my enemy," she said.

"He is mine now," said Fionn. "Tell me your story."

"My name is Saeve, and I am a woman of Faery," she commenced. "In the Shi' many men gave me their love, but I gave my love to no man of my country."

"That was not reasonable," the other chided with a blithe heart.

"I was contented," she replied, "and what we do not want we do not lack. But if my love went anywhere it went to a mortal, a man of the men of Ireland."

"By my hand," said Fionn in mortal distress, "I marvel who that man can be!"

"He is known to you," she murmured. "I lived thus in the peace of Faery, hearing often of my mortal champion, for the rumour of his great deeds had gone through the Shi’, until a day came when the Black Magician of the Men of God put his eye on me, and, after that day, in whatever direction I looked I saw his eye."
She stopped at that, and the terror that was in her heart was on her face. "He is everywhere," she whispered. "He is in the bushes, and on the hill. He looked up at me from the water, and he stared down on me from the sky. His voice commands out of the spaces, and it demands secretly in the heart. He is not here or there, he is in all places at all times. I cannot escape from him," she said, "and I am afraid," and at that she wept noiselessly and stared on Fionn.

"He is my enemy," Fionn growled. "I name him as my enemy."

"You will protect me," she implored.

"Where I am let him not come," said Fionn. "I also have knowledge. I am Fionn, the son of Uail, the son of Baiscne, a man among men and a god where the gods are."

"He asked me in marriage," she continued, "but my mind was full of my own dear hero, and I refused the Dark Man."

"That was your right, and I swear by my hand that if the man you desire is alive and unmarried he shall marry you or he will answer to me for the refusal."

"He is not married," said Saeve, "and you have small control over him." The Chief frowned thoughtfully. "Except the High King and the kings I have authority in this land."

"What man has authority over himself?" said Saeve.

"Do you mean that I am the man you seek?" said Fionn.

"It is to yourself I gave my love," she replied. "This is good news," Fionn cried joyfully, "for the moment you came through the door I loved and desired you, and the thought that you wished for another man went into my heart like a sword." Indeed, Fionn loved Saeve as he had not loved a woman before and would never love one again. He loved her as he had never loved anything before. He could not bear to be away from her. When he saw her he did not see the world, and when he saw the world without her it was as though he saw nothing, or as if he looked on a prospect that was bleak and depressing. The belling of a stag had been music to Fionn, but when Saeve spoke that was sound enough for him. He had loved to hear the cuckoo calling in the spring from the tree that is highest in the hedge, or the blackbird's jolly whistle in an autumn bush, or the thin, sweet enchantment that comes to the mind when a lark thrills out of sight in the air and the hushed fields listen to the song. But his wife's voice was sweeter to Fionn than the singing of a lark. She filled him with wonder and surmise. There was magic in the tips of her fingers. Her thin palm ravished him. Her slender foot set his heart beating; and whatever way her head moved there came a new shape of beauty to her face.

"She is always new," said Fionn. "She is always better than any other woman; she is always better than herself."
He attended no more to the Fianna. He ceased to hunt. He did not listen to the songs of poets or
the curious sayings of magicians, for all of these were in his wife, and something that was
beyond these was in her also.

"She is this world and the next one; she is completion," said Fionn.

CHAPTER III

It happened that the men of Lochlann came on an expedition against Ireland. A monstrous fleet
rounded the bluffs of Ben Edair, and the Danes landed there, to prepare an attack which would
render them masters of the country. Fionn and the Fianna-Finn marched against them. He did not
like the men of Lochlann at any time, but this time he moved against them in wrath, for not only
were they attacking Ireland, but they had come between him and the deepest joy his life had
known.

It was a hard fight, but a short one. The Lochlannachs were driven back to their ships, and within
a week the only Danes remaining in Ireland were those that had been buried there.

That finished, he left the victorious Fianna and returned swiftly to the plain of Allen, for he could
not bear to be one unnecessary day parted from Saeve.

"You are not leaving us!" exclaimed Goll mac Morna.

"I must go," Fionn replied.

"You will not desert the victory feast," Conan reproached him.

"Stay with us, Chief," Caelte begged.

"What is a feast without Fionn?" they complained.

But he would not stay.

"By my hand," he cried, "I must go. She will be looking for me from the window."

"That will happen indeed," Goll admitted.

"That will happen," cried Fionn. "And when she sees me far out on the plain, she will run
through the great gate to meet me."

"It would be the queer wife would neglect that run," Cona'n growled.

"I shall hold her hand again," Fionn entrusted to Caelte's ear.

"You will do that, surely."
"I shall look into her face," his lord insisted. But he saw that not even beloved Caelte understood the meaning of that, and he knew sadly and yet proudly that what he meant could not be explained by any one and could not be comprehended by any one.

"You are in love, dear heart," said Caelte.

"In love he is," Cona'n grumbled. "A cordial for women, a disease for men, a state of wretchedness."

"Wretched in truth," the Chief murmured. "Love makes us poor We have not eyes enough to see all that is to be seen, nor hands enough to seize the tenth of all we want. When I look in her eyes I am tormented because I am not looking at her lips, and when I see her lips my soul cries out, 'Look at her eyes, look at her eyes.'"

"That is how it happens," said Goll rememberingly.

"That way and no other," Caelte agreed.

And the champions looked backwards in time on these lips and those, and knew their Chief would go.

When Fionn came in sight of the great keep his blood and his feet quickened, and now and again he waved a spear in the air.

"She does not see me yet," he thought mournfully.

"She cannot see me yet," he amended, reproaching himself.

But his mind was troubled, for he thought also, or he felt without thinking, that had the positions been changed he would have seen her at twice the distance.

"She thinks I have been unable to get away from the battle, or that I was forced to remain for the feast."

And, without thinking it, he thought that had the positions been changed he would have known that nothing could retain the one that was absent.

"Women," he said, "are shamefaced, they do not like to appear eager when others are observing them."

But he knew that he would not have known if others were observing him, and that he would not have cared about it if he had known. And he knew that his Saeve would not have seen, and would not have cared for any eyes than his.

He gripped his spear on that reflection, and ran as he had not run in his life, so that it was a panting, dishevelled man that raced heavily through the gates of the great Dun.
Within the Dun there was disorder. Servants were shouting to one another, and women were running to and fro aimlessly, wringing their hands and screaming; and, when they saw the Champion, those nearest to him ran away, and there was a general effort on the part of every person to get behind every other person. But Fionn caught the eye of his butler, Gariv Crona'n, the Rough Buzzer, and held it.

"Come you here," he said.

And the Rough Buzzer came to him without a single buzz in his body.

"Where is the Flower of Allen?" his master demanded.

"I do not know, master," the terrified servant replied.

"You do not know!" said Fionn. "Tell what you do know."

And the man told him this story.

CHAPTER IV

"When you had been away for a day the guards were surprised. They were looking from the heights of the Dun, and the Flower of Allen was with them. She, for she had a quest's eye, called out that the master of the Fianna was coming over the ridges to the Dun, and she ran from the keep to meet you."

"It was not I," said Fionn.

"It bore your shape," replied Gariv Cronan. "It had your armour and your face, and the dogs, Bran and Sceo'lan, were with it."

"They were with me," said Fionn.

"They seemed to be with it," said the servant humbly

"Tell us this tale," cried Fionn.

"We were distrustful," the servant continued. "We had never known Fionn to return from a combat before it had been fought, and we knew you could not have reached Ben Edar or encountered the Lochlannachs. So we urged our lady to let us go out to meet you, but to remain herself in the Dun."

"It was good urging," Fionn assented.

"She would not be advised," the servant wailed. "She cried to us, 'Let me go to meet my love'."

"Alas!" said Fionn.
"She cried on us, 'Let me go to meet my husband, the father of the child that is not born.'"

"Alas!" groaned deep-wounded Fionn. "She ran towards your appearance that had your arms stretched out to her."

At that wise Fionn put his hand before his eyes, seeing all that happened.

"Tell on your tale," said he.

"She ran to those arms, and when she reached them the figure lifted its hand. It touched her with a hazel rod, and, while we looked, she disappeared, and where she had been there was a fawn standing and shivering. The fawn turned and bounded towards the gate of the Dun, but the hounds that were by flew after her."

Fionn stared on him like a lost man.

"They took her by the throat--"the shivering servant whispered.

"Ah!" cried Fionn in a terrible voice.

"And they dragged her back to the figure that seemed to be Fionn. Three times she broke away and came bounding to us, and three times the dogs took her by the throat and dragged her back."

"You stood to look!" the Chief snarled.

"No, master, we ran, but she vanished as we got to her; the great hounds vanished away, and that being that seemed to be Fionn disappeared with them. We were left in the rough grass, staring about us and at each other, and listening to the moan of the wind and the terror of our hearts."

"Forgive us, dear master," the servant cried. But the great captain made him no answer. He stood as though he were dumb and blind, and now and again he beat terribly on his breast with his closed fist, as though he would kill that within him which should be dead and could not die. He went so, beating on his breast, to his inner room in the Dun, and he was not seen again for the rest of that day, nor until the sun rose over Moy Life' in the morning.

CHAPTER V

For many years after that time, when he was not fighting against the enemies of Ireland, Fionn was searching and hunting through the length and breadth of the country in the hope that he might again chance on his lovely lady from the Shi'. Through all that time he slept in misery each night and he rose each day to grief. Whenever he hunted he brought only the hounds that he trusted, Bran and Sceo'lan, Lomare, Brod, and Lomlu; for if a fawn was chased each of these five great dogs would know if that was a fawn to be killed or one to be protected, and so there was small danger to Saeve and a small hope of finding her.
Once, when seven years had passed in fruitless search, Fionn and the chief nobles of the Fianna were hunting Ben Gulbain. All the hounds of the Fianna were out, for Fionn had now given up hope of encountering the Flower of Allen. As the hunt swept along the sides of the hill there arose a great outcry of hounds from a narrow place high on the slope and, over all that uproar there came the savage baying of Fionn's own dogs.

"What is this for?" said Fionn, and with his companions he pressed to the spot whence the noise came.

"They are fighting all the hounds of the Fianna," cried a champion.

And they were. The five wise hounds were in a circle and were giving battle to an hundred dogs at once. They were bristling and terrible, and each bite from those great, keen jaws was woe to the beast that received it. Nor did they fight in silence as was their custom and training, but between each onslaught the great heads were uplifted, and they pealed loudly, mournfully, urgently, for their master.

"They are calling on me," he roared.

And with that he ran, as he had only once before run, and the men who were nigh to him went racing as they would not have run for their lives. They came to the narrow place on the slope of the mountain, and they saw the five great hounds in a circle keeping off the other dogs, and in the middle of the ring a little boy was standing. He had long, beautiful hair, and he was naked. He was not daunted by the terrible combat and clamour of the hounds. He did not look at the hounds, but he stared like a young prince at Fionn and the champions as they rushed towards him scattering the pack with the butts of their spears. When the fight was over, Bran and Scceo'lan ran whining to the little boy and licked his hands.

"They do that to no one," said a bystander. "What new master is this they have found?"

Fionn bent to the boy. "Tell me, my little prince and pulse, what your name is, and how you have come into the middle of a hunting-pack, and why you are naked?"

But the boy did not understand the language of the men of Ireland. He put bis hand into Fionn's, and the Chief felt as if that little hand had been put into his heart. He lifted the lad to his great shoulder.

"We have caught something on this hunt," said he to Caelte mac Rongn. "We must bring this treasure home. You shall be one of the Fianna-Finn, my darling," he called upwards.

The boy looked down on him, and in the noble trust and fearlessness of that regard Fionn's heart melted away.

"My little fawn!" he said.
And he remembered that other fawn. He set the boy between his knees and stared at him earnestly and long.

"There is surely the same look," he said to his waking heart; "that is the very eye of Saeve."

The grief flooded out of his heart as at a stroke, and joy foamed into it in one great tide. He marched back singing to the encampment, and men saw once more the merry Chief they had almost forgotten.

CHAPTER VI

Just as at one time he could not be parted from Saeve, so now he could not be separated from this boy. He had a thousand names for him, each one more tender than the last: "My Fawn, My Pulse, My Secret Little Treasure," or he would call him "My Music, My Blossoming Branch, My Store in the Heart, My Soul." And the dogs were as wild for the boy as Fionn was. He could sit in safety among a pack that would have torn any man to pieces, and the reason was that Bran and Sceo'lan, with their three whelps, followed him about like shadows. When he was with the pack these five were with him, and woeful indeed was the eye they turned on their comrades when these pushed too closely or were not properly humble. They thrashed the pack severally and collectively until every hound in Fionn's kennels knew that the little lad was their master, and that there was nothing in the world so sacred as he was.

In no long time the five wise hounds could have given over their guardianship, so complete was the recognition of their young lord. But they did not so give over, for it was not love they gave the lad but adoration.

Fionn even may have been embarrassed by their too close attendance. If he had been able to do so he might have spoken harshly to his dogs, but he could not; it was unthinkable that he should; and the boy might have spoken harshly to him if he had dared to do it. For this was the order of Fionn's affection: first there was the boy; next, Bran and Sceo'lan with their three whelps; then Caelte mac Rona'n, and from him down through the champions. He loved them all, but it was along that precedence his affections ran. The thorn that went into Bran's foot ran into Fionn's also. The world knew it, and there was not a champion but admitted sorrowfully that there was reason for his love.

Little by little the boy came to understand their speech and to speak it himself, and at last he was able to tell his story to Fionn.

There were many blanks in the tale, for a young child does not remember very well. Deeds grow old in a day and are buried in a night. New memories come crowding on old ones, and one must learn to forget as well as to remember. A whole new life had come on this boy, a life that was instant and memorable, so that his present memories blended into and obscured the past, and he could not be quite sure if that which he told of had happened in this world or in the world he had left.

CHAPTER VII
"I used to live," he said, "in a wide, beautiful place. There were hills and valleys there, and woods and streams, but in whatever direction I went I came always to a cliff, so tall it seemed to lean against the sky, and so straight that even a goat would not have imagined to climb it."

"I do not know of any such place," Fionn mused.

"There is no such place in Ireland," said Caelte, "but in the Shi' there is such a place."

"There is in truth," said Fionn.

"I used to eat fruits and roots in the summer," the boy continued, "but in the winter food was left for me in a cave."

"Was there no one with you?" Fionn asked.

"No one but a deer that loved me, and that I loved."

"Ah me!" cried Fionn in anguish, "tell me your tale, my son."

"A dark stern man came often after us, and he used to speak with the deer. Sometimes he talked gently and softly and coaxingly, but at times again he would shout loudly and in a harsh, angry voice. But whatever way he talked the deer would draw away from him in dread, and he always left her at last furiously."

"It is the Dark Magician of the Men of God," cried Fionn despairingly.

"It is indeed, my soul," said Caelte.

"The last time I saw the deer," the child continued, "the dark man was speaking to her. He spoke for a long time. He spoke gently and angrily, and gently and angrily, so that I thought he would never stop talking, but in the end he struck her with a hazel rod, so that she was forced to follow him when he went away. She was looking back at me all the time and she was crying so bitterly that any one would pity her. I tried to follow her also, but I could not move, and I cried after her too, with rage and grief, until I could see her no more and hear her no more. Then I fell on the grass, my senses went away from me, and when I awoke I was on the hill in the middle of the hounds where you found me."

That was the boy whom the Fianna called Oisi'n, or the Little Fawn. He grew to be a great fighter afterwards, and he was the chief maker of poems in the world. But he was not yet finished with the Shi. He was to go back into Faery when the time came, and to come thence again to tell these tales, for it was by him these tales were told.
8. The Peacock Maiden
(A Chinese Tale: A Story of the Tai People)

FOR a thousand miles the Lantsang River flows, rolling to the south, bringing down a hundred thousand grains of glittering gold over the years and leaving a thousand and ten stories along its banks, among which is....

I

In Monbanja, a land of perennial green, there once lived a king named Bahkeladir. His granaries overflowed with the fruits of good harvests and his palace was beyond compare for splendor and richness, but he had no children. Both he and his queen Machena longed for a son, for an heir to succeed to the throne and complete their happiness.

And then, one morning in early spring, their wish was fulfilled. The people rushed excitedly about, talking of a strange happening. A man-child crawled out from the foot of a huge white elephant and then disappeared without a trace. Right at this moment, the queen gave birth to a healthy son which the king named Chaushutun, after a prince famous for his bravery, hoping that his son, too, would grow into a strong and brave man.

With each passing day Chaushutun grew taller and stronger. He diligently studied the arts of peace and war, becoming well versed in the arts and proficient with all weapons. His intelligence was astonishing, and his strength excelled all other men.

One day he peered into a well and by the dim light beheld a strange object in it. The wise old men said that the great King Bahmo had left a wonderful treasure there, which men for many generations had tried in vain to obtain. Chaushutun ordered the well be drained, and when this was done he descended into the well to examine it more closely. The object was a magic bow. So powerful was it that he who owned it could defeat an entire enemy army. No one but Chaushutun had the strength to bend the huge bow. He could draw it taut till it was as round as the full moon, and every arrow from it hit the target clean and sure.

One day as an evil bird of prodigious size was arrogantly wheeling overhead in the clouds, a black fish clasped in its beak, an arrow from Chaushutun's bow pierced it. The fish fell from its beak into a river, and the bird, mortally wounded, plunged down into the forests below.

Sixteen times the breezes of autumn fanned the paddy fields into a swaying, burning gold. Chaushutun was now a brave, handsome lad, with deep, clear eyes that sparkled with life. His face was more lovely than the legendary Dewawo's, and his voice was like the chiming of bells, soft and musical to the ear.

When the maidens saw him their mouths and eyes opened wide in admiration and they longed to toss the embroidered pouch of courtship at him, offer him the slit-bamboo stool reserved for their dear ones, and give him love nuts. His parents grew increasingly concerned about his marriage, and time and again urged him to marry a girl of noble birth.
The treacherous minister Mahashena, eager to increase his influence over the throne, offered his daughter. But it was of no use. Of the many beautiful but empty-headed daughters of nobles, not one could win Chaushutun's heart. His one wish was to find himself a girl as capable as she was beautiful, who could be his faithful companion for life.

One day, with his magic bow and sword, and mounted on his wonder horse, Chaushutun rode away, over vast fields, over range after range of mountains and through thick forests, to search for a girl after his heart. On the way he fell in with an old hunter named Gohagen and the two became firm friends. Together they hunted the wild boar and the flame-speckled deer, and shared the same fire. As they ate their fill of savory venison they talked of many interesting things. One of the stories Gohagen told the prince was this:

Not many years ago, Bahna, the God of Waters, with a magic weapon captured the son of Bahun, king of all fish-eating birds. In revenge the bird king caught the God of Waters while he was visiting the ocean's surface in the guise of a black fish. And just as the bird king was exulting high in the skies an arrow suddenly struck him, making him release the black fish, which fell down into a river, right into the net old Gohagen had spread. The black fish pleaded to be set free and promised to come to Gohagen's aid whenever he needed help. The kind-hearted Gohagen set the fish free.

"I admired the bowman whose arrow brought down that fish! I have always hoped that some day I will meet him," concluded Gohagen.

"That unknown bowman probably wants to meet you even more," Chaushutun added with a smile. So they talked through the night, like old, intimate friends.

Chaushutun looked up and sighed. "Ah, bright star!" he said. "Herald of dawn! So high, yet so easily seen. Now why is a beautiful and talented maid born among men so difficult to find?"

"Love never disappoints pure hearts. The steadfast and true will bring the deep-seated spring water to the surface," Gohagen chuckled knowingly.

Chaushutun nodded. He would remember that saying.

"And not far from here," the old hunter went on, "is Lake Langsna with its jade-green waters as clear as a polished mirror. And every seven days, seven peacock maidens extraordinarily fair to see bathe there. They are as fair as resplendent flowers, and the youngest outshines them all. When you see her, you will see the beauty of the legendary Nandiowala and you will know what wisdom and cleverness really mean. Come, let us go and see."

Chaushutun rose eagerly. They mounted their swift horses and soon were at the lake. They hid themselves on the lake's edge and waited.

II
The weather at noon was warm and mild, and the limpid waters of the lake mirrored the many-colored clouds which sailed gently across the sky, fanned by a soft fragrant breeze.

Suddenly, from out of the skies seven colorful peacocks flew down and alighted on the shore. Quickly the peacock cloaks were shed, and seven graceful maidens appeared, who, laughing merrily, plunged into the lake.

Chaushutun and Gohagen gazed, fascinated. After a while the peacock maidens rose from the water and, donning their peacock cloaks, began to dance. Chaushutun was enchanted by the youngest, the seventh sister, Namarona. Oh, how she danced! But all too soon the dancers turned back into peacocks, rose high into the air and flew away towards the west, and became seven tiny specks on the horizon, with Chaushutun gazing longingly after them.

"Don't be so sad!" said Gohagen. "They'll come back again in another seven days."

"Seven days! And then only a few moments! How can I stop them leaving?"

"Let us go and ask the hermit Palasi. He might know."

They went and found Palasi in his forest home. Smilingly he looked Chaushutun over. He shook his head at first, but finally gave a nod, and summoning an otter, told Chaushutun to follow it. The otter led them to the side of Lake Langsna, where it plunged in.

The waters immediately divided into two, leaving a wide, dry path. Along this came Bahna, the God of Waters himself, who greeted Chaushutun as his savior, and led them into his magnificent palace. Only then did Gohagen realize that the bowman who had shot down the evil bird Bahun was no other than his companion. After revealing all the secrets of a magic hook he had, the God of Waters lent it to Chaushutun and escorted them back to the shore. The two friends resumed their hiding place and waited.

The longed-for day arrived. The sun hung in mid-heaven and Chaushutun and Gohagen saw on the horizon a flash as of seven glittering diamonds, which came straight towards them. As they drew nearer, the dazzling orbs of light became seven peacocks, and after alighting, they again became seven beautiful maidens, who dived into the lake. Chaushutun's eyes carefully sought out and marked the youngest maiden. He had watched where she hung her peacock cloak and then, while the maidens splashed and frolicked in the lake, he quietly took out his magic hook, brought down the maiden's garment and gently drew it to his hiding place.

The maidens finished their bathing. What was their panic when they discovered that seventh sister's garment was not to be found!

Namarona began to cry, and her sisters comforted her, saying, "We will carry you home between us."

Chaushutun was frightened when he heard this, and called out, "No! Don't go!" He was going to say "Here is your garment!" but Gohagen clapped his hand over his mouth.
The peacock maidens were startled when they heard a man's voice, and took to their wings, leaving Namarona behind. She quickly darted into some thick bushes and hid herself.

After a long while when everything remained silent and motionless, she came out cautiously and began to look for her peacock garment.

"Tee-hee-hee! Tee-hee-hee!" something chattered high in the trees. It was only an impertinent squirrel.

"O squirrel, have you seen my garment?"

"Tee-hee-hee! Tee-hee-hee!" The squirrel only laughed.

"Oh, don't laugh! Can't you see I am looking frantically for my peacock cloak? I'm sure you know where it is! Won't you tell me?"

The squirrel, whiskers twitching, waved his bushy tail and pointed to the spot where Chaushutun was hiding, and then vanished into the leafy branches.

"Who could be there?" she asked herself. She looked up. There was a falcon wheeling overhead. "Could it be a bird who took my cloak?"

Swish! Chaushutun let fly an arrow and the falcon hurtled down, with an arrow through its heart. It dropped to the ground beside Namarona. She picked it up and looked about her, astonished. Still she could see no one.

"O maiden," a voice called softly, "did the arrow fly true?"

Namarona turned and saw Chaushutun, but it was too late to run and hide. It seemed a long, long while before she could find her voice. "Yes, right through the heart," she answered, in her soft, musical voice.

The two of them gazed at one another, speechless with enchantment.

Then Namarona spoke again, her face red with a rosy blush, "May I ask if my elder brother has seen my peacock cloak?"

"Oh why, O maiden, are you not at home, but here in this wilderness, looking for a peacock cloak?"

"My six sisters and I came to swim in Lake Langsna. I hung my cloak on yonder flowering bough, but it has vanished."

"I can see no houses near or far. Can you be the fairy Nandiowala from heaven, beautiful maid?"
"King Chaudekasali of Mongwudoongpan is my father. I am Namarona, his seventh daughter. You, elder brother, must surely be the handsome Bahmo or Bahna, the God of Waters. The mortal world cannot breed so handsome a youth."

"No, I am Chaushutun, son of King Bahkeladir of Monbanja. Though a thousand miles away, I sensed the fragrance of the flowers blossoming here, and came. Do not tell me the fresh flower before me belongs to another."

"My elder brother is so eloquent. He is a lovebird reciting his moving lines before me! There is no divine lotus here with a thousand petals, nor a flower so sweet that its perfume can spread even a hundred miles. The flower here showed little promise as a bud, and the poor blossom which resulted can only droop in shame. No one has ever come to water it, or caress it. Why should anyone stoop to pluck it?"

"A precious stone needs the cunning hand of a craftsman. O maiden, why are you not wearing the ring of some loved one?"

"What, I, a mere pebble in the wilderness! Who would deceive himself into thinking it a jewel! Or who would want to cast a precious ring away in the wilderness!"

As they were speaking, Namarona's six sisters appeared, anxiously looking for their little lost sister. They saw her and were about to swoop down and snatch her away when Gohagen shot an arrow into the air and flourished the magic hook at them, at which they took fright and fled.

"Fear not, lovely maid," Chaushutun comforted her, for she too was frightened. "He who protects me is my friend Gohagen, a most kind-hearted man." And then he added, shyly, "My store of food is but half eaten; my bed but half occupied. The fiery comet flies lonely across heaven. Ah, why has it no companion?"

"Alas, the sun only rises when the moon must set. People of different worlds cannot live together. Were it otherwise, my humble, poor self would gladly be a handmaid and wash dishes and feed swine for a lonely man."

"Ah, strong wine needs no fortifying! Wound not my heart further!" Chaushutun thought he could see a gleam of hope and went on more boldly. "I have journeyed a thousand miles across land and water to come here, and waited seven long nights and days to see you. I beg you to accompany me back to my home, to live with me."

"Water flows out from a jar easily but to scoop it back is hard," she answered. In truth, she had already lost her heart to this handsome youth, but she was not to be won too easily. "To go with you to your home would be enchanting, but what of your parents, the king and queen? What of your court and your people? They may not be pleased. And then how will I lift my head to eat my food? My eyes will never be dry."
"It cannot be that they will not be pleased! My parents love me well and will equally love what is mine. Your beauty equals that of Nandiowala and will shine throughout the land. All my people will be proud and happy to see you as the prince's consort."

"But my parents! They will miss me and will be sad."

"My home be yours," said Chaushutun, taking a golden ring off his finger eagerly. "Oh, lovely maid! Accept this and gladden my heart!"

He slipped it on her unresisting finger, and she gave him a jewel from her breast, saying, "In this you can always see your loved one."

No sooner had the two plighted their troth than two lotus blooms flowering on a single stem rose to the surface of the lake. The lovers thanked the hunter Gohagen and left Chaushutun's wonder horse in his care as a parting gift, and asked him to return the magic hook to its owner.

"And is it not time you returned my peacock cloak?" asked Namarona, her eyes full of laughter.

He pulled her cloak out of the bushes and gave it back to her. She put it on and, holding Chaushutun's hand tightly, spread out her dazzling wings. They rose into the air and in a flash went to his home in Monbanja.

III

The romantic way by which their young prince found his love set everyone buzzing with excitement. All agreed it was enchanting to have such a consort, as lovely as a fairy, for their prince. All that is, save that treacherous minister Mahashena. He was furious because his daughter was rejected, and was determined to have his revenge. He openly opposed the marriage and tried to convince the king that Namarona was a witch. Meanwhile he secretly sent messengers to the king of the neighboring country of Mongshugang-Nakema, extolling the virtues and beauty of Namarona and exhorting him to send his army to abduct her for himself, promising to do all he could to help such an invading army.

At first the king Bahkeladir was reluctant to accept an unknown maiden as his son's bride, but he finally gave his consent when he saw how greatly his son loved Namarona. The queen and Namarona, however, liked each other from their first meeting and were soon fast friends. So, since nearly every noble approved, an auspicious day was chosen and preparations were started to celebrate the marriage.

Now the king of the neighboring country of Mongshugang-Nakema was a wicked tyrant, and a sensual and greedy bully. When he received the traitor Mahashena's glowing report of Namarona, he immediately assembled his army and invaded Monbanja.

It was on the very night of the wedding that the dispatch from the frontier came, informing the king that the country had been invaded. Everything was thrown into confusion. Chaushutun consulted his wise Namarona and decided that he would beg the king to let him lead the army
against the invaders. The king agreed, and Chaushutun and the army departed. Soon after he had
gone, the traitor minister brought a false report about the fighting, asserting that the prince's army
was being driven back and that defeat seemed certain. King Bahkeladir was numbed with
despair. Like a vanquished quail, he was deaf and blind to everything.

At night he had a terrible dream, so terrible that he could not forget it. He woke up shuddering
and summoned all his lords and asked them to interpret this hideous nightmare. When he
described it, the head priest, who was in league with the faithless minister, immediately
interpreted it as the work of a witch who would betray the city.

"A witch! Where?" asked the king helplessly.

"Within the palace walls. But your humble servant dare not say more."

"In a time like this you must speak out and fear nothing," the king ordered.

Three times the head priest begged the king's pardon, as if he were reluctant to speak for fear of
offending the king. Finally he spoke. "It is no other than Namarona," he said. "It is the prince's
consort who has brought disaster upon us. If we do not rid ourselves of her, I fear for the
consequences."

The king was greatly alarmed and did not know what to do.

Mahashena was pleased to see the king's consternation and seized the opportunity to pour more
poison in his ears about Namarona. "Within seven days is the Day of Sacrifice. Let Namarona be
seized and stripped of all her possessions and be executed on that day!" he proclaimed on behalf
of the witless king.

The queen broke the dreadful news to Namarona and hid the peacock cloak, hoping to
find some
way for her to escape. Poor Namarona pleaded with the king, but he was adamant.

"Die bravely for our country and my son's sake!" was his reply.

Namarona was heart-broken. She wept and wept, longing for Chaushutun to come back and save
her from this awful fate.

Chaushutun had driven the enemy back, and was even now leading his army triumphantly home,
but he was still far away when the Day of Sacrifice came.

Namarona was taken to the execution ground, her rich robes in tatters. She had already a plan for
escape, but, at the thought of having to leave Chaushutun, she wept profusely.

As she was led past the king and queen, she turned and begged them to listen to her last plea.
"Hear me, O king and queen," she cried. Let me once more put on my peacock cloak and dance
for you before we part forever!"
King Bahkeladir's heart softened and he granted her this last wish. The queen brought her the peacock cloak, the guards loosened her bonds, and Namarona put it on.

Slowly she began to dance. She was lovely to watch, the colors on the cloak flashing as she swayed. Even the stony-hearted executioner stood entranced as though his souls was cleansed and purified by the young maid's dance, and the crowds forgot they were there to watch an execution and only knew they were watching a lovely dancer. Slowly Namarona transformed herself into a peacock and rose into the air. The faithless minister shouted to the king to order the executioner to seize her, but it was already too late. She was out of reach, and soon out of sight.

"See, my lords," he shouted again in a fury. "See! She was a witch. She flew away!"

He had barely finished speaking when a warrior galloped up and ran to the king. He had brought the news of the victory. The king was still in a daze and asked again and again what news he brought.

"The prince, your son, leading your majesty's army, has routed the enemy. Our banners fly victorious!" the soldier repeated.

The king looked at the treacherous minister, who bowed his head. Everything was now clear to him. The next minute the whole populace rose and with joyous shouts welcomed their victorious army returning, with Chaushutun at their head. The court musician sang a song of welcome:

Sweet is the juice of the coconut!
Strong the shell that guards it!
We people of Monbanja live happily,
With Chaushutun the hero as our protector.

"The honor belongs to the beautiful Namarona," said Chaushutun smilingly. "It was her strategy that defeated the enemy. Come, let us ask her to accept the honor."

The king turned pale. How could he have been so foolish and done such wrong to an innocent person! How more than foolish to mistake the bad for the good!

The head priest and minister, fearful of Chaushutun's vengeance, hunched their shoulders and stole away as best they could, while the people and the soldiers bowed their heads and wept as they thought of Namarona, their princess who was as lovely as the fairy Nandiowala.

Prince Chaushutun was startled at the hush which fell after he had spoken.

"What is this?" he cried, alarmed. "What is this?" What has happened?"

The king and queen, their hearts heavy with grief, forced themselves to tell the truth. The blow fell like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, or the hiss of water on red embers. Chaushutun staggered and dropped to the ground.
Only half conscious, he murmured her name repeatedly. He took out the jewel she had given him at their betrothal, and looked into it. Yes, as she said, he could see her in it, with the hermit Palasi, her cheeks wet with tears. It was like a physical pain in his heart and he fell back again in a swoon.

When he came to he was in a cold anger. First, though, he was determined to find her again. Heedless of all pleas, he mounted his fiery steed and galloped to Lake Langsna, stopping neither day nor night. On and on, he spurred his horse, searching for his beloved Namarona.

IV

Namarona, so cruelly wronged, had left her bridal home with a heavy heart. As she winged her way home to Mongwudoongpan she thought of her loving parents and her sisters, whom she had not seen for some time. Her faith in Chaushutun's love for her was unshaken, and she knew he would not rest till he found her again. But this made her heart more heavy, for the way to her was fraught with danger. She flew over Lake Langsna and, meeting the hermit Palasi, she took off her armlet and spoke to him.

"Please give this to Chaushutun," she said, for she was sure he would seek for her there. "Tell him that if he wears it, his days will pass as though I were still by his side. But he must not try to follow me! It is too dangerous. Tell him he must not look for me!" And she turned and flew off, weeping as if her heart would break.

Chaushutun pressed on over fertile fields, through thick forests and over many tall ranges. His faithful mount was exhausted, and died. But Chaushutun hurried on by foot, gulping a hasty drink when he passed a stream and getting what game he could. It was only when he was dropping with fatigue that he paused briefly. Day after weary day he labored till he came to Lake Langsna. Thinking back to the happy meeting with Namarona, he wept bitterly. So bitterly did he cry that the hermit Palasi took compassion on him and, going up to Chaushutun, gave him Namarona's armlet. At the sight of the armlet he wept all the more grievously and became all the more determined to find her.

"From here to Namarona's home is a long and difficult road, over impassable rivers and vast stretches of shifting sands. There are unpredictable perils, man-crushing mountains and giant man-eating birds awaiting you. And should you by chance reach Mongwudoongpan, her father, the king, would still doubt your worth as your father doubted hers."

"I must go on!" Chaushutun vowed. "If I do not find her again I do not want to return. Without her I cannot live!"

Palasi was deeply moved to see such love, and such determination. He decided he would help, and called up a monkey to guide Chaushutun to Namarona's home.

The monkey led the way, on their trying and seemingly endless journey, till one day they reached the Namienkalikagan, the river which ran white-hot, enough to melt metal. Chaushutun tested the seething waters with his sword. No sooner did the blade touch the water than the tip dissolved.
Upriver and down he searched, but no ford or bridge could he find. There was no way over unless he could fly. He stood on the bank, gazing across the river with impatient eyes. Suddenly a huge black python rose out of the water, its head on one bank and its tail on the other, like a long, narrow bridge. The nimble-witted monkey quickly ran over the snake to the other side, closely followed by Chaushutun. When they were across, the snake disappeared again.

On and on Chaushutun and the monkey pushed westwards till they reached the cloud-piercing peaks, the Three Fighting Sentinels. These were three mountains which crashed against one another continuously. Chaushutun fitted an arrow to his magic bow and aimed at a crack. Swish flew the arrow, breaking a temporary passage through the shifting mountains. Monkey and man sped through this opening. Even as they reached the other side, the mountains crashed together again.

And after a long, long way they reached a vast open space swept by sandstorms and flying stones. All day they had to battle with the whirling stones till at last they reached a huge tree which blotted out the sun. Tired and exhausted, they climbed up into its branches and rested, unaware that this was the home of the giant man-eating birds. A sudden blast of wind woke Chaushutun out of his exhausted stupor. It was the bird and his mate returning to their nest. The male bird could forecast events to come in the east and the female in the west.

"Your prediction was not very accurate, was it?" the female said derisively to her mate. "I thought you said that Chaushutun would be here today! There's no sign of him that I can see."

"But according to my knowledge, he has crossed the Namienkalikagan and passed through the Three Fighting Sentinels safely. He should be here today. I am still hopeful of having my dainty morsel," the male said petulantly. Then he strained his great head. "Gawk," he croaked, "I can smell a living human!"

"Gawk! I too," cried the female. "Come! Let us go down and see."

The two giant birds flopped to the ground, sniffing now east, now west, craning their ugly necks in every direction. Chaushutun, alarmed, clutched his sword, prepared to do battle with them. The birds discovered the monkey and devoured him. They found nothing else and flapped back to their aerie.

"Oho! A monkey! That's your man from the east, is it?" said the female. "Anyway, I'm going to sleep now. Tomorrow the King of Mongwudoongpan is going to hold a ceremony to welcome and bless his seventh princess who has just returned from Monbanja. Seven huge elephants, a hundred head of buffaloes, and a hundred fat pigs are going to be butchered. Let us go there, and have our fill of bone and blood."

Soon the great birds were asleep and Chaushutun relaxed with a sigh of relief. "Tomorrow they're going to fly to my dear one's home, are they!" he thought. "If only I could steal a ride on one of them! What care I for danger if I can see her again." The thought of her made him brave. He gripped his good sword firmly and quietly climbed into the nest. He hacked off a huge
feather, as big and round as a man, and stealthily crept into its hollow stump. "Now the bird will take me to Mongwudoongpan!" he thought triumphantly.

V

Next morning the huge birds took wing, soaring swiftly through the skies, with Chaushutun safely hidden, and soon reaching the kingdom of Mongwudoongpan. The bird landed, and preened its feathers, shaking Chaushutun out. He quickly made his way towards the palace. As he drew near he saw an elderly woman resting in the shade of a pavilion.

He was about to ask for news of Namarona when he saw a troop of beautiful maidens dressed in bright robes on their way to fetch water. So he said, "May I ask you, honored matron, why so many maids fetch water together?"

"Young man," replied the old lady, "don't you know that the seventh princess has come back from Monbanja and the king has ordered a great feast to pray for a blessing on her? These girls are now fetching water for the princess."

"Oh," said Chaushutun. He asked nothing more, but watched the maids fill their pails and depart one after the other till only one was left beside the well.

It was Namarona's personal maid, a clever young girl. She had filled her pails when she saw the handsome stranger staring intently at her. She thought him handsome and, pretending she was unable to lift the pails, called to him for help, hoping thus to enter into conversation with him. Chaushutun gladly helped her, and as he bent over the pails he quickly slipped the armlet Namarona had give him into one of them.

"Just as the flower which stands by the clear waters is always beautiful," he said, "so I dare presume the mistress whom you serve is most lovely. Will you present my blessings to her? May her tears be washed away and may her smile appear again!"

The maid blushed. It seemed an unusual compliment to send. She looked more closely at this strange youth and replied, "From where does my elder brother come? He speaks so eloquently, it could be the speech of a golden cockatoo from some foreign skies!"

"Yes," Chaushutun answered, "it is from foreign skies that I have come. But eloquence I have none. The only fluency which comes to my tongue is to echo your mistress's name. Take her my message, I beg you, take it swiftly."

The girl still wanted to know what lay behind his mysterious word, but she knew her princess was waiting, and had to go.

Never for one moment did Namarona forget Chaushutun. In front of her was clean green grass and fresh bright flowers, but she only wanted to see her loved one. She saw the bees busily visiting the flowers, and she felt all the more lonely and sad. When the morning mists lifted and the dew dried, her sorrow still lay heavy on her heart. She only longed to be with him again, to
live together happily. On this day when her father was holding the great ceremony to bless her, she fervently hoped that the clear water showered on her would wash away all her misfortunes and bring the day of her happy reunion with Chaushutun nearer.

Her maid returned and poured the water over her. Something struck her arm. She stifled a cry as she saw what lay on the ground.

"What startles the princess?" asked her maid.

"Is it a dream? What do I see! There on the ground lies my armlet. How did it get there?"

"Your eyes do not deceive you. Indeed, it is the princess's armlet that lies there."

"I can see a fire balloon floating, but I cannot see the person who lit the fire! I can see an embroidered love pouch in front of me, but, alas, where is he who dropped it!"

"Princess, why do you talk of fire balloons and love pouches while I bathe you?"

"Girl, you must tell me where this armlet came from."

"Is it not possible I scooped it up with the water?"

"No! No! I beg you, tell me, who gave it to you?"

The serving maid was puzzled. What strange business was this? She told Namarona everything: how she went to fetch water and met a young man, and how he spoke strangely to her.

Namarona sprang to her feet and ran, barefooted, to the king and queen, her eyes bright and shining. "My husband is here!" she cried breathlessly.

Chaushutun had wandered on after the maid servant left, and then he was apprehended and brought before the king. The king looked doubtfully at Chaushutun. Was this youth worthy of his daughter's love? He could not believe that Chaushutun had reached his kingdom merely by courage and love and without a magic peacock cloak. And so quickly too!

Chaushutun begged the king to pardon him for the wrongs that his daughter had suffered, and swore that he loved her with all his heart. The king could almost believe him, but he was determined to test him. He proposed two conditions which Chaushutun must fulfil. If he failed, he was to leave without seeing the princess.

As the first test, Chaushutun had to destroy, with his bow, a gigantic boulder hindering the smooth flow of the river and causing frequent floods which destroyed many thousands of farms. No one had ever been able to do anything to alleviate this curse.

Chaushutun, before ten thousand pairs of watchful eyes, fitted an arrow to his magic bow and drew it taut with all his might. Swish flew the arrow and immediately there was a tremendous
rumble like thunder. The huge boulder crumbled and was swept swiftly away by the current,
amidst a roar of cheers from the crowd. The king was satisfied with the first test.

The second condition was this: The seven princesses had to enter a darkened room and each
show a finger through a hole in the wall. If Chaushutun could identify Namarona's finger, then
the king would be satisfied that he loved her.

The night was black as pitch, and Chaushutun outside the darkened room had great difficulty in
finding any fingers at all. Unexpectedly, however, a firefly hovered in the air and then gently
alighted on one particular finger. Without a moment's hesitation Chaushutun seized the finger,
feeling it could be no other than Namarona's.

"He has succeeded! That is her finger!" the king exclaimed, all doubts gone. "Come, and we will
celebrate their reunion!"

A few days later, Chaushutun and Namarona prepared to go. They bade everyone of
Mongwudoongpan farewell and left for Monbanja on a flying horse and a flying elephant, given
to them by the king.

King Bahkeladir and Queen Machena were still mourning their sorrows when their tears turned
to joy. Elaborate ceremonies and feasts were held to celebrate the young couple's return. The
traitor minister, fearing to meet his just reward, had left with his rejected daughter for the
neighboring country of Mongshugang-Nakema.

Chaushutun and Namarona lived long and happily together. Namarona's peacock dance, now a
symbol of peace and happiness, became famous throughout the land of the Tais and is danced to
this very day.

9. Vasilissa the Beautiful

Russian

In a certain Tsardom, across three times nine kingdoms, beyond high mountain chains, there
once lived a merchant. He had been married for twelve years, but in that time there had been
born to him only one child, a daughter, who from her cradle was called Vasilissa the Beautiful.
When the little girl was eight years old the mother fell ill, and before many days it was plain to
be seen that she must die. So she called her little daughter to her, and taking a tiny wooden doll
from under the blanket of the bed, put it into her hands and said:

"My little Vasilissa, my dear daughter, listen to what I say, remember well my last words and fail
not to carry out my wishes. I am dying, and with my blessing, I leave to thee this little doll. It is
very precious for there is no other like it in the whole world. Carry it always about with thee in
thy pocket and never show it to anyone. When evil threatens thee or sorrow befalls thee, go into a corner, take it from thy pocket and give it something to eat and drink. It will eat and drink a little, and then thou mayest tell it thy trouble and ask its advice, and it will tell thee how to act in thy time of need." So saying, she kissed her little daughter on the forehead, blessed her, and shortly after died.

Little Vasilissa grieved greatly for her mother, and her sorrow was so deep that when the dark night came, she lay in her bed and wept and did not sleep. At length she be thought herself of the tiny doll, so she rose and took it from the pocket of her gown and finding a piece of wheat bread and a cup of kvass, she set them before it, and said: "There, my little doll, take it. Eat a little, and drink a little, and listen to my grief. My dear mother is dead and I am lonely for her."

Then the doll's eyes began to shine like fireflies, and suddenly it became alive. It ate a morsel of the bread and took a sip of the kvass, and when it had eaten and drunk, it said:

"Don't weep, little Vasilissa. Grief is worst at night. Lie down, shut thine eyes, comfort thyself and go to sleep. The morning is wiser than the evening." So Vasilissa the Beautiful lay down, comforted herself and went to sleep, and the next day her grieving was not so deep and her tears were less bitter.

Now after the death of his wife, the merchant sorrowed for many days as was right, but at the end of that time he began to desire to marry again and to look about him for a suitable wife. This was not difficult to find, for he had a fine house, with a stable of swift horses, besides being a good man who gave much to the poor. Of all the women he saw, however, the one who, to his mind, suited him best of all, was a widow of about his own age with two daughters of her own, and she, he thought, besides being a good housekeeper, would be a kind foster mother to his little Vasilissa.

So the merchant married the widow and brought her home as his wife, but the little girl soon found that her foster mother was very far from being what her father had thought. She was a cold, cruel woman, who had desired the merchant for the sake of his wealth, and had no love for his daughter. Vasilissa was the greatest beauty in the whole village, while her own daughters were as spare and homely as two crows, and because of this all three envied and hated her. They gave her all sorts of errands to run and difficult tasks to perform, in order that the toil might make her thin and worn and that her face might grow brown from sun and wind, and they treated her so cruelly as to leave few joys in life for her. But all this the little Vasilissa endured without complaint, and while the stepmother's two daughters grew always thinner and uglier, in spite of the fact that they had no hard tasks to do, never went out in cold or rain, and sat always with their arms folded like ladies of a Court, she herself had cheeks like blood and milk and grew every day more and more beautiful.

Now the reason for this was the tiny doll, without whose help little Vasilissa could never have managed to do all the work that was laid upon her. Each night, when everyone else was sound asleep, she would get up from her bed, take the doll into a closet, and locking the door, give it something to eat and drink, and say: "There, my little doll, take it. Eat a little, drink a little, and
listen to my grief. I live in my father's house, but my spiteful stepmother wishes to drive me out of the white world. Tell me! How shall I act, and what shall I do?"

Then the little doll's eyes would begin to shine like glow-worms, and it would become alive. It would eat a little food, and sip a little drink, and then it would comfort her and tell her how to act. While Vasilissa slept, it would get ready all her work for the next day, so that she had only to rest in the shade and gather flowers, for the doll would have the kitchen garden weeded, and the beds of cabbage watered, and plenty of fresh water brought from the well, and the stoves heated exactly right. And, besides this, the little doll told her how to make, from a certain herb, an ointment which prevented her from ever being sunburnt. So all the joy in life that came to Vasilissa came to her through the tiny doll that she always carried in her pocket.

Years passed, till Vasilissa grew up and became of an age when it is good to marry. All the young men in the village, high and low, rich and poor, asked for her hand, while not one of them stopped even to look at the stepmother's two daughters, so ill-favored were they. This angered their mother still more against Vasilissa; she answered every gallant who came with the same words: "Never shall the younger be wed before the older ones!" and each time, when she had let a suitor out of the door, she would soothe her anger and hatred by beating her stepdaughter. So while Vasilissa grew each day more lovely and graceful, she was often miserable, and but for the little doll in her pocket, would have longed to leave the white world.

Now there came a time when it became necessary for the merchant to leave his home and to travel to a distant Tsardom. He bade farewell to his wife and her two daughters, kissed Vasilissa and gave her his blessing and departed, bidding them say a prayer each day for his safe return. Scarce was he out of sight of the village, however, when his wife sold his house, packed all his goods and moved with them to another dwelling far from the town, in a gloomy neighborhood on the edge of a wild forest. Here every day, while her two daughters were working indoors, the merchant's wife would send Vasilissa on one errand or other into the forest, either to find a branch of a certain rare bush or to bring her flowers or berries.

Now deep in this forest, as the stepmother well knew, there was a green lawn and on the lawn stood a miserable little hut on hens' legs, where lived a certain Baba Yaga, an old witch grandmother. She lived alone and none dared go near the hut, for she ate people as one eats chickens. The merchant's wife sent Vasilissa into the forest each day, hoping she might meet the old witch and be devoured; but always the girl came home safe and sound, because the little doll showed her where the bush, the flowers and the berries grew, and did not let her go near the hut that stood on hens' legs. And each time the stepmother hated her more and more because she came to no harm.

One autumn evening the merchant's wife called the three girls to her and gave them each a task. One of her daughters she bade make a piece of lace, the other to knit a pair of hose, and to Vasilissa she gave a basket of flax to be spun. She bade each finish a certain amount. Then she put out all the fires in the house, leaving only a single candle lighted in the room where the three girls worked, and she herself went to sleep.
They worked an hour, they worked two hours, they worked three hours, when one of the elder daughters took up the tongs to straighten the wick of the candle. She pretended to do this awkwardly (as her mother had bidden her) and put the candle out, as if by accident.

"What are we to do now?" asked her sister. "The fires are all out, there is no other light in all the house, and our tasks are not done."

"We must go and fetch fire," said the first. "The only house near is a hut in the forest, where a Baba Yaga lives. One of us must go and borrow fire from her."

"I have enough light from my steel pins," said the one who was making the lace, "and I will not go."

"And I have plenty of light from my silver needles," said the other, who was knitting the hose, "and I will not go.

"Thou, Vasilissa," they both said, "shalt go and fetch the fire, for thou hast neither steel pins nor silver needles and cannot see to spin thy flax!" They both rose up, pushed Vasilissa out of the house and locked the door, crying:

"Thou shalt not come in till thou hast fetched the fire."

Vasilissa sat down on the doorstep, took the tiny doll from one pocket and from another the supper she had ready for it, put the food before it and said: "There, my little doll, take it. Eat a little and listen to my sorrow. I must go to the hut of the old Baba Yaga in the dark forest to borrow some fire and I fear she will eat me. Tell me! What shall I do?"

Then the doll's eyes began to shine like two stars and it became alive. It ate a little and said: "Do not fear, little Vasilissa. Go where thou hast been sent. While I am with thee no harm shall come to thee from the old witch." So Vasilissa put the doll back into her pocket, crossed herself and started out into the dark, wild forest.

Whether she walked a short way or a long way the telling is easy, but the journey was hard. The wood was very dark, and she could not help trembling from fear. Suddenly she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs and a man on horseback galloped past her. He was dressed all in white, the horse under him was milk-white and the harness was white, and just as he passed her it became twilight.

She went a little further and again she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs and there came another man on horseback galloping past her. He was dressed all in red, and the horse under him was blood-red and its harness was red, and just as he passed her the sun rose.

That whole day Vasilissa walked, for she had lost her way. She could find no path at all in the dark wood and she had no food to set before the little doll to make it alive.
But at evening she came all at once to the green lawn where the wretched little hut stood on its hens' legs. The wall around the hut was made of human bones and on its top were skulls. There was a gate in the wall, whose hinges were the bones of human feet and whose locks were jaw-bones set with sharp teeth. The sight filled Vasilissa with horror and she stopped as still as a post buried in the ground.

As she stood there a third man on horseback came galloping up. His face was black, he was dressed all in black, and the horse he rode was coal-black. He galloped up to the gate of the hut and disappeared there as if he had sunk through the ground and at that moment the night came and the forest grew dark.

But it was not dark on the green lawn, for instantly the eyes of all the skulls on the wall were lighted up and shone till the place was as bright as day. When she saw this Vasilissa trembled so with fear that she could not run away.

Then suddenly the wood became full of a terrible noise; the trees began to groan, the branches to creak and the dry leaves to rustle, and the Baba Yaga came flying from the forest. She was riding in a great iron mortar and driving it with the pestle, and as she came she swept away her trail behind her with a kitchen broom.

She rode up to the gate and stopping, said:

Little House, little House, Stand the way thy mother placed thee, Turn thy back to the forest and thy face to me!

And the little hut turned facing her and stood still. Then smelling all around her, she cried: "Foo! Foo! I smell a smell that is Russian. Who is here?"

Vasilissa, in great fright, came nearer to the old woman and bowing very low, said: "It is only Vasilissa, grandmother. My stepmother's daughters sent me to thee to borrow some fire."

"Well," said the old witch, "I know them. But if I give thee the fire thou shalt stay with me some time and do some work to pay for it. If not, thou shalt be eaten for my supper." Then she turned to the gate and shouted: "Ho! Ye, my solid locks, unlock! Thou, my stout gate, open!" Instantly the locks unlocked, the gate opened of itself, and the Baba Yaga rode in whistling. Vasilissa entered behind her and immediately the gate shut again and the locks snapped tight.

When they had entered the hut the old witch threw her self down on the stove, stretched out her bony legs and said:

"Come, fetch and put on the table at once everything that is in the oven. I am hungry." So Vasilissa ran and lighted a splinter of wood from one of the skulls on the wall and took the food from the oven and set it before her. There was enough cooked meat for three strong men. She brought also from the cellar kvass, honey, and red wine, and the Baba Yaga ate and drank the whole, leaving the girl only a little cabbage soup, a crust of bread and a morsel of suckling pig.
When her hunger was satisfied, the old witch, growing drowsy, lay down on the stove and said: "Listen to me well, and do what I bid thee. Tomorrow when I drive away, do thou clean the yard, sweep the floors and cook my supper. Then take a quarter of a measure of wheat from my store house and pick out of it all the black grains and the wild peas. Mind thou dost all that I have bade; if not, thou shalt be eaten for my supper."

Presently the Baba Yaga turned toward the wall and began to snore and Vasilissa knew that she was fast asleep. Then she went into the corner, took the tiny doll from her pocket, put before it a bit of bread and a little cabbage soup that she had saved, burst into tears and said: "There, my little doll, take it. Eat a little, drink a little, and listen to my grief. Here I am in the house of the old witch and the gate in the wall is locked and I am afraid. She has given me a difficult task and if I do not do all she has bade, she will eat me tomorrow. Tell me: What shall I do?"

Then the eyes of the little doll began to shine like two candles. It ate a little of the bread and drank a little of the soup and said: "Do not be afraid, Vasilissa the Beautiful. Be comforted. Say thy prayers, and go to sleep. The morning is wiser than the evening." So Vasilissa trusted the little doll and was comforted. She said her prayers, lay down on the floor and went fast asleep.

When she woke next morning, very early, it was still dark. She rose and looked out of the window, and she saw that the eyes of the skulls on the wall were growing dim. As she looked, the man dressed all in white, riding the milk-white horse, galloped swiftly around the corner of the hut, leaped the wall and disappeared, and as he went, it became quite light and the eyes of the skulls flickered and went out. The old witch was in the yard; now she began to whistle and the great iron mortar and pestle and the kitchen broom flew out of the hut to her. As she got into the mortar the man dressed all in red, mounted on the blood-red horse, galloped like the wind around the corner of the hut, leaped the wall and was gone, and at that moment the sun rose. Then the Baba Yaga shouted: "Ho! Ye, my solid locks, unlock! Thou, my stout gate, open!" And the locks unlocked and the gate opened and she rode away in the mortar, driving with the pestle and sweeping away her path behind her with the broom.

When Vasilissa found herself left alone, she examined the hut, wondering to find it filled with such an abundance of everything. Then she stood still, remembering all the work that she had been bidden to do and wondering what to begin first. But as she looked she rubbed her eyes, for the yard was already neatly cleaned and the floors were nicely swept, and the little doll was sitting in the storehouse picking the last black grains and wild peas out of the quarter-measure of wheat.

Vasilissa ran and took the little doll in her arms. "My dearest little doll!" she cried. "Thou hast saved me from my trouble! Now I have only to cook the Baba Yaga's supper, since all the rest of the tasks are done!"

"Cook it, with God's help," said the doll, "and then rest, and may the cooking of it make thee healthy!" And so saying it crept into her pocket and became again only a little wooden doll.

So Vasilissa rested all day and was refreshed; and when it grew toward evening she laid the table for the old witch's supper, and sat looking out of the window, waiting for her coming. After
awhile she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs and the man in black, on the coal-black horse, galloped up to the wall gate and disappeared like a great dark shadow, and instantly it became quite dark and the eyes of all the skulls began to glitter and shine.
Then all at once the trees of the forest began to creak and groan and the leaves and the bushes to moan and sigh, and the Baba Yaga came riding out of the dark wood in the huge iron mortar, driving with the pestle and sweeping out the trail behind her with the kitchen broom. Vasilissa let her in; and the witch, smelling all around her, asked:

"Well, hast thou done perfectly all the tasks I gave thee to do, or am I to eat thee for my supper?"

"Be so good as to look for thyself, grandmother," answered Vasilissa.

The Baba Yaga went all about the place, tapping with her iron pestle, and carefully examining everything. But so well had the little doll done its work that, try as hard as she might, she could not find anything to complain of. There was not a weed left in the yard, nor a speck of dust on the floors, nor a single black grain or wild pea in the wheat.

The old witch was greatly angered, but was obliged to pretend to be pleased. "Well," she said, "thou hast done all well." Then, clapping her hands, she shouted: "Ho! my faithful servants! Friends of my heart! Haste and grind my wheat!" Immediately three pairs of hands appeared, seized the measure of wheat and carried it away.

The Baba Yaga sat down to supper, and Vasilissa put before her all the food from the oven, with kvass, honey, and red wine. The old witch ate it, bones and all, almost to the last morsel, enough for four strong men, and then, growing drowsy, stretched her bony legs on the stove and said: "Tomorrow do as thou hast done today, and besides these tasks take from my storehouse a half-measure of poppy seeds and clean them one by one. Someone has mixed earth with them to do me a mischief and to anger me, and I will have them made perfectly clean." So saying she turned to the wall and soon began to snore.

When she was fast asleep Vasilissa went into the corner, took the little doll from her pocket, set before it a part of the food that was left and asked its advice. And the doll, when it had become alive, and eaten a little food and sipped a little drink, said: "Don't worry, beautiful Vasilissa! Be comforted. Do as thou didst last night: say thy prayers and go to sleep." So Vasilissa was comforted. She said her prayers and went to sleep and did not wake till next morning when she heard the old witch in the yard whistling. She ran to the window just in time to see her take her place in the big iron mortar, and as she did so the man dressed all in red, riding on the blood red horse, leaped over the wall and was gone, just as the sun rose over the wild forest.

As it had happened on the first morning, so it happened now. When Vasilissa looked she found that the little doll had finished all the tasks excepting the cooking of the supper. The yard was swept and in order, the floors were as clean as new wood, and there was not a grain of earth left in the half-measure of poppy seeds. She rested and refreshed herself till the afternoon, when she cooked the supper, and when evening came she laid the table and sat down to wait for the old witch's coming.
Soon the man in black, on the coal-black horse, galloped up to the gate, and the dark fell and the
eyes of the skulls began to shine like day; then the ground began to quake, and the trees of the
forest began to creak and the dry leaves to rustle, and the Baba Yaga came riding in her iron
mortar, driving with her pestle and sweeping away her path with her broom.

When she came in she smelled around her and went all about the hut, tapping with the pestle; but
pry and examine as she might, again she could see no reason to find fault and was angrier than
ever. She clapped her hands and shouted:

"Ho! my trusty servants! Friends of my soul! Haste and press the oil out of my poppy seeds!"
And instantly the three pairs of hands appeared, seized the measure of poppy seeds and carried it
away.

Presently the old witch sat down to supper and Vasilissa brought all she had cooked, enough for
five grown men, and set it before her, and brought beer and honey, and then she herself stood
silently waiting. The Baba Yaga ate and drank it all, every morsel, leaving not so much as a
crumb of bread; then she said snappishly: "Well, why dost thou say nothing, but stand there as if
thou wast dumb?"

"I spoke not," Vasilissa answered, "because I dared not. But if thou wilt allow me, grandmother,
I wish to ask thee some questions."

"Well," said the old witch, "only remember that every question does not lead to good. If thou
knowest overmuch, thou wilt grow old too soon. What wilt thou ask?"

"I would ask thee," said Vasilissa, "of the men on horse back. When I came to thy hut, a rider
passed me. He was dressed all in white and he rode a milk-white horse. Who was he?"

"That was my white, bright day," answered the Baba Yaga angrily. "He is a servant of mine, but
he cannot hurt thee. Ask me more."

"Afterwards," said Vasilissa, "a second rider overtook me. He was dressed in red and the horse
he rode was blood-red. Who was he?"

"That was my servant, the round, red sun," answered the Baba Yaga, "and he, too, cannot injure
thee," and she ground her teeth. "Ask me more."

"A third rider," said Vasilissa, "came galloping up to the gate. He was black, his clothes were
black and the horse was coal-black. Who was he?"

"That was my servant, the black, dark night," answered the old witch furiously; "but he also
cannot harm thee. Ask me more."

But Vasilissa, remembering what the Baba Yaga had said, that not every question led to good,
was silent.
"Ask me more!" cried the old witch. "Why dost thou not ask me more? Ask me of the three pairs of hands that serve me!"

But Vasilissa saw how she snarled at her and she answered: "The three questions are enough for me. As thou hast said, grandmother, I would not, through knowing over much, become too soon old."

"It is well for thee," said the Baba Yaga, "that thou didst not ask of them, but only of what thou didst see outside of this hut. Hadst thou asked of them, my servants, the three pairs of hands would have seized thee also, as they did the wheat and poppy seeds, to be my food. Now I would ask a question in my turn: How is it that thou hast been able, in a little time, to do perfectly all the tasks I gave thee? Tell me!"

Vasilissa was so frightened to see how the old witch ground her teeth that she almost told her of the little doll; but she bethought herself just in time, and answered: "The blessing of my dead mother helps me."

Then the Baba Yaga sprang up in a fury. "Get thee out of my house this moment!" she shrieked. "I want no one who bears a blessing to cross my threshold! Get thee gone!"

Vasilissa ran to the yard, and behind her she heard the old witch shouting to the locks and the gate. The locks opened, the gate swung wide, and she ran out on to the lawn. The Baba Yaga seized from the wall one of the skulls with burning eyes and flung it after her. "There," she howled, "is the fire for thy stepmother's daughters. Take it. That is what they sent thee here for, and may they have joy of it!"

Vasilissa put the skull on the end of a stick and darted away through the forest, running as fast as she could, finding her path by the skull's glowing eyes which went out only when morning came.

Whether she ran a long way or a short way, and whether the road was smooth or rough, towards evening of the next day, when the eyes in the skull were beginning to glimmer, she came out of the dark, wild forest to her stepmother's house.

When she came near to the gate, she thought, "Surely, by this time they will have found some fire," and threw the skull into the hedge; but it spoke to her, and said: "Do not throw me away, beautiful Vasilissa; bring me to thy stepmother." So, looking at the house and seeing no spark of light in any of the windows, she took up the skull again and carried it with her.

Now since Vasilissa had gone, the stepmother and her two daughters had had neither fire nor light in all the house. When they struck flint and steel the tinder would not catch and the fire they brought from the neighbors would go out immediately as soon as they carried it over the threshold, so that they had been unable to light or warm themselves or to cook food to eat. Therefore now, for the first time in her life, Vasilissa found herself welcomed. They opened the door to her and the merchant's wife was greatly rejoiced to find that the light in the skull did not go out as soon as it was brought in. "Maybe the witch's fire will stay," she said, and took the skull into the best room, set it on a candlestick and called her two daughters to admire it.
But the eyes of the skull suddenly began to glimmer and to glow like red coals, and wherever the three turned or ran the eyes followed them, growing larger and brighter till they flamed like two furnaces, and hotter and hotter till the merchant's wife and her two wicked daughters took fire and were burned to ashes. Only Vasilissa the Beautiful was not touched.

In the morning Vasilissa dug a deep hole in the ground and buried the skull. Then she locked the house and set out to the village, where she went to live with an old woman who was poor and childless, and so she remained for many days, waiting for her father's return from the far-distant Tsardom.

But, sitting lonely, time soon began to hang heavy on her hands. One day she said to the old woman: "It is dull for me, grandmother, to sit idly hour by hour. My hands want work to do. Go, therefore, and buy me some flax, the best and finest to be found anywhere, and at least I can spin."

The old woman hastened and bought some flax of the best sort and Vasilissa sat down to work. So well did she spin that the thread came out as even and fine as a hair, and presently there was enough to begin to weave. But so fine was the thread that no frame could be found to weave it upon, nor would any weaver undertake to make one.

Then Vasilissa went into her closet, took the little doll from her pocket, set food and drink before it and asked its help. And after it had eaten a little and drunk a little, the doll became alive and said: "Bring me an old frame and an old basket and some hairs from a horse's mane, and I will arrange everything for thee." Vasilissa hastened to fetch all the doll had asked for and when evening came, said her prayers, went to sleep, and in the morning she found ready a frame, perfectly made, to weave her fine thread upon.

She wove one month, she wove two months—all the winter Vasilissa sat weaving, weaving her fine thread, till the whole piece of linen was done, of a texture so fine that it could be passed, like thread, through the eye of a needle. When the spring came she bleached it, so white that no snow could be compared with it. Then she said to the old woman: "Take thou the linen to the market, grandmothers and sell it, and the money shall suffice to pay for my food and lodging." When the old woman examined the linen, however, she said:

"Never will I sell such cloth in the market place; no one should wear it except it be the Tsar himself, and tomorrow I shall carry it to the Palace."

Next day, accordingly, the old woman went to the Tsar's splendid Palace and fell to walking up and down before the windows. The servants came to ask her her errand but she answered them nothing, and kept walking up and down. At length the Tsar opened his window, and asked: "What dost thou want, old woman, that thou walkest here?"

"O Tsar's Majesty" the old woman answered, "I have with me a marvelous piece of linen stuff, so wondrously woven that I will show it to none but thee."
The Tsar bade them bring her before him and when he saw the linen he was struck with astonishment at its fineness and beauty. "What wilt thou take for it, old woman?" he asked.

"There is no price that can buy it, Little Father Tsar," she answered; "but I have brought it to thee as a gift." The Tsar could not thank the old woman enough. He took the linen and sent her to her house with many rich presents.

Seamstresses were called to make shirts for him out of the cloth; but when it had been cut up, so fine was it that no one of them was deft and skillful enough to sew it. The best seamstresses in all the Tsardom were summoned but none dared undertake it. So at last the Tsar sent for the old woman and said: "If thou didst know how to spin such thread and weave such linen, thou must also know how to sew me shirts from it."

And the old woman answered: "O Tsar's Majesty, it was not I who wove the linen; it is the work of my adopted daughter."

"Take it, then," the Tsar said, "and bid her do it for me." The old woman brought the linen home and told Vasilissa the Tsar's command: "Well I knew that the work would needs be done by my own hands," said Vasilissa, and, locking herself in her own room, began to make the shirts. So fast and well did she work that soon a dozen were ready. Then the old woman carried them to the Tsar, while Vasilissa washed her face, dressed her hair, put on her best gown and sat down at the window to see what would happen. And presently a servant in the livery of the Palace came to the house and entering, said: "The Tsar, our lord, desires himself to see the clever needlewoman who has made his shirts and to reward her with his own hands."

Vasilissa rose and went at once to the Palace, and as soon as the Tsar saw her, he fell in love with her with all his soul. He took her by her white hand and made her sit beside him. "Beautiful maiden," he said, "never will I part from thee and thou shalt be my wife."

So the Tsar and Vasilissa the Beautiful were married, and her father returned from the far-distant Tsardom, and he and the old woman lived always with her in the splendid Palace, in all joy and contentment. And as for the little wooden doll, she carried it about with her in her pocket all her life long.