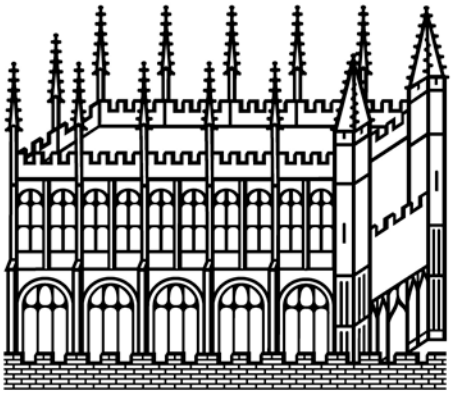
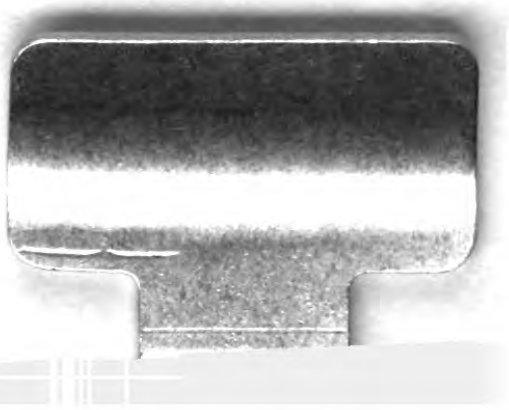


THE WITCH'S PALACE



The Witch's Palace

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KING PLUTO CAUGHT THE CHILD IN HIS ARMS

The Witch's Palace

From "TANGLEWOOD TALES"

By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

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THE WITCH'S PALACE

CHAPTER I

Some of you have heard, no doubt, of the wise King Ulysses, and how he went to the siege of Troy, and how, after that famous city was taken and burned, he spent ten long years in trying to get back again to his own little kingdom of Ithaca.

At one time, in the course of this weary voyage, he arrived at an island that looked very green and pleasant, but the name of which was unknown to him. For, only a little while before he came thither, he had met with a terrible storm, or rather a great many storms at once, which drove his fleet of vessels into a strange part of the sea.

This misfortune was entirely due to the fact that his shipmates were so foolish and curious that, while Ulysses lay asleep, they had untied some very bulky leathern bags, in which they supposed a valuable treasure to be hidden. But in each of these stout bags King Volus, the ruler of the winds,

had tied up a tempest, and had given it to Ulysses to keep, in order that he might be sure of a favourable passage homeward to Ithaca. When the strings were loosened, forth rushed the whistling blasts, like air out of a blown bladder, whitening the sea with foam, and scattering the vessels nobody could tell whither.

When he had escaped from this peril, a still greater one had befallen him. Driving before the violent gale, he reached a place which, as he afterwards found, was called Laestrygonia. Here some monstrous giants had eaten up many of his companions, and had sunk every one of his vessels, except that in which he himself sailed, by flinging great masses of rock at them from the cliffs along the shore.

After going through such troubles as these, you cannot wonder that King Ulysses was glad to moor his tempest-beaten bark in a quiet cove of the green island which I began with telling you about. But he had met so many dangers from giants, and one-eyed Cyclops, and monsters of the sea and land, that he could not help dreading some mischief even in this pleasant and seemingly lonely spot.

For two days, therefore, the poor weather-worn voyagers kept quiet, and either stayed on board of their vessel, or merely crept along under the cliffs that bordered the shore. To keep themselves alive, they dug shell-fish out of the sand, and sought for

any little rill of fresh water that might be running towards the sea.

Before the two days were spent, they grew very weary of this kind of life; for the followers of King Ulysses, as you will find it important to remember, were terrible eaters, and pretty sure to grumble if they missed their regular meals, and their irregular ones besides. Their stock of provisions was quite finished, and even the shell-fish began to grow scarce, so that they had now to choose between starving to death or venturing into the interior of the island, where perhaps some huge three-headed dragon or other horrible monster had his den. Such misshapen creatures were very numerous in those days, and nobody ever expected to make a voyage or take a journey without running more or less risk of being devoured by them.

But King Ulysses was a bold man as well as a prudent one. On the third morning he made up his mind to find out what sort of a place the island was, and whether it were possible to obtain a supply of food for the hungry mouths of his companions. So, taking a spear in his hand, he clambered to the summit of a cliff, and gazed round about him.

At a distance, towards the centre of the island, he beheld the stately towers of what seemed to be a palace, built of snow-white marble, and rising in the midst of a grove of lofty trees. The thick

branches of these trees stretched across the front of the building, and more than half-hid it, although, from the portion which he saw, Ulysses judged it to be very large and exceedingly beautiful, and probably the dwelling-place of some great nobleman or prince.

A blue smoke went curling up from the chimney, and was almost the most pleasant part of the sight to Ulysses, for, from the great amount of this smoke, it was reasonable to think that there was a good fire in the kitchen, and that at dinner-time a plentiful feast would be served up to the people of the palace and to whatever guests might happen to drop in.

With so pleasant a prospect before him, Ulysses thought that he could not do better than go straight to the palace gate, and tell the master of the palace that there was a crew of poor shipwrecked sailors not far off, who had eaten nothing for a day or two, save a few clams and oysters, and would therefore be thankful for a little food. The prince or nobleman must be a very stingy fellow, to be sure, if at least, when his own dinner was over, he would not bid them welcome to the fragments from the table.

CHAPTER II

Pleased with the plan he had formed, King Ulysses had made a few steps in the direction of the palace, when there was a great twittering and chirping from the branch of a neighbouring tree. A moment afterwards a bird came flying towards him, and hovered in the air, so as almost to brush his face with its wings. It was a very pretty little bird, with purple wings and body, and yellow legs, and a circle of golden feathers round its neck, and on its head a golden tuft, which looked like a very small crown.

Ulysses tried to catch the bird, but it fluttered nimbly out of his reach, still chirping in a piteous tone, as if it could have told a sad story had it only been gifted with human language. When he attempted to drive it away, the bird flew no farther than the bough of the next tree, and again came fluttering about his head, with its doleful chirp, as soon as he showed a purpose of going forward.

"Have you anything to tell me, little bird?" asked Ulysses.

He was ready to listen attentively to whatever the bird might tell him; for, at the siege of Troy and elsewhere, he had known such odd things to happen that he would not have thought it much out of the common run had this little feathered creature talked as plainly as himself.

"Peep!" said the bird, "peep, peep, pe—weep!"

And nothing else would it say, but only "Peep, peep, pe—weep!" over and over and over again. As often as Ulysses moved forward, however, the bird showed the greatest alarm, and did its best to drive him back, with the anxious flutter of its purple wings.

Its strange conduct made him think, at last, that the bird knew of some danger that awaited him, and which must needs be very terrible, beyond all question, since it moved even a little fowl to feel pity for a human being. So he made up his mind for the present to return to the vessel, and tell his companions what he had seen.

This appeared to satisfy the bird. As soon as Ulysses turned back, it ran up the trunk of a tree, and began to pick insects out of the bark with its long, sharp bill. It was a kind of woodpecker, you must know, and had to get its living in the same manner as other birds of that kind. But every little while, as it pecked at the bark of the tree, the purple bird bethought itself of some secret sorrow, and repeated its plaintive note of "Peep, peep, pe—weep!"

On his way to the shore, Ulysses had the good luck to kill a large stag, by thrusting his spear into its back. Taking it on his shoulders (for he was a very strong man), he lugged it along with him, and flung it down before his hungry companions. I have already hinted to you what great eaters some of the comrades of King Ulysses were. From what

is told of them, I think that their favourite diet was pork, and that they had lived upon it until a good part of their bodies was swine's flesh, and their tempers and natures were very much akin to the hog.

A dish of venison, however, was a very delightful meal to them, especially after feeding so long on oysters and clams. So, beholding the dead stag, they felt its ribs in a knowing way, and lost no time in kindling a fire of drift wood to cook it. The rest of the day was spent in feasting, and, if these huge eaters got up from table at sunset, it was only because they could not scrape another morsel off the poor animal's bones.

The next morning they were as hungry as ever. They looked at Ulysses as if they expected him to clamber up the cliff again, and come back with another fat deer upon his shoulders. Instead of setting out, however, he called the whole crew together, and told them it was in vain to hope that he could kill a stag every day for their dinner, and therefore some other mode of satisfying their hunger must be thought of.

"Now," said he, "when I was on the cliff yesterday, I found out that this island is inhabited. At a great distance from the shore stood a marble palace, which appeared to be very large, and had a great deal of smoke curling out of one of its chimneys."

"Aha!" muttered some of his companions, smack-

ing their lips. "That smoke must have come from the kitchen fire. There was a good dinner on the spit; and no doubt there will be as good a one to-day."

"But," went on the wise Ulysses, "you must remember, my good friends, our misadventure in the cavern of one-eyed Polyphemus, the Cyclops! Instead of his ordinary milk diet, did he not eat up two of our comrades for his supper, and a couple more for breakfast, and two at his supper again? Methinks I see him yet, the hideous monster, scanning us with that great red eye in the middle of his forehead, to single out the fattest. And then again, only a few days ago, did we not fall into the hands of the King of the Laestrygons, and those other horrible giants, his subjects, who devoured a great many more of us than are now left? To tell you the truth, if we go to yonder palace, there can be no question that we shall make our appearance at the dinner table; but whether seated as guests, or served up as food, is a point to be carefully considered."

"Either way," murmured some of the hungriest of the crew, "it will be better than to starve—especially if one could be sure of being well fattened beforehand, and daintily cooked afterwards."

"That is a matter of taste," said King Ulysses, "and, for my own part, neither the most careful fattening nor the daintiest of cooking would recon-

cile me to being dished at last. My plan is, therefore, that we divide ourselves into two equal parties, and find out, by drawing lots, which of the two shall go to the palace and beg for food and help. If these can be obtained, all is well. If not, and if the people prove as unfriendly as Polyphemus, or the Laestrygons, then there will but half of us perish, and the remainder may set sail and escape."

CHAPTER III

As nobody objected to his plan, Ulysses began to count the whole band, and found that there were forty-six men, including himself. He then numbered off twenty-two of them, and put Eurylochus (who was one of his chief officers, and second only to himself in wisdom) at their head. Ulysses took command of the remaining twenty-two men in person. Then, taking off his helmet, he put two shells into it, on one of which was written "Go", and on the other "Stay". Another person now held the helmet, while Ulysses and Eurylochus drew out each a shell; and the word "Go" was was found written on that which Eurylochus had drawn.

In this manner it was settled that Ulysses and his twenty-two men were to remain at the seaside until the other party should have found out what

sort of treatment they might expect at the palace. As there was no help for it, Eurylochus at once set forth at the head of his twenty-two followers, who went off in a very sad state of mind, leaving their friends in hardly better spirits than themselves.

No sooner had they clambered up the cliff than they caught sight of the tall marble towers of the palace, rising as white as snow, out of the lovely green shadow of the trees which surrounded it. A gust of smoke came from a chimney in the rear of the building. This vapour rose high in the air, and, meeting with the breeze, was wafted seaward, and made to pass over the heads of the hungry mariners. When people's appetites are keen, they have a very quick scent for anything savoury in the wind.

"That smoke comes from the kitchen," cried one of them, turning up his nose as high as he could, and snuffing eagerly, "as sure as I'm a half-starved wanderer."

"Pig, roast pig!" said another. "Ah, the dainty little porker! My mouth waters for him!"

"Let us make haste," cried the others, "or we shall be too late for the good cheer!"

But scarcely had they made half a dozen steps from the edge of the cliff when a bird came fluttering to meet them. It was the same pretty little bird, with the purple wings and body, the yellow legs, the golden collar round its neck, and the crown-like tuft upon its head, whose conduct had

so much surprised Ulysses. It hovered about Eurylochus, and almost brushed his face with its wings.

"Peep, peep, pe—weep!" chirped the bird.

So intelligent was the sound that it seemed as if the little creature was going to break its heart with some mighty secret that it had to tell, and only this one poor note to tell it with.

"My pretty bird," said Eurylochus, for he was a wary person, and let no token of harm escape his notice, "my pretty bird, who sent you hither? And what is the message which you bring?"

"Peep, peep, pe—weep!" replied the bird very sadly.

Then it flew towards the edge of the cliff and looked round at them, as if anxious that they should return whence they came. Eurylochus and a few of the others were inclined to turn back. They could not help suspecting that the purple bird must be aware of something harmful that would befall them at the palace, and the knowledge of which affected its airy spirit with sorrow. But the rest of the voyagers, snuffing up the smoke from the palace kitchen, scorned the idea of returning to the vessel.

One of them (more brutal than his fellows and the most enormous eater in the whole crew) said such a cruel and wicked thing that I wonder the mere thought did not turn him into a wild beast in shape, as he already was in his nature.

"This troublesome and impertinent little fowl," said he, "would make a delicate titbit to begin dinner with. Just one plump morsel, melting away between the teeth. If he comes within my reach, I'll catch him and give him to the palace cook to be roasted."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the purple bird flew away, crying "Peep, peep, pe—weep!" more sadly than ever.

"That bird," remarked Eurylochus, "knows more than we do about what awaits us at the palace."

"Come on, then," cried his comrades, "and we'll soon know as much as he does."

CHAPTER IV

The party accordingly went onward through the green and pleasant wood. Every little while they caught new glimpses of the marble palace, which looked more and more beautiful the nearer they approached it.

So they hastened their steps towards the portal, but had not got halfway across the wide lawn when a pack of lions, tigers, and wolves came bounding to meet them. The terrified mariners started back, expecting no better fate than to be torn in pieces and devoured. To their surprise and joy, however, these wild beasts merely capered

around them, wagging their tails, offering their heads to be stroked and patted, and behaving just like so many well-bred house dogs when they wish to express their delight at meeting their master or their master's friends. The biggest lion licked the feet of Eurylochus, and every other lion, and every wolf and tiger, singled out one of his two-and-twenty followers, whom the beast fondled as if he loved him better than a beef-bone.

But for all that Eurylochus imagined that he saw something fierce and savage in their eyes. Nor would he have been surprised at any moment to feel the big lion's terrible claws, or to see each of the tigers make a deadly spring, or each wolf leap at the throat of the man whom he had fondled. Their mildness seemed unreal, and a mere freak. But their savage nature was as true as their teeth and claws.

Nevertheless the men went safely across the lawn, with the wild beasts frisking about them, and doing no manner of harm. Although, as they mounted the steps of the palace, you might possibly have heard a low growl, particularly from the wolves, as if they thought it a pity, after all, to let the strangers pass without so much as tasting what they were made of.

Eurylochus and his followers now passed under a lofty portal, and looked through the open doorway into the interior of the palace. The first thing that they saw was a very large hall, and

a fountain in the middle of it gushing up towards the ceiling out of a marble basin, and falling back into it with a constant splash.

The water of the fountain, as it spouted upward, was constantly taking new shapes, not very distinctly, but plainly enough for a nimble fancy to make out what they were. Now it was the shape of a man in a long robe, the fleecy whiteness of which was made out of the fountain's spray. Now it was a lion, or a tiger, or a wolf, or an ass, or, as often as anything else, a hog wallowing in the marble basin as if it were his sty.

It was either magic or some very curious piece of work that caused the gushing waterspout to take all these forms. But before the strangers had time to look closely at this wonderful sight, their attention was drawn off by a very sweet and agreeable sound. A woman's voice was singing sweetly in another room of the palace, and with her voice was mingled the noise of a loom, at which she was probably seated weaving a rich texture of cloth, and intertwining the high and low sweetness of her voice into a rich tissue of harmony.

By and by the song came to an end, and then all at once there were several feminine voices talking airily and cheerfully, with now and then a merry burst of laughter, such as you may always hear when three or four young women sit at work together.

"What a sweet song that was!" exclaimed one of the voyagers.

"Too sweet, indeed," answered Eurylochus, shaking his head. "Yet it was not so sweet as the song of the Sirens, those birdlike damsels who wanted to tempt us on the rocks, so that our vessel might be wrecked and our bones left whitening along the shore."

No warning, however, had any effect on his companions. They went up to a pair of folding doors at the farther end of the hall, and, throwing them wide open, passed into the next room. Eurylochus meanwhile had stepped behind a pillar.

In the short moment while the folding doors opened and closed again, he caught a glimpse of a very beautiful woman rising from the loom, and coming to meet the poor weather-beaten wanderers with a kindly smile, and her hand outstretched in welcome. There were four other young women, who joined their hands and danced merrily forward, curtsying to the strangers. They were only less beautiful than the lady who seemed to be their mistress. Yet Eurylochus fancied that one of them had sea-green hair, and that the close-fitting bodice of a second looked like the bark of a tree, and that both the others had something odd in their aspect, although he could not quite make out what it was in the little while that he had to examine them.

The folding doors swung quickly back and left

him standing behind the pillar, alone in the outer hall. There Eurylochus waited until he was quite weary, and listened eagerly to every sound, but without hearing anything that could help him to guess what had become of his friends.

Footsteps, it is true, seemed to be passing and repassing in other parts of the palace. Then there was a clatter of silver dishes, or golden ones, which made him think of a rich feast in a splendid banqueting hall. But by and by he heard a great squealing and grunting, and then a sudden scampering, like that of small, hard hoofs over a marble floor, while the voices of the mistress and her four handmaidens were screaming all together in tones of anger and mockery.

Eurylochus could not think what had happened, unless a drove of swine had broken into the palace, attracted by the smell of the feast. Chancing to cast his eyes at the fountain, he saw that it did not shift its shape, as formerly, nor looked either like a long-robed man, or a lion, a tiger, a wolf, or an ass. It looked like nothing but a hog, which lay wallowing in the marble basin, and filled it from brim to brim.

CHAPTER V

But we must leave the prudent Eurylochus waiting in the outer hall, and follow his friends into the inner part of the palace. As soon as the beautiful woman saw them, she arose from the loom, as I have told you, and came forward, smiling and stretching out her hand. She took the hand of the foremost among them, and bade him and the whole party welcome.

"You have been long expected, my good friends," said she. "I desire to make you happy for as long a time as you may remain with me. For this purpose, my honoured guests, I have ordered a banquet to be prepared. Fish, fowl, and flesh, roasted and in savoury stews, and seasoned, I trust, to all your tastes, are ready to be served up. If your appetites tell you it is dinner-time, then come with me to the festal board."

The beautiful woman now clapped her hands, and immediately there entered a train of two-and-twenty serving men, bringing dishes of the richest food, all hot from the kitchen fire, and sending up such a steam that it hung like a cloud below the bright dome of the lofty hall. An equal number of attendants brought great flagons of wine of various kinds, some of which sparkled as it was poured out, and went bubbling down the throat, while of other sorts the purple liquor was so clear that you could see the wrought figures at the

bottom of the goblet. While the servants supplied the two-and-twenty guests with food and drink, the hostess and her four maidens went from one throne to another, exhorting them to eat their fill, and to quaff wine as much as they could, and thus to make amends, at this one banquet, for the many days they had gone without a dinner.

But whenever the mariners were not looking at them (which was pretty often, as they looked chiefly into the basins and platters), the beautiful woman and her damsels turned aside and laughed. Even the servants, as they knelt down to present the dishes, might be seen to grin and sneer while the guests were helping themselves to the offered dainties.

And once in a while the strangers seemed to taste something that they did not like.

"There is an odd kind of spice in this dish," said one. "I can't say it quite suits my palate. Down it goes, however."

"Send a good draught of wine down your throat," said his comrade on the next throne. "That is the stuff to make this sort of cookery go well. Though I must needs say the wine has a queer taste too. But the more I drink of it the better I like the flavour."

Whatever little fault they might find with the dishes, they sat at dinner a very long while, and it would really have made you ashamed to see how they drank down the liquor and gobbled up the

food. They sat on golden thrones, to be sure, but they behaved like pigs in a sty, and, if they had had their wits about them, they might have found out that this was the opinion of their beautiful hostess and her maidens.

It brings a blush into my face to reckon up, in my own mind, what mountains of meat and pudding, and what gallons of wine, these greedy mariners ate and drank. They forgot all about their homes, and their wives and children, and all about Ulysses, and everything else, except this banquet, at which they wanted to keep feasting for ever. But at length they began to give over, because they were really unable to eat or drink any more.

"That last bit of fat was too much for me," said one.

"And I have not room for another morsel," said his next neighbour, heaving a sigh. "What a pity! My appetite is as sharp as ever."

In short, they all left off eating, and leaned back on their thrones with such a stupid and helpless look as made them laughable to behold. When their hostess saw this, she laughed aloud. So did her four damsels. So did the two-and-twenty serving men that bore the dishes, and their two-and-twenty fellows that poured out the wine. And the louder they laughed, the more stupid and helpless did the two-and-twenty greedy sailors look.

Then the beautiful woman took her stand in the

middle of the room, and, stretching out a slender rod (it had been all the while in her hand, although they never noticed it till this moment), she turned it from one guest to another, until each had felt it pointed at himself. Beautiful as her face was, and though there was a smile on it, it looked just as wicked and full of mischief as the ugliest serpent that ever was seen. Stupid as the voyagers had made themselves, they began to suspect that they had fallen into the power of an evil-minded enchantress.

"Wretches," cried she, "you have abused my kindness, and in this princely hall your conduct has been suited to a sty! You are already swine in everything but the human form, which you disgrace, and which I myself should be ashamed to keep a moment longer were you to share it with me. Take your proper shapes, and begone to the sty!"

But, brutes as they certainly were, they yet had enough of human nature in them to be shocked at their own hideousness; and they uttered a vile grunt and squeal. So harsh and ear-piercing it was that you would have fancied a butcher was sticking his knife into each of their throats; or, at the very least, that somebody was pulling every hog by his funny little twist of a tail.

"Begone to your sty!" cried the enchantress, giving them some smart strokes with her wand, and then she turned to the serving-men. "Drive

out these swine, and throw down some acorns for them to eat."

CHAPTER VI

Meantime, as I told you before, Eurylochus had waited, and waited, and waited in the entrance-hall of the palace without being able to understand what had befallen his friends. At last, when the swinish uproar resounded through the palace, and when he saw the image of a hog in the marble basin, he thought it best to hasten back to the ship and inform the wise Ulysses of these wonderful things. So he ran as fast as he could down the steps, and never stopped to draw breath till he reached the shore.

"Why do you come alone?" asked King Ulysses as soon as he saw him. "Where are your two-and-twenty comrades?"

At these questions Eurylochus burst into tears.

"Alas!" cried he, "I greatly fear that we shall never see one of their faces again."

Then he told Ulysses all that had happened as far as he knew it, and added that he suspected the beautiful woman to be a vile enchantress, and the marble palace, splendid as it looked, to be only a dismal cavern in reality. As for his companions, he could not imagine what had become of them,

unless they had been given to the swine to be devoured alive.

At this news all the voyagers were greatly affrighted. But Ulysses lost no time in girding on his sword, and hanging his bow and quiver over his shoulders, and taking a spear in his right hand. When his followers saw their wise leader getting these things ready, they enquired whither he was going, and earnestly besought him not to leave them.

Had his followers dared, they would have kept him by force. But King Ulysses frowned sternly on them, and shook his spear, and bade them stop him at their peril. Seeing him so firm, they let him go, and sat down on the sand, as sad a set of people as could be, waiting and praying for his return.

It happened to Ulysses, just as before, that when he had gone a few steps from the edge of the cliff, the purple bird came fluttering towards him, crying: "Peep, peep, pe—weep!"

"What mean you, little bird?" cried Ulysses. "You are arrayed like a king, in purple and gold, and wear a golden crown upon your head. Is it because I too am a king that you desire so earnestly to speak with me? If you can talk in human language, say what you would have me do."

"Peep!" answered the purple bird very sadly. "Peep, peep, pe—weep!"

Certainly there lay some heavy sorrow at the

little bird's heart, and it was very sad that he could not at least tell what it was. But Ulysses had no time to waste in trying to get at the secret. He therefore quickened his pace, and had gone a good way along the pleasant woodpath, when there met him a young man of a very brisk and intelligent aspect, and clad in a rather strange garb.

He wore a short cloak, and a sort of cap that seemed to be furnished with a pair of wings; and, from the lightness of his step, you would have supposed that there might likewise be wings on his feet. To enable him to walk still better (for he was always on one journey or another), he carried a winged staff, around which two serpents were wriggling and twisting. In short, I have said enough to make you guess that it was Quicksilver, and Ulysses (who knew him of old, and had learned a great deal of his wisdom from him) knew him at once.

"Whither are you going in such a hurry, wise Ulysses?" asked Quicksilver. "Do you know that this island is enchanted? The wicked enchantress (whose name is Circe, the sister of King Betes) dwells in the marble palace which you see yonder among the trees. By her magic arts she changes every human being into the brute, beast, or fowl whom he happens most to resemble."

"That little bird which I met at the edge of the cliff," exclaimed Ulysses, "was he a human being once?"

"Yes," answered Quicksilver. "He was once a king named Picus, and a pretty good sort of a king too, only rather too proud of his purple robe, and his crown, and the golden chain about his neck; so he was forced to take the shape of a gaudy-feathered bird. The lions, and wolves, and tigers, who will come running to meet you in front of the palace, were formerly fierce and cruel men, resembling in their natures the wild beasts whose forms they now rightfully wear."

"And my poor companions," said Ulysses, "have they undergone a like change through the arts of this wicked Circe?"

"You well know what eaters they were," replied Quicksilver—and, rogue that he was, he could not help laughing at the joke,—"so you will not be surprised to hear that they have all taken the shape of swine! If Circe had never done anything worse, I really should not think her so very much to blame."

"But can I do nothing to help them?" enquired Ulysses.

"It will require all your wisdom," said Quicksilver, "and a little of my own into the bargain, to keep your royal and prudent self from being changed into a fox. But do as I bid you, and the matter may end better than it has begun."

While he was speaking, Quicksilver seemed to be in search of something. He went stooping along the ground, and soon laid his hand on a

little plant with a snow-white flower, which he plucked and smelt. Ulysses had been looking at that very spot only just before, and it appeared to him that the plant had burst into full flower the instant Quicksilver touched it with his fingers.

"Take this flower, King Ulysses," said he. "Guard it as you do your eyesight. For I can assure you it is exceedingly rare and precious, and you might seek the whole earth over without finding another like it. Keep it in your hand, and smell it frequently after you enter the palace, and while you are talking with the enchantress. Above all, when she offers you food, or a draught of wine out of her goblet, be careful to fill your nostrils with the flower's fragrance. Follow these directions, and you may defy her magic arts to change you into a fox."

Quicksilver then gave him some further advice how to behave, and, bidding him be bold and prudent, again assured him that, powerful as Circe was, he would have a fair prospect of coming safely out of her enchanted palace. After listening attentively, Ulysses thanked his good friend, and went on his way again. But he had only taken a few steps, when, recollecting some other questions which he wished to ask, he turned round again, and beheld nobody on the spot where Quicksilver had stood; for that winged cap of his, and those winged shoes, with the help of the winged staff, had carried him quickly out of sight.

CHAPTER VII

When Ulysses reached the lawn in front of the palace the lions and other savage animals came bounding to meet him, and would have fawned upon him and licked his feet. But the wise king struck at them with his long spear, and sternly bade them begone out of his path, for he knew that they had once been bloodthirsty men, and would now tear him limb from limb, instead of fawning upon him, could they do the mischief that was in their hearts. The wild beasts yelped and glared at him, and stood at a distance while he ascended the palace steps.

The King likewise heard the noise of the shuttle in the loom, and the sweet melody of the beautiful woman's song, and then the pleasant voices of herself and the four maidens talking together, with peals of merry laughter intermixed. But Ulysses did not waste much time in listening to the laughter or the song. He leaned his spear against one of the pillars of the hall, and then, after loosening his sword in the sheath, stepped boldly forward, and threw the folding-doors wide open. The moment she beheld his stately figure standing in the doorway, the beautiful woman rose from the loom and ran to meet him, with a glad smile throwing its sunshine over her face, and both her hands extended.

"Welcome, brave stranger!" cried she. "We were expecting you.

"Your companions," said she, "have already been received into my palace, and have enjoyed the kindly treatment to which their proper conduct so well entitles them. If such be your pleasure, you shall first take some refreshment, and then join them in the splendid apartment which they now occupy. See, I and my maidens have been weaving their figures into this piece of tapestry."

She pointed to the web of beautifully-woven cloth on the loom. Circe and the four nymphs must have been very diligently at work since the arrival of the mariners, for a great many yards of tapestry had now been wrought. In this new part, Ulysses saw his two-and-twenty friends represented as sitting on cushioned thrones, greedily devouring dainties, and quaffing deep draughts of wine. The work had not yet gone any further. Oh no, indeed! The enchantress was far too cunning to let Ulysses see the mischief which her magic arts had since brought upon the sailors.

"As for yourself, valiant sir," said Circe, "judging by the dignity of your aspect, I take you to be nothing less than a king. Deign to follow me, and you shall be treated as befits your rank."

So Ulysses followed her into the hall, where his two-and-twenty comrades had devoured the banquet which ended with such disaster for themselves. But all this while he had held the snow-white flower in his hand, and had constantly smelt it while Circe

was speaking. As he crossed the threshold of the room, he took good care to inhale several long and deep snuffs of its fragrance.

Instead of two-and-twenty thrones which had before been ranged around the wall, there was now only a single throne in the middle of the apartment. But this was surely the most beautiful seat that ever a king or an emperor reposed himself upon, all made of chased gold, studded with precious stones, with a cushion that looked like a soft heap of living roses, and overhung by a canopy of sunlight, which Circe knew how to weave into drapery. The enchantress took Ulysses by the hand, and made him sit down upon this dazzling throne. Then, clapping her hands, she summoned the chief butler.

"Bring hither," said she, "the goblet that is set apart for kings to drink out of. And fill it with the same delicious wine which my royal brother, King Betes, praised so highly when he last visited me with my fair daughter Medea. That good and amiable child! Were she now here, it would delight her to see me offering this wine to my honoured guest."

But Ulysses, while the butler was gone for the wine, held the snow-white flower to his nose.

"Is it a wholesome wine?" he asked.

At this the four maidens tittered; whereupon the enchantress looked round at them with a most severe aspect.

"It is the wholesomest juice that ever was squeezed out of the grape," said she; "for instead of disguising a man, as other liquor is apt to do, it brings him to his true self, and shows him as he ought to be."

The chief butler liked nothing better than to see people turned into swine, or making any kind of a beast of themselves. So he made haste to bring the royal goblet, filled with a liquor as bright as gold, and which kept sparkling upward, and throwing a sunny spray over the brim.

But, delightful as the wine looked, it was mingled with the most potent enchantments that Circe knew how to mix. For every drop of the pure grape-juice, there were two drops of the pure mischief; and the danger of the thing was that the mischief made it taste all the better. The mere smell of the bubbles which rose to the brim was enough to turn a man's beard into pig's bristles, or make a lion's claws grow out of his fingers, or a fox's brush behind him.

"Drink, my noble guest," said Circe, smiling as she presented him with the goblet. "You will find in this draught a solace for all your troubles."

King Ulysses took the goblet with his right hand, while with his left he held the snow-white flower to his nostrils and drew in so long a breath, that his lungs were quite filled with its pure and simple fragrance. Then, drinking off all the wine, he looked the enchantress calmly in the face.

"Wretch," cried Circe, giving him a smart stroke with her wand, "how dare you keep your human shape a moment longer? Take the form of the brute which you most resemble. If a hog, go join your fellow-swine in the sty; if a lion, a wolf, a tiger, go howl with the wild beasts on the lawn; if a fox, go exercise your craft in stealing poultry. Thou hast quaffed off my wine and canst be no longer a man."

CHAPTER VIII

Such was the virtue of the snow-white flower, instead of wallowing down from his throne in swinish shape, or taking any other brutal form, Ulysses looked even more manly and kingly than before. He gave the magic goblet a toss, and sent it clashing over the marble floor to the farthest end of the room. Then, drawing his sword, he seized the enchantress by her beautiful ringlets, and made a gesture as if he meant to strike off her head at one blow.

"Wicked Circe," cried he, in a terrible voice, "this sword shall put an end to thy enchantments. Thou shalt die, vile wretch, and do no more mischief in the world by tempting human beings into the vices which make beasts of them."

The tone and look of Ulysses were so dreadful, and his sword gleamed so brightly, and seemed to

"Wretch!" cried Circe

have so very keen an edge, that Circe was almost killed by the mere fright, without waiting for a blow. The chief butler scrambled out of the room, picking up the golden goblet as he went. The enchantress and the four maidens fell on their knees, wringing their hands and screaming for mercy.

"Spare me!" cried Circe, "royal and wise Ulysses. For now I know that thou art he of whom Quicksilver forewarned me, the most prudent of mortals, against whom no enchantments can prevail. Thou only couldst have conquered Circe. Spare me, wisest of men. I will show thee true kindness, and even give myself to be thy slave, and this splendid palace to be henceforth thy home."

Ulysses would not be pacified until Circe had taken a solemn oath to change back his companions, and as many others as he should direct, from their present forms of beast or bird into their former shapes of men.

"On these conditions," said he, in a grave tone of voice, "I consent to spare your life. Otherwise you must die upon the spot."

With a drawn sword hanging over her, the enchantress would readily have consented to do as much good as she had hitherto done mischief, however little she might like such work. She therefore led Ulysses out of the back door of the palace, and showed him the swine in their sty.

"These must certainly be my comrades," said Ulysses. "I recognize their natures. They are

hardly worth the trouble of changing them into the human form again. Nevertheless, we will have it done, lest their bad example should make the other hogs worse. Let them take their former shapes, therefore, Dame Circe, if your skill is equal to the task. It will require greater magic, I trow, than it did to make swine of them."

So Circe waved her wand again, and repeated a few magic words, at the sound of which the two-and-twenty hogs pricked up their hanging ears. It was a wonder to behold how their snouts grew shorter and shorter, and their mouths (which they seemed to be sorry for, because they could not gobble so quickly) smaller and smaller, and how one and another began to stand upon his hindlegs, and scratch his nose with his fore trotters.

At first the lookers-on hardly knew whether to call them hogs or men, but by and by they began to think that they rather resembled the latter. At last, there stood the twenty-two comrades of Ulysses, looking pretty much the same as when they left the vessel.

To say the truth, there was a kind of grunt in their voices, and for a long time afterwards they spoke gruffly, and were apt to set up a squeal.

"It must depend on your own future conduct," added Ulysses, "whether you do not find your way back to the sty."

At this moment the note of a bird sounded from

the branch of a neighbouring tree. "Peep, peep, pe—we—ep!"

It was the purple bird that all this while had been sitting over their heads, watching what was going on, and hoping that Ulysses would remember how he had done his utmost to keep him and his followers out of harm's way. Ulysses ordered Circe at once to make a king of this good little fowl, and leave him exactly as she found him.

Hardly were the words spoken, and before the bird had time to utter another "pe-weep", King Picus leaped down from the bough of the tree, as majestic a king as any in the world, dressed in a long purple robe and bright yellow stockings, with a splendidly wrought collar about his neck, and a golden crown upon his head.

He and King Ulysses exchanged with one another the courtesies which belong to their high rank. But from that time forth King Picus was no longer proud of his crown and his trappings of royalty, nor of the fact of his being a king. He felt himself merely the upper servant of his people, and that it must be his lifelong labour to make them better and happier.

As for the lions, tigers, and wolves (though Circe would have restored them to their former shapes at his slightest word), Ulysses thought it better that they should remain as they now were, and thus give warning of their cruel natures, instead of going about under the guise of men, and pretend-

ing to human feelings, while their hearts had the bloodthirstiness of wild beasts.

So he let them howl as much as they liked, but never troubled his head about them. And when everything was settled according to his pleasure, he sent to summon the rest of his comrades, whom he had left at the seashore. These being arrived, with the prudent Eurylochus at their head, they all made themselves comfortable in Circe's enchanted palace until quite rested and refreshed from the toils and hardships of their voyage.

THE POMEGRANATE SEEDS

CHAPTER I

Mother Ceres was very fond of her daughter Proserpina, and seldom let her go alone into the fields. But just at the time when my story begins, the good lady was very busy, because she had the care of the wheat, and the corn, and the rye, and barley, and, in short, of the crops of every kind, all over the earth. As the season had thus far been uncommonly backward, it was necessary to make the harvest ripen more speedily than usual. So she put on her turban, made of poppies (a kind of flower which she was always noted for wearing), and got into her car drawn by a pair of winged dragons, and was just ready to set off.

"Dear Mother," said Proserpina, "I shall be very lonely while you are away. May I not run down to the shore, and ask some of the sea nymphs to come up out of the waves and play with me?"

"Yes, child," answered Mother Ceres. "The sea nymphs are good creatures, and will never lead

you into any harm. But you must take care not to stray away from them, nor go wandering about the fields by yourself. Young girls, without their mothers to take care of them, are very apt to get into mischief."

The child promised to be as prudent as if she were a grown-up woman. By the time the winged dragons had whirled the car out of sight, she was already on the shore, calling to the sea nymphs to come and play with her. They knew Proserpina's voice, and were not long in showing their glistening faces and sea-green hair above the water, at the bottom of which was their home.

They brought along with them a great many beautiful shells; and, sitting down on the moist sand, where the surf wave broke over them, they busied themselves in making a necklace, which they hung round Proserpina's neck. By way of showing her thanks, the child besought them to go with her a little way into the fields, so that they might gather a lot of flowers, with which she would make each of her kind playmates a wreath.

"Oh no, dear Proserpina!" cried the sea nymphs; "we dare not go with you upon the dry land. We are apt to grow faint unless at every breath we can snuff up the salt breeze of the ocean. And don't you see how careful we are to let the surf wave break over us every moment or two, so as to keep ourselves comfortably moist? If it were not for

that, we should soon look like bunches of uprooted seaweed dried in the sun."

"It is a great pity," said Proserpina. "But do you wait for me here, and I will run and gather my apron full of flowers, and be back again before the surf wave has broken ten times over you. I long to make you some wreaths that shall be as lovely as this necklace of many-coloured shells."

"We will wait, then," answered the sea nymphs. "But while you are gone, we may as well lie down on a bank of soft sponge, under the water. The air to-day is a little too dry for our comfort. But we will pop up our heads every few minutes to see if you are coming."

The young Proserpina ran quickly to a spot where, only the day before, she had seen a great many flowers. These, however, were now a little past their bloom. Wishing to give her friends the freshest and loveliest blossoms, she strayed farther into the fields, and found some that made her scream with delight. Never had she met with such beautiful flowers before,—violets so large and fragrant,—roses with so rich and delicate a blush,—such superb hyacinths, and such sweet-smelling pinks,—and many others, some of which seemed to be of new shapes and colours. Two or three times, moreover, she could not help thinking that a tuft of most splendid flowers had suddenly sprouted out of the earth before her very eyes, as if on purpose to tempt her a few steps farther.

Proserpina's apron was soon filled and brimming over with delightful blossoms. She was on the point of turning back in order to rejoin the sea nymphs, and sit with them on the moist sands, all twining wreaths together. But, a little farther on, what should she behold?—it was a large shrub, completely covered with the most beautiful flowers in the world.

"The darlings!" cried Proserpina; and then she thought to herself, "I was looking at that spot only a moment ago. How strange it is that I did not see the flowers!

"What a silly child I am!" thought she, taking courage. "It is really the most beautiful shrub that ever sprang out of the earth. I will pull it up by the roots, and carry it home, and plant it in my mother's garden."

Holding up her apron full of flowers with her left hand, Proserpina seized the large shrub with the other, and pulled and pulled, but was hardly able to loosen the soil about its roots. What a deep-rooted plant it was! Again the girl pulled with all her might, and noticed that the earth began to stir and crack to some distance around the stem. She gave another pull, but let go her hold, fancying that there was a rumbling sound right beneath her feet. Did the roots go down into some enchanted cavern? Then, laughing at herself for so childish a notion, she made another effort. Up came the shrub, and Proserpina

staggered back, holding the stem in her hand, and gazing at the deep hole which its roots had left in the soil.

CHAPTER II

Much to her surprise, this hole kept spreading wider and wider, and growing deeper and deeper, until it really seemed to have no bottom; and all the while there came a rumbling noise out of its depths, louder and louder, and nearer and nearer, and sounding like the tramp of horses' hoofs and the rattling of wheels. Too much frightened to run away, she stood straining her eyes into this wonderful hollow, and soon saw a team of four sable horses, snorting smoke out of their nostrils, and tearing their way out of the earth with a splendid golden chariot whirling at their heels. They leaped out of the bottomless hole, chariot and all. There they were, tossing their black manes, flourishing their black tails, and curvetting with every one of their hoofs off the ground at once, close by the spot where Proserpina stood. In the chariot sat the figure of a man, richly dressed, with a crown on his head, all flaming with diamonds. He was of a noble aspect, and rather handsome, but looked sullen and discontented. He kept rubbing his eyes, and shading them with

his hand, as if he did not live enough in the sunshine to be very fond of its light.

As soon as this personage saw the frightened Proserpina, he waved her to come a little nearer.

"Do not be afraid," said he, with as cheerful a smile as he knew how to put on. "Come, will you not like to ride a little way with me in my beautiful chariot?"

But Proserpina was so alarmed that she wished for nothing but to get out of his reach. And no wonder! The stranger did not look very good-natured, in spite of his smile. As for his voice, its tones were deep and stern, and sounded as much like the rumbling of an earthquake underground as anything else. As is always the case with children in trouble, Proserpina's first thought was to call for her mother.

"Mother, Mother Ceres," cried she, all in a tremble, "come quickly and save me!"

But her voice was too faint for her mother to hear. Indeed, it is most probable that Ceres was then a thousand miles off, making the corn grow in some far-distant country. Nor could it have availed her poor daughter even had she been within hearing. For no sooner did Proserpina begin to cry out, than the stranger leaped to the ground, caught the child in his arms, and again mounting the chariot, shook the reins, and shouted to the four black horses to set off. They at once broke into so swift a gallop that it seemed rather

like flying through the air than running along the earth.

In a moment Proserpina lost sight of the pleasant vale of Enna, in which she had always dwelt. Another instant, and even the summit of Mount Etna had become so blue in the distance that she could scarcely make it out from the smoke that gushed out of its crater. But still the poor child screamed, and scattered her apron full of flowers along the way, and left a long cry trailing behind the chariot. Many mothers to whose ears it came, ran quickly to see if any mischief had befallen their children. But Mother Ceres was a great way off, and could not hear the cry.

As they rode on, the stranger did his best to soothe her.

"Why should you be so frightened, my pretty child?" said he, trying to soften his rough voice. "I promise not to do you any harm."

"Let me go home!" cried Proserpina, "let me go home!"

"My home is better than your mother's," answered King Pluto. "It is a palace all made of gold, with crystal windows; and because there is little or no sunshine thereabouts, the apartments are lit with diamond lamps. You never saw anything half so splendid as my throne. If you like, you may sit down on it, and be my little queen, and I will sit on the footstool."

"I don't care for golden palaces and thrones," sobbed Proserpina. "O my mother, my mother! Carry me back to my mother!"

But King Pluto, as he called himself, only shouted to his steeds to go faster.

"Pray do not be foolish, Proserpina," said he, in rather a sullen tone. "I offer you my palace and my crown, and all the riches that are under the earth, and you treat me as if I were doing you an injury. The one thing which my palace needs is a merry little maid to run upstairs and down, and cheer up the rooms with her smile. And this is what you must do for King Pluto."

"Never!" answered Proserpina, looking as miserable as she could. "I shall never smile again till you set me down at my mother's door."

But she might just as well have talked to the wind that whistled past them; for Pluto urged on his horses, and went faster than ever. Proserpina went on crying out, and screamed so long and so loudly that her poor little voice was almost screamed away. When it was nothing but a whisper, she happened to cast her eyes over a great broad field of waving grain; and whom do you think she saw? Who but Mother Ceres, making the corn grow, and too busy to notice the golden chariot as it went rattling along. The child gathered all her strength, and gave one more scream, but was out of sight before Ceres had time to turn her head.

CHAPTER III

King Pluto had taken a road which now began to grow very gloomy. It was bordered on each side with rocks and cliffs, between which the rumbling of the chariot-wheels was re-echoed with a noise like rolling thunder. The trees and bushes that grew in the holes of the rocks had very dismal foliage. By and by, although it was hardly noon, the air became dark with a grey twilight. The black horses had rushed along so swiftly that they were already beyond the limits of the sunshine.

But the duskier it grew, the more did Pluto's face take on an air of satisfaction. After all, he was not an ill-looking person, more so when he left off twisting his features into a smile that did not belong to them. Proserpina peeped at his face through the gathering dusk, and hoped that he might not be so very wicked as she at first thought him.

"Ah, this twilight is truly refreshing," said King Pluto, "after being so tormented with that ugly glare of the sun. How much more agreeable is lamplight or torchlight, more particularly when reflected from diamonds! It will be a grand sight when we get to my palace."

"Is it much farther?" asked Proserpina. "And will you carry me back when I have seen it?"

"We will talk of that by and by," answered

Pluto. "We are just entering my dominions. Do you see that tall gateway before us? When we pass those gates we are at home. And there lies my faithful dog at the threshold. Cerberus! Cerberus! Come hither, my good dog!"

So saying, Pluto pulled at the reins, and stopped the chariot right between the tall, large pillars of the gateway. The dog of which he had spoken got up from the threshold, and stood on its hinder legs, so as to put his fore-paws on the chariot-wheel. But, my stars, what a strange dog it was! Why, he was a big, rough, ugly-looking monster, with three heads, and each of them fiercer than the two others. But fierce as they were, King Pluto patted them all. He seemed as fond of his three-headed dog as if it had been a sweet little spaniel with silken ears and curly hair.

Cerberus, on the other hand, was evidently rejoiced to see his master, and expressed his love, as other dogs do, by wagging his tail at a great rate. Proserpina's eyes being drawn to it by its brisk motion, she saw that this tail was neither more nor less than a live dragon, with fiery eyes, and fangs that had a very poisonous look. And while the three-headed Cerberus was fawning so lovingly on King Pluto, there was the dragon tail wagging against its will, and looking as cross and ill-natured as you can imagine, on its own account.

"Will the dog bite me?" asked Proserpina,

shrinking closer to Pluto. "What an ugly creature he is!"

"Oh, never fear," answered her companion. "He never harms people unless they try to enter my dominions without being sent for, or to get away when I wish to keep them here. Down, Cerberus! Now, my pretty Proserpina, we will drive on."

On went the chariot, and King Pluto seemed greatly pleased to find himself once more in his own kingdom. He drew Proserpina's attention to the rich veins of gold that were to be seen among the rocks, and pointed to several places where one stroke of a pickaxe would loosen a bushel of diamonds. All along the road, indeed, there were sparkling gems, which would have been of great value above-ground, but which here were reckoned of the meaner sort, and hardly worth a beggar's stooping for.

He alighted from the chariot, and, taking Proserpina in his arms, carried her up a lofty flight of steps into the great hall of the palace. It was splendidly lit by means of large precious stones of various hues, which seemed to burn like so many lamps, and glowed with a hundredfold radiance all through the vast apartment. And yet there was a kind of gloom in the midst of this enchanted light. Nor was there a single object in the hall that was really agreeable to behold, except the little Proserpina herself, a lovely

child, with one earthly flower which she had not let fall from her hand.

It is my opinion that even King Pluto had never been happy in his palace, and that this was the true reason why he had stolen away Proserpina, in order that he might have something to love, instead of cheating his heart any longer with this tiresome splendour. Though he pretended to dislike the sunshine of the upper world, yet the effect of the child's presence, bedimmed as she was by her tears, was as if a faint and watery sunbeam had somehow or other found its way into the enchanted hall.

Pluto now summoned his servants, and bade them lose no time in preparing a most abundant banquet, and, above all things, not to fail in setting a golden beaker of the water of Lethe by Proserpina's plate.

"I will neither drink that nor anything else," said Proserpina. "Nor will I taste a morsel of food, even if you keep me for ever in your palace."

"I should be sorry for that," replied King Pluto, patting her cheek; for he really wished to be kind, if he had only known how. "You are a spoiled child, I perceive, my little Proserpina. But when you see the nice things which my cook will make for you, your appetite will quickly come again."

Then, sending for the head cook, he gave strict orders that all sorts of fine things, such as young people are usually fond of, should be set before

Proserpina. He had a secret motive in this. For you are to understand it is a fixed law that when persons are carried off to the land of magic, if they once taste any food there, they can never get back to their friends. Now, if King Pluto had been cunning enough to offer Proserpina some fruit, or bread and milk (which was the simple fare to which the child had been used), it is very probable that she would soon have been tempted to eat it. But he left the matter entirely to his cook, who, like all other cooks, thought nothing fit to eat unless it were rich pastry, or highly seasoned meat, or spiced sweet-cakes,—things which Proserpina's mother had never given her, and the smell of which quite took away her appetite, instead of sharpening it.

CHAPTER IV

But my story must now clamber out of King Pluto's dominions, and see what Mother Ceres has been about since she was bereft of her daughter. We had a glimpse of her, as you remember, half-hidden among the waving grain, while the four black steeds were swiftly whirling along the chariot in which her beloved Proserpina was so unwillingly borne away. You recollect, too, the loud scream which Proserpina gave, just when the chariot was out of sight.

Of all the child's outcries, this last shriek was the only one that reached the ears of Mother Ceres. She had mistaken the rumbling of the chariot-wheels for a peal of thunder, and thought that a shower was coming up, and that it would assist her in making the corn grow. But at the sound of Proserpina's shriek she started, and looked about in every direction, not knowing whence it came, but feeling almost certain that it was her daughter's voice. It seemed so strange, however, that the girl should have strayed over so many lands and seas (which she herself could not have traversed without the aid of her winged dragons), that the good Ceres tried to believe that it must be the child of some other parent, and not her own darling Proserpina, who had uttered this sad cry. Nevertheless it troubled her with many tender fears, such as are ready to bestir themselves in every mother's heart when she finds it necessary to go away from her dear children without leaving them under the care of some maiden aunt or other such faithful guardian. So she quickly left the field in which she had been so busy. As her work was not half done, the grain looked next day as if it needed both sun and rain, and as if it were blighted in the ear, and had something the matter with its roots.

The pair of dragons must have had very nimble wings, for in less than an hour Mother Ceres had alighted at the door of her home, and found it

empty. Knowing, however, that the child was fond of sporting on the seashore, she hastened thither as fast as she could, and there beheld the wet faces of the poor sea nymphs peeping over a wave.

All this while the good creatures had been waiting on the bank of sponge, and once every half-minute or so had popped up their four heads above water, to see if their playmate were yet coming back. When they saw Mother Ceres, they sat down on the crest of the surf-wave, and let it toss them ashore at her feet.

"Where is Proserpina?" cried Ceres. "Where is my child? Tell me, you naughty sea nymphs, have you enticed her under the sea?"

"Oh no, good Mother Ceres," said the innocent sea nymphs, tossing back their green ringlets and looking her in the face. "We never should dream of such a thing. Proserpina has been at play with us, it is true. But she left us a long while ago, meaning only to run a little way upon the dry land, and gather some flowers for a wreath. This was early in the day, and we have seen nothing of her since."

Ceres scarcely waited to hear what the nymphs had to say, before she hurried off to make enquiries all through the neighbourhood. But nobody told her anything that could enable the poor mother to guess what had become of Proserpina. A fisherman, it is true, had noticed her little footprints in

the sand, as he went homeward along the beach with a basket of fish. A rustic had seen the child stooping to gather flowers; several persons had heard either the rattling of chariot-wheels or the rumbling of distant thunder; and one old woman, while plucking catnip, had heard a scream, but supposed it to be some childish nonsense, and therefore did not take the trouble to look up. The stupid people! It took them such a long while to tell the nothing that they knew, that it was dark night before Mother Ceres found out that she must seek her daughter elsewhere. So she lighted a torch and set forth, making up her mind never to come back until Proserpina was discovered.

In her haste and trouble of mind she quite forgot her car and the winged dragons. Or, it may be, she thought that she could follow up the search more thoroughly on foot. At all events this was the way in which she began her sorrowful journey, holding her torch before her, and looking carefully at every object along the path. And, as it happened, she had not gone far before she found one of the beautiful flowers which grew on the shrub that Proserpina had pulled up.

"Ha!" thought Mother Ceres, looking at it by torchlight, "here is mischief in this flower! The earth did not produce it by any help of mine, nor of its own accord. It is the work of enchantment, and is therefore poisonous; and perhaps it has poisoned my poor child."

But she put the poisonous flower in her bosom, not knowing whether she might ever find any other memorial of Proserpina.

CHAPTER V

All night long, at the door of every cottage and farmhouse Ceres knocked, and called up the weary labourers to ask if they had seen her child. They stood, gaping and half-asleep, at the threshold, and answered her pityingly, and besought her to come in and rest. At the portal of every palace, too, she made so loud a summons that the servants hurried to throw open the gate, thinking that it must be some great king or queen, who would demand a banquet for supper, and a stately chamber to repose in.

When they saw only a sad and anxious woman, with a torch in her hand and a wreath of withered poppies on her head, they spoke rudely, and sometimes threatened to put the dogs upon her. But nobody had seen Proserpina, nor could give Mother Ceres the least hint which way to seek her.

Thus passed the night; and still she went on searching, without sitting down to rest or stopping to take food, or even remembering to put out the torch, although first the rosy dawn, and then the glad light of the morning sun, made its red flame

They threatened to put the dogs upon her

look thin and pale. But I wonder what sort of stuff this torch was made of, for it burned dimly through the day, and at night was as bright as ever, and never was put out by the rain or wind in all the weary days and nights while Ceres was seeking for Proserpina.

Thus Mother Ceres went wandering about for nine long days and nights, finding no trace of Proserpina, unless it were now and then a withered flower. These she picked up and put in her bosom, because she fancied that they might have fallen from her poor child's hand. All day she travelled onward through the hot sun. At night again the flame of the torch would redden and gleam along the pathway, and she continued her search by its light, without ever sitting down to rest.

On the tenth day she chanced to see the mouth of a cavern, within which (though it was bright noon everywhere else) there would have been only a dusky twilight; but it so happened that a torch was burning there. It flickered and struggled with the duskiness, but could not half light up the gloomy cavern with all its sad glimmer. Ceres was resolved to leave no spot without a search, so she peeped into the entrance of the cave, and lighted it up a little more by holding her own torch before her. In so doing she caught a glimpse of what seemed to be a woman, sitting on the brown leaves of the last autumn, a great heap of

which had been swept into the cave by the wind. This woman (if woman it were) was by no means so beautiful as many of her sex. Her head, they tell me, was shaped very much like a dog's, and by way of ornament she wore a wreath of snakes around it. But Mother Ceres, the moment she saw her, knew that this was an odd kind of a person, who got all her enjoyment in being miserable, and never would have a word to say to other people, unless they were as sad and wretched as she herself delighted to be.

"I am wretched enough now," thought poor Ceres, "to talk with this sorrowful Hecate, were she ten times sadder than ever she was yet."

So she stepped into the cave, and sat down on the withered leaves by the dog-headed woman's side. In all the world, since her daughter's loss, she had found no other companion.

"O Hecate," said she, "if ever you lose a daughter, you will know what sorrow is. Tell me, for pity's sake, have you seen my poor child Proserpina pass by the mouth of your cavern?"

"No," answered Hecate in a cracked voice, and sighing betwixt every word or two,—"no, Mother Ceres, I have seen nothing of your daughter. But my ears, you must know, are made in such a way that all cries of distress and affright, all over the world, are pretty sure to find their way to them; and nine days ago, as I sat in my cave, making myself very miserable, I heard the voice of a

young girl shrieking as if in great distress. Something terrible has happened to the child, you may rest assured. As well as I could judge, a dragon, or some other cruel monster, was carrying her away."

"You kill me by saying so," cried Ceres, almost ready to faint. "Where was the sound, and which way did it seem to go?"

"It passed very swiftly along," said Hecate, "and at the same time there was a heavy rumbling of wheels towards the eastward. I can tell you nothing more, except that, in my honest opinion, you will never see your daughter again. The best advice I can give you is to take up your abode in this cavern, where we will be the two most wretched women in the world."

"Not yet, dark Hecate," replied Ceres. "But do you first come with your torch and help me to seek for my lost child. When there shall be no more hope of finding her (if that black day is fated to come), then, if you will give me room to fling myself down, either on these withered leaves or on the naked rock, I will show you what it is to be miserable. But until I know that she has perished from the face of the earth, I will not allow myself space even to grieve."

As the pair travelled along in this woebegone manner, a thought struck Ceres.

"There is one person," she exclaimed, "who must have seen my poor child, and can doubtless tell

what has become of her. Why did not I think of him before? It is Phœbus."

"What," said Hecate, "the young man that always sits in the sunshine? Oh, pray do not think of going near him. He is a gay, light young fellow, and will only smile in your face. And, besides, there is such a glare of the sun about him that he will quite blind my poor eyes, which I have almost wept away already."

"You promised to be my companion," answered Ceres. "Come, let us make haste or the sunshine will be gone, and Phœbus along with it."

CHAPTER VI

Accordingly they went along in quest of Phœbus, both of them sighing grievously, and Hecate, to say the truth, making a great deal worse crying than Ceres; for all the pleasure she had, you know, lay in being miserable, and therefore she made the most of it. By and by, after a pretty long journey, they arrived at the sunniest spot in the whole world.

There they beheld a beautiful young man, with long curling ringlets, which seemed to be made of golden sunbeams. His garments were like light summer clouds. The expression of his face was so very vivid that Hecate held her hands before

her eyes, muttering that he ought to wear a black veil. Phœbus (for this was the very person whom they were seeking) had a lyre in his hands, and was making its chords tremble with sweet music, at the same time singing a very sweet song, which he had just composed. For, besides a great many other accomplishments, this young man was renowned for his admirable poetry.

As Ceres and her dismal companion approached him, Phœbus smiled on them so cheerfully that Hecate's wreath of snakes gave a spiteful hiss, and Hecate heartily wished herself back in her cave. But as for Ceres, she was too earnest in her grief either to know or care whether Phœbus smiled or frowned.

"Phœbus!" cried she, "I am in great trouble, and have come to you for help. Can you tell me what has become of my dear child Proserpina?"

"Proserpina! Proserpina, did you call her name?" answered Phœbus, trying to recollect. There was such a constant flow of pleasant ideas in his mind, that he was apt to forget what had happened no longer ago than yesterday.

"Ah, yes, I remember her now. A very lovely child, indeed! I am happy to tell you, my dear madam, that I did see the little Proserpina not many days ago. You may make yourself perfectly easy about her. She is safe, and in excellent hands."

"Oh, where is my dear child?" cried Ceres,

clasping her hands and flinging herself at his feet.

"Why," said Phœbus,—and as he spoke he kept touching his lyre so as to make a thread of music run in and out among his words,—"as the little damsel was gathering flowers (and she has really a very fine taste for flowers), she was suddenly snatched up by King Pluto, and carried off to his dominions. I have never been in that part of the universe; but the royal palace, I am told, is built in a very noble style, and of the most splendid and costly materials. Gold, diamonds, pearls, and all manner of precious stones will be your daughter's ordinary playthings. I recommend you, my dear lady, to give yourself no uneasiness."

"Hush! Say not such a word!" answered Ceres indignantly. "What is there to gratify her heart? What are all the splendours you speak of, without love? I must have her back again. Will you go with me, Phœbus, to demand my daughter of this wicked Pluto?"

"Pray excuse me," replied Phœbus, with an elegant bow. "I certainly wish you success, and regret that my own affairs are so pressing that I cannot have the pleasure of attending you. Besides, I am not upon the best of terms with King Pluto. To tell you the truth, his three-headed dog would never let me pass the gateway. I should be obliged to take a sheaf of sunbeams

along with me, and those, you know, are forbidden things in Pluto's kingdom."

"Ah, Phœbus," said Ceres, with bitter meaning in her words, "you have a harp instead of a heart. Farewell!"

"Will not you stay a moment," asked Phœbus, "and hear me turn the pretty and touching story of Proserpina into verses?"

Poor Mother Ceres! It is sad to think of her, on her toilsome way all alone, and holding up that never-dying torch, the flame of which seemed an emblem of the grief and hope that burned together in her heart. So much did she suffer, that though her aspect had been quite youthful when her troubles began, she grew to look like an elderly person in a very brief time.

CHAPTER VII

One day, during her wandering in quest of the entrance to Pluto's kingdom, she came to the palace of King Celeus, who reigned at Eleusis. Ascending a lofty flight of steps, she entered the portal, and found the royal household in very great alarm about the queen's baby. The infant, it seems, was sickly (being troubled with its teeth, I suppose), and would take no food, and was all the time moaning with pain. The Queen—her name was

Metanira—wished to find a nurse. When she beheld a woman of matronly aspect coming up the palace steps, she thought in her own mind that here was the very person whom she needed. So Queen Metanira ran to the door with the poor wailing baby in her arms, and besought Ceres to take charge of it, or at least to tell her what would do it good.

"Will you trust the child entirely to me?" asked Ceres.

"Yes, and gladly, too," answered the Queen, "if you will devote all your time to him; for I can see that you have been a mother."

"You are right," said Ceres. "I once had a child of my own. Well, I will be the nurse of this poor sickly boy. But beware, I warn you, that you do not interfere with any kind of treatment which I may judge proper for him. If you do so, the poor infant must suffer for his mother's folly."

Then she kissed the child, and it seemed to do him good, for he smiled, and nestled closely into her bosom.

So Mother Ceres set her torch in a corner (where it kept burning all the while), and took up her abode in the palace of King Celeus, as nurse to the little Prince Demophoön. She treated him as if he were her own child, and allowed neither the King nor the Queen to say whether he should be bathed in warm or cold water, or what he should

eat, or how often he should take the air, or when he should be put to bed.

You would hardly believe me if I were to tell you how quickly the baby Prince got rid of his troubles, and grew fat and rosy and strong, and how he had two rows of ivory teeth in less time than any other little fellow before or since. Instead of the palest, and wretchedest, and puniest imp in the world (as his own mother confessed him to be when Ceres first took him in charge), he was now a strapping baby, crowing, laughing, kicking up his heels, and rolling from one end of the room to the other. All the good women of the neighbourhood crowded to the palace, and held up their hands in surprise at the beauty and health of this darling little Prince. Their wonder was the greater, because he was never seen to taste any food,—not even so much as a cup of milk.

"Pray, nurse," the Queen kept saying, "how is it that you make the child thrive so?"

"I was a mother once," Ceres always replied; "and, having nursed my own child, I know what other children need."

But Queen Metanira, as was very natural, had a great desire to know what the nurse did to her child. One night, therefore, she hid herself in the chamber where Ceres and the little Prince were accustomed to sleep. There was a fire in the chimney, and it had now crumbled into great coals and embers, which lay glowing on the hearth, with

a blaze flickering up now and then, and flinging a warm and ruddy light upon the walls. Ceres sat before the hearth with the child in her lap, and the firelight making her shadow dance upon the ceiling overhead. She undressed the little Prince, and bathed him all over with some fragrant liquid out of a vase.

The next thing she did was to rake back the red embers, and make a hollow place among them, just where the backlog had been. At last, while the baby was crowing and clapping its fat little hands, and laughing in the nurse's face (just as you may have seen your little brother or sister do before going into its warm bath), Ceres suddenly laid him, all naked as he was, in the hollow among the red-hot embers. She then raked the ashes over him, and turned quietly away.

You may imagine, if you can, how Queen Metanira shrieked, thinking nothing less than that her dear child would be burned to a cinder. She burst forth from her hiding-place, and, running to the hearth, raked open the fire, and snatched up poor little Prince Demophoön out of his bed of live coals, one of which he was gripping in each of his fists. He at once set up a grievous cry, as babies are apt to do when rudely startled out of a sound sleep. To the Queen's astonishment and joy, she could see no token of the child's being injured by the hot fire in which he had lain. She now turned to Mother Ceres, and asked her to explain the secret.

"Foolish woman," answered Ceres; "did you not promise to entrust this poor infant entirely to me? You little know the mischief you have done him. Had you left him to my care, he would have grown up like a child of heavenly birth, endowed with superhuman strength and intelligence, and would have lived for ever. Do you imagine that earthly children are to become immortal without being tempered to it in the fiercest heat of the fire? But you have ruined your own son. For though he will be a strong man and a hero in his day, yet, on account of your folly, he will grow old, and finally die, like the sons of other women. The weak tenderness of his mother has cost the poor boy an immortality. Farewell!"

Saying these words, she kissed the little Prince Demophoön, and sighed to think what he had lost, and took her departure without heeding Queen Metanira, who entreated her to remain and cover up the child among the hot embers as often as she pleased. Poor baby! he never slept so warmly again.

CHAPTER VIII

While she dwelt in the King's palace, Mother Ceres had been so constantly occupied with taking care of the young Prince that her heart was a little lightened of its grief for Proserpina. But

now, having nothing else to busy herself about, she became just as wretched as before. At length, in her despair, she came to the dreadful resolve that not a stalk of grain nor a blade of grass, not a potato nor a turnip, nor any other vegetable that was good for man or beast to eat, should be suffered to grow until her daughter were restored. She even forbade the flowers to bloom, lest somebody's heart should be cheered by their beauty.

At last, as there seemed to be no other remedy, our old friend Quicksilver was sent posthaste to King Pluto, in hopes that he might be persuaded to undo the mischief he had done, and to set everything right again by giving up Proserpina. Quicksilver accordingly made the best of his way to the great gate, took a flying leap right over the three-headed dog, and stood at the door of the palace in a very short time. The servants knew him both by his face and garb; for his short cloak, and his winged cap and shoes, and his snaky staff had often been seen thereabouts in times gone by. He requested to be shown at once into the King's presence; and Pluto, who heard his voice from the top of the stairs, and who loved to amuse himself with Quicksilver's merry talk, called out to him to come up. And while they settle their business together, we must ask what Proserpina has been doing ever since we saw her last.

The child had said, as you may remember, that she would not taste a mouthful of food as long as

she should be forced to remain in King Pluto's palace. How she contrived to maintain her resolve, and at the same time to keep herself tolerably plump and rosy, is more than I can explain. But some young ladies, I am given to understand, possess the power of living on air, and Proserpina seems to have had it too. At any rate, it was now six months since she left the outside of the earth; and not a morsel, so far as the servants were able to see, had yet passed between her teeth. This was the more creditable to Proserpina, inasmuch as King Pluto had caused her to be tempted day after day with all manner of sweetmeats, and richly preserved fruits, and delicacies of every sorts, such as young people are generally most fond of. But her good mother had often told her of the hurtfulness of these things; and for that reason alone, if there had been no other, she would have refused to taste them.

All this time, being of a cheerful and active nature, the little damsel was not quite so unhappy as you may have supposed. After Proserpina came, the palace was no longer the same abode of dismal beauty that it had before been. The people all felt this, and King Pluto more than any of them.

"My own little Proserpina," he used to say, "I wish you could like me a little better. We gloomy and cloudy-natured persons have often as warm hearts at bottom as those of more cheerful natures. If you would only stay with me of your own

accord, it would make me happier than the possession of a hundred such palaces as this."

"Ah," said Proserpina, "you should have tried to make me like you before carrying me off. And the best thing you can do now is to let me go again. Then I might remember you sometimes, and think that you were as kind as you knew how to be. Perhaps, too, one day or other, I might come back and pay you a visit."

"No, no," answered Pluto with his gloomy smile, "I will not trust you for that. You are too fond of living in the broad daylight, and gathering flowers. What an idle and childish taste that is! Are not these gems, which I have ordered to be dug for you, and which are richer than any in my crown—are they not prettier than a violet?"

"Not half so pretty," said Proserpina, snatching the gems from Pluto's hand and flinging them to the other end of the hall. "Oh, my sweet violets! shall I never see you again?"

And then she burst into tears. But young people's tears have very little saltness in them, and do not inflame the eyes so much as those of grown persons. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if, a few moments afterwards, Proserpina was sporting through the hall almost as merrily as she and the four sea nymphs had sported along the edge of the surf-wave. King Pluto gazed after her, and wished that he too was a child. And little Proserpina, when she turned about and be-

held this great King standing in his splendid hall, and looking so grand, and so sad, and so lonesome, was smitten with a kind of pity. She ran back to him, and, for the first time in all her life, put her small soft hand in his.

"I love you a little," whispered she, looking up in his face.

"Do you indeed, my dear child?" cried Pluto, bending his dark face down to kiss her. But Proserpina shrank away from the kiss, for though his features were noble, they were very dusky and grim. "Well, I have not deserved it of you, after keeping you a prisoner for so many months, and starving you besides. Are you not terribly hungry? Is there nothing which I can get you to eat?"

In asking this question the King of the mines had a very cunning purpose; for, you will recollect, if Proserpina tasted a morsel of food in his dominions, she would never afterwards be at liberty to quit them.

"No, indeed," said Proserpina. "Your head cook is always baking, and stewing, and roasting, and rolling out paste, and planning one dish or another, which he imagines may be to my liking. But he might just as well save himself the trouble, poor fat little man that he is. I have no appetite for anything in the world, unless it were a slice of bread of my mother's own baking, or a little fruit out of her garden."

CHAPTER IX

When Pluto heard this, he began to see that he had mistaken the best method of tempting Proserpina to eat. The cook's made dishes and dainties were not half so delicious, in the good child's opinion, as the simple fare to which Mother Ceres had accustomed her. Wondering that he had never thought of it before, the King now sent one of his trusty servants, with a large basket, to get some of the finest and juiciest pears, peaches, and plums which could anywhere be found in the upper world.

Unfortunately, however, this was during the time when Ceres had forbidden any fruits or vegetables to grow. After seeking all over the earth, King Pluto's servant found only a single pomegranate, and that so dried up as to be not worth eating. Nevertheless, since there was no better to be had, he brought this dry old withered pomegranate home to the palace, put it on a golden salver, and carried it up to Proserpina. Now it happened, strangely enough, that just as the servant was bringing the pomegranate into the back door of the palace, our friend Quicksilver had gone up the front steps, on his errand to get Proserpina away from King Pluto.

As soon as Proserpina saw the pomegranate on the golden salver, she told the servant he had better take it away again.

"I shall not touch it, I assure you," said she. "If I were ever so hungry, I should never think of eating such a miserable, dry pomegranate as that."

"It is the only one in the world," said the servant.

He set down the golden salver with the wizened pomegranate upon it, and left the room. When he was gone, Proserpina could not help coming close to the table and looking at this poor dried fruit with a great deal of eagerness; for, to say the truth, on seeing something that suited her taste, she felt all the six months' appetite taking hold of her at once. To be sure it was a very wretched-looking pomegranate, and seemed to have no more juice in it than an oyster shell. But there was no choice of such things in King Pluto's palace. This was the first fruit she had seen there, and the last she was ever likely to see. Unless she ate it up at once it would grow drier than it already was, and be wholly unfit to eat.

"At least I may smell it," thought Proserpina.

So she took up the pomegranate and applied it to her nose, and, somehow or other, being in such close neighbourhood to her mouth, the fruit found its way into that little red cave. Dear me! what an everlasting pity! Before Proserpina knew what she was about, her teeth had actually bitten it of their own accord. Just as this fatal deed was done, the door of the apartment opened, and in came

King Pluto, followed by Quicksilver, who had been urging him to let his little prisoner go.

At the first noise of their entrance, Proserpina withdrew the pomegranate from her mouth. But Quicksilver (whose eyes were very keen, and his wits the sharpest that ever anybody had) saw that the child was a little confused. Seeing the empty salver, he suspected that she had been taking a sly nibble of something or other. As for honest Pluto, he never guessed the secret.

"My little Proserpina," said the King, sitting down, and drawing her between his knees, "here is Quicksilver, who tells me that a great many misfortunes have befallen innocent people on account of my keeping you in my dominions. To confess the truth, I myself had already reflected that it was a cruel act to take you away from your good mother. But then you must consider, my dear child, that this vast palace is apt to be gloomy (although the precious stones certainly shine very bright), and that I am not of the most cheerful nature, and that therefore it was a natural thing enough to seek for the society of some merrier creature than myself. I hoped you would take my crown for a plaything, and me—ah, you laugh, naughty Proserpina!—me, grim as I am, for a playmate. It was a silly hope."

"Not so very silly," whispered Proserpina. "You have really amused me very much, sometimes."

"Thank you," said King Pluto rather dryly.

"But I can see plainly enough that you think my palace a dusky prison, and me the iron-hearted keeper of it. And an iron heart I should surely have, if I could detain you here any longer, my poor child, when it is now six months since you tasted food. I give you your liberty. Go with Quicksilver. Hasten home to your dear mother."

Now, although you may not have supposed it, Proserpina found it impossible to take leave of poor King Pluto without some regrets for not telling him about the pomegranate. She even shed a tear or two, thinking how lonely and cheerless the great palace would seem to him, with all its ugly glare of made light, after she herself,—his one little ray of natural sunshine, whom he had stolen, to be sure, but only because he valued her so much,—after she should have departed. I know not how many kind things she might have said to the lonely King of the mines, had not Quicksilver hurried her away.

"Come along quickly," whispered he in her ear, "or his Majesty may change his royal mind. And take care, above all things, that you say nothing of what was brought you on the golden salver."

In a very short time they had passed the great gateway (leaving the three-headed Cerberus barking and yelping and growling with threefold din behind them), and came out upon the surface of the earth. It was delightful to behold, as Proserpina hastened along, how the path grew green behind

and on either side of her. Wherever she set her blessed foot, there was at once a dewy flower.

CHAPTER X

Mother Ceres had returned to her deserted home, and was sitting lonely on the doorstep, with her torch burning in her hand. She had been idly watching the flame for some moments past, when all at once it flickered and went out.

"What does this mean?" thought she. "It was an enchanted torch, and should have kept burning till my child came back."

Lifting her eyes, she was surprised to see a sudden greenness flashing over the brown and barren fields, exactly as you may have observed a golden hue gleaming far and wide across the landscape from the just risen sun.

"Does the earth disobey me?" cried Mother Ceres angrily. "Does it dare to be green when I have bidden it be barren until my daughter shall be restored to my arms?"

"Then open your arms, dear Mother," cried a well-known voice, "and take your little daughter into them."

And Proserpina came running and flung herself upon her mother's bosom. Their joy is not to be described. The grief of their separation had caused

both of them to shed a great many tears, and now they shed a great many more, because their joy could not so well express itself in any other way.

When their hearts had grown a little more quiet, Mother Ceres looked anxiously at Proserpina.

"My child," said she, "did you taste any food while you were in King Pluto's palace?"

"Dearest Mother," answered Proserpina, "I will tell you the whole truth. Until this very morning not a morsel of food had passed my lips. But to-day they brought me a pomegranate (a very dry one it was, and all shrivelled up, till there was little left of it but seeds and skin), and, having seen no fruit for so long a time, and being faint with hunger, I was tempted just to bite it. The instant I tasted it, King Pluto and Quicksilver came into the room. I had not swallowed a morsel; but—dear Mother, I hope it was no harm—but six of the pomegranate seeds, I am afraid, remained in my mouth."

"Ah, unfortunate child, and miserable me!" exclaimed Ceres. "For each of those six pomegranate seeds you must spend one month of every year in King Pluto's palace. You are but half restored to your mother. Only six months with me, and six with that good-for-nothing King of Darkness!"

"Do not speak so harshly of poor King Pluto," said Proserpina, kissing her mother. "He has some very good points; and I really think I can

bear to spend six months in his palace, if he will only let me spend the other six with you. He certainly did very wrong to carry me off; but then, as he says, it was but a dismal sort of life for him, to live in that great gloomy place all alone; and it has made a wonderful change in his spirits to have a little girl to run upstairs and down. There is some comfort in making him so happy; and so, upon the whole, dearest Mother, let us be thankful that he is not to keep me the whole year round."