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Very

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STEAD'S BOOKS FOR THE BAIRNS—58

ERNEST BENN'S EDITION

THE SNOW QUEEN

BY

HANS ANDERSEN

MUNAVIRUL ISLAM L. S. SCHOOL
Date.....
ERNAKULAM.
A 6/52 Eng

LONDON: ERNEST BENN, LIMITED,
BOUVERIE HOUSE, E.C.4

PREFACE.

MY DEAR BAIRNS,

Once again I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. And I do something more than wish it—I give you in this number the secret of how to have both a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

"The Snow Queen" is one of those fairy stories that are truer than most histories. You know the Bible is full of fairy stories, parables, and fables, which are true in a more real sense than the plain statement of what people call facts. Now, of course, it is not a literal truth that any little boy of the name of Karl actually had a piece of broken glass in his heart, making it hard and cold, and causing him to see all beautiful things as if they were hideous and ugly; but it is none the less really true that you and I, and all boys and girls everywhere, are often exactly like little Karl. We do not have a bit of broken glass under our ribs, inside our bodies, but we have something there which has just the same effect upon our sight. And it is also true that the only way that horrid thing inside can get melted is by the influence of love.

You know, all of you, that sometimes you feel doleful, and when you look out upon your life everything seems dark and sad. You have not got this or that, you have lost something, or your mother has gone away. And all the world seems black and ugly and hateful to you, just as it did to Karl.

Now if you ever do feel like that again, just try to think if there is not some other little boy or girl who is much worse off than yourself—some bairn who has no picture-books, no comfortable home, no kind, loving father and mother—who has perhaps not had any breakfast but a piece of dry bread;—and then ask yourself, if you know of such a one, whether you cannot do something to help him to be a little happier. Perhaps you could lend him one of your picture-books, or read him a story, or ask her to come and play with your dolls. And when you are thinking of how to help others, slowly but surely the nasty thing in your heart will melt, and you will see God's world grow brighter and brighter, as Karl did when Gerda found him in the Snow Queen's ice palace, and melted his heart with her warm, loving tears; and you will learn the great secret that, if you want to be happy yourself, you must endeavour to forget yourself, and try to make others happy.

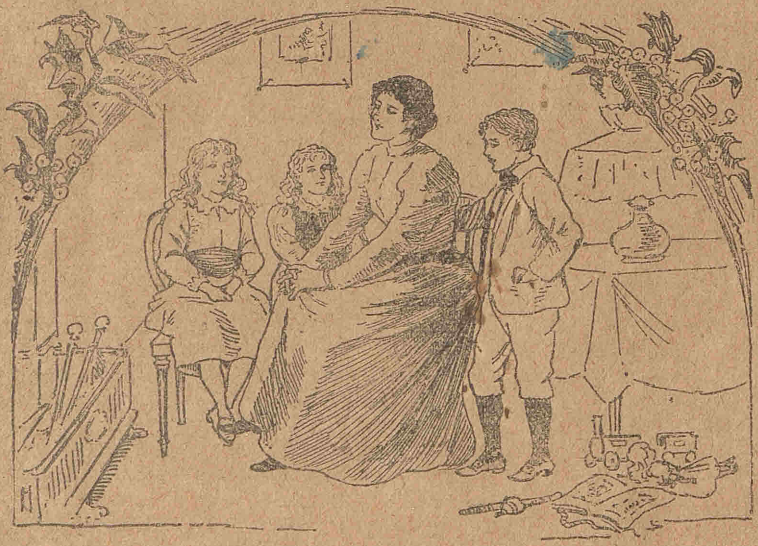
If we all try to act upon that, we shall have a very Happy New Year

W. T. STEAD.

First reissued in Ernest Benn's edition, in 1926

Printed in Great Britain by MACKAYS LTD., Chatham

THE SNOW QUEEN.



CHAPTER I.

Let us sit by our Christmas fire, children, and watch the bright, flickering flames, whilst I tell you of what happened once long ago.

In a very large town, where there were so many houses and people and such little room for them that there was no chance of their having gardens, and so the most of them had to be contented with flower-pots in their windows, two little children lived, who were, however, better off than most folk. They were not brother and sister, though they were as fond of one another as if they had been.

The parents of these two children lived at the bottom of a court. Their houses were opposite one another, and quite at the end, where the blank wall

of a neighbouring house joined the two together. The children and their parents lived right on the top floor, and from a little window in each house they could actually step out and cross over to each other's homes, because the gutter pipe which ran across the blank wall was so broad that they could walk upon it; and the windows were quite close, the houses being so funnily built—like those old houses at Chester, where each floor comes farther out than the one underneath it.

Each house had a large wooden box, in which grew a little rose tree, mustard and cress, and other little plants. The parents fixed the boxes close to the gutter, so that they nearly reached from one window to another, and looked like banks of flowers. Pretty everlasting peas grew over the edge of the boxes, and the rose trees twined their long sprigs about the windows, and grew so well that they touched each other with their branches.

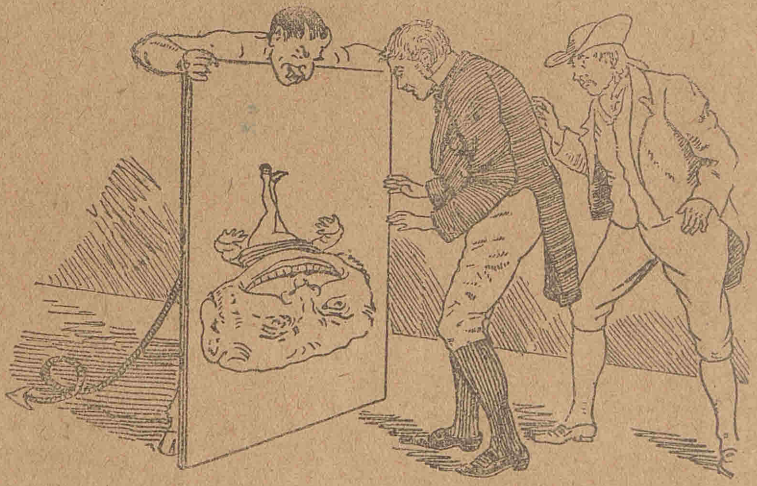
In the beautiful summer weather the children could fix their stools on to the gutter, and sit under the rose trees. It was heavenly to sit in the bright sun and play together; but when the winter came these pleasures were impossible for the windows were closed up with the frost. So they warmed some pennies on the stove and laid them on the frozen pane, which gave them a nice little round peephole, and then a soft bright eye beamed from each window, and Karl and Gerda could look at one another. But if they wanted to talk, they had many stairs to go up and down before they could meet, and now the snowflakes were flying all around.

But to understand our story properly, we must leave Karl and Gerda, and tell what had happened ages before.

Once there lived a wicked Goblin (the Evil One), so wicked that his greatest happiness was to do harm to other people. And one day when he was at his very happiest, and therefore wickedest, he made a looking-glass, which possessed the power of making everything good and beautiful that was reflected on its surface smaller, while all that was worthless and bad-

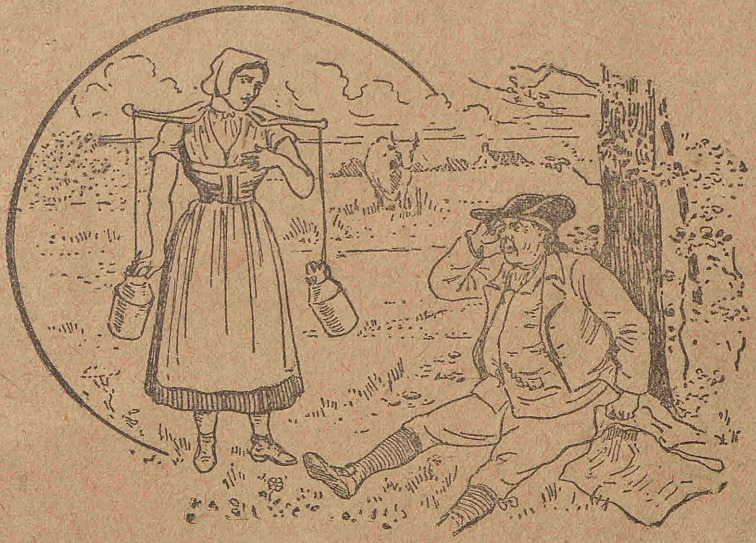


GERDA LOOKING FOR KARL.



looking was made larger. Seen in this glass, the most lovely landscapes looked like cooked spinach, and the best amongst mankind looked horribly ugly as if standing on his head. Faces were so distorted that friends could not know them; and if one had a single freckle, it looked as if it went over one's nose and mouth. The Evil One thought this looked charming; but, worst of all, if a good, pious thought came into a human being's mind, a flaw appeared in the looking-glass. All who went to the Evil One's school—for he kept a school—spread the fame of the wonderful glass, and declared that people might now for the first time see how the world and its inhabitants really looked. The devil's scholars carried the glass about everywhere, till at last there was not a human being left who had not been seen distorted on its surface. Now they wanted to fly with it to the regions of the blessed; but the higher they flew with the glass, the more it cracked, and they could scarcely hold it; but they flew higher and higher,

and nearer and nearer the sun, till the glass got so hot that it slipped out of their hands, and fell upon the earth, where it broke into millions and millions of pieces. But this was a greater misfortune than ever, for some of the bits of glass were hardly so large as a grain of sand, and these flew about the world, and when they lodged in anybody's eye, they remained there, and the person thenceforth saw everything upside down, and only approved wicked things; for every tiny piece of glass possessed the qualities that had belonged to the whole. Some human beings got a piece right through the heart, and this was shocking, for their hearts became as cold as a lump of ice, and the poor things became wicked and bad. Other pieces were set as spectacles, and it was very hard for those who wore them to be good or true; and that Evil Spirit laughed till he shook his sides, so delighted was he with his mischief, whilst, alas! alas! the little bits of glass flew everywhere.





CHAPTER II.

Now we will go back to Karl and Gerda, who were standing beside the grandmother one winter's day watching the snowflakes. "The white bees are swarming," said the grandmother.

"Have they a Queen Bee?" said the little boy, for he knew all about the bees.

"To be sure," said the grandmother, "she is flying in the thickest of the swarm; she is the largest of them all, and never stays upon the ground, but flutters up again to the black clouds. She often flies through the streets of the town at midnight, and peeps into the windows, and then the snowflakes freeze into such odd shapes like flowers."

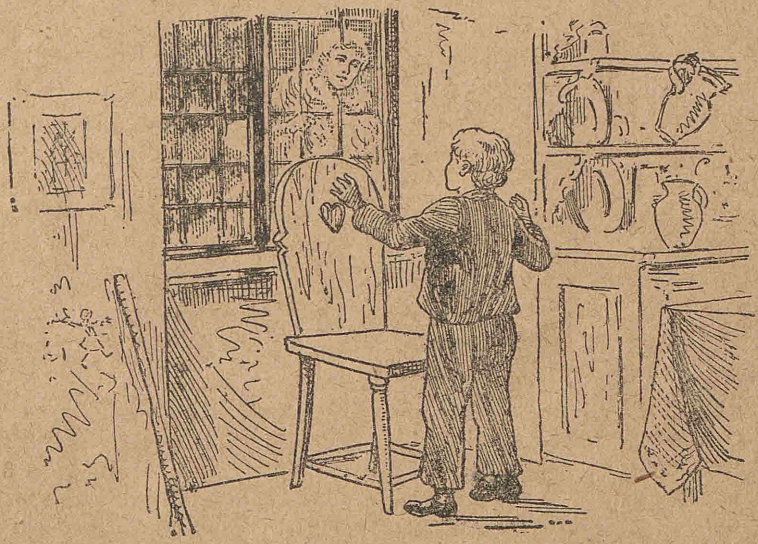
"Yes, I have seen that," said both of the children. And now they knew it was true.

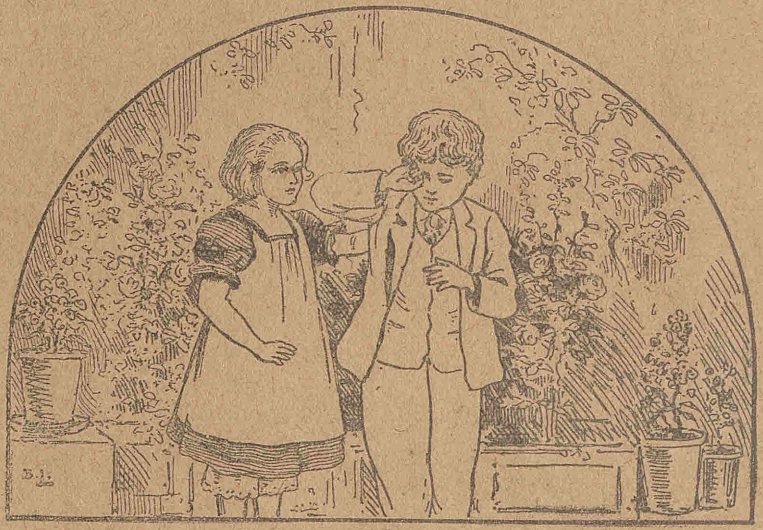
"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Let her come," said the little boy; "I will put her on the warm stove, and then she must melt."

In the evening, when little Karl went home, and had half undressed, he climbed on a chair up to the window, peeped through the little hole, and saw some snowflakes falling, the largest amongst which alighted on the edge of one of the flower boxes, and kept increasing and increasing till it became a full-grown woman, dressed in the softest white gauze, which seemed to consist of millions of star flakes fastened together. She was so beautiful; but though made of ice, dazzling, glittering ice, she was alive. Her eyes sparkled like two bright stars, but there was neither rest nor calmness in them. She nodded towards the window, and moved her hand. The little boy was frightened, and jumped down from the chair, and then he thought he saw a large bird fly past the window.

The next day was frosty;





after that came a thaw; but by and by the spring came, the sun shone, the earth was clothed in green, the swallows built their nests, the windows were opened, and the little children once more sat under the rose trees high above all the other stories. The roses bloomed most beautifully that summer. The little girl had learned a song in which roses were mentioned. She sang it to the little boy, and he joined her singing:

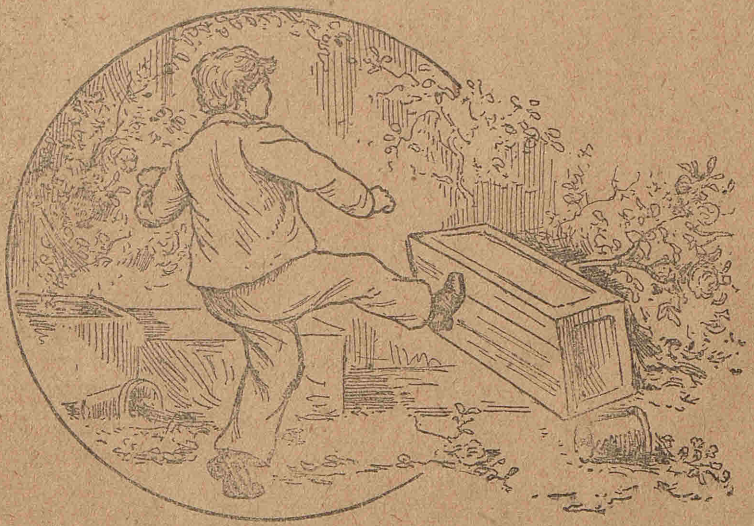
"The roses flourish and pass away,
But the Christ-child cometh again some day."

And the little ones clasped each other's hands, kissed the roses, and looked up into God's bright sunshine, telling each other that the Christ-child was up there. Oh, those happy summer days! It was so delightful there by the fresh rose trees.

Karl and Gerda sat looking in a picture-book of birds and animals, when, just as the great church clock struck five, Karl said, "Oh, Gerda, something pricks my heart, and something has flown into my eye!" The little girl put her arm

round his neck, and Karl blinked his eyelids, but there was nothing to be seen in them. "I think it is gone," said he. But it was not so. It was one of those bits of magic glass, no bigger than a grain of sand, that nasty glass which made everything great and good look small and ugly, whilst everything bad and disagreeable, and every fault, became much more plainly seen. Poor unhappy Karl! He had likewise received a grain right through his heart, which was soon to grow as hard as a lump of ice. He now ceased to feel pain, but the glass was there. "Why do you cry?" he said. "You look so ugly; nothing has happened to me. Fie!" he said suddenly, "there is a great worm-hole in that rose, and look how crooked the other one is. What nasty roses they are; they are as horrid as the boxes in which they grow!" And then he kicked the boxes and tore off the roses.

"Karl, what are you doing?" cried the little girl. And when





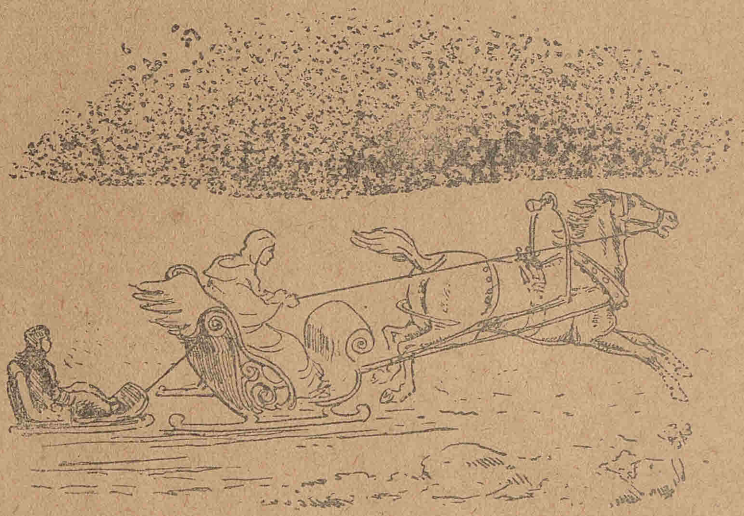
he saw how frightened she was, he tore off another rose, and then leaped in at his window away from sweet little Gerda.

The next time she brought out the picture-book, he said it was only fit for children in swaddling clothes; and when his grandmother related a story, he was sure to interrupt her with some "ifs" and "buts"; and whenever he could manage it, he would place himself behind her, put on a pair of spectacles, and speak just like her, and he mimicked her so that everybody laughed. He could soon mimic every one, but he was sure to imitate the most disagreeable things he saw. People said "that boy will surely be a genius." But it was the bit of glass that had stuck in his eye and in his heart, and which made him tease even little Gerda, who loved him so dearly. He played now in quite a different fashion from what he had done before. He amused himself more as a grown person would; and one winter's day when it

had snowed he came with a burning glass, and held out the skirt of his blue coat to catch some flakes of snow. "Now look in the glass, Gerda," said he. And every snowflake was magnified, and looked like a beautiful flower, or a ten-pointed star, and very pretty it was to see. "Now," said Karl, "this is scientific, and much more interesting than real flowers; there is not a fault in them."

Soon after Karl appeared with thick gloves on his hands and his sleigh at his back, and he whispered in Gerda's ear, "I have leave to go to the great square where the other boys are playing." And away he went. The strongest of the boys who played in the square often fastened their sleighs to the carts of the country people who passed by, and went a good way with them. This was great fun. In the middle of the game there came along a large sleigh, painted white, in which sat some one huddled up in a rough white skin, and wearing a rough white cap. The sleigh went twice round



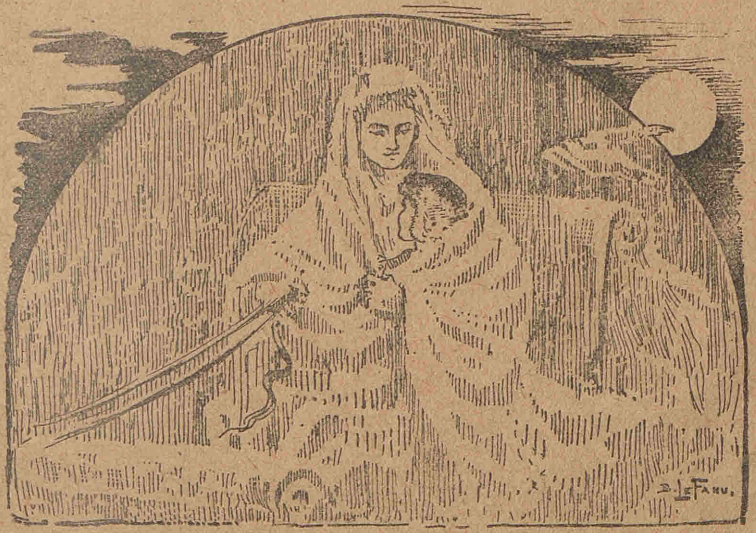


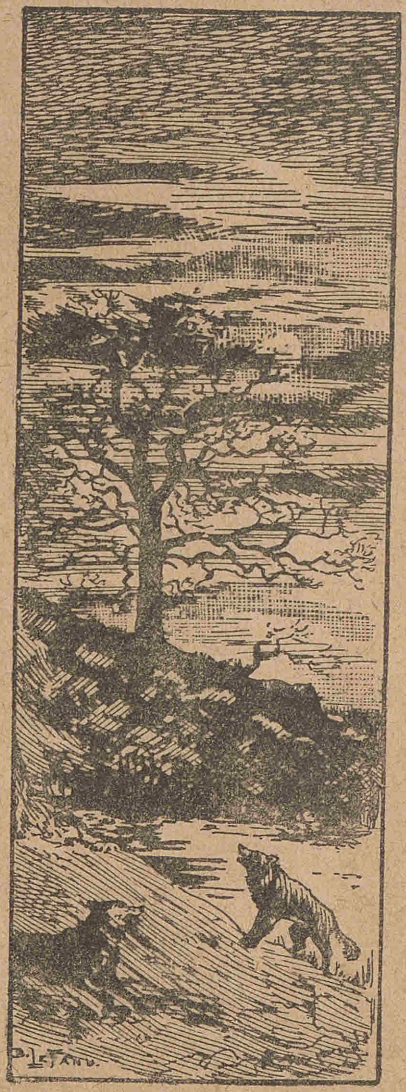
the square, and Karl quickly bound his little sleigh to it, and drove away with it. It went faster and faster, right down the next street. The driver turned round, and gave Karl a friendly nod, as if he knew him, and every time Karl wanted to unfasten his little sleigh the driver nodded again, and Karl sat still, and so they drove right through one of the gates of the town.

Then it began to snow so heavily that the little boy could not see his little hand before him; but on they went, and though he let go the string in order to get loose from the sleigh, it was of no use, for his little craft still clung fast to the other, and they went with the speed of the wind. He shouted loudly, but nobody heard him. The snow kept fluttering about, the sleigh kept flying, and presently there was a violent bump as if they were leaping over a hedge. Karl was very frightened, and tried to repeat the Lord's Prayer, but he could only think of the multiplication table. The snow-

flakes grew larger and larger, and at last looked like great white birds. Suddenly these jumped on one side, the sleigh stopped, the person who had driven it rose up: the skin and cap were of snow, but there stood a tall and slender lady of dazzling whiteness—the Snow Queen!

"We have come along at a good pace," said she; "but if you don't wish to freeze, creep into my bearskin," and she placed him beside her in the sleigh, and wrapped the skin around him, and he felt as if he were sinking into a snow-drift. "Are you still cold?" she said, as she kissed his forehead. Oh, that kiss was colder than ice! It seemed to shoot right through his heart, half of which was already a lump of ice, and he felt as if he were going to die. But in a second he felt better than ever, and was no longer cold. "My sleigh—don't forget my sleigh!" that was his first thought. So one of the white fowls who flew behind took the sleigh on its





back. Then the Snow Queen kissed Karl once more, and he clean forgot everything and everybody, even little Gerda and the grandmother. "Now you shall have no more kisses," said the Snow Queen, "or I should kiss you to death."

Karl looked at her, and she was very lovely—oh, so lovely! She no longer seemed to him to be made of ice as when she sat outside the window and nodded to him. No longer did he fear her. He told her he could reckon by heart, and knew how many square miles there were in the land, and the number of the people; and she continued smiling. And then he thought he didn't know enough. So they went on and on, over forests and lakes and across the sea. Under them blew the cold wind, the wolves howled, the crows were hovering about; but high above shone the clear full moon, and so on, through the night; and in the day time he slept at the feet of the Snow Queen.

NUNAVIRUL
Date
KARKULAM

CHAPTER III.

But how did little Gerda get on when Karl did not return? Where could he be? Nobody knew; nothing did they hear. The boys had seen him fasten his sleigh to a large and strange one, but that was all. Many tears were shed for him.

Little Gerda cried bitterly and long. By and by people said he must be dead; he must have got drowned in the river that flowed past the school. Oh, what days those were! Then the spring returned, and brought warm sunshine. "Karl is dead," said little Gerda. "I don't believe it," said the sunshine. "He is dead," she said to the swallows. "We don't believe it," they said; nor did Gerda.

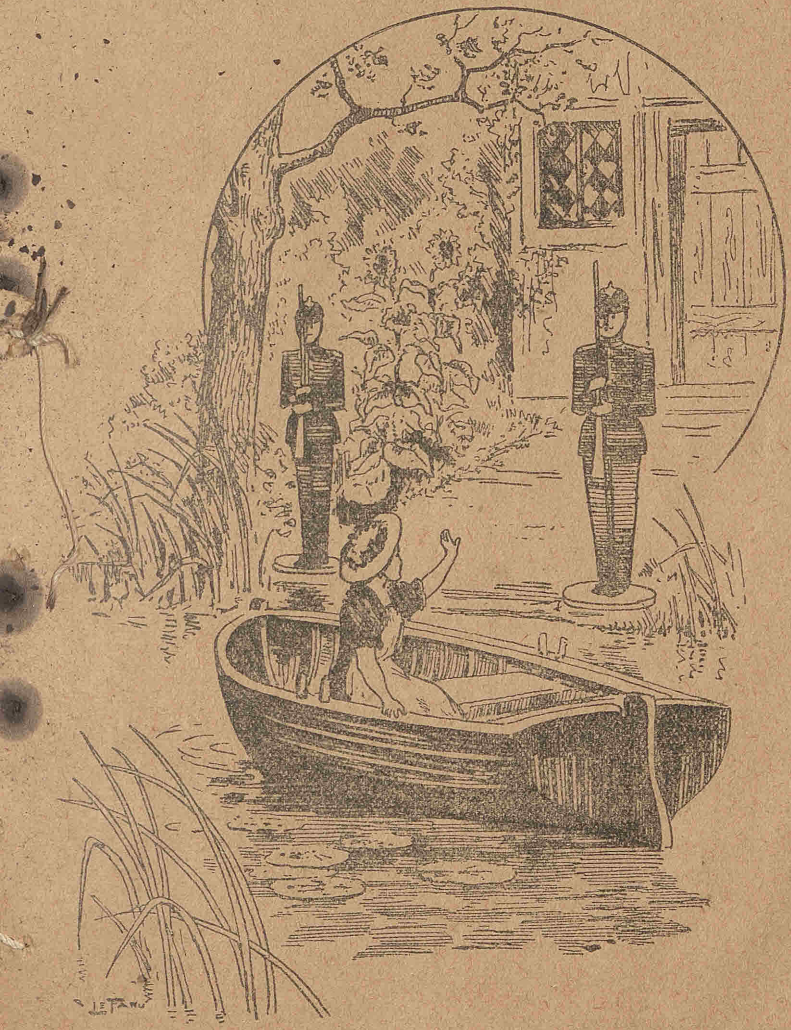
"I will put on my new red shoes," she said one morning, "and I will go to the river and ask after him." It was quite early. She kissed the old grandmother, who was still asleep,

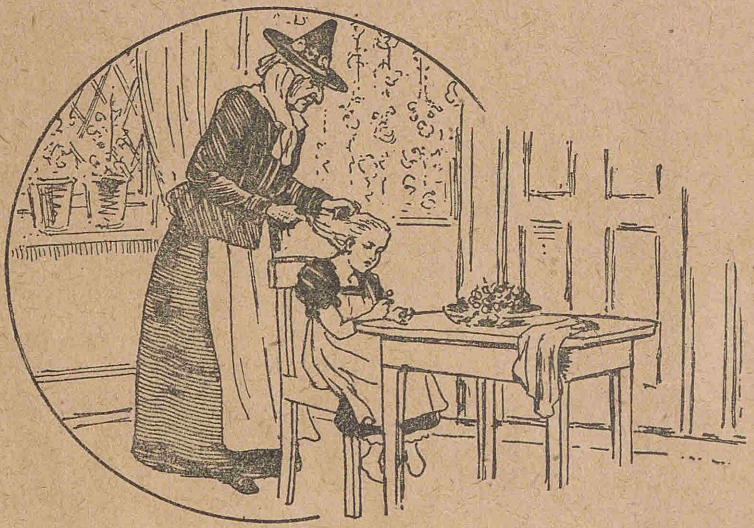


put on the red shoes, and went out all alone through the town gate to the river. "Is it true that you have taken away my playfellow?" she said. "I will give you my red shoes if you will give him back to me." And it seemed to her as if the ripples nodded in a wonderful way. So she took off her beloved red shoes, and threw them into the water, but they fell near the bank, and the little waves brought them back to land, just as if the river would not accept them, as it could not give her Karl in exchange. Now she fancied she had not thrown the shoes out far enough. So she crept into a boat that lay amongst the rushes, and went to the far end of it, and flung the shoes out into the water.

The boat was not fastened, and her quick movement set it gliding away from the shore. Seeing this, she made haste to get out of the boat, but before she could do so it was quite a long way from the land, and was floating faster and faster. Gerda was very frightened, and began to cry. Only the sparrows heard her, and they couldn't carry her ashore; but they flew along the banks as if to comfort her, singing, "Here we are—here we are." Little Gerda sat still, with only her stockings on her feet, the little red shoes floated behind, but did not reach the boat, it went so fast. The river banks were very pretty—lovely flowers, fine old trees, beautiful grass, and sheep and cows, but not a solitary human being.

"Perhaps the river will carry me to little Karl," thought Gerda. Then she grew more cheerful, stood up, and watched for hours the beautiful green banks, until at last she came to a great cherry garden, in which was a little house with wonderful red and blue windows, a thatched roof, and in front of it two wooden soldiers presenting arms. Gerda called to them, thinking they were alive, but they did not answer, and the tide drove the boat straight to the shore. Gerda called in a still louder voice, and a very old woman, leaning on a crutch, came out of the house. She wore a large hat, to shelter her from the sun.





and pretty flowers were painted on it.

"You poor little child!" said the old woman. "To think of your coming out into the world on this broad stream!" and she pulled the boat ashore with her crutch, and helped little Gerda out. "Come and tell us who you are, and how you came hither," said she. Then Gerda told her about poor little Karl and her search for him, but the old woman shook her head and said, "Hum, hum." Gerda asked if she had seen Karl. "No," said the old woman, "but he may come, still; so take heart and taste my cherries, and look at my flowers, which are prettier than any picture-book, for every one of them can tell a story." She then took Gerda by the hand, and led her into the house and shut the door. The windows were very high, and the red, blue, and yellow panes gave a strange light; but on the table were the finest cherries, and Gerda was allowed to eat as many as she chose. While she was eat-

ing, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, and her curling locks looked beautifully glossy round her cheerful little face, which was as round and fresh as a rose.

"I have not seen so sweet a maiden for a long time," said the old woman. "Now we shall live together." And while she was combing little Gerda's hair the child quite forgot about Karl, for the old woman had magic powers, though she was not wicked, but she wished very much to keep little Gerda with her. So she went into the garden, and extending her crutch over the rose trees, they sank into the dark ground, without leaving a trace behind. The old woman did this because she was afraid the rose trees would remind Gerda of little Karl.

Now she took Gerda into the garden. How sweet it smelt! Every flower of every season was there in full bloom. Gerda jumped for joy, and played till the sun sank behind the tall cherry trees, and then she went to bed in a lovely room with red silk curtains,





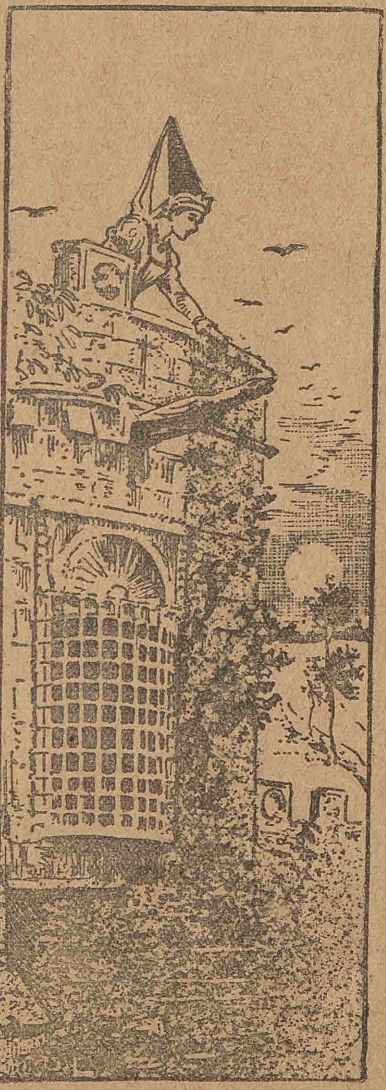
and her pillow being stuffed with violets, she slept and dreamt as a queen would on her wedding day. Next morning she played again with the flowers in the warm sunshine, and so the days flew by. Gerda knew every flower, but there seemed to be one missing, though she could not tell which. One day, however, she noticed the garden hat with its painted roses. The old woman had forgotten about her hat. "Why, it's the roses that are wanting," said Gerda, jumping amongst the flower beds, and looking for what was not to be found.

Then she sat down and cried; but her tears fell just on the spot where one of the rose trees had sunk into the ground. The warm tears watered the earth, and the rose tree shot up more blooming than ever. Gerda kissed the roses, and thought of little Karl. "Oh, how I have been wasting my time!" said the little girl. "I wanted to look for Karl. Do you know where he is?" she asked the roses. "Do you think he is dead?"

"Dead he is not," said the roses. "We have been into the earth where the dead lie, and Karl wasn't there." So Gerda went to the other flowers, and, peeping into each little cup, asked, "Do you know where Karl is?" but each flower stood dreaming in the sun, and thinking of its own story. And Gerda heard a great many of these, but none of the flowers knew anything about Karl.

The bine-weed said, "An old castle hangs over the narrow crossway, house-leek is climbing leaf by leaf over its red walls, and there on the balcony stands a fair maiden, who bends over the parapet and looks into the road below. 'Is he not yet coming?' she says." "Does she mean Karl?" asked little Gerda. "I'm talking of *my* story," said the bine-weed.

Then Gerda questioned the little snowdrop. "Between the trees hangs a plant fastened by ropes. It is a swing, and two little girls in snow-white dresses and long green ribbons fluttering from their hats sit swinging. Their brother, who is bigger





than they, stands on the swing. He has put his arm round the rope to steady himself, for in one hand he holds a little bowl, and in the other a clay pipe: he is blowing soap-bubbles. The swing keeps going, and the pretty bubbles fly about, while the last still clings to the stem of the pipe, and rocks in the wind. The swing keeps going. A little black dog as light as the bubbles balances himself on his hind paws, and will get into the swing amongst the rest. Off goes the swing, the dog falls, barks, and is angry, the children tease him, and the bubbles burst. That is my song."

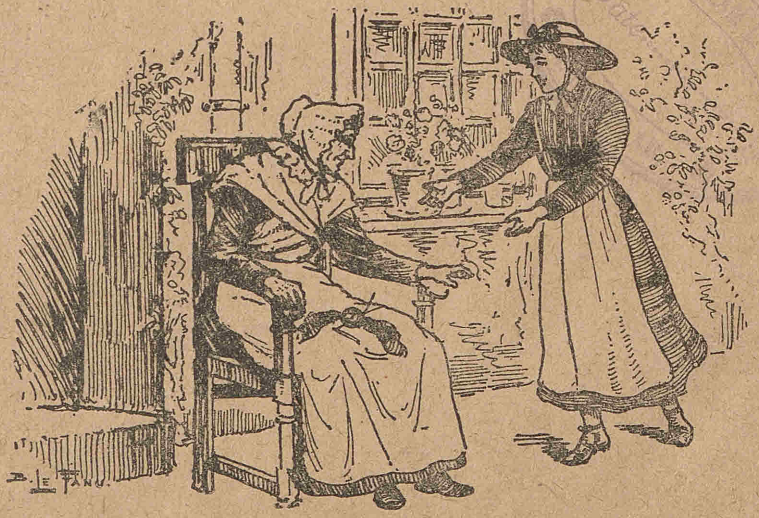
"It may be all very pretty," said Gerda; "but you tell it so sorrowfully, and you don't even mention little Karl."

Then Gerda went up to the buttercup. "You are a little bright sun," said Gerda. "Do you know where I can find my playfellow?" The buttercup sparkled so prettily, and looked at Gerda and said, "The bright sunshine shone warmly upon a little court-yard. The old grandmother sat out in the air on her chair, and

her grand-daughter, a poor and pretty maidservant, was returning after a short visit. She kissed her grandmother. There was gold—the gold of the heart—in that blessed kiss. There was gold in the sunbeams that morning, and she was worth her weight in gold. That's my little story," said the buttercup.

"My dear old grandmother!" sighed Gerda. "Yes, she is always thinking about me, and troubling about me, as she did about little Karl. But I will soon go home and take Karl with me. It is no use asking the flowers, who know nothing but their own songs." And then she tucked up her frock that she might run the faster. But the narcissus caught her foot as she was jumping over it, so she stopped short, and, looking at the tall flower, said, "Perhaps you know something." And what did the narcissus say?

"I can see myself to the life. Oh, how beautiful I smell! Up there is a little dancer, who stands sometimes on one leg, and sometimes on





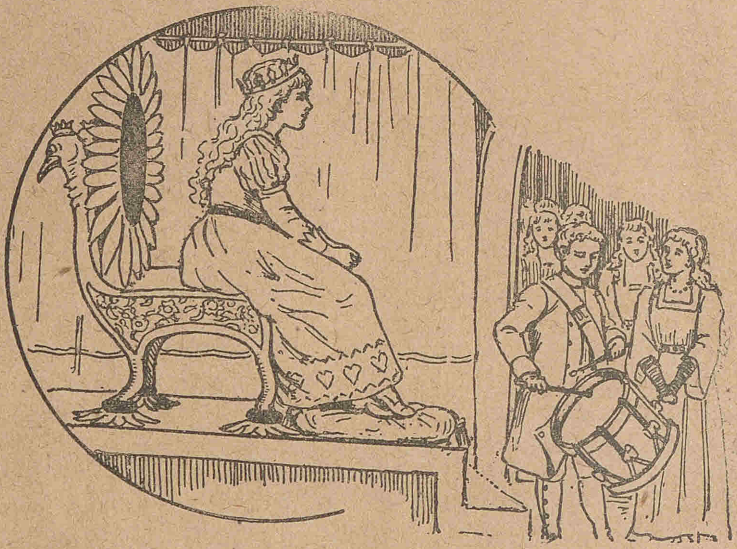
another." "What do I care about that?" interrupted Gerda, who ran to the far end of the garden. The gates were shut, but she pressed the rusty latch, and it gave way; they flew open, and Gerda ran out with bare feet into the wide world. She looked back two or three times, but nobody came after her. So at last, when she could run no longer, she sat down on a big stone, and, looking around her, found that summer was over, and the autumn nearly over, though she had been unable to see it in the beautiful garden, where there were flowers and sunshine all the year round.

"Dear me! how long I have stayed," said poor little Gerda, and she got up to go on. Her poor little feet were tired and sore, and everything looked so bleak and cheerless: the willow leaves were quite yellow, the dew trickled down like water, the leaves kept falling from the trees; and though the sloe tree had some fruit on it, it was so sour that one could not eat it without making a wry face. Oh, how grey and dreary the whole world seemed!

CHAPTER IV.

GERDA went on and on, but was obliged to rest again; and now it began to snow. Just then a black crow hopped to where she was sitting, and after looking at her a while, and wagging his head, said, "Caw, caw." He felt kindly towards the little girl, and asked her where she was going all alone in the wide world. The word "alone" went straight to Gerda's heart; so she told the crow her whole story, and asked him if he had seen Karl. The crow nodded his head thoughtfully, and said, "Maybe, maybe." "No—have you, though?" cried the little girl, and she nearly hugged the crow to death, she kissed him so fondly. "Steady, steady," said the crow. "I think—I believe—it may be little Karl, but he has certainly forgotten you by this time, for the princess—" "Is he living with a princess?" said Gerda. "Yes, listen," said the crow. "I do find it





so hard to speak your language. If you understood crow language I should be able to tell you better." "I never learnt it," said Gerda, "but my grandmother knows it; I wish I had learnt." "Never mind," said the crow, "I'll tell you as well as I can.

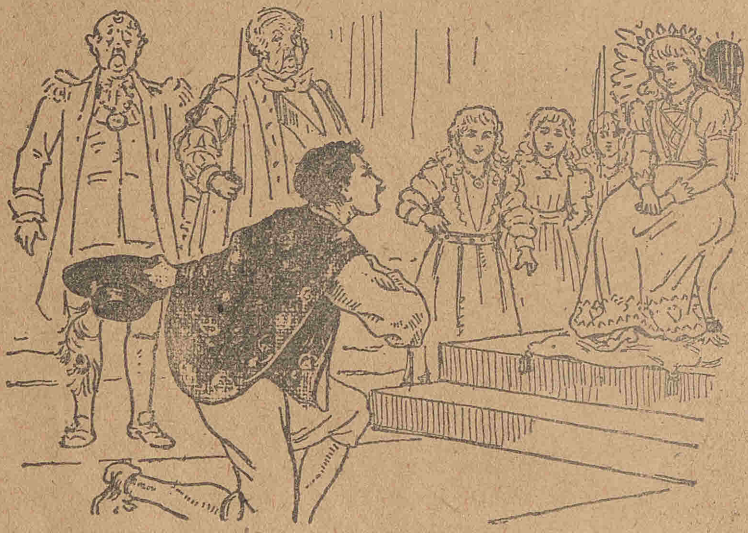
"In the kingdom where we now are lives a princess, who is desperately clever. She has read and forgotten all the newspapers in the world, so clever is she. A while ago, as she was sitting on her throne, she thought she would like to marry, if she could find a husband who knew how to answer when he was spoken to, instead of merely standing and looking grand. So she assembled all her ladies-in-waiting by the beating of a drum, and when they heard of her intention they were much pleased. 'We are glad of it,' said they.

"You may believe every word I tell you," said the crow, "for I have a tame sweetheart who hops about the palace and tells me all that passes." (Of course, his sweetheart was a

crow.) "The newspapers immediately published the news that every good-looking young man was at liberty to go to the palace and speak to the princess. He who could say anything worth hearing would be welcome to stay at the palace, while he who spoke the best would be chosen by the princess to be her husband.

"The newspapers looked very smart; they were decorated with a border of hearts, with the princess's initials. Well, the young men all rushed helter-skelter to the palace.—You may believe me," said the crow, "it's as true as I am sitting here.—But not one of the young men succeeded either the first or the second day. They could all speak well enough while they were outside in the street, but when they had passed through the palace gates, and beheld the body-guard in silver, and the foot-men all over gold standing along the staircase, and the large rooms so finely lighted up, they were quite confounded. And when they approached the throne on which





the princess sat they found nothing to say, and could only repeat the last word she uttered, which was not very amusing for her. It was exactly as if the young men had taken a sleeping-powder directly they got inside, and remained quite sleepy until they got back into the street. There was a whole row of them, reaching from the palace to the town gate. I went to see them," said the crow, "they were hungry and thirsty, but they did not get as much as a glass of water. Some of the wisest had taken slices of bread and butter with them, but they did not share it with their next neighbour, for each thought, 'Let him look hungry, and then the princess won't have him.'"

"But Karl, my Karl," said Gerda, "was he amongst the crowd?"

"Stop a bit, we are coming to him presently.

"On the third day there came marching cheerfully along a little person who had neither horse nor coach; his eyes

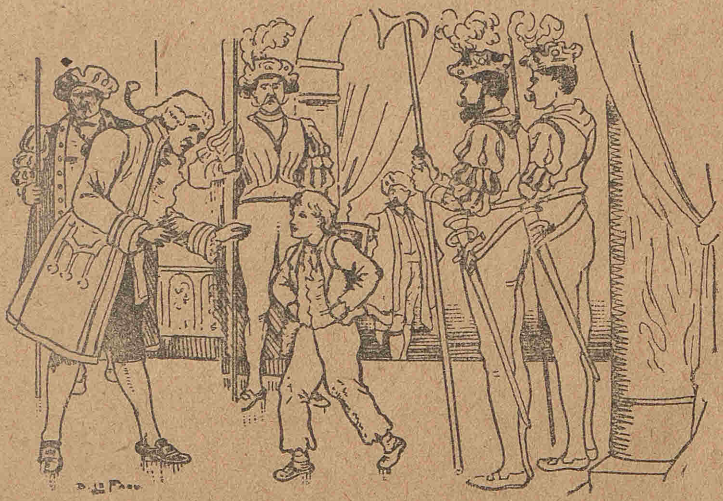
sparkled like yours, and he had beautiful long hair, but was shabbily dressed." "That was Karl!" cried Gerda, in high delight. "Oh, then I have found him!" and she clapped her hands for joy.

"He had a little knapsack on his back," said the crow.

"Surely it must have been his sleigh," said Gerda, "for he went away with his sleigh."

"That is very possible," said the crow. "I may not have looked very closely, but this I know, from my tame sweetheart, that when he came through the palace gate, and saw all the body-guard all over silver, and the footmen on the stairs in their smart clothes, he was not in the least put out, but nodded to them, saying, 'It must be very tiresome to stand on the staircase, I would rather go inside.'

"All the rooms were in a blaze of light, members of Parliament and Excellencies were walking about barefooted and bearing golden vases; it was enough to inspire one with respect. The little person's boots creaked dreadfully, but





he did not care a bit about it."

"It must be Karl," said Gerda. "I know he had new boots on, I have heard them creak in grandmother's room."

"Well," said the crow, "he went boldly up to the princess, whose throne was one huge pearl. All the Court ladies with their maids and their ladies' maids, and all the great lords with their gentlemen and pages stood around, and the nearer they were to the door, the prouder they appeared; indeed, one could hardly venture to look at a gentleman's page, who always wore slippers, so important an air did each one assume as he stood in the door."

"It must be quite awful," said little Gerda. "But did Karl marry the princess?"

"If I had not been a crow," was the answer, "I would have taken her myself, although I'm engaged. The young man spoke just as well as I do when I am speaking the crow language, so I heard from my tame sweetheart. He was cheerful

and pleasant, said he had not come to woo her, but because he had heard how clever she was, and he was pleased with her, and she with him."

"It certainly must be Karl," said Gerda; "he was so clever, he could reckon by heart, even fractions. Oh, will you not take me to the palace?"

"That is easily said, but not so easily done," said the crow. "However, I will speak to my tame sweetheart about it; for I must tell you candidly, a little girl like you would never get leave to enter the palace."

"Ah! but I shall," said Gerda; "when Karl hears that I am here, he will come out directly to fetch me."

"Well, wait for me over there," said the crow, nodding his head as he flew away.

It was not till quite late in the evening that the crow returned. "Caw, caw," he said, "my sweetheart sends her love to you, and here is a little roll which she took in the kitchen for you. There is plenty of bread, and you must be very hungry. It is not possible for you to enter the palace: you are barefoot, and the guards in





silver would not let you pass. But don't cry, we will manage to get you in. My sweetheart knows a small back staircase that leads to the bedroom, and she knows where she can find the key."

And they went through the long alley into the garden, and when the lights in the palace were put out, the crow led little Gerda to a back door that was only fastened with a latch. Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with longing! She felt as though she was going to do something wrong, yet she only wanted to know whether it was little Karl. "It must be he," she thought, as she pictured to herself his clear bright eyes and long hair, and the smile he used to have before the splinters of glass had wounded him. Surely he would be glad to see her, to hear what a long way she had come for his sake, and to know how sorry they were at home when he did not come back. Her heart thrilled with fear and joy. They were now on the stairs, and a small lamp was burning in the closet. In the middle of the floor stood the tame crow, twisting her

head from side to side as she gazed at Gerda, who made a curtsy as her grandmother had taught her.

"My betrothed has spoken highly of you," said the tame crow, "and the story is very touching. If you will carry the lamp I will go in front of you. If we go this way we shall not meet any one."

"But it seems as if some one were behind us," said Gerda, and then a rustling noise went past her, and horses with flying manes and thin legs, whippers in, and ladies and gentlemen on horseback all appeared like shadows on the wall.

"Those are only dreams," said the crow, "which have gone to fetch the thoughts of the royal people who will go a-hunting in their dreams. That is all the better, for now you can look at them in their beds quite safely." They entered the first room, which was hung with rose-coloured satin embroidered with flowers. Each room was more magnificent than the last, quite enough to bewilder one. Presently





they came to a bedroom. The ceiling was like a large palm tree whose leaves were of costly crystal. In the middle of the floor two beds, shaped like lilies, hung from golden stems; one was white—in that was the princess; the other was like a yellow lily. It was in this that Gerda was to look for little Karl.

She pushed one of the yellow leaves aside, saw a brown neck, called out "Karl! Karl!" and held the lamp over him. He woke, turned round his head, and—oh, misery, it was not Karl!

At Gerda's cry of sorrow the princess woke too, peeped out of the white lily, and asked what was the matter.

Poor little Gerda began to tell her story, interrupted many times by bitter sobs. She told, too, how the crow had helped her.

"Poor child!" said the princess, and then turning to the crows, assured them that she was not angry, though they were not to make a practice of bringing people into her bedroom.

Then the princess asked if they would like to be made court crows, and be fed from the

kitchen. The two crows bowed, but begged leave to have a fixed appointment; it would be so comfortable to have a certain provision for old age.

The kind prince got out of his bed, and gave it up to Gerda; more he could scarcely do.

She folded her little hands, and thought, "How kind all are to me, people and animals as well," and then she closed her eyes and fell into a sweet sleep. All the dreams came flying back into the room, but now they looked like angels, and drew a little sleigh in which sat Karl, who nodded to her. The next day she was dressed in silk and velvet from head to foot, and the princess offered to let her stay in the palace and have a good time. But all she asked for was a little coach and a horse and a pair of little boots, so that she might go into the wide world again to look for Karl.

So they gave her clothes, and boots, and a muff, and at the door she found a new





coach of pure gold, with coachmen, and footmen, and postillions wearing gold crowns on their heads. The prince and princess helped her themselves into the coach, and wished her good fortune. The wild crow, who was now married, went with her for the first three miles, and sat by her side, for he could not bear riding backwards. The tame crow stood in the doorway flapping her wings, because she had been suffering from headache ever since she had had a fixed appointment and too much to eat. The coach had a good store of sweet cakes, fruit, and gingerbread nuts under the seat. "Farewell, farewell," cried the prince and princess. Little Gerda could not help crying, and the crow cried too. Then, after the first few miles, the wild crow had to leave her, and his leave-taking was very sad. He perched upon a tree, and flapped his black wings as long as he could see the coach.

CHAPTER V.

Now Gerda was driven through a gloomy forest, but the coach lit up the road like a torch, and some robbers who were in the forest saw it and came rushing out. "Gold! gold!" they shrieked, and, seizing the horses, they struck postillions, coachmen, and footmen all dead, and then dragged little Gerda out of the coach. "How nice and fat she is!" said an old robber-woman, who had a long bristly beard and great eyebrows. "She has been fed with the kernels of nuts, and will taste as good as a little fat lamb." As she spoke she drew forth a shining knife, which glittered frightfully. "Oh! oh!" screamed the woman, whose ear had been badly bitten by her very own daughter, who was hanging on her back.

"You ugly thing!" cried the mother, forgetting to kill Gerda. "Let her alone!" said the little robber-girl. "She shall play with me, and sleep with me in my bed, and give me her muff and her pretty dress." And she bit her mother again till she jumped in the air and twirled round, and all the robbers laughed and said, "See how she is dancing with her cub!" "Now I will have a ride in the coach," said the little robber-girl, who was obstinate and spoiled. Then she and Gerda got in and went away into the wood. The little robber-girl was as big as Gerda, but stronger, with broader shoulders and a darker skin. Her eyes were quite black, and she looked sadly out of them. She said to Gerda, "They sha'n't kill you as long as I don't wish you ill. I suppose you are a princess?"

"No," said little Gerda, who then told her story, and why she was going through the wide world to look for little Karl. The robber-girl looked at her earnestly, nodded her head, and said, "They sha'n't kill you, even if I wished you ill, for then I'll do

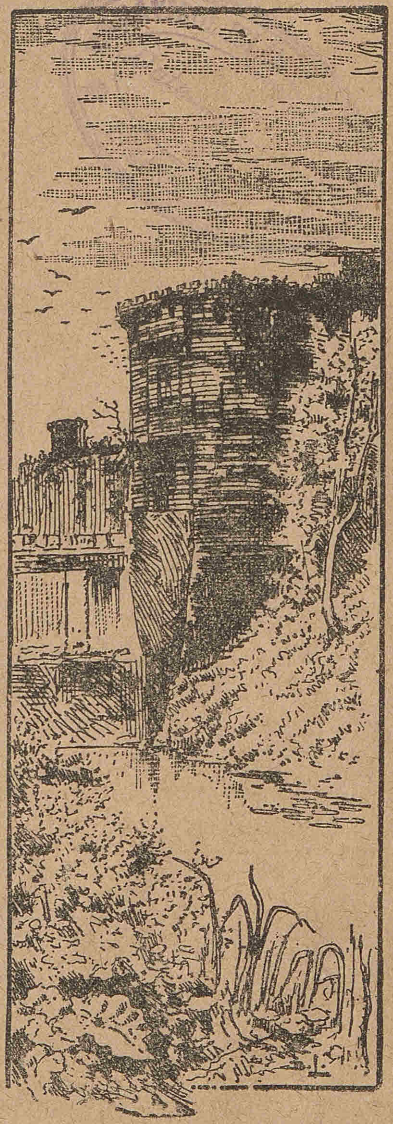


THE ROBBERS ATTACK THE COACH.

it myself," and she wiped Gerda's eyes, and put both her hands into the handsome muff that was so soft and warm.

The coach now stopped. They were in the middle of a courtyard belonging to a robber's castle, which was rather ruinous. Crows and ravens flew out of the holes, and great bulldogs, every one of which looked as if it could swallow a man, were jumping about, though they did not bark, because it was not allowed.

In a large old smoky hall a bright fire was burning on the stone floor; the smoke went up to the ceiling and found an outlet as best it might. In a large cauldron soup was boiling, and hares and rabbits were roasting in front of the fire. "You shall sleep with me to-night, with my little animals," said the little robber-girl. They then had something to eat and drink, after which they went into a corner where lay some straw and some carpets. Above, perched on poles, were quite a hundred doves, apparently asleep, though they turned round slightly when the two little girls approached. "They





all belong to me," said the little robber-girl, and seizing the one nearest to her, she held it by the feet and shook it till it flapped its wings.

"Kiss it!" she cried, flapping it in Gerda's face. "There are a whole crowd of them," she said, pointing to a hole high up in the wall; "and here stands my dear old baa-baa." So saying, she took by the horn a reindeer, who wore a bright brass collar round his neck, and was tied up. "We have to keep him tight, or he would run away. I tickle him every night with my sharp knife, which he is very much afraid of"; and the little girl took out a long knife from the hole in the wall and drew it gently across the reindeer's neck. The poor animal began to kick, and the little robber-girl laughed, and drew Gerda into bed with her.

"Do you mean to keep the knife with you when you are asleep?" said Gerda, with some alarm.

"I always sleep with the knife," said the little girl; "one never knows what might happen. But tell me over again all about Karl and why

you went out into the wide world." And Gerda told again what she had told before. Then the little robber-girl put her arm round Gerda's neck, and held the knife in her other hand, and snored aloud; but Gerda could not close her eyes, not knowing whether she was to live or die. The robbers sat round the fire singing and drinking, and the robber-woman became quite tipsy. Oh, it was horrible for a little girl to see such things!

Then the wild doves began to "coo, coo," and they whispered, "We have seen little Karl. A white fowl carried his sleigh. He sat in the Snow Queen's carriage, which drove right over the forest as we lay in our nests. She blew upon us, and all died except our two selves. Coo, coo."

"What are you saying up there?" cried Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going?" "Most likely to Lapland, where there is always snow and ice. Ask the reindeer that is fastened to the rope."

"Yes," said the reindeer, "there is ice and snow. And what a delightful place it is! One can leap about in freedom





in the great shining valleys. There it is that the Snow Queen pitches her summer tent; but her strong castle lies near the North Pole, on an island called Spitzbergen."

"Oh, my dear, dear Karl!" sighed Gerda.

"Lie still," said the robber-girl, "or I'll run the knife through your body."

The next morning Gerda told her all that the wild doves had said. The little robber-girl looked very serious, though she nodded her head, saying, "That's nothing to trouble about."

"Do you know where Lapland lies?" she asked the reindeer.

"Who better than I?" said the animal, with brightening eyes. "I was born and brought up there, and frisked about on its snow-fields."

"Listen," said the robber-girl to Gerda. "You see that all our men are gone, and only mother remains at home. About noon she drinks out of the large bottle, and takes a sleep afterwards, and then I'll do something for you."

She jumped out of bed, took her mother by the neck, pulled

her beard, and said, "Good morning, you old stupid! good morning." The mother in return pinched her nose until it was red and blue—and all this was out of love!

When the mother had drunk freely out of her bottle, and had gone to sleep, the robber-girl went to the reindeer and said, "I should much like to tickle you many more times with the sharp knife, for you look so ridiculous. But, never mind, I will untie your rope and help you out, so that you may run off to Lapland; but you must put your best leg foremost, and carry this little girl to the Snow Queen's palace, where she will find her playfellow. You have heard all she said, for she spoke loud enough and you were listening."

The reindeer jumped for joy; the robber-girl lifted little Gerda on to the animal's back, even took care to bind her fast, and gave her a little cushion to sit upon. "There are your fur boots," she said, "for it is getting cold; but as to the muff, I shall keep that, because it is so pretty. But you shall not be frozen with the cold; I will give you mother's large



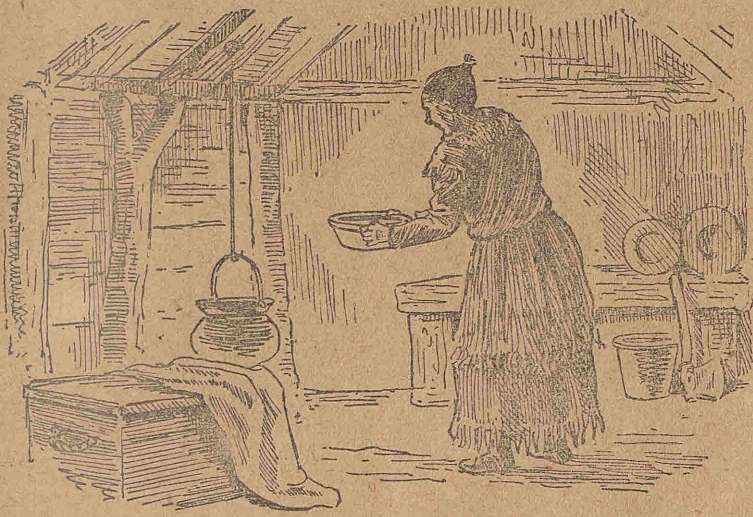


mittens, that will reach to your elbows."

Gerda wept for joy.

"I can't stand whimpering," said the robber-girl, "you ought now to look pleased. Here are a couple of loaves and a ham, so now you won't starve." These were fastened to the reindeer, and then the little robber-girl opened the doors, enticed the dogs into the house, and cut with her sharp knife the rope that bound the reindeer. "Now you may go, but take good care of the little girl." Gerda stretched forth her hands in the large mittens towards the robber-girl and bade her farewell.

Then away flew the reindeer, through thick and thin, across the wide forest, over bogs and plains, as quick as he could fly. The wolves howled and the ravens shrieked, while the sky was bright red as if it were in flames. "That is my old friend, the Aurora Borealis," cried the reindeer; "see how it shines;" and he ran still faster both day and night. The loaves were eaten, and the ham too, by the time they reached Lapland.



CHAPTER VI.

They stopped in front of a miserable-looking house, the roof of which reached down to the ground, and the door was so low that the family were obliged to creep on all fours when they wanted to go in or out. Nobody was at home just then but an old Laplandish woman, who was cooking fish over an oil-lamp, and the reindeer told her Gerda's story—when he had told his own, which, of course, seemed to him far more important; but Gerda was so benumbed with the cold that she could not speak a word.

"Oh, your poor creature!" said the Laplander. "You have such a long way to run yet; it is a hundred miles into Finland, where the Snow Queen lives in the summer, and burns Bengal lights every evening. I will write a few words on a dried stock fish, because I have no paper, and



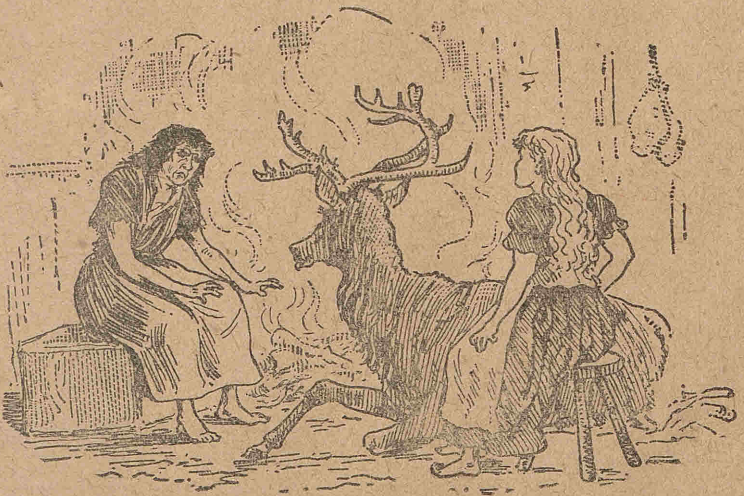
will give it you for the Finnish woman up there, who will direct you better than I can."

And when Gerda was warmed, and had eaten and drunk, the Lap woman wrote a few words on a dried stock fish, tied her once more on the reindeer, who made off with great speed. "Whizz, whizz," said the air, and throughout the whole night the heavenly blue northern lights streamed. And now they reached Finland, and knocked at the chimney of the Finlander, for door she had none. It was so terribly hot within that their hostess could scarcely wear any clothes. She was small and rather dirty. She loosened little Gerda's frock directly, and took off her boots and mittens, it was so hot, then she put a lump of ice on the reindeer's head, and read what was written on the stock fish. After reading it through three times she knew its contents by heart, and put the stock fish into the saucepan where the broth was cooking, for she never wasted anything.

The reindeer now related first his own story and then

little Gerda's, and the Finnish woman's eyes twinkled, though she said nothing. "You are so wise," said the reindeer, "you can bind all the winds in the world with a bit of thread. Can you not give this little girl a portion, to endow her with the power of twelve men, so that she could conquer the Snow Queen."

"Twelve men!" said the Finnish woman. "Much use that would be!" But the reindeer begged so hard for little Gerda, and she looked at the Finnish woman with such entreating eyes, that the eyes of the latter began to twinkle, and, taking the reindeer into a corner, she whispered into his ear as she laid a fresh lump of ice on his head, "Karl is sure enough with the Snow Queen, and finds everything delightful; he thinks it the finest place in the world, but this is because he has a little splinter of glass in his heart, and a grain of glass in his eye. These will have to be removed, or he'll never again be a human being, and the Snow Queen will keep him."



"Can't you help Gerda a little?"

"Indeed I can't give her greater power than she has already. Do you not see how men and animals all serve her, and how even with bare feet she gets on. Her power is in her heart, and is there because she is such a dear, innocent child. You will find the Snow Queen's garden about two miles from here. Carry the little girl thither, and set her down near the large bush which stands covered with red berries amidst the snow. Don't stay gossiping, but make haste and come back here." And then the Finnish woman lifted little Gerda on the reindeer's back, who tore off as fast as he could.

"Oh, I haven't my boots and my mittens!" Gerda cried, for the cold was biting, but she dared not stop the reindeer, who ran till he reached the bush with the red berries, where he set Gerda down, and kissed her mouth, while large bright tears trickled down the animal's cheeks. Then away he ran. Gerda ran forward as quickly as she could She was met by a whole regiment of snowflakes, which, instead of falling from the sky, ran along the ground, and grew bigger as they came nearer. They looked most alarming, for they were alive. They were the Queen's outposts, and were of the oddest shapes. Some looked like great porcupines, others like knots of serpents, still others like bears with bristly hair, but all were dazzling white.

Gerda repeated the Lord's Prayer, while the cold was so intense that she could see her own breath. These clouds of breath became thicker, and took the shape of tiny angels, who grew larger as they touched the earth. All wore helmets and carried spears and shields. Their numbers kept increasing, and by the time Gerda had finished her prayer, a whole host of them surrounded her, and they pierced the frightful snowflakes with their spears till they shivered them into a hundred pieces; and so little Gerda went safely on, and the angels stroked her hands and feet so that she felt the cold less, and hastened on to the Snow Queen's castle.

MUNAVIRUL ISLAM L. S.
Date.....
ERNAKULAM





CHAPTER VII.

THE walls of the castle were made of drifted snow, and the windows and doors of biting winds. There were more than a hundred rooms in it, just as the snow had blown them together; the largest stretched for several miles. They were all lit up by the bright northern light; but they were so large, empty, glittering, and icy cold. No parties were ever given here, not even a little ball for the bears, where the storm would have been useful for tunes, and the bears might have danced on their hind legs. Empty, wide, and cold was it in the halls of the Snow Queen. In the middle lay a frozen lake that had been broken into a thousand pieces, and in the centre of the lake sat the Snow Queen when she was at home. But just now she was away, for she had gone, according to her own account, to look into the black kettles, as she called Mount Etna and Mount Vesuvius. So little Karl was

there all alone in the large ice hall that was so many miles long. He was quite blue—nay, almost black with the cold; but he did not perceive it, for the Snow Queen had kissed away his shiverings, and his heart was like a lump of ice. He was dragging about some sharp flat pieces of ice, and placing them in all sorts of ways, for he wanted to make something out of them. Karl was making figures, and clever ones, too: this was the ice game of Reason. In his eyes the figures were very remarkable, and of the greatest importance, owing to the little glass splinter that still stuck in his eye. He composed complete figures, but he never could manage to form the word he wanted, which was Eternity. And the Snow Queen had said, "If you can find out this figure, you shall then be your own master, and I'll give you the whole world and a new pair of skates."

He was still vainly trying as little Gerda came through





he large gate into the castle. Cutting winds were raging within, but she said an evening prayer, and the winds stopped as if they were going to sleep. On she went into the large, empty, cold rooms—and there in front of her was Karl. She flew towards him, put her arms round his neck, and held him tight as she cried, "Karl! Karl! I have found you at last!" But he sat quite still, stiff and cold. Then at last the hot tears poured from Gerda's eyes, and, falling upon his breast, went right through to his heart and melted the lump of ice, washing away the little fragment of glass. He looked at her whilst she sang:

"The roses flourish and pass away,
But the Christ-child cometh again some day."

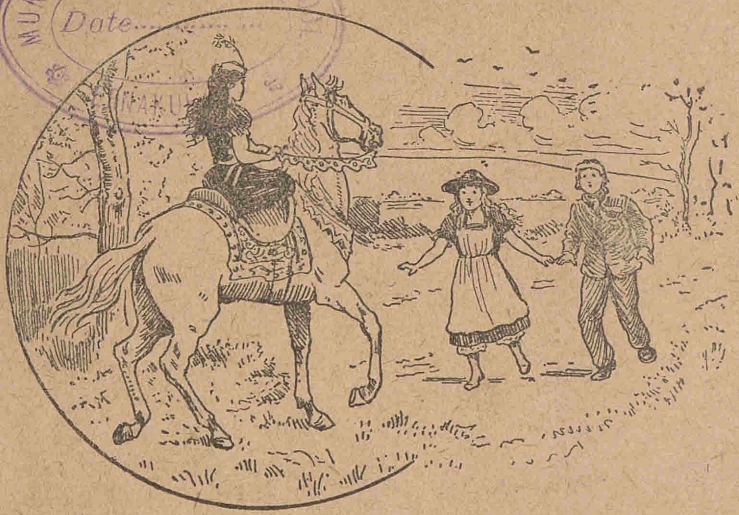
Then Karl burst into tears, and he cried so much that the little bit of glass swam out of his eye. At once he recognized Gerda, and cried joyfully, "Gerda! dear Gerda! where have you been so long? Where am I?" He looked around astonished. "Oh, how cold it is!" and he clung to

Gerda, who laughed and cried for joy; and the scene was so touching that even the pieces of ice jumped for joy, too. And when they were tired and laid down again they formed themselves into the very word Eternity that the Snow Queen said he must find out. Then Gerda kissed his cheeks, and they became blooming; she kissed his eyes, and they beamed like hers; she kissed his hands and feet, and they became healthy.

So they took each other by the hand, and walked out of the castle, and talked of grandmamma and the roses; and as they walked the winds were laid to rest, and the sun shone forth, and when they reached the red-berry bush, they found the reindeer waiting for them, and also a young reindeer whose udders were full of milk, which she gave the children to drink. The reindeer then carried Karl and Gerda to the Finnish woman, in whose hot room they warmed themselves, then on to the Laplander, who had made new clothes for them and put



MUNAVIRUL ISLAM L. 3. Date...



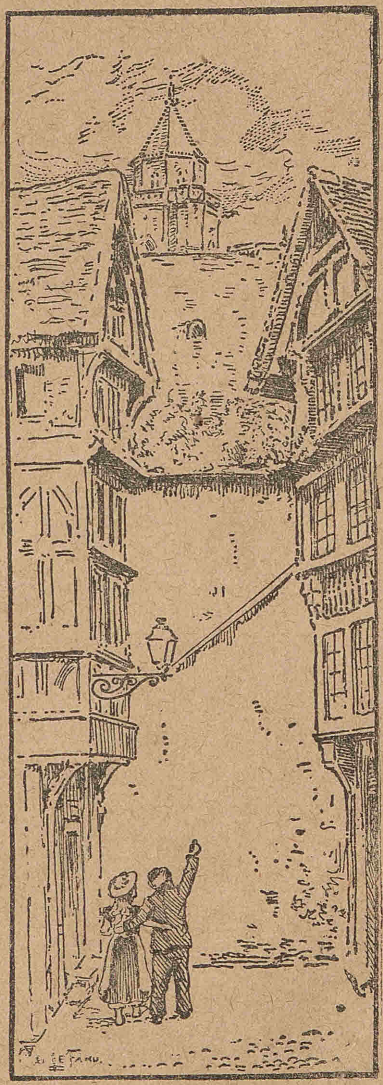
their sleigh right. The reindeer and his companion ran beside them, and followed them until the country began to be green, when they said farewell to the children.

When the first little birds began to twitter the forest was full of green buds. Out of it came a beautiful horse that had belonged to the golden coach. On it was a girl wearing a shining red cap, with pistols in her belt. This was the little robber-girl, who was tired of staying at home, and she meant first to go to the north, and, perhaps, on to some other part of the world. Gerda and she were delighted to meet. "You are a nice fellow to have gone wandering like this!" said the robber-girl to Karl. "I should very much like to know whether you are worth going to the end of the world for." But Gerda stroked her cheek, and asked after the prince and princess. "They are travelling in foreign lands." "And what about the crow?" said Gerda. "He is dead," she said. "His tame sweetheart has become a widow, and

wears a bit of black woollen thread round her leg. Now tell me all about yourself."

Then Gerda and Karl told all that had happened.

"Snip, snap, snorum!" said the robber-girl, who shook hands and promised that if she could she would pay them a visit some day. Then away she rode, whilst Karl and Gerda walked on hand in hand. And the farther they went, the lovelier the spring appeared with its greenness. Soon they recognized the tall steeples of their own town. The church bells were ringing gaily. On they went into the town, on to the grandmother's door, up the stairs, and into the room, where all looked as it used to do. The clock still said "tick, tack," and the hands were pointing to the hour; but as they passed through the doorway, they noticed that they had grown up, and were no longer boy and girl, but young man and maiden. The roses on the roof were in full bloom, peeping in at the window, and there stood the little stools they had used as children. Karl and Gerda sat





down, holding each other's hand, and the cold, empty splendour of the Snow Queen's palace passed from their minds as a dream. The grandmother sat in God's bright sunshine, and read aloud from her Bible, "Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And Karl and Gerda exchanged looks. They now understood the meaning of the old hymn:

"The roses flourish and pass away,
But the Christ-child cometh again some day."

There they both sat, grown up, yet with childlike hearts. And it was summer, warm heavenly summer.

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