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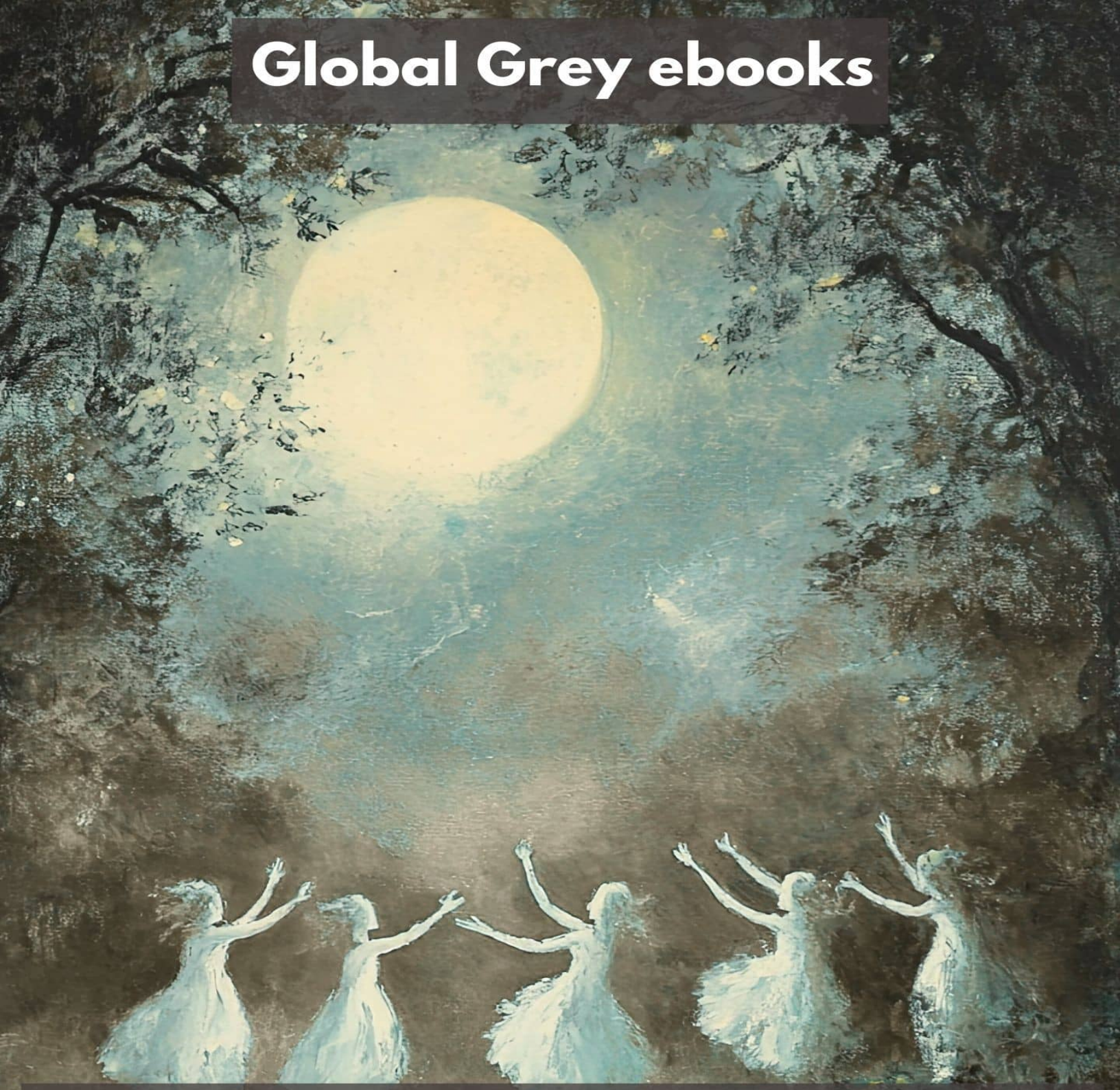

A PEEP AT THE PIXIES, OR LEGENDS OF THE WEST

Anna Eliza Bray

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OR
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A Peep at the Pixies, or Legends of the West
by Anna Eliza Bray

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Introduction

Dartmoor described.--The Pixies said to make it their Haunt.--What they are supposed to be, and what they do.

IN this most pleasant part of England, the county of Devon, we have many hills and rivers, with plenty of woods, and fields, and birds, and flowers. And we have a large tract of country called Dartmoor, where the hills are so high that some of them are like mountains, with a number of beautiful sparkling streams and waterfalls, and a great many rocks, some standing alone, and others piled on the top of the heights in such an odd way, that they look like the ruins of castles and towers built by the giants in the olden time, and these are called Tors; they are so lofty that the clouds often hang upon them and hide their heads. And what with its being so large and lonely, and its having no trees, except in one or two spots near a river, Dartmoor is altogether, though a wild, a very grand place.

In going from Tavistock to Exeter, persons sometimes cross the moor, where there is now a good road, but it is so dreary and solitary, that you may travel for miles and only here and there see a hut of the very poorest kind, built of turf dug on the spot, and thatched with green rushes, so that at a little distance it looks like the ground on which it stands. The people who live in these humble dwellings are not very nice, for the pig-stye is generally near the door, and the children are not much cleaner than the pigs. It is the more discreditable to their mothers to let them be so, as there is water enough around to wash and keep clean all the children in Devonshire.

Corn can only be made to grow in a few scanty patches on Dartmoor, but there is plenty of grass between the rocks and stones, and on this sheep and oxen feed in great numbers. Many horses and young colts are also there sent to pasture, and there run about and gambol, with their manes and tails flowing and whisking about to keep off the flies (which are abundant), in the most frolicksome manner; and even the poorest have a donkey, that feeds near their huts.

The poor burn peat instead of wood or coal; and this useful kind of fuel is nothing more than decayed turf dug out of the surrounding bogs. It is cut in long pieces and dried, and then piled up, the one piece upon the other, till it

becomes a large heap, which at a little distance looks not unlike a tent, and when several of them are seen standing together, they remind the traveller of a camp. This peat is principally sold to cottagers and farmers for fuel; and when it is carried to market, it is not taken in a cart, but put on what is called a crook, which is made of wood, in, shape something like the prongs of a pitchfork turned upward, and when placed upon the back of a horse or donkey, it holds, piled upon it, a great load.

The moor, being very hot in summer, abounds with adders or vipers, that creep under the stones and hide in the long grass; and the men, when at work, bind ropes of straw round their legs to save themselves from the bite of these venomous reptiles. The farmers hang boughs of ash-tree twisted round the necks of their cattle, believing that it will save them from being harmed by the adders; but it is of no use, as they are often sadly bitten.

There are a great many low walls, built of loose stones, to hinder the cattle from straying; for if any of them attempt to jump over, the stones not being fastened come tumbling down, and frighten them terribly. The rocks consist of a very hard stone called granite, which is quarried out and cut into blocks; and these are sent by a rude railway to Plymouth, where they are shipped off to London and elsewhere, to be used for building houses, churches, bridges, etc. The famous Waterloo bridge was partly built of the granite from Dartmoor.

The rocks are useful in another way also; for on them grows a sort of grey moss, which in the autumn produces a beautiful little red flower, not so big as a red berry from the holly tree; and this moss is gathered and sold to the dyer, with which he dyes woollen cloth a bright scarlet; and many boys and girls have coats and frocks made out of the cloth so dyed.

I do not know a prettier sight than to watch the rivers and streams of Dartmoor, as they rush along strong and rapid; and every now and then fall over great masses of rock in a sheet of white foam, or in a number of little bright cascades. And when they pass on in a more quiet way, the water is so clear you may see every stone beneath it; and several of the rocks standing in the middle or at the sides of these streams, are often quite covered with moss and what is called *lichens.* These are of various colours; white, green, grey, or of the deepest black, like a piece of rich black velvet. And it is very pretty, too, here to see the water-wagtail, a nice little bird with white and

grey feathers, skimming over the rocks, shaking his tail up and down, dipping his wings into the stream and off again in a moment.

On Dartmoor, too, as I have noticed in a previous work,[1] we meet in spring, upon a sunny morning, the pale yellow butterfly, usually seen in the garden among the flower beds; but here sporting on the front of some old grey rock, or settling on the wild thyme, or on the golden furze, as its wings shake with a quickness that will sometimes dazzle the sight.

And how beautiful is the song of the birds that we often find on the moor! The thrush, that never tires; or the lark, which sings first and soars highest; and the pretty wheatear that builds her nest amongst the old rocks, whose colour it so resembles in the black and grey of its wings, that you sometimes do not observe it perched upon them till you hear its small cry. There, too, is the goshawk, so rare in Devon; and the kite, that now is seldom found in its inhabited valleys, still prowls, like a robber, about the moor, as if in search of his prey; and the ring-ouzel finds a dwelling in the hollows of the stones, and the poor little reed-wren makes them her home: and robin, that favourite of old and young, there need fear no pilferer; for so much is this pretty bird the familiar friend of children in our neighbourhood, that the boys will pelt any one of their companions who may steal but an egg from poor robin's nest.

But though there are so many pleasant sights, yet the moor has its dangers. Those very high hills and lofty tors are liable to be visited with sudden mists which are as thick as the clouds; and so hide every thing, that I have known persons when seated in a carriage and caught in one of these say, that they could not plainly see the heads of the horses which drew them along. It is sad to think how many poor people in old times before the good broad road was made, lost their lives on the moor in these mists; some by wandering about all night in the cold, and others by getting into bogs and being swallowed up alive before help could be given them.

Many years ago, a very remarkable instance occurred of a native of this place, the late Mr. Edward Smith, being enveloped in mist, whilst endeavouring to make his way (from a stream where he had been fishing) across Mistor, with a view to shorten his road to Princetown on the moor. The following particulars I have gathered and selected from Mr. Smith's own account of the circumstance.[2]

He had not advanced more than a quarter of a mile in his ascent, when he was so suddenly enveloped in a cloud, dense, dark, and flaky, that it startled him. On every side appeared whirling masses of mist, of so thick a consistency that it affected his very breathing. He paused; but thinking it would be impossible to err in walking in a straight line over the summit of a hill, continued to advance; but in this he was deceived. The way seemed to lengthen before him. At last he descried a few of those immense fragments of granite with which the summit of the tor was strewed. Their appearance through the fog was wonderfully grand, wavy, fantastic, and as if possessing life. Although even with the surface, such was the deception, they appeared upright, each in succession perpendicular, until he arrived so close, that it required almost the very touch to prove the deception. There were also some scattered sheep, one here and there. At the distance of twenty or thirty yards, for he could distinguish nothing further, they had the appearance of a moving unshapen mass, infinitely larger than reality. Every now and then one of these animals would start from the side of a block of granite close to his feet, affrighted--sometimes with a screaming bleat, as if, like himself, filled with surprise and awe.

When, as he believed, he had gained the summit, Mr. Smith stood still and looked about him. There was above, beneath, and all around, a mass, flaky, and at times even rushing, of white fog. At length he sat down to rest, feeling unable to walk on. His situation was now painful, and the evening rapidly approaching. The fog increased in murkiness, and all hopes that it would clear away vanished. He looked around for some large fragments of stone, under the shelter of which to take up his quarters for the night. From exertion he had been hot even to excess, but was now shivering and chilled. At length he endeavoured to proceed.

The ground began to incline, and he suddenly found himself descending a very steep acclivity; presently he heard the distant rushing of water; the sound enlivened him; it was like the voice of a guide and friend, and he pressed onward; when suddenly, so instantaneously that he could compare it to nothing but the lifting up of a veil, the fog rushed from him, and the scene which opened induced him almost to doubt his very senses.

At his feet, the river Walkham brawled amongst the rocks scattered throughout its bed. On his left, was just sufficient of the hamlet of Merrivale open to show the eastern arch of its picturesque bridge, whilst in

the distance the fantastic rocks of Vixen Tor were still wreathed in mist. At his right, within two or three hundred yards, was the very spot he had first quitted to ascend the mountain, and in front arose one of those grand and lofty tors which render the moor so striking; it was dark and frowning, its topmost ridges embosomed in clouds, whose summits were gilded by the broad sun, now rapidly descending behind them. The whole scene was like magic; even whilst looking on it, it appeared to him as a dream. He now found that, during a space of two hours and a half, he had walked up the mountain, taken a complete circuit of its summit, and almost retraced his steps in his descent, such had been the deception of this most dangerous mist.

In the winter months, the snow often entirely covers the moor, and so suddenly and heavily will a snow-storm come on, that travellers have not unfrequently been confined to the house in which they had the good luck to take shelter before it arose, for many days and weeks together. At various times, many a poor creature has been frozen to death on the moor. An instance that happened many years ago, was truly melancholy. A shepherd who had so perished was not found till some weeks after his death, when his dog, nearly starved, was discovered wistfully watching near the body of his unfortunate master.

At a later period, two boys were sent from a neighbouring farm to look for some strayed sheep on the moor. They were surprised by a sudden storm of snow; and not returning their master grew uneasy, and with some of his men went out to search for them. The lads were found nearly buried in snow, and both apparently sleeping. In this state they were removed to the farm-house; one was restored to life, but the other was quite dead.[3]

Besides the huts I mentioned just now, there are a few cottages and houses, and a very large building on the moot, which is now a dismal one--a prison.

Some years ago, when there was a war between England and France, King George III used to send there the Frenchmen who were taken prisoners in battle by his soldiers and sailors; and now his grand-daughter, Queen Victoria, still uses it for a prison: and sends there no less than twelve hundred convicts as a punishment for their having broken the laws of the land in many ways.

These wicked men are not allowed to live in idleness; but are sent out to work upon the moor, under the care of a warden, armed with a double-barrelled gun. There are also a great many of the Queen's troops who are placed there to guard them, and to prevent their running away, which, however, I am told they sometimes do; but happily they are always caught again through their being unable to find any place of shelter, or anything to live upon, in that barren, lonely, and desolate region.

You have read, my young friends, in your History of England, some accounts of the ancient Britons, and of the Druids, who were priests and judges among them. The Druids lived very much together, and formed schools, in which they taught such arts and learning as they were acquainted with; and they studied much the stars on heights and open places, such as those on Dartmoor, where a great many of them dwelt. They said it was unlawful to perform the rites and ceremonies of their religion within a covered temple or under a roof of any kind. Whenever they could, therefore, they chose a hill or lofty mound for the purpose, as from such they could have a better view of the sun, and the moon, and the planets, which they were so ignorant as to worship.

Now these temples they made by setting upright in the earth large, rough, unhewn stones in the form of a circle; and many such are still to be seen on Dartmoor. Sometimes when they found a very large rock of a strange and unusual shape, they would at once choose it for a place of worship, and cut hollows like basins at the top to catch the rainwater, with which they sprinkled the people, and pretended to cure them of many diseases of body and mind.

One of these rocks on Dartmoor, called Vixen Tor, is a hundred and ten feet high; and so curiously formed by nature, that it resembles the Egyptian Sphinx, which is a very large stone cut into the shape of a man's face and head, that stands in the sandy desert on the banks of the river Nile.

Many of the Britons lived in huts on Dartmoor, and these were made, like the temples, by rough hewn stones set upright in the ground, in the form of a circle, with walls made of wood and roofs of rushes, high and tapering like tents. There are, also, still to be seen, here and there, a circle of very strong stones, so large as to have within its enclosure a great many small huts; and the sheep and the cattle used to be driven within it at night, to save

them from being devoured by bears and wolves, which in those days prowled about the moor.

When the Dartmoor Britons buried a chief, who was always a warrior or a king, the Druids raised a heap of stones over his grave; and sometimes a very large single piece of granite, supported upon three or four upright stones, as we see the legs support an old fashioned table; and this they called a Cromlech.

On the moor, upon the side of a steep hill which rises above the river Dart, there is the most curious little wood ever seen. It is called Wistman's Wood, or "the wood of the wise men;" and is supposed to be the remains of one of the sacred groves of the Druids. It consists of some very aged and stunted oaks, not above ten or twelve feet high. The boles of these dwarf-trees are covered with moss of an exceeding thickness, hung with ivy, and have altogether a most strange and antiquated appearance.

Now this wild tract of land, as well as other parts of Devonshire and Cornwall, is considered to be haunted by a set of little creatures, called Pixies. They are not like children; for, though they are small, and can sometimes be seen, it is said they can fly as well as run, and creep through key-holes, and get into the bells of flowers, and many other places where little boys and girls cannot creep. The Pixies are sometimes good, and do kind acts; but more frequently they are mischievous, and do a great deal of harm to men, women, and children, if they have a spite against them; and often hurt the cattle.

Some people say they are the souls of poor children who die unbaptised, and others think that they are a kind of fairies, but more frolicsome, and have more power to do either good or harm. They are, however, generally considered a distinct race; for if you could but see a Pixy, my young friends, you would see at once how different was such a creature from a Fairy. Indeed, it is matter of tradition, that the Faries wished very much to establish themselves in Devonshire, but the Pixies would not hear of it; and a terrible war ensued. Oberon was, with his host, defeated; and his majesty received a wound in the leg which proved incurable; none of the herbs in his dominions have hitherto had the least beneficial effects, though his principal secretary and attendant, Puck, has been in search of one of a healing nature ever since.

Having said thus much concerning their general character, I will now proceed to speak a little more about the Pixies and their manners in detail, as in many respects. they are very curious; and in doing so, for some few particulars, I shall venture to draw upon my own account, given in a former work, which, being intended for men and women only, is not at all likely to fall into the hands of my young friends.[4]

These tiny elves are said to delight in solitary places, to love pleasant hills and pathless woods, or to disport themselves on the margins of rivers and mountain streams. Of all their amusements dancing forms their chief delight; and this exercise they are said always to practise, like the Druids of old, in a circle or ring. These dainty beings, though represented as of exceeding beauty in their higher order, are nevertheless, in some instances, of strange, uncouth, and fantastic figure and visage; though such natural deformity need give them very little uneasiness, since they are traditionally believed to possess the power of assuming various shapes at will.

Their love of dancing is not unaccompanied with that of music, though it is often of a nature somewhat different to those sounds which human ears are apt to consider harmonious. In Devonshire, that unlucky omen, the cricket's cry, is to them as animating and as well timed as the piercing notes of the fife, or the dulcet melody of the flute, to mortals. The frogs sing their double-bass, and the screech-owl is to them like an aged and favoured minstrel piping in hall. The grasshopper, too, chirps with his merry note in the concert, and the humming-bee plays "his hautbois" to their tripping on the green; as the small stream, on whose banks they hold their sports, seems to share their hilarity, and talks and dances as well as they, in emulation of the revelry, whilst it shows through its crystal waters a gravelly bed as bright as burnished gold, the jewel-house of Pixy-land; or else the pretty stream lies sparkling in the moonbeam, for no hour is so dear to Pixy revels as that in which man sleeps, and the queen of night, who loves not his mortal gaze, becomes a watcher.

It is under the cold light of her beams, or amidst the silent shadows of the dark rocks, where that light never penetrates, that on the moor the elfin king of the Pixy race holds his high court of sovereignty and council. There each Pixy receives his especial charge: some are sent, like the spirit Gathon of Cornwall, to work the will of his master in the mines, to show by sure signs,

where lies the richest lode; or sometimes to delude the unfortunate miner, and to mock his toil.

Other Pixies are commissioned on better errands than these; since, nice in their own persons, for they are the avowed enemies of all sluts, they sally forth to see if the maidens do their duty with mop and broom, and if these cares are neglected to give them a good pinching! Many, in this part of the world, are very particular in sweeping their houses before they go to bed, and they will frequently place a basin of water by the chimney nook, to accommodate the Pixies, who are great lovers of water; and sometimes requite the good deed by dropping a piece of money into the basin.

Many a Pixy is sent out on works of mischief to deceive the old nurses and steal away young children, or to do them harm. This is noticed' by one of our old English poets, Ben Jonson:--

"Under a cradle I did creep
By day, and, when the childe was asleepe
At night, I suck'd the breath, and rose
And pluck'd the nodding nurse by the nose."

The wicked and thievish elves, who are despatched on the dreadful errand of changing children in the cradle, are all said to be squint-eyed. In such cases (so say our gossips in Devon) the Pixies use the stolen child just as the mortal mother may happen to use the changeling dropped in its stead.

Many, also, bent solely on mischief are sent forth to lead poor travellers astray, to deceive them with those false lights called Will-o'-the-wisp, or to guide them a fine dance in trudging home through woods and water, through bogs and quagmires and every peril; or, as Robin Goodfellow says, to

"Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harms."

Others, who may be said to content themselves with a practical joke, and who love frolic better than mischief, will merely make sport by blowing out the candles on a sudden, or overturning the cook's pot on the fire. Some Pixies are dispatched to frolic or make noises in wells; and the more gentle and kindly race will spin flax and help their favourite damsels to do their work.

In Devonshire, and more especially on Dartmoor, it is a very common thing with any person who loses his way, to consider himself as *Pixy-led,* and this frequently happens to our stout yeomen and farmers, when they happen to have a cup too much at a merry-making. But for this there is a remedy. For whoever finds himself; or if a woman herself, *Pixy-led,* has nothing more to do than to turn jacket, petticoat, pocket or apron inside out, and a Pixy, who hates the sight of any impropriety in dress, cannot stand this, and off the imp goes, as if, according to the vulgar saying, he had been sent packing with a flea in his ear.

A Pixy-house is often said to be in a rock; sometimes, however, a mole hill is a palace for the elves, or a hollow nut cracked by the "joiner squirrel," will contain the majesty of Pixy-land. And Drayton, who wrote of these little fanciful beings as if he were the chosen laureate of their race, thus describes their royal dwelling.

"The walls of spiders' legs are made,
Well morticed and finely laid,
He was the master of his trade
It curiously that builded;
The windows of the eyes of cats,
And for a roof, instead of slats,
Is covered with the skins of bats,
With moonshine that are gilded."

And now, my young friends, having told you that both Cornwall and Devonshire, and more particularly the wild waste of Dartmoor, are said to be much haunted by Pixies, I shall proceed to give you what I trust will afford you some amusement in those hours not devoted to your lessons, or to more serious studies, in a few Pixy tales.

I. Pixy Gathon; Or, The Tailor's Needle

"BAD times! Master Trickett," said Betsy Humming, as she turned her wheel, at which she was most industriously spinning, "bad times! for tho' I be at work from morning to night, and do spin as fine Kersey, tho' I say it who ought not to say it, as any in Crediton, nobody comes to buy. Never had so little to do all the years I've worked for a living--'tis all along with the coming in of the Scotch King."

"Very bad times, neighbour," replied Trim Trickett, the tailor, "for nobody wears out their clothes as they used to do in the old Queen's time; or alters their fashions as the great folk did in the days of Elizabeth. Except a pair of trunk hose for master Justice, Sir Simon de Noodle, and a doublet for his young son; and a new gown for Dame Westcott, I have not had a job to keep my needle going for these two months. Never had such bad times, since I first crossed a leg in the way of business."

"You've as much as you deserve, and more too, Master Trickett; and so have you, Betsy Humming," said Gammer Guy, a cross-grained old crone, who was sitting in the easy chair by the chimney nook, leaning on her staff. She was one of those village gossips who do little themselves, and spend most of their time in hindering their neighbours.

"No thanks to you, Gammer Guy, if any good luck comes to me, or to any body else," said the tailor; "for if ill wishing be as bad as ill doing, as some folks think, a body need not go far to find it, when you be near. I know what some people do say of other people."

"And what do they say of other people?" asked Gammer Guy, "for I know you mean that hit for me, Master Trickett; but do you suppose every body means harm, or does it, because they be old and past work?"

"No, Mother Guy, I think no such thing," replied Trim. "There is old Anastatia Steer bed-ridden now; I never thought any ill of her, nor said it, tho' she be the oldest woman in the county; and may be in all England."

“Ah! poor old soul,” said Betsy Humming, “I’ve spun the woollen for her shroud for her long ago, and that by her own desire to oblige her; tho’ I’m not to be paid for it till she be dead, and calls for it.”

“Then I reckon you won’t much longer be out of pocket, Betsy,” said the tailor.’

That’s true enough, Trim,” replied Betsy; “and if I be called on soon for the shroud, you’ll have to make it;. and that will be grist, to your mill, Master Trickett. And then she has so many relations; and her great great grandchildren’s children be so many, I reckon you’ll have to make a mourning suit for them all, women and men; and what a wind-fall will that be for you! How your needle will go day and night to have the doublets, and hose, and the gowns, and the kirtles ready for the funeral! And I shall sell them some of my black kersies, and times will be better; and we shall have something else to do than to stand and talk about ‘em.”

“Well! if ever I heard the like!” said Gammer Guy, “You and Trim Trickett to go for to settle a poor harmless old neighbour’s death after that fashion! And all to put money into your own pockets! O its a cruel and a very wicked thing! Who’s ill-wishing now I trow?”

“Not I,” said Trim, “I be sure.”

“Nor I,” said Betsy Humming.

“Did you not talk of old Anastatia Steer’s death? and what a profit it would be to you both, before it comes?”

“Yes; but we did not say we’d kill her,” said Betsy.

“Nor wish her dead neither,” said Trim, “we only said she was like to die soon.”

“And is not that bad enough,” exclaimed Gammer Guy.. “What’s the harm with old Anastatia that you should talk of her in such a way; and she only been bed-ridden these last six months?”

“Why, is she not said to be one hundred and forty years old complete? And don’t folks come far and near to see her, as a *cuerossity?”* said the tailor. “And doesn’t she fail faster and faster every day? She can’t live for ever like the wandering Jew.”

“But she has no doctor,” said Gammer Guy,” and so may last for many a year yet to come.”

“She is blind,” said Betsy Humming.

“And deaf,” said Trim.

“And has never a tooth in her head, and can’t feed her-self,” said Betsy.

“And has lost her memory, and the use of her limbs,” said Trim.

“But she’s alive, and eats, drinks, and sleeps,” said Gammer Guy.

“So she may,” said Trim; “but I do say, for all that, old Anastatia Steer being one hundred and forty years complete, bed-ridden, blind, deaf, and helpless, may be supposed able to die soon, without anything going contrary to the rules of *Natur,* and without any ill-wishing from me and my neighbour, Betsy Humming; and we both wish her no harm.”

Gammer Guy, who was given to have ill thoughts and suspicions of everybody, shook her head; and after taking a cup of warm spiced ale, with an egg beat up in it, at Betsy Humming’s cost, repaid her hospitality by spreading at the next two or three neighbours where she called in for a gossip, that she was quite sure Betsy Humming, for the sake of selling some of her black kersies, and Trim Trickett, for the sake of having to make ‘em up as mourning suits, were both of them *ill-wishing* poor old Anastatia Steer, who was comfortable in her bed, free from all sickness, and might last as long as the king himself, let alone their wicked wiles. But such *ill-wishing* was as bad as a downright murdering of her.

It was so indeed in popular opinion, at the time of my tale, in the West of England; when poor old women and men, if they once got the character of *ill-wishing,* were sure to be taken up as witches, wizards, or sorcerers, and were in danger of being tried for their lives, and burnt under the law against witchcraft, which was particularly patronised by King James the First.

Now it so happened, that Anastatia Steer unluckily died suddenly within two or three days after this discourse, of no disease whatever, according to all appearance, except that from which there is no escape--worn-out nature. No sooner did Betsy Humming hear of it, than she produced the woollen shroud, spun by herself ten years ago to oblige the departed; and Trim very

innocently solicited custom in his way from the friends and relatives of the deceased.

But what was his surprise, and that of his neighbour, the honest spinster of kersies, to find doors shut in their faces, backs turned upon them, and an expression of universal abhorrence at the very sight of them, as if they carried about the plague, at that time rife in a distant part of the county of Devon. It was too bad; and Trim hearing from his little boy, Johnny Trickett, that it was commonly reported all over Crediton, that he and Betsy Humming had *ill-wished* poor old Anastatia out of the world, he grew furious, and at once accused cross-grained Gammer Guy of having done this injury to the fame of two honest souls. Never was tailor so angry as he; and he protested that he would have justice on his defamer, even if he sought it at the throne of King James the First. But before he could seek that majestic person to obtain it, the town constable sought out him and his supposed associate, Betsy Humming, and both of them were taken into custody on the very serious charge of having conspired, by witchcraft and diabolical arts, the death of Anastatia Steer for their own selfish purposes and profit.

That was an awful morning on which the luckless tailor and spinster appeared before the Justice of the Peace. They were ushered into an old Gothic hall, venerable from age and the smoke of many generations. About the walls hung antiquated portraits of various judges, knights, esquires, and ladies, representing, in a goodly row, all the De Noodles who had flourished and died since the days of the Conquest.

Sir Simon, the living representative of his distinguished family, seemed to carry the, grandeur and importance of his long line of ancestry all in his own person. He had a proud and austere air; was tall and lank, of a somewhat withered appearance, with thin lips, and little pinky eyes, and a sharp-hooked nose, with a pair of barnacles stuck on the end of it that pinched so close as to cause him to speak through it with a small squeaking voice. He wore a large pair of trunk hose, a rich doublet, and a black velvet cap stuck on the crown of his head; and when seated in his high-backed carved oak-chair, with his clerk on his right hand, prepared with pen, ink-horn, and paper, to take the depositions, and Master Constable, a figure as broad as he was long, bearing his staff of office, on the other side, Sir Simon altogether presented the spectacle of a solemn, stately old

gentleman, whose nod or whose frown was enough to scare the poor creatures who were brought before him on such a charge.

After surveying the accused with no very encouraging scrutiny, and hearing a general statement of the case, Sir Simon proceeded to examine Gammer Guy and the rest of the witnesses. The evidence was by no means satisfactory; and of the “says he,” and “says she,” and “says I,” and “says you,” that make up so much of evidence in a country place, there was a very sufficient share. Though told with many alterations and much exaggeration, nothing more really appeared against the accused than has already been related; not a single fact could be brought against either party except the following, viz., that Betsy Humming had a very favourite black cat, which she was known to fondle and pet considerably; that pussy had been seen to sit by her side and on her knee, and to raise her tail quite into Betsy’s face; that the said cat would purr to her in a very suspicious manner when pleased, or when her mistress rubbed down her back, or gave her from her own bowl some of her milk porridge. The cat, it was solemnly deposed, in the opinion of Gammer Guy and many other credible witnesses, was no other than a familiar or evil spirit, employed by the aforesaid Betsy to do her wicked will.

And as a further evidence of her league with the tailor to do deeds of darkness, it was proved that he kept in his cottage a tame, old raven, of which he was very fond; and the witness who proved this, said, he would like to know what any honest man could have to do with a raven about his dwelling? And that the cat being black and the bird of the same colour, was such a sign of agreement in wickedness as could not be mistaken.

His worship, the justice, on hearing all this, gravely shook his head, and muttered, in an under tone, “Very suspicious.”

His clerk shook his head in assent to the sapient observation of his master, and master constable gave three shakes of his; one, it is to be presumed, in concurrence with his worship’s opinion; another in assent to the echo of his clerk, and the last in confirmation of both the former with his own. At length the hearing of the evidence against the accused closed.

Sir Simon de Noodle looked very wise, shook his head again, leant back in his chair, twisted his thumbs, hemmed thrice, and then--asked his clerk what he thought of the matter. The clerk consulted the constable in an

undertone of voice; and the constable whispered with old cross-grained Gammer Guy, who, amongst the many bitter charges she on that morning made against Trim, forgot not to state that he had called her an old fool.

Trim, seeing so much consultation going on, not knowing what would be the result, and fearing nothing less than hanging if the justice took up the matter with the assistance of so many counsellors, rashly stepped forward, and proposed that the nearest relatives of the deceased, who had come into some property by her death, should be called upon to say whether there might not be great probability of poor old Anastatia Steer, in the one hundred and fortieth year of her age, managing to die a natural death, without the assistance either of witches or wizards, or witchcraft of any kind.

Now the relatives of the deceased were far more disposed to settle the matter reasonably than the enemies of Trim and Betsy, had they been left to themselves. But Gammer Guy would interfere; and as Sir Simon de Noodle was, in respect to knowledge of the law, quite as much an old woman as herself, he did not check her. So she persuaded the friends of the dead to drop prosecution for witchcraft and murder solely on the accused subscribing to the following conditions of ordeal: namely, that Betsy Humming should spin one hundred and forty threads (that being the number in agreement with the years of the deceased), and spin them so fine, that they should all, pass through, and remain in the eye of Trim Trickett's needle with which he usually worked in his shop. But unless this were done by the expiration of one month, and if they eventually failed in such object, then they should both be put upon their trial for witchcraft and murder. The ordeal was a severe one; and the luckless spinster and tailor looked at each other aghast with affright. But Betsy had a stout heart, far stouter than the tailor; and so, raising her hand after a minute's pause, she gave Trim an encouraging slap on the back, exclaiming, "Never start from the trial, man! never fear. We have done no wrong; let us do right still; and trust the rest to all the good saints in the calendar. I can spin with a clear conscience, and you can thread a needle with an honest man's hand; and so I'll try which can spin the finest, I or the spiders. 'Tis 'for life or death, Master Trickett, so never fear; but look to pass one hundred and forty of my threads through your needle, till a hundred and forty stick in it."

"But if the thing fails," said Trim.

“Why then it fails,” replied Betsy; “and in one month we be tried for witchcraft and murder; but that can’t make us guilty of such wickedness; and if there’s law or justice to be had in the land, we’ll have it, Trim, in some way or other.”

Trim shook his head; but the bystanders observed that the black cat, which had been brought before the justice as a guilty party in the business, raised her tail three times as Betsy spoke, and a murmur of dread ran through the assembly. Even Sir Simon de Noodle did not like the sign, nor the understanding it seemed to indicate between the witch and her familiar, and directed the constable to detain the cat, saying--that the said cat was to be considered as remanded in point of law. Master constable bowed profoundly to this command; and a bag was ordered to convey pussy out of the court to the safe keeping of the law officer. The cat took her removal very ungraciously; and as she scratched and resisted, and mewed loudly, on being forced into the bag, it was considered as an unequivocal proof of her being a familiar spirit in a feline form.

Sir Simon de Noodle now proceeded most solemnly to confirm the conditions of ordeal. But as, for the sake of his dignity, he fancied he must do something out of his own head, he rendered the conditions still harder by ordering that Betsy Humming and Trim Trickett should be forthwith sent to gaol, there to spin the one hundred and forty threads, and there to pass them within the eye of the needle; and the sapient justice added, that unless they could accomplish this task before the expiration of the month allotted for the purpose, he thought the evidence so strong against both of them, that he doubted not one would be burned alive, and the other certainly hanged.

All this was very cruel. Betsy Humming spun from, morning till night, and till she nearly blinded herself with the fineness of her work; but Tim could not get more than ten or a dozen threads through the eye of his needle. They were so poor that they had nothing to live on but prison fare--bread and water; and only straw in their cold, stone cells to sleep upon. For the first week, when they met every day in the court-yard of the gaol, it was only to bewail their ill-fortune, though Betsy’s heart was still stouter than Trim’s.

But (according to a trite and true observation), as in this world there is no condition, however good, but some drawback is found to attend it, so is there none, perhaps, so miserable but some consolation is afforded to lighten the load of inevitable suffering. Now this was exactly the case with

Trim Trickett. He was the parent of a little boy named Johnny; an only child, and a very good one. Johnny, seeing how hard his poor father fared, could not bear the thoughts of his having nothing to eat but bread and water; and so he determined to do as other boys did (for there was a great demand for them at this time), and go and work in the mines, to save as much as he could of his small weekly pittance to get some comforts and a little meat for. his father; and, if it were necessary, to live on bread and water himself, so that he might but help his suffering parent.

I shall not detain you, my young friends, with giving you any long account of a Cornish mine, more than to tell you, that, at a very great depth below the surface of the earth, running in lines on beds, called *lodes,* people find a vast deal of copper ore. This is dug out and smelted with fire, so as to free it from the dross mixed with it, and then it becomes a valuable metal; and the copper-smith works it into many useful things for household and other purposes. A pit, or hole, is made in the earth, and sometimes a mine is found and worked several hundred feet below the surface; and men are let down into it with buckets, not unlike those used at a well. Water is always found in mines; very large machines, therefore, are erected, by which it is constantly pumped up, or the men would be drowned whilst digging out the copper ore. As the light of day cannot penetrate thus deep in the earth, the miners used candles in lanterns; but, in our days, more frequently the safety lamp invented by Sir Humphrey Davy. Boys are much wanted in mines, to do many slight matters of work; such as to wheel small quantities of the ore in barrows to the heap, whence the men remove the load above ground. They are sometimes also employed to pick and wash the copper, so as to free it from the loose earth with which it is mixed. In many other things they are likewise very useful.

Now, at the time of my story, a man named Tregarrens, who was of a morose and tyrannical disposition, wanted a lad to help him do his work in the mines; and seeing little Johnny was a willing and active lad, he engaged him at once; and the pay he was to give him was rather more than the boy expected. Johnny went, therefore, eagerly to work, but he soon had cause to rue having placed him-self under his new master; for on all occasions, whether he deserved it or not, the poor lad was abused and maltreated by this tyrant below-ground in a very vexatious manner, and kicked, and cuffed, and thrashed for the smallest, and oftentimes for no offence at all.

Among other practices in the mine, Johnny observed that the miners anxiously worked wherever they heard a sort of hammering noise within the rock. Their belief was, that this hammering was made by a Pixy, named Gathon, a great frequenter of mines, but who acted with considerable caprice. Sometimes he would hammer where there was nothing but rubble to be found; and then the men would hear him laughing heartily at having so misled them, and caused their labours to be in vain. Whilst, at other times, quite unexpectedly, he would hammer and disclose to them the richest and, hitherto, undiscovered ore.

One day, when Tregarrens' mood had been more than usually brutal, so that poor little Johnny had received several blows of a very severe kind (though he would not think of quitting his employer, on account of the pittance which enabled him to help his father), he could no longer resist giving vent to his feelings. He sat down in an obscure corner amongst the rocks, where nobody was at work, where it was dark and gloomy, and cried as if his young heart would break; the tears literally poured down his cheeks as he endeavoured to wipe them away with his hand.

Whilst he thus sat deploring his hard lot, all at once he saw a bright and greenish light stream upon the opposite side of the rock; and, on looking up, beheld with surprise the queerest little boy he had ever seen. He was very low in stature, but such limbs! they seemed to be composed of rolls of fat; with a face like a ball, and so full and red, with a nose as round as a bottle; whilst the eyes, that were small, gleamed out of his head like a couple of bright burning coals in a blacksmith's forge. He had very large ears, hairy and long, resembling those of a donkey, and a tail that he twirled and twisted about, and at last rested the end of it, which was full and bushy, upon his shoulder. He carried a hammer in his little fat hand, and was as naked as when he was born; but that never troubled him. To complete the whole, there was a look in his face, merry and waggish.

Johnny did not know what to make of such a strange creature, and was afraid to speak to it. But my little gentleman did not stand for ceremony; so he said, laughing as he spoke, "Don't be frightened at me; I'm your friend, Johnny Tricket, and am come to do you good; for I'm a good natured little fellow, as you may see by my being so fat. I am Gathon the mining man; look at my hammer! Ho, ho, ho," continued he laughing, "I am just come from calling off that tyrant your master, Tregarrens, who intended to thrash

you, for being absent from the gallery when he wanted you to help to do his work. But as he started to come hither, to look after you, I hammered away furiously in the great rock near his standing; and off he went to call the men to batter for what they won't find, a new run of copper ore. Ho, ho, ho!"

Johnny was greatly startled, and could not forbear expressing a fear that the disappointment would cause his master to be in a worse humour with him. "Never mind that," said the Pixy, "haven't I deceived them finely? Ho, ho, ho! Let Gathon alone for a frisk and a trick, when he's in the mood to make fools of the fellows. But now, Johnny Trickett, leave off crying and hear me; for I'm your friend; and let me tell you that you may have a worse than Pixy Gathon the hammering man."

Johnny's surprise at seeing and hearing a real Pixy was very great. But the poor boy recollected that he had done no harm, though he had suffered a great deal; and so he took heart, and thanking his new friend for his good in intentions, begged him to go on.

"Well then, this is what I have to say. Johnny Trickett, I pity you much; and your father once did me a good turn, though without knowing it, and I'm not ungrateful. He once cracked a nut, into which, as it was hollow, a wicked old witch had squeezed me, and as you may see, I'm not the most easily to be so squeezed, and so he let me out; and though I bobbed up against his nose, he never raised a hand to brush me rudely off or to hurt me; and now I'll repay his good deed, by doing good to his son, and to him into the bargain. Don't cry, my boy, but continue to bear patiently the ill treatment of Tregarrens, till the end of the month your poor father is to be in gaol, and I will do what no mortal creature could do to serve your father; since for every kick and cuff which you take patiently from your tyrant below ground, I'll pass a thread of Betsy Humming's spinning through the eye of your father's needle. And no fear of a hundred and forty cuffs coming to your share, my lad, before the month is ended."

"Say five hundred and no fear, but I'll have 'em all and take them patiently," said Johnny joyfully; "and then my dear father will be safe and out of gaol."

"That he will," said Pixy Gathon, "and I shall rejoice in doing him good!" And with that the little fellow tumbled three times head over heels and whisked about his tail to show his joy on the occasion.

“I’m sure, master Gathon,” said Johnny, “that father will be grateful; and if it would be no offence to you, and you would like to have them, instead of running about naked in that fashion, father would be very glad to make you a little pair of hose, and charge nothing for them.”

“Pixies never wear hose--thank you all the same for the offer, master Johnny; but I’ll serve you and your father too without seeking reward;” and so for the present little Gathon took his leave, popped into a nook among the rocks, and was for the time seen no more.

True indeed was the assurance of the Pixy, Johnny got so many kicks and cuffs, and so well did Gathon keep his word, that, to his exceeding joy and surprise, the tailor, who was not in the secret, found sometimes five or six threads, or more, passed in one day through the eye of his needle from the skein he already possessed of Betsy Humming’s spinning. Still there wanted a great number of threads to make up one hundred and forty.

In the meanwhile his good little son continued to labour in the mines, and to receive all his injuries with a cheerful as well as a patient spirit. On one occasion, however, his tyrant was so brutal in the fury of his passion, for some slight offence, as to strike the lad a violent blow when he stood close to the mouth of the shaft or pit; he reeled and fell down it. The poor boy must have been killed on the spot, but for the ready services of his friend Gathon. The Pixy had been hammering near the spot, when seeing the lad’s danger he whisked into the bucket, and caught him in it ere he reached the ground, landing him in perfect safety.

Tregarrens, when he saw the lad tumble down the shaft, had been in a terrible fright; not that he cared a rush for the boy’s life; but he knew well, that had Johnny lost it by his means, he should be turned out of his place, and be brought up before a magistrate for his conduct on a very serious charge. When, therefore, he found that the lad had only fallen into the bucket, and that he had not so much as a scratch by way of injury, it was such a relief to his fears, it did what nothing else could have done in all the world, it actually put him in a good humour with little Johnny. This was the very thing which, at the moment, the lad least desired; for there was only ONE day left to complete the month allotted for his father’s ordeal; and his needle wanted but ONE thread more to complete the number of one hundred and forty.

Johnny was, therefore, in a terrible fright when, on that last day, Tregarrens, for the first time since he had been in his employ, called him a good boy; and not a sign of a cuff could he trace in his master's face or in his manner towards him. At this crisis, hoping to excite in him something like an angry mood, so that it could but procure from him one gentle kick, or if only a box on the ear, he purposely did his task of work negligently; and left two or three wheel-barrows with the ore, standing in the way of Tregarrens, so that he stumbled over one of them and nearly broke his shins. Many other little matters did he neglect in the duty of the day, with the last forlorn hope of obtaining but one more cuff; but none came. Tregarrens had not yet quite recovered from the joy occasioned by his being relieved from the fright of supposing he had killed little Johnny; so that he could not so immediately favour him with a renewal of rough kindnesses or tyranny.

In this dilemma, his fat little friend once more came to his aid; for having bound himself by the honour of a Pixy only to pass a thread through Trim's needle whenever his son took a cuff patiently; it was not in the power of such a gentleman Pixy as he was, to break his word. But he bethought him of a way to come to Johnny's relief. Whilst Tregarrens was at work in the mine, he heard himself repeatedly called by his name, accompanied by peals of laughter, and the most insulting and provoking expressions. He looked round, and saw only Johnny standing near him. He at once accused him of these insults; but Johnny ever loved the truth, and protested he had not spoken a word.

Tregarrens doubted this much; but still keeping his temper, he once more turned to his work in the rock. Whilst so engaged, peals of laughter and renewed insults met his ears, as if spoken by some one close at his elbow., there could be no mistake, for at his elbow stood little Johnny.

Now fully provoked, Tregarrens turned and gave the lad a most hearty box on the ear. Johnny, delighted to think that this blow taken patiently would procure the desired end and his father's liberty, exclaimed--" Thank you, thank you, Master Tregarrens," and fairly cut a frisk or two in the joy of his heart.

Tregarrens, thinking all this was done in mockery, and to add insult to insult, forgot his former forbearance, and in the extremity of his rage, snatched up his pickaxe, with which he was working, and would have knocked poor little Johnny on the head, had not, at that moment, a most

furious hammering in the rock met his ear, from the end of the gallery. Thinking that this was an indication where the rich ore might be found, for he had toiled all that day with very little effect, his covetousness overcame even his fury; and he rushed forward to find the exact spot before the mysterious hammering could cease.

No sooner was he gone, than from out an obscure chink in the rock, near where Johnny stood, popped Pixy Gathon; with his usual joyousness of spirit, he tumbled bead over heels by way of frolic, without doing the slightest injury to a large bright bottle, shining like gold, and almost as big as himself, which he carried under his arm. At length he squatted down after his fashion, and indulging in a hearty laugh to think how he had provoked, played upon, and finally deceived Tregarrens, he bade Johnny get up in all haste and follow him.

Johnny lost not a moment in obeying his whimsical friend; and they soon came beneath the shaft, where was hanging (suspended from aloft) the empty bucket, at a considerable height from the ground on which they stood.

“Get in this moment,” said the Pixy, “and I will give the signal to those above to raise the bucket.”

“I cannot reach it,” said Johnny, “it is so high above my head.”

“Never mind that,” replied little Gathon, “but catch hold of my tail; and I’ll whisk you into it in a second. But first take this bottle; it is filled with gold. Take it to your father; it will make him a rich man for life. It is honestly come by; for I’ve dug deep in the earth to get it up for him; and I make him a present of it. But, though he will not see me, for I don’t shew myself above ground, that’s not the way of the hammering man, I shall be with him before you; for I will keep my word, and this day will pass the last thread through the eye of his needle. Farewell, my boy; and whenever you hear us of the Pixy race ill spoken of as mischievous elves, remember there was one little fellow among them who served you well at the hour of your need; and do us justice as good-natured folk sometimes. when we are pleased, and bestir ourselves at a pinch.”

So saying, the Pixy raised his tail, Johnny seized hold of it as a ship boy would of a rope when in danger of tumbling overboard; he held fast, and in

another second little Gathon whisked him into the bucket, pulled a bell, and up went Johnny from the regions below to the surface of the earth.

Need I tell what followed on that memorable morning? That the one hundred and forty threads were completed; and that Betsy Humming and Trim Trickett were set at liberty and pronounced innocent; for they had successfully undergone the ordeal. Even the innocence of the black cat was made apparent; for Master Constable, on opening the bag in the presence of the justice, found her dead! which, as she had been allowed no food, clearly proved she was not a familiar, who could have lived without it. Sir Simon de Noodle admitted the fact of innocence tested and proved, as pussy had very properly died from an empty stomach. Trim shared the contents of the bottle with Betsy Humming; his little boy was taken into the service of Sir Simon's lady as a very pretty page; and the golden bottle became a sign in Watling Street, London; where multitudes of people, and even King James himself went to satisfy their curiosity by seeing one hundred and forty threads within the eye of the tailor's needle.

II. The Three Trials; Or, The Story Of Crabby Cross

ON the stormy coast of Cornwall there stand, at the summit of the cliffs, the ruins of the castle of Tintagel; a place so ancient that it is said originally to have been built by Prince Arthur, the famous king of the Britons. The rocks beneath run out into the sea in the most fantastic shapes, and the waves, which break against them in sheets of foam, produce a very beautiful effect. Few of the walls and towers of this castle now remain; and they are so old and so weather-beaten that, in colour and in form, they differ very little from the rocks themselves. in the cliffs are two deep caverns; one of these the sea has completely penetrated through, and so much have the cliffs fallen by the continual rush of the waters, that it is only by crossing a narrow slip of land, or isthmus, that the summit, where the ruins now principally stand, can be reached, and that not without difficulty and danger.

Near Tintagel is Trevenna, a mean and strange-looking village, with several scattered cottages and very old houses, built in those times of which you, my young friends, have read, when there were in England the wars of the white and red roses. The traveller who goes to see Tintagel gets out of his carriage at Trevenna, and winds down a steep narrow path in a ravine, which lies between two hills, in making the descent, he passes what is always a cheerful object both to hear and to see in a landscape--a water-mill turned by a stream which rushes down by the side of the ravine from the heights above, and further on falls over some rocks into the sea.

This is a very pretty scene; but in former days it was, much finer, when the castle stood in a perfect state, with all its lofty towers and walls. Then men clad in armour kept watch and ward upon the battlements, to see that no enemy, either by land or by water, might approach unsuspected the dwelling of old Sir Rowland, the Baron of Tintagel. He was famous for his hospitality, and for his courage in battle, and, for his love of mirth and minstrelsy, was commonly called Sir Rowland, the merry and brave.

One night the wind blew in loud gusts round the walls and towers of Tintagel, and the sea roared; and the sky was so dark that not the smallest

star could be seen, and the rain came down in torrents, and it was altogether so stormy and dismal that the Baron would not have turned out a dog in such weather. Whilst he sat in his castle hall, with only two of his followers, over a fire that burnt dull and heavily, either from the quantity of rain falling down the large old chimney, or the dampness of the logs of wood piled upon the hearth, the Baron seemed in a very angry mood. Something had that day happened to vex him; and those who sat with him were afraid of him, and were so silent and grave that they neither amused their master, nor themselves. So cross was the Baron, that, when one of his favourite dogs came crouching to him, bending his head and wagging his tail, in the hope to attract his notice, he gave the poor animal a kick, and sent him, with a howl, towards the hall door. But, no sooner was he got there, than the dog stopped, perked up his ears, listened, and gave a short bark two or three times. Immediately after, the blast of a horn was distinctly heard, notwithstanding the bluster of the wind and the roaring of the sea.

The Baron commanded one of his men to go and enquire who it might be that thus sounded for admission at his gates at such an hour and in such a night. In those days there were no knockers to doors, and a horn, suspended without the castle gates, being blown by whoever wanted to come in, gave notice to the porter or warder of the castle.

The Baron was speedily informed that there stood without a couple of miserable men begging shelter for the night, saying they were half dead from cold and hunger, and did not know where to go, for so great was the darkness they feared to pass on their way before morning. On being asked, what they were like, the warder replied, that, as well as he could see by the light of the torch, as he looked at them for a moment, they seemed to be very coarsely dressed, and had on old wrapping-cloaks; and he thought they spoke like men who were born over seas, in a tone and manner which shewed them (so, at least, he fancied) to be more French or Spanish than English. His opinion was, that they were a couple of those wandering fools, who often come from foreign parts, and go about begging at the castle and the convent doors; and, in return for their entertainment, shew their tricks, and dance and sing, and tell tales, and make merry, for the amusement of the knights and friars.

“If they are such, right welcome shall they be,” said the Baron, “for we lack something to make us merry; for no two owls brought from an old church

tower for my companions, could have been more moping, dull, or dreary, than Gregory and Digory have been to night. They came to pass the hours away with me in this gloomy time; but they can neither sing nor say to lighten the weary moments. Go, ask these new-corners who and what they are? And if merry men and jongleurs from Normandy and Bretagne, right welcome; and if they can dance, tumble, and sing, we will have a joyful night of it, let the storm rage as it may. These fools be better than you or the owls," continued the Baron, laughing at his two solemn companions in no very courteous way. Gregory and Digory bowed in assent to their master's compliment, and were quite as glad as himself at the prospect of a little sport in that gloomy old hall.

The warder soon returned, but with a long face and a very different report. The strangers were neither foreigners nor fools, nor jongleurs, but two very poor men, father and son, who had set out on an affair of business, to carry some wax-tapers much wanted at the little chapel which stood near Nathan's Kieve, and being overtaken by the darkness and the storm, they feared to go on, and so had ventured to beg at the castle-gate a shelter for the night.

The Baron, on hearing this, was mightily disappointed; he was before in a very angry mood, and this new vexation made him furious; and the warder, who was as much disappointed as his master, immediately obeyed his commands to turn them away from his doors as a couple of idle vagabonds; so that, with many ill words, and some kicks and cuffs to boot, the two poor men were sent about their business. They were sadly cast down; so hard did the wind blow, that they could scarcely keep their footing as they once more retraced their steps down the long, steep, and narrow path that led from the castle to the road.

They were disappointed, hungry, cold, and weary; and the bundles of wax-tapers which they bore on their backs were heavy, and required care for fear of breaking by a fall. As they were going along, they eased their hearts by grumbling, and denouncing, in no very gentle terms, the Baron of Tintagel.

"Call him merry and brave, I trow," said the old man; "he's no more mirth in him than old Joan of the wry mouth; for a merry heart likes to make glad the hearts of other men; and a brave man would never go for to kick out a couple of poor bodies like dogs from his door, in such a night as this: as for brave, I don't believe a word about it. He's only brave behind his stone

walls and strong towers; but bring him out of them in such a wind and darkness as this, and see if he would not quake for fear if he heard but the cry of a chough, knowing, as all Cornish men do, that the soul of Prince Arthur is in one of those birds, and comes to give notice of no good luck to the mart who hears its scream in a storm."[5]

"And to turn us poor folk that be so hungry from his doors," said his son, who was a sturdy youth, of a bold and fearless temper. "I be starving for want of a supper. I would seek it and have it, though I called old Joan to help me to it, if I knew where she now dwelt. I'd seek her through fire and water, if any one of they pixy bodies, which folk say she has at her beck and call, would but show the way."

That's as bold and as dangerous a word, Will Penruffin, as ever I heard," said the old man; "take heed of what thou sayest."

But scarcely had sturdy Will uttered those words, when they both saw a pale glimmering light, somewhat in the shape of a ball, of an emerald hue, not unlike the light which the glow-worm gives from her little lamp on a fine summer's night. It seemed to roll on before them.

"That's very strange," said the old man, "I do not half like it."

"But I like it well," said Will, "and I'll follow and see what comes on 't; for, may be, 't is a Pixy light, and that never burns for nothing. I'll after it."

"Do not, my son," said the old man; "it may lead you into harm, into a bog, to the mouth of a mine, or to an open grave in a churchyard. Do not follow it."

"But I will though," said his son: "and I'll see the worst or the best on 't, or my name is not Will Penruffin."

"Ask it what it be first?" said the father much alarmed. "Holla, ho! you Master Jack-a-lantern, what be you, I pray? Tell us if any man may know your business, and what you be, and where you be going?":

"Crabby Cross,
To make up your loss."

These strange words seemed as if spoken by no one near; the wind appeared to carry them as the blast swept over the wanderers' heads.

“Crabby Cross to make up our loss!--that’s to make up our loss of a supper and a bed. What, ho! you young gentleman, that talks as if in the clouds, what do you mean by all this?”

“Follow the light,
‘Twill guide you right:
Follow, follow.”

“That I will,” said Penruffin, “I’ll see what comes of all this, let what will betide.” And away strode sturdy Will with rapid strides down the steep path, his father following and not half liking the adventure, yet afraid to trust his son (who was none of the most obedient) to his own wilful ways. The mysterious ball of fire, if so it could be called, led them on very strangely. Sometimes it rose above their heads high in the air, and shone upon them like the light of the brightest star, then it sunk down upon the ground, and shewed distinctly every pebble or wild flower that was in the path, or by its side. Now it made a dart forward; and then it glided on, making rings as if dancing on its way. Once or twice it turned into an unbeaten track, and at length fixed itself above the door of a very mean cottage with a thatched roof, that stood by the side of a path on a lone and dreary common.

Sturdy Will at once understood that this was to be the end of his journey for the night; and he rapped on the door with the walking-staff which he held in his hand. The light instantly disappeared, and all was in profound darkness.

“Who comes there,” said a voice, in answer to Will’s rap.

“Night wanderers in quest of shelter and a bed,” said the old man.

“Pass on then,”, said the voice within, “this is no place to find a lodging.”

“But we want something more. than that,” exclaimed Will, “we be hungry; we want--”

“Something more than that! what mean you?” continued the unseen speaker. “Who led you here?”

“Crabby Cross,
To make up our loss,”

said Will boldly, “that’s all I know about the matter.”

Immediately there sounded from within peals of laughter; but laughter so strange it was more like the cackling of hens, when one of them exulting in having laid an egg, sets the whole poultry yard in commotion. The door opened, though no one seemed to turn the key, or to drop bar or bolt; but open it flew and in walked Will, as bold as a lion, unheeding his father, who kept pulling him back by the cloak, for he did not half like going in, but as Will would go on, his father followed after him.

On entering, they found themselves in a small low room, surrounded by walls of stone; a wood fire burning on the hearth, and a lamp dimly on the table, which served more to show the gloom and discomfort of the place than any other purpose. A little old woman, who seemingly had just quitted her seat in the chimney nook, stood ready to receive the strangers. She was very ungainly to look upon. Her dress was of the coarsest brown serge, and patched with rags of many colours. Her neck bare, dark, thin and shrivelled, resembled that of a tortoise. Her eyes were black and fierce, the lids red, sore and inflamed; whilst her mouth was strangely twisted, not so much by disease, as by a cross sour temper. Such was old Joan of the wry mouth.

There were many curious things, both living and dead, in that small low room. A very large black cat with green eyes was seated in the chair usually occupied by its mistress. A couple of owls were at roost on a piece of wood conveniently placed for them in a little corner recess. A toad was lying at his ease upon the hearth, as a number of unusually large black beetles ran about it, and seemed to enjoy the warmth of the embers. Many herbs were hanging up in dried bundles to the rafters of the ceiling; and a raven chained by one leg, was perched on the back of the same chair, where the black cat, with her tail curled round her, and her fore legs erect, sat purring with vast content and satisfaction, nor seemed at all tempted to move from her station by several mice which crept in and out of their holes directly under the owls' roost; and they also appeared disposed to do the little animals no harm.

Joan of the wry mouth proceeded to question the new-corners in a very short manner; and sturdy Penruffin, as bold as sturdy, at once satisfied her curiosity, by telling her what had that night befallen him and his father. How they had sought shelter at the castle of the old baron, Sir Rowland, called the merry and brave, and had been turned away from his door; Will's desire expressed aloud to seek a supper and a bed, if he knew how to reach

the dwelling of the good old dame (for so he was civil enough to call old Joan), in whose presence he now stood, the appearance of the mysterious light, and lastly his father's great need of a supper and a bed as well as his own.

Old Joan heard him very attentively to an end, and then saying, would he do three things which she required, all his wants should be supplied, and his father's also; she bade him answer at once, Yes or No.

Will's father, who had no liking either for the place or for old Joan, or for her blind bargain, would have inter posed; but the young Penruffin, before his sire could speak, stretched out his great rough hand and his brawny arm from under his cloak, seized the bony hand of the witch, and causing her withered arm to ache to the very elbow with the vehemence of his shake, said, in a loud voice, as he stamped his foot on the ground, "Three things! three times three things will I do at thy bidding, mother, so that thou wilt but keep thy word."

Joan seized a long broom, which stood near her chair, about which was twisted a live snake; and flourishing it over 'Will's head, exclaimed--

"For weal or for woe; for blessing or ban;
Old Joan keeps her word to woman or man."

The bargain was thus sealed; and no sooner was it done, than such a strange combination of noises filled the little room as never the like was heard before. The owls hooted; the cat set up a caterwauling, the mice squeaked, the toad croaked, the snake hissed, and half a dozen of black hens made their appearance from some unobserved nook; these last surrounded Will, and made such a cackling as nothing could be compared to it for discordant sounds.

"My family bid you welcome," said old Joan; "and now for your promise, you must fulfil that given to me; and if you go well through it, and never flinch, then a supper and a bed shall be yours, such as the churl of Tintagel, when he makes merry in hall, would never have given to you or yours. Now for the proof of your mettle, if you be a man."

Here 'Will's father would again have interposed; but old Joan very unceremoniously swept her broom across his mouth, so that when he endeavoured to speak, his son could not understand a word he said. She then bade him sit down and be quiet in a chair near the fire; and gave him

the assurance that, if he did not play the fool and meddle with her and his Son, he should presently have a good supper; but, if he disturbed her again, she vowed she would turn him out, as the bluff Baron had done, to wander in the dark and in the midst of the storm. He obeyed, though reluctantly, for indeed he could not help himself; and seeing into what a house his son's imprudence had brought him, he thought it best to be quiet, for fear of enraging so wicked and so powerful a witch as old Joan, She now proceeded to her work.

First she drew a large circle with white chalk round Will; and commanded him to hold his peace as he stood within it. She next loosed the snake from her broomstick, threw it within the circle, and bade Will to seize it and wind it round his arm. No sooner had the reptile fallen within the magic ring, than it lengthened, and it grew and it swelled till it became a monstrous beast, almost as big as the Boa Constrictor that may now be seen at the Zoological gardens in a glass case. But Will Penruffin, the sturdy and bold, held out his arm and let the creature twist round it at its own will. Joan laughed like a wild cat as she saw her commands so well obeyed; and raising her skinny hand, with the forefinger extended, so as to be in a direct line opposite the snake's head, said--

"Draco, Draco, well and good,
Bite his thumb and draw his blood."

Will the bold, with a firm countenance and without altering his position, suffered Draco to open his huge mouth, and to plunge his fangs into the fleshy part of his thumbs The hag clapped her hands for joy at the sight of his unflinching courage; and, holding forth the broomstick, caught the snake. upon it before he could inflict a second wound. The moment she withdrew it from the circle, it shrunk into its original size. She looked round, and observing Will's father shaking and trembling in every limb, though silent with fear; she dashed at the man the snake's tail, and told him that he was an old fool not to know a harmless snake from a viper. She next turned to Will, stamped her foot on the floor, and thrice called--

"Little Lynx, little Lynx,
Come through the chinks."

Immediately a strange-looking little creature popped through a hole in the door. The creature was not more than seven or eight inches high, with wings

like a gnat, and a curly poll, which looked more like the down of a bird than hair, with a very queer and comical face; black, sharp eyes, like those of a mouse; being quite naked, and having a little, short tail behind, that he whisked and twisted about at pleasure.

“That’s my pretty Pixy,” said old Joan. “What hast thou there?”

“Fern-seed, night-shade, dew and dill,
With herbs that work my mistress’ will.”

The witch snatched them from the Pixy’s tiny hand; bade him begone, and gave them to Penruffin. “This is thy reward for obeying my first command; the second is now to come,” she said. It was of a more mysterious kind than the former. Again old Joan enjoined Will neither to move nor to offer the least resistance whatever should betide him. Having said this, she called aloud--

“Crabby Cross, Crabby Cross,
Come to Will’s loss.”

Another little Pixy appeared of a far more strange appearance than his brother. He had the face of an ill-disposed child; round but roguish. His small legs and thighs were covered all over with hair; his tail, though short, was more bushy than that of little Lynx, and he had the wings of a bat, both on his shoulders and at his heels. No sooner had he appeared than he alighted at once on the broomstick of the witch; catching hold of it by his tiny fat fingers, and whirled himself round, and round, and round it, in his Pixy fun, so that it dazzled Will’s eyes only to see it.

Old Joan, who did not enjoy this sport so much as the Pixy, shook him off, and sent him tumbling upon the ground. He would have got a severe, fall, had not a dozen or two other Pixies, till that moment unseen, rushed forward and bore him up among them as their leader and master. Joan ordered him to leave off his antics and to do her bidding. Whereupon Crabby Cross made a spring and seated himself at once upon her shoulder, and received in a whisper her commands. He gave three tumbles, head over heals, in token of obedience; and immediately after popped through the key-hole, followed by his train of attendant Pixies.

In less than a minute, there came a great bounce against the door, and in the Pixies rolled a large bee-hive, which had been taken from the cottage garden. Crabby Cross, assisted by his fellows, seized upon an old kettle that

stood in the chimney nook, whilst little Lynx and two or three dozen more snatched up old Joan's ladle, and though thus heavily burthened, assisted by a whole army of Pixies, they absolutely stuck the old kettle on the top of Will Penruffin's head; and there began to batter upon it with might and main; and the bees began to swarm upon Will's face and head in such a manner that notwithstanding all his courage he gave himself up for a dead man. But convinced she was obeyed, and that Will would really die before he spoke, the hag bade Crabby Cross desist; and at her bidding, kettle, ladle, bees and hive were as speedily moved off as they had been moved on. And now came the last trial of sturdy Will.

"Chick Pick, Chick Pick, come and soon,
Catch me a beam from the silver moon;
Make Penruffin ride with thee,
Over the land, over the sea.
If he flinch, or if he fear,
Let the winds toss him far and near;
'With dead men's bones and sticks of yew,'
Beat him, pinch him, black and blue."

"We'll beat him, pinch him, black and blue," was the chorus echoed from a thousand little throats, to this command of old Joan; and in came such a troop of hens and chickens as never before was seen.

The leader of these was a fat black hen, which, like the snake, had no sooner entered within the charmed circle than it rose into a monstrous bird. Myriads of little wretches, some with heads like those of old men, others with baby faces; some with wings of birds, others with those of bats, or flies, or gnats; and a thousand other winged creatures, all gathered round Will, and fairly pushed him on the hen's back; so that he was obliged to sit across it for safety; as, most marvellous of all, she dashed through the cottage window, which little Lynx opened to make way for her; and though she and Will were two such large beings, they passed through it with all the ease imaginable, never even touching its sides.

Where they went to, Will's old father did not know, for he neither saw their flight nor their return, so frightened was he. And Will himself afterwards declared that he really could not very well remember where he had been; though he was not without a suspicion he had, in that brief flight, ascended above the storm and the clouds which hung over Tintagel, and had a peep at

the man in the moon; who was, as he described him, an old gentleman with a long white beard, and everything about him seemed made of silver. He supposed, but could not take upon him to say it with certainty, that a moon-beam had been caught in this way, as when the black hen brought him down again and whisked him once more in safety through the window; he (Will) unquestionably had a moon-beam in his cap, which old Joan took carefully off, as he thought, with the intention to put it into pickle.

At all events, she was so well pleased with his courage and his having kept his word to obey her in three things, that she desired him to apply the charmed herbs, brought by Pixy little Lynx, to his bitten thumb, which immediately healed. He likewise, at her bidding, washed his face with the dew, also given with the herbs by the Pixy, so that not a sting from a bee remained to give him pain. And as to the fern-seed, he cast down that to the great black hen which brought him back again; and she fell to picking it up and eating it so heartily, that whilst she was thus engaged he slipped off her back without damage; and then artfully scattering a few seeds beyond the circle he led her out of it; and she returned to her natural size and shape, and cackled off in quest of her chickens.

And now came Will's reward. Old Joan was not worse than her word, as he had kept his. She gave him and his father a fine fat goose for supper; delicately cooked by the Pixies, with apple sauce. And to this was added a pie made of young rooks, a favourite dish in Devonshire; and as nice a junket formed of rennet and cream, as ever came from the hand of the daintiest dairy maid of the 'West of England. Old Penruffin was so well regaled that he forgot all his nervous frights and fears, and drank Joan's health with hearty good will, in as nice a mug of mead, the product of her bees of the former year, as ever was tasted.

The supper ended, she gave them both as comfortable a bed, on a large heap of clean straw, as man could desire to rest upon. And as Will Penruffin's nerves were a little shaken by his midnight journey on the hen's back, and he could not immediately fall asleep, according to custom, as soon as he laid his head on the pillow, old Joan resolved to soothe and to compose him to rest with melody. At her command, the bellows began blowing a soft and gentle air, as the kitchen door creaked to a perfect tune, the cuckoo clock set to playing, and the wind came humming through the window with the most

plaintive and drowsy sounds. Will was so lulled and charmed that he soon out-snored the music.

Morning came; a clear, bright, beautiful morning; and welcome it was after so stormy a night. No sooner did the first beams of the sun tip the clouds with red and gold, and make the blue sky look even more lovely than it naturally did by force of contrast, than Will; who was still fast asleep, felt his nose tweaked in a very queer way; whilst his mouth (which he had been sleeping with wide open) was tickled inside as if by a hair; and his ears pulled for him in right good earnest.

Scarcely awake, he put up both: hands, and rubbed his eyes; and in doing so, to his extreme surprise, pushed off a little wretch who was sitting astride upon his nose kicking it for amusement, as if he had been laying his heels into the sides of a Pixy pony. My little gentleman was very dapper, being dressed in a green cloak and hood, very like a peas-cod; with a white cap, resembling a pea blossom, upon his head, altogether very trim and pretty. His face was gay and handsome; he wore moustachios on his upper lip; there as a free air about him, and a dash of the saucy fellow. His under clothes were tight to his shape; but with a little hole behind for the convenience of swinging carelessly his tail, which was curly and silky. The other Pixies were less striking, though still well looking, clothed and trimly dressed. They were all singing in their small squeaking way--

“The moon is a-bed, and up is the sun;
Get up, Penruffin, and have your fun.”

Will, now fairly awake, obeyed the summons; he shook off the Pixy company, who took it in good part, and flying through the keyhole, they went to announce to old Joan that her guest was risen and ready for breakfast.

Whereupon that ancient dame regaled him and his father with a bowl of milk fresh from the cow, and some hot cakes baked on the hearth, no doubt by the Pixies. Their meal ended, both father and son were about to depart, but as they would not be ungrateful for their good cheer, they proceeded to offer their thanks to old Joan in their rough Cornish fashion.

Whereupon old Joan bade Will put his hand into the pocket of his vest before he departed; he instantly obeyed her command, when what was his surprise to find in it a purse filled with several pieces of gold coin, as bright

as if just struck at the king's mint. On opening the purse to count the contents, for he was desirous to ascertain the amount of his riches, out jumped Crabby Cross, as queer-looking, with as roguish an air as ever. The Pixy thus addressed Penruffin, as he stood for a minute on the pieces of gold which Will held in the open palm of his hand--

"Three trials you bore for your supper and bed;
Without sign of fear or feeling of dread;
Old Joan keeps her word for blessing or ban,
And with gold thus rewards a bold and brave man."

III. The Seven Crosses Of Tiverton; Or, The Story Of Pixy Picket

THE events I am now about to relate occurred soon after that cruel king, the crook-backed Richard, was slain-in the battle of Bosworth Field; and the Earl of Richmond, who won the day, ascended the throne of England, as Henry, the seventh of that name.

During the wars which ended in his downfall, Richard, being so wicked a man himself, was joined by many men of high and low degree, who were also very wicked. Among these was Randolph Rowle, who, for the brutality of his disposition, was commonly called Randolph the Ruffian. He had served for many years under the late King Henry the Sixth, and (though it was never proved against him) was strongly suspected, on account of his hard-heartedness, of having been chosen as one of the murderers who assisted in smothering the poor little princes in the Tower.

Long before this he had married a young woman of his native town, Tiverton, in Devonshire, who was much too good for him. He used her very ill; and though he had seven children, none of them lived to be a year old. Strange things were said about the way in which it was supposed they came by their deaths. Their poor mother, whose name was Bridget, had a very tender heart, and grieved for the loss of her babes, as much as she rejoiced whenever her husband went away to the wars and left her at home; for then she had a little quiet, with nobody to beat and ill-use her. But as her husband took with him all the little she had gained in money by working hard to help her neighbours, and even deprived her of what wheat she had stored up. by gleaning in the fields, she was very poor and needy. The last time he went away was to fight in Bosworth Field; and then he left her with only seven eggs in the world to live upon; and these she had concealed in an old, cracked oaken bowl that stood in a dark place in the corner cupboard. To add to her troubles, her hen had left off laying eggs.

In the evening of the day of Randolph’s departure, when the winds were blowing and the rain beating in heavy showers against her cottage window, Bridget sat over a wood-fire made by a few sticks which she had collected

in the forest, thinking upon her hard fate, and what she should do to help herself. Suddenly she heard a moaning without, accompanied by a gentle tapping at her door. Bridget rose up in haste, for she fancied this must be the cry of some benighted traveller; and so kind was her heart that distress never cried to her in vain, for if she had but a crust of bread, she would gladly share it with any poor soul who had none. So she opened the door at once, when in came the queerest looking little creature she had ever seen, dressed almost in rags, dripping wet and shivering with cold.

It seemed to be a child, and a very small one, with a fat round face, a curly poll, a snub nose, and blue cunning eyes, but very sparkling and pretty. But the most strange thing of all was that there was a look of a woman in the child's face, which Bridget did not know very well how to describe when she told the story: so she used to say--"it was for all the world like a little old child, neither one thing nor the other, and yet for all that very pretty." As to the wet rags and the hair, she did not know what to think of them either, for though she wiped down the creature's locks with the tail of her own petticoat, as hard as a groom wipes down a horse after a heat, and got all the wet from its head, yet the tail of the petticoat remained bone dry, and looked cleaner and better than when it was new; and when she took the urchin to, the fire in her dripping clothes, they dried in a trice, but never once smoked!

This done she set the little one down on the low stool, with two legs and a half, in the chimney corner; and she sat as well, not once rocking, as if never a broken leg had been under her. Bridget now asked the little girl her name. She answered it was PICKET, and said that she had lost her way in the dark, and begged for something to eat, as she declared herself to be very hungry. Bridget rose up with a sigh to think how little she had to offer, but she took from the cracked bowl in the cupboard one of the seven eggs, and asked little Picket if she would like to have it boiled or roasted, telling her that six more eggs was all she had in the world.

"Six more eggs!" said the child, "then pray, ma'am, be so good as to give them to me; for I have in all six brothers and sisters at home, and all very hungry;" and, like 'Wordsworth's little girl, she added--" 'We are seven;' and we have neither father nor mother, and don't know what to do for a supper. So give the seven eggs to me, and I will begone, for the rain is over, and I can see through the window the moon above the clouds, and I shall

now be able to find my way home, and my brothers and sisters and I will all sup together." So without waiting for ceremony, the forward little thing took the seven eggs, and tied them up in a bit of a rag that she wore like a cloak about her.

"You are welcome to the eggs, my dear," said the good-natured Bridget, "and as for your poor little brothers and sisters, I pity them very much. It makes me cry afresh to hear their number; for I have lost seven dear babes myself, and am now a childless woman." She wiped her eyes as she spoke, and told the little girl that if ever she could serve her, or her brothers and sisters, in any way, though she was very poor, she would never refuse to help the fatherless."

'The child seemed very sensible of her kindness; and asked her what would make her the most happy in the world.

"To have just such a pretty girl as you are, though not to look quite so much of a woman at your age."

'No sooner had she said this, than the strange little creature began to jump and leap about in a way that Bridget thought she would break all the eggs she had in her cloak; and then she laughed and began to sing; and going towards the door, whisked out of it, the good woman could scarcely tell how, singing very gaily these words as she departed:--

"Seven given in charity
Seven shall return to thee,
In a hopeful progeny."

Bridget stood dumb with surprise, and did not know what to make of all this. She crossed herself and blessed, herself, and went to bed in a very doubtful frame of mind. The next morning when she got up, she saw something. glitter in her old shoe, and found to her amazement it was a piece of silver coin, fresh and new as if just from the King's mint. Next the hen saluted her ears with the greatest cackling and ran about the yard, as if half mad with delight. Bridget found she had laid an egg, and so the fowl continued to do every day after for weeks together, till there were enough eggs for her to hatch chickens; and then she reared seven of the finest that ever were seen, But the greatest wonder is yet to be told.

A few months after all this had happened, as Randolph Rowle was one day returning home, his absence having been shorter than usual, he observed a

great many people, young and old, about his house, all talking, moving, lifting up their hands and eyes, as if in amazement. The stir and bustle was considerable, for all the women in the village seemed assembled together.

“What’s the matter?” inquired Randolph as he approached them, “Are you all gone mad to-day, or what has happened that you so beset my door?”

“O, Master Randolph Rowle, don’t you know what has come to pass?” said a neighbour.

“How should I?” he replied. “I have been up to Lunnun with some of my old fellows at arms to try to get taken into the service of the new king, but he will not have us; and so here am I home again, and nothing better in fortune.”

“Nothing better in fortune!” exclaimed one of the gossips. “O Master Randolph Rowle, you are the luckiest man in the world; there never was such a thing known or heard of before.”

“You ‘ll be the envy of half the great barons and ladies in the county,” said a young woman.

“You’ll be talked of far and near,” said an old one.

“For what?” exclaimed Randolph. “You have all tongues that run fast enough, but will not one of you tell me what all this is about?”

“And such a blessing upon your head,” said an old grandmother who was present.

And I hope you will remember the poor neighbours who first told you of it,” said another speaker; “and will give me something to drink your health with, for I am quite ready to do a neighbour’s part.”

“And I hope you’ll give us all something to drink your health with, and to bring good luck on your roof, for as many more blessings every year,” said another gossip. And so they went on chattering like magpies.

Randolph grew angry; his ears were stunned with twenty women all talking together, whilst he knew not what it was about. At last he grew rough, and lifting up a great walking staff that he held in his hand, vowed he would clear his door of them all if they would not tell him at once, and in plain terms, what had happened.

On hearing this, an old woman advanced, inclined her body a little, spread out her two hands open before her, looked up in his face, and said in a sort of scream, indicative of an excess of joyous congratulation--

“Why, Randolph Rowle, this it be then.--You be the happiest man in all the new king’s kingdom; you be the father of seven children, all alive and well, and all born at the same time; and if you will give me something to buy spoons, I’ll stand godmother to them all myself. Joy, joy to you, Randolph Rowle! Hurra, hurra!”

“And pray give something to wet the throats of us gossips, for bringing you the good news,” and all the women, old and young, huddled round him, each claiming a reward for herself, for having been the first to announce it, and give him joy.

Randolph instinctively put his hands up to his ears, and neither seemed overjoyed, nor at all gladdened, as any honest father would have been at the hearing of such a piece of good luck, as having seven babies born to him all in one day. He rather looked vexed and angry about it; and protesting that not the cackling of the geese on the common, nor the squalling of all the cats in the village, nor the hum of the bee-hives, could so vex his ears and madden his senses as their tongues; he gave the old crone who had in the plainest manner told him the news a poke with his staff, kicked and pushed the others aside with heels and elbows, made his way within his own door, and banged it after him in all their faces.

Randolph found his wife sitting up, quite well, nicely dressed in the neatest clothes she had ever worn. The nicest cradle, covered with a white satin quilt, was by her side, and in it seven sweet pretty babies, just as if made out of wax; and as like the one to the other as so many pats of butter.

The sight of so numerous a family caused Randolph to be very angry; and without giving one kind word, or even. look, to his wife, he said, in a’, rough voice and manner, “‘What’s all this? Seven little wretches to call me father, and to keep me day and night working for them, and starving myself. I shall do no such thing. They shall not stay here; I will not have them. And what’s all this? You so fine as my lady the Countess of Devon, up at the Castle; and white satin, too, thrown over this bundle of kittens. How comes all this?, I don’t understand it.”

“I am sure, I can’t tell you, husband,” said Bridget, “all, I know is, that neither the clothes, nor the cradle, nor the white satin quilt cost us the smallest bit of money; for I found them all by the bed-side when I opened my eyes; on waking from the first sleep that I got after the dear babes were born. And O husband, for the love of all the saints, don’t call these seven sweet, pretty, dear, beautiful little babes, *kittens.* They are human creatures, and all girls. And when they are made Christians, I hope they will live to be good ones, and a comfort to you. So do give them a father’s blessing, and be thankful for having seven of them sent all at one time to make up for the number we lost formerly.”

“I bless them!” said Randolph,” for what? For bringing me seven plagues--seven mouths to fill instead of one. I can’t feed babes as thrushes do their young, with worms; and my wish, wife, is, that these seven little wretches were food for them in the church-yard.”

“O Randolph, don’t say such a wicked thing, for fear the roof should fall down upon us and crush us both with them. To think such an unnatural wish should come from the lips of a father, it is shocking! But I’ll work for the babes day and night to maintain them. And I’ll do all for them myself till they are old enough to get their own living. So do now be a good man for once, and bless your own dear children.”

Randolph looked down upon the poor innocents sleeping in the cradle, but with no relenting expression., He spoke not a word.

“Don’t they look just like so many daisies, sweet, pretty dears,” said Bridget, her admiration of her little progeny inspiring her with the first and only poetical mode of speech she ever ventured to use in the presence of her husband. He answered her by calling her a fool for her pains; and, without stopping to say another word, left the cottage and went in search of old Pancras Cole, the woman of the evil eye, as she was called, who lived in a lonely hut by the road-side near the neighbouring forest. It was said that, when she had nothing else to do, she would amuse herself by taking a seat on a rock by the way-side, and there would work some spell to the injury of every traveller mounted on horse-back who refused to give her money; that she would make his horse stumble or throw the rider before he got to his journey’s end. Randolph the ruffian had, on more occasions than the present, been seen to seek her when his humour or his passions, like her own, were disposed to work evil.

Pancras Cole was seated on the rock as he approached her. She was dressed in an old, dark gown and cloak, with a hood thrown over her head, leaving the face and forehead uncovered. She had the most formidable aspect. Though seated, she appeared to be a very tall woman, strong and robust, with the muscles of her arms so marked, that they looked almost like whip-cords drawn round them. They were quite bare nearly up to her shoulders, for her cloak was thrown back. Her face was dark, her eyes fiery and dark also, and she had a black beard on the upper lip and about the chin; it would have been a great improvement to her, had she sent for the village barber to shave it. She was leaning on her staff, and seemed to be looking out for a corner, when Randolph approached. Before he could speak, she thus greeted him.

“Dogs have whelps more than are needed;
Kittens have their deaths unheeded.
Why should seven make thee moan?
Babes they are, and all thine own.
Seven! in a basket heap them,
Seven! let the river keep them.

“Good,” said Randolph the ruffian, “Mother, you and I never differ in our way of thinking.”

“Nor of acting,” exclaimed Paneras Cole, “but what you would’ do, must be done before the moon wanes tomorrow night. And more than that, Randolph Rowle,” she added, “follow my counsel, and bread and ale and a stout sword and good pay shall be yours.”

“What must I do? I would go below the earth and take service with that dark gentleman you serve so well upon it, mother, for such guerdon as you tell me of,” said the reprobate Randolph, with a grin which was the nearest approach to a smile his countenance ever assumed. “Tell me what to do, and where to go, and I am not the man to flinch in the matter.”

Go and take service with the Baron La Zouch, who was King Richard’s friend,” said the hag. “He has been fined heavily, and his castle seized, for serving the dead king; but the living one has granted him pardon for his life, and he is about to thank King Henry for it as I would have him. He is secretly drawing together a band of discontented men, and stirring up some of the great barons against him. I have given him my blessing. If this

treason thrives, you will be a made man, Randolph Rowle. Go before the moon wanes to-morrow night, and, by the power of my art, I foresee you will be taken Into his service."

"And the seven imps at home?" said the profane Randolph.

Do this," replied old Pancras Cole; and she rose up and whispered something in Randolph's ear, then raised her arm, and pointed with her "skinny finger" in an opposite direction; and, bidding the evil one prosper him in all his ways, left him to himself, went into the cottage, and shut the door after her.

Now, my young friends, you want to know what she said to him. But how can I tell you? No one was there to hear it; and as neither Pancras Cole nor Randolph Rowle ever made known the subject of that whisper to any living creature, it is quite impossible that I can be acquainted with it. But, perhaps, the next event in my tale may enable us to guess what it was.

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In the days of which I write, there were neither stagecoaches, flies, gigs, nor rail-roads. Gentlemen and ladies generally travelled on horse-back; and that through such bad roads (for this was long before Mr. M'Adam was born), they seldom made a journey of any distance, unless compelled so to do. They generally contented themselves, if they lived in the country, with riding about hunting and hawking on their own lands. There were, also, no newspapers in those days; so that, what with the want of such coaches and rail-roads, and newspapers, news of any kind travelled slowly; and an event which was very stirring in one village might not be known in the next for some days, or even weeks, after. This I tell you, my young friends, in order to account for Randolph Rowle's good luck, in having seven little girls all at once, not being so speedily or so much known in the neighbourhood as the gossips round his door, who wanted to get some money from him, had predicted.

At the time of my story, there was a certain Countess of Devon, a widow, whose son was a little boy, and under the care of a good master at Winchester School. The Countess took charge of all his castles and lands till he should be of age to take possession of them himself; and she lived always in one or the other of these strongholds. Now there was, among them, a very noble residence, which had been built early in the twelfth

century. It stood on the north side of the market-town of Tiverton; and to this day, though but a portion of its ruins are in existence, it forms an object of curiosity with the traveller and the antiquary. The ruins consist of a large gateway and some strong towers and walls, partially overgrown with ivy.

Just before the opening of my tale, the Countess had been much annoyed by a law-suit, commenced against herself and her little son by the wicked Baron La Zouch, who set up a most unjust claim to Tiverton Castle, pretending he had a right to the lands on which it stood. But, after a great deal of time and money spent to no purpose, he lost his suit, and the Countess remained in full possession of the castle.

In the times of which I write, the town and neighbourhood of Tiverton were different in many respects to what they now are. A large park and forest belonging to the Earls of Devon formed part of the castle domain, and the river ran through woods that have long since been destroyed, so that it would now be in vain to seek for the spot where the good and pious Countess of Devon erected a little chapel or oratory, to which she was fond of retiring to pray and meditate, without being disturbed by any of her numerous household or guests. The chapel was some distance from the castle, but she took a pleasure in walking to it alone early of a morning.

In one of these walks, she came suddenly upon a man who was just about turning into a narrow path, which led through the wood to the river. She observed he was carrying a basket, and that when he saw her, he first made as if he would pass her at once; then he stood back, then he moved forward again, and though he put down his load for a minute to doff his cap to her, for he knew who she was, yet he snatched the basket up again in a very hasty manner, and seemed so desirous to get on, that he had hardly the patience to let her pass.

“Good man,” said the Countess, who thought there was something very strange in all this, “what makes you in such a hurry, and what have you there in that basket?”

Whelps, my lady, whelps.”

“Whelps!” said the Countess. “Do let me see them.”

They are not worth looking at, my lady,” replied the man; “they are only puppies not worth the rearing.”

“And what are you going to do with them?” inquired the Countess.

“Drown them, my lady; toss them into the river; such whelps are not worth the rearing.”

“I will see them,” said the Countess. “Put the basket down.”

“They are my own, and I have a right to do what I please with them,” muttered the man. “If I open the basket, they’ll jump out and run away, and I’ve no time to spare to catch them: so good-morrow to you, my lady.” And with that he attempted to push past her in a very rude manner.

But this purpose was not so easily effected. The Countess, though alone, was not unattended; she had by her side a guard who understood and obeyed the slightest sign she gave him of her pleasure.

“Seize him, Harold, seize him!” accompanied by a motion of her hand, caused a noble bloodhound in a moment to fly at the fellow, and seize him by the throat. In the struggle his foot slipped, and he fell with some violence on the ground, striking the back of his head against the roots of an oak-tree that crossed the path. The fellow was somewhat stunned by the blow. The Countess, whose command over her dog was no less surprising than his intelligence in obeying her, now made some sign, and the bound held the man by the throat, but without throttling him.

In another moment she removed the lid from the basket; when who shall speak her surprise, on beholding what then met her eyes! Seven sweet beautiful little babies, all put together with their heads uppermost, like birds in a nest, and some opening their mouths, as if asking for food, like those birds, from their dams.

“O you cruel, wicked man!” said the Countess. “But you shall not escape punishment; my people shall teach you to know that murder can neither be intended nor committed on my domain without chastisement.”

At that moment, all the seven babies began to cry, and the Countess became sorely embarrassed what to do, between her desire to save the children, and to detain the man who would have destroyed them. But the lives of the former were, she justly judged, of the first consequence; and no time was to be lost, for they seemed very hungry, and much in want of bread-pap. She, therefore, at once put the lid on the basket, but found she could not carry it without assistance. Calling off Harold from the man, she bade the dog take

one handle in his mouth, whilst she held the other, and in this way proposed to carry it between them to the castle. But the noble hound, who seemed on that morning to possess even more than his accustomed intelligence, relieved her by taking at once the basket in his mouth, and without any help whatever, wagged his tail, and trotted off with it towards the castle.

The Countess feared to remain without her guard, near such a ruffian; and observing that time fellow was now raising himself up from the ground, she said to him, “Repent; and be thankful that you have been prevented doing a most cruel deed,” and followed the dog as fast as her steps could carry her.

The Countess of Devon truly did a good deed, in saving the lives of Randolph Rowle’s seven poor little babes from the wicked purpose of their unnatural father. No one knew what became of him; but, after many enquiries, she found out the mother, and was very kind to her; but, so much had Bridget fretted for the loss of her babes, and so ill had she been used by her husband, that her health failed her very much. Seeing this, and thinking it not safe that the poor woman should remain where so cruel a husband might be likely to return some day or other to molest her, the Countess persuaded Bridget to go to a distance, and recommended her to the abbess of a convent in Cornwall, where she might make herself useful in household work to help the nuns.

Bridget agreed to the proposal; and, before she left the castle, took leave of her seven sweet babies very affectionately; and the Countess made the poor woman quite happy, by assuring her that she would do all for the dear little creatures just the same as if they were children of her own. She kept her word; had them christened, and gave them an education fit for the first ladies in the land.

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PART II.

FIFTEEN years had passed away since the events related in the last chapter. The Countess’ son had grown up a man, had gone to travel for the improvement of his mind and manners, and left his good lady-mother in the full command of his castle of Tiverton, where she liked principally to dwell.

The Countess now began to consider that it was high time for her seven daughters,. as she used to call Patience, Katherine, Margaret, Mabel, Alice, Isabel, and Ursula, to see something of the world, and be introduced into

company, so that they might appear at the grand dinners and balls she often gave at the castle. The Countess always kept her son's birth-day, and made a great feast upon it to her friends, her followers, and tenants; and the poor were not forgotten on so joyous an occasion. True, he was now absent; but she loved him so dearly, that she determined to have the feast just as usual; and as it so happened that, fifteen years before, she preserved the seven children on her son's birth-day, she determined to make it a festival of more than usual splendour. So grand was everything to be, with such plenty of good cheer, that it took a whole month to prepare for the day. When it came at last, on the 15th of July, though it was St. Swithin's day, not a drop of rain fell; and the sun shone out so bright, and with such a full face, as if he could never tire with looking upon the revelry, and giving a warm welcome to the guests.

Everything was ready; the Countess sat at the head of a long table in the old castle hall. Knights, ladies, esquires, and pages, were all present in their gayest attire; whilst her seven fair daughters, the children of adoption, sat by her, four on the right, and three on the left hand. They were all dressed in white satin, and could only be known, the one from the other, by the variety in colour of the knots of ribband which they wore upon their bosoms. So much, indeed, were they alike, that the Countess herself found it difficult to distinguish them. They had all light brown curly hair, fine blue eyes, and necks and cheeks like lilies and roses. Beautiful as they were, they were quite as good as they were beautiful; and so grateful, that the only contest they ever had among themselves was, which should do most to oblige and serve the good lady who had been to them all such a good friend and benefactress.

It was really a very pretty sight, to see both them and the dinner; how plentiful it was; how gaily the tables were set out with festoons of flowers; how the cups of wine and mead went sparkling round the board. It was cheering to hear with what a shouting the healths of the Countess of Devon, her absent son, and her seven fair daughters, were given in the hall, as the old harper struck up his harp and sang to it a song which made the old roof echo again with its joyous sounds.

Just as the harper was concluding his song, the horn, which hung at the castle gates to announce the arrival of any one who desired admission, sounded loud and long. The Countess was surprised, as all the guests of any

consequence she had invited were already arrived, and seated at the table, and for no common person would the horn blow after that fashion. A page ran in haste up to his mistress, and begged her to go to the window, which looked towards the long avenue that led to the castle, and she would see a sight that would surprise her. The Countess and her seven young ladies, none of whom were wanting in curiosity, did as they were advised to do, and ran to the window, and there saw what I really do not know how to describe, so glorious was it.

There appeared, coming along the Avenue, a sort of small open car, so white and dazzling that it looked as if made of ivory and silver. It was drawn by four cream-coloured ponies, but not larger than ordinary sized dogs.

The harness they had about them was composed of gold and mother-of-pearl; and on their heads, and at their ears, the little animals had bunches of flowers tied up with blue, pink, and green ribbands. Multitudes of little men on foot, each wearing such shining dresses, that it is not possible I can particularize them, were seen around the car, and each carried a javelin in one hand, and a little shield slung across his shoulders. It was quite evident, therefore, these miniature men acted as soldiers.

In front of this guard of honour, walked the musicians; they were very queer and whimsical in their appearance, dresses, and instruments. They were all like little men; but some among them looked old and ugly; and each man who played the fiddle had carved on the top of his instrument a face resembling his own, in all its ugliness. There were Jew's harps, and flutes that seemed to be formed out of old broom sticks; which was the more extraordinary where everything was so fine. Several pot-lids were used by way of cymbals; and the leader of the band, a very pompous little fellow, wearing what was in his day a novelty, a full-bottomed wig, carried a salt-box under his arm, and played upon it with great taste and expression; a set of performers on the marrow-bones and cleaver, probably the finest in Europe, completed the band.

In the car was seated a lady, so very splendidly dressed that to look at her when the beams of the sun fell upon her, as they did on her coming into the court of the castle, was as trying to the eyes, as it is to look upon water, when it reflects the sun's rays. On a nearer view, it was seen that although she was loaded with jewels, she wore nothing by way of ornament but what

in form resembled some object in nature. Her tiara was made by a row of golden-crested wrens; their eyes were of diamonds, and the finest chased gold formed the crown of the birds; whilst round the neck of each was a little collar of the richest gems. Her gown was of the thinest silver tissue; and over it a robe lined with the white and glossy plumage from the breast of the swan.

At the back of her car sat seven ladies, her maids of honour, each carried something in her hand over which was thrown a white napkin; probably to conceal it from the common gaze. There were at least one hundred knights and as many squires, all in the gayest attire, with bright armour, and the richest velvets and jewels, and helmets and bonnets, with diamond and emerald ornaments; and white plumes drooping over their heads. The Countess was lost in wonder; but nothing in this splendid sight so much surprised her as to see how very small were all the gentlemen, the ladies, the car, and the horses. In point of size they really looked just like a set of little children playing at kings and queens, surrounded by their court.

But there they were; and the only probable conjecture the Countess could make was--that they must be people from one of those strange and little known countries, over seas, in the eastern part of the world, which neither in size nor in any thing else resembled the nations of Europe. She had often heard poor pilgrims, who go about from castle to castle telling the wonders they have seen in their travels, speak of such beings. Her son, too, was on his travels; perhaps he had visited the court of some Prince of this description, and might have recommended him with several of his chief nobility, or probably, his Queen, to make a journey to England, and to visit his mother at Tiverton Castle. The Countess told what she thought to those around her; and they all fancied she must be right in her opinion. It was agreed to give the stranger a very handsome and ceremonious reception.

The grand little lady gave her hand to the chamberlain of the castle, who bent down to accommodate his height to hers, as he handed her from her car. All the pages and gentlemen present followed his example in paying their respects to the maids of honour; and many of the household also shewed the most civil attention to the mounted knights and their diminutive horses. At length the whole of the new corners entered the hall. The grand lady directed the master of the salt-box to stop the band, as she was about to make a speech, and to salute the Countess of Devon.

The Countess, surrounded by her seven daughters, received the little lady standing on the dais. She bade the fair stranger, who came about as high as her knee, welcome; and ventured to ask her name and her country.

“The Princess Picket,” she replied, with great dignity; but with a very sweet smile, as if to reassure the Countess, lest the announcement of the very high rank of her guest should be too much for her. The princess was then conducted to the foot-stool that stood before the chair of state, which was too high for her to reach, and seated upon the stool: the maids of honour stood around her, in respectful observance of her pleasure.

The Countess, after many civilities, requested the Princess and her party to take refreshment, which she did not refuse. A nice little table was brought in, and many dainties placed upon it. The Princess Pickett and her ladies pulled and picked a few pieces with their fingers; but seemed to like nothing so well as a junket that was produced; and on that they fell to with all their might, lapped the cream like young kittens, and soon emptied the dish and called for another.

The little gentlemen of the Princess’ suite were regaled at the long board in the hall; and as the readiest way of serving them, for they were not tall enough to touch it, they were set upon the table. They fell to very heartily on the good cheer, and did not spare the wines. Some, indeed, so far forgot themselves, as to take rather too much; and more than one had a tumble on the floor, which only excited peals of laughter among his fellows. But the Princess, who was very dignified, would not sanction anything like riot in her attendants; and saying she had far to travel that night, and must be gone, directed her people to prepare for her departure.

She then rose and very politely complimented the Countess on her hospitality, and on the grace and beauty of her seven fair daughters. The Countess said plainly, they were none of hers, and was much astonished to find that the Princess knew perfectly well their history, more especially when she added, she was aware the lady of the castle on that day celebrated the anniversary of her son’s birth; the same being also the day of her having, fifteen years before, done so good a deed as the saving of the poor babes might truly be called. Before her departure, she wished to give to each young lady some token of her regard; and a word of good advice. She waved her hand to them gracefully; and the girls instantly threw themselves at her feet and declared their readiness to obey her commands.

Princess Pickett was satisfied. She bade them arise; and speaking apart to her maids of honour, they also prepared to fulfil her orders. The first took her station on the right-hand of her mistress, as she beckoned to one of the sisters to approach her.

Patience stepped forward. The Princess then took from the hands of her attendant a beautiful little dog with long curly ears, and presenting it to Patience, said--

“Fidele take--his watchful ear
Will ne’er be closed when danger’s near.”

She next ordered Katharine to come to her; and taking something from another of her ladies in waiting, presented to this sister a small beautifully-carved ivory hand, the fingers of which were rather bent towards the thumb. The Princess spoke--

“Doubt not your way by day or night;
This ivory hand will guide you right.”

With exactly the same ceremonies, to each of the five remaining sisters she presented a gift. To Margaret, a phial, with these words--

“Take, then, this wine; it hath a power
To bind in sleep for one whole hour.”

To Mabel she gave a beautiful little bird of the dove class, but scarcely larger than a wren. It was in a pretty cage with golden wires. Mabel could not help expressing her admiration of the gift in a few words of thankful delight. The Princess, as she put the cage with its feathered tenant into her hand, said--

“Safely and swiftly through the air
This faithful bird will letter bear.”

Alice came next at her desire. The Princess gave her a very plain key, suspended on a ring of gold, with these words:--

“Through every door this little key
Will give escape or entrance free.”

To Isabel she presented what was apparently a very simple gift, a little parcel of dried herbs that looked no better than a bundle of common dead leaves, tied up together. The Princess smiled as if amused at seeing how

much Isabel was disappointed at receiving so poor a gift; but she said as she smiled:--

“The deadliest wound of sharpest steel,
Sword, spear, or shaft, this herb will heal”

Ursula next advanced blushing, and in such a tremor she could hardly stand in so august a presence. The Princess graciously reassured her, and with much condescension gave her a small but elegantly formed lute with these words:--

“A lute can charm the bosom rude,
When passion’s in its fiercest mood.”

This was the last gift. As if inspired by some powerful spell which encompassed them, and was quite irresistible, the seven sisters fell at the Countess of Devon’s feet, and vowed in the name of all the saints to whom they prayed, to dedicate to her at any time in which she might need their services, the gifts they had received.

The Princess Picket was well pleased with their modest and dutiful behaviour, and took her leave both of them and all present with her accustomed dignity. She mounted into her car, and commanded her band to give a parting token of respect to the Countess, by playing one of their most impressive airs. The Jews’ harp, the marrow-bones and cleavers, and the other instruments, led by the salt-box. struck up “Polly put the kettle on,” which tune probably not even Sir Henry Bishop himself, with all his profound knowledge of music, is aware to be of such ancient date, as to have been performed in such a presence, and by such a distinguished set of musicians as those described in this veritable history.

It was soon after this eventful day, that the good Countess of Devon began to experience anew the wicked designs of her old enemy, the Baron La Zouch. Deserted by the lawyers, who, in the first instance had urged him on to commence the law-suit, in the hope of gaining the lands, he determined to have no more to do with such deceivers. He said they took his money and left him and his cause just as it was before he had anything to do with them. Now the Baron La Zouch was a bold man and very fond of fighting, and so he called his archers and all his merry men about him, and told them that if they would follow him and storm the castle of Tiverton, that was his by right, and if they beat the Countess of Devon’s men at arms, who were in it

as her guards, he would allow them as soon as they got possession to share the gold and silver cups and spoons among them, and to open the cellars and help themselves to all the wines and strong ale they could find in them. The Baron's men were very well pleased with the proposal, for like their master, they were no better than thieves: and so they set forward to the storming of Tiverton castle.

I will not detain you, my young friends, with a relation of all the particulars of the siege. It was a very stirring one whilst it lasted. So many men were collected in the surrounding woods, that there was scarcely a branch of a tree, but a nodding plume, or a helmet, or the glitter of a steel cap was seen under it. There was a fierce contest in the effort made by the besiegers to storm the outward barriers and to gain access to the castle by crossing the moat or ditch by which it was surrounded. When that was gained by the enemy, there was such a blowing of bugles and sounding of trumpets, and whizzing of arrows, and twanging of crossbows; such a rolling down of stones and hot pitch from the battlements of the castle on the besiegers, and such a shouting and a calling and a banging with swords and axes about each other's heads; and such a clashing of shields, that never was anything like it since men began to kill each other for gain, or for amusement, in battles or in tournaments. But at last the besiegers were beaten back: many lost their lives; so that the Baron La Zouch was obliged to give over the contest and draw off his men, leaving the Countess of Devon, who had sustained very little loss, in full possession of her castle, her gold and silver cups and spoons, and all her wine and ale.

Thus defeated in law and in arms, the Baron La Zouch was nevertheless determined not to give over annoying the Countess; and thinking that as her son was absent over seas, if he could but get rid of such a spirited woman, he should soon possess himself of the castle, he determined to have recourse to treachery. So wicked was he, that he offered among the worst of his own people a reward in gold to any one of them who would kill the Countess, either openly or by any secret means he could devise.

La Zouch was a violent man, but even in his own wicked plans incautious; so that the plots he was desirous to carry into execution against her life reached the ears of the Countess. All her seven daughters became very watchful and anxious about her; indeed, so did her household and people generally, for she was a very good mistress over them all. Every precaution

was taken for safety; the drawbridge that crossed the moat was raised every evening before dark, and no one suffered to pass over or to enter into the castle without the warder knowing who he was.

One night when the weather was very warm, the Countess, before retiring to bed, opened a window in the room where she slept, which was much larger than castle-windows of the time usually were, but she was very fond of plenty of fresh air, and so she had it altered to suit her own fancy. She enquired of her attendant, if a page who slept in a room adjoining her little oratory was at his post, as, ever since these alarms about the Baron, he was so stationed as her guard for the night. On being informed he was at hand in case of need, she dismissed her waiting damsel, and retired to rest.

About midnight, the Countess was awakened by a strange sound without the window. The moon shone brightly, for it was at the full, and streamed into the apartment in a flood of light, when she fancied she saw a small creature like a child in form, but not so high as her hand, pulling the ears of the little dog which the Princess Picket had given to Patience, and which, by that affectionate girl's wish, the Countess had taken to sleep in her bed-chamber ever since she had been frightened about the Baron. She now looked and wondered, and fancied that she must be dreaming. The dog growled on having his ears pulled, but did not raise up his nose, which was turned towards his hind legs, as he lay in a manner rolled up on the rushes near the bed-side. But before the lady could satisfy herself if she were waking or sleeping, she heard a noise at the window, and, on looking up, saw, to her astonishment, a man squeezing himself through it, and getting into her room. The moon gleamed partially upon him, and showed that he wore a steel casque or cap: something glittered that he carried in his hand.

At that moment, before the Countess could spring from her bed, the dog roused up, and barked so furiously, that the man, who had cleared the window and leaped down on the floor, first made at the dog with the intent to silence it. But though he struck at it again and again, the little creature ran round and round and round him in so quick a manner, that he could neither strike it, nor kill it, nor get away from it, for the nimble animal flew at one leg, now at another, hindering every attempt he made to put forward a foot to reach the Countess. He was amazed, for never before did so insignificant a little dog become a match for a ruffian bent on murder.

In the interval, the Countess leaped from her bed, and rushing towards that side of the room where her zealous little guard still fought so bravely for her defence, she slipped under the arras or tapestry that hung loose over the walls, opened a secret door which it concealed, and in another moment called up the page. She told him he was too young and too slight to encounter the armed man, but bade him run and sound the alarm-bell that was near her chamber, and do all he could to rouse the castle, and call up the guard, who, night and day, were on the watch at the castle gates.

She was obeyed; and the ruffian, at the very instant the dog was beginning to weary of his contest with him, was taken prisoner. The Countess spared his life, though he deserved to lose it; but she caused him to be chained and put into a dungeon of the castle. There the priest obtained from him a confession: he was one of the Baron La Zouch's people. On the previous evening he had contrived to deceive the porter, and to pass unsuspected, when several of the countrymen were bringing great loads of wood for fires into the castle. The villain had concealed himself in some bushes that grew under one of the outer walls; and knowing all about the castle, and where the Countess slept, with the assistance of a scaling-ladder he had got in at her bedroom window, when all her household was at rest. He acknowledged that the little dog had been the means of saving her life.

In consequence of this, all the bushes which had any where grown under the walls were cut down; and the people of the castle became more than ever watchful. At length the Countess was much relieved by hearing that the Baron la Zouch was absent from the country, and had taken with him all his men, except a few that he left to guard his own castle which was far distant from hers. She now thought herself safe for a time; and as she had been very much confined within her own walls, she began to wish for fresh air. A ride in the forest was proposed. After consulting with the priest and the captain of the guard, they gave it as their opinion that the safest way would be for the Countess and one of her daughters to dress themselves very plainly, like their waiting damsels; and so to go out together without any attendance, as if they were merely two of the household going on their own affairs to the neighbouring market; whereas did so great a lady go forth with her accustomed state it might attract notice, and some new plan be devised for her injury.

According to this advice, the Countess and Katherine, each mounted on a pretty and swift pacing pony, wrapped around her a plain grey cloak with a hood, and having as plain a foot cloth, set out for an airing. They soon reached the forest. When the Countess came to the spot at the entrance of the wood, where so many years before she met Randolph with his basket of live children, she told Katherine that was the place where herself and her sisters had been saved from a cruel fate. The young lady shed tears at the affecting narrative, and after pausing a few moments to express her sense of thankfulness, and her determination to serve her benefactress at the risk of life itself, they continued for some time their ride under the boughs of the trees. Now and then a deer bounded across their path, in his way to join the herd to which he belonged, or to go down to the river's side and slake his thirst from the stream that ran as clear as a mirror, reflecting in its dark surface the woods and the sky, so that it looked almost like a Pixy world seen beneath the waters. The birds were singing merrily, and hopping about the grass, or flying from bough to bough, as joyous as birds could be.

At length, on advancing more towards the depths of the forest, Katherine, who had very quick eyes and observed every thing, suddenly drew up her pony by the side of the Countess, and said to her in a hurried manner, "Dear lady, what shall we do? It is neither safe to continue on this road, nor to turn back, for I have looked well about me before I would speak to you, because I would speak with certainty. Steel caps and shining armour and arms glanced every now and then through the boughs of the trees as we passed, to the right of us. And from something that I see glittering at this moment yonder, under the trees in the direction we are going, I am certain there are men concealed in that quarter also. What shall we do?"

"I know not," said the Countess, giving herself up for lost, "I know not; we shall surely be taken or killed by some of the followers of that wicked Baron is. Zouch. Where can we turn for safety?"

Katherine looked for a few minutes greatly distressed; but all at once, as if a sudden thought struck her, she stopped; her countenance brightened up; and still holding the rein in her left hand, she passed the other under her cloak, and exclaiming, "I remember now, we are safe," immediately drew forth the little ivory hand that had been presented to her by the Princess Pickett. With perfect calmness she held it up, and shewed it to the Countess.

Instantly on doing so, the fore-finger of the delicately carved little hand moved, and pointed to an obscure path (scarcely, visible to a casual observer) that led under some large overhanging oaks, to an unfrequented part of the forest. The Countess, who at once saw and understood the sign, bowed her head in token of assent to it; and turning her pony in the direction to which the hand pointed, the creature set off with a speed that was astonishing; and yet so easy was the motion, that the Countess seemed to ride on the winds rather than on the earth. Katherine followed in like manner. So little known was this path, that the ladies who had ridden in that forest for many years had never before seen it.

They came at length to a very pretty spot; and there the ponies stopped of their own accord. The woods still continued thick above their heads with crossing boughs; some broken rocks lay immediately before them, over which dashed with a pleasing sound a cool and sparkling fall of water, not lofty but very beautiful. A small hermitage stood near the rocks, low-built, of wood, and covered with a thatch composed of green boughs. On a moss-grown stone, near the entrance, sat an aged man in a grey gown. His beard hung down upon his breast; his years, his dress; his beard altogether looked venerable. Yet on a near approach, there was something in his countenance which seemed to speak a man whose character had not always been that of an humble and meek recluse. There were strong lines about the brows, which were naturally knit, and presented no very pleasing expression; whilst the mouth retained the traces of passions once strong, and even now not wholly subdued. Still he was old, and the Countess felt, as all good people do, the highest respect for age; and as the hermit rose to receive her and help her off the pony she begged his blessing.

The Countess told him her story frankly, not fearing to trust so holy a man with the knowledge of the truth. He heard her with attention, invited both the ladies into his cell, and offered them his brown loaf and a cup of water from the spring, such being all the refreshment he had to lay before them. He then counselled them how to proceed; advised to wait in his cell till such time as the moon should be risen, when he would conduct them back to the castle by a path through the wood, known to so few that he considered there could be no danger in following it. As soon as they reached the outskirts, he would go forward and give notice to the castle of the approach of its lady; and a guard of, her own people might then come forth and conduct her in

safety through the more known and frequented part of the way. The Countess would have instantly consented, but Katherine gave her a look, which she at once understood. The young lady then, without saying a word to the hermit, consulted again the ivory hand, and, finding it pointed to where he proposed to go, she felt satisfied. All was soon arranged; and it was agreed to adopt the plan without fear, as soon as the moon should be risen. It succeeded as well as it could be wished; and so the Countess was saved that night from danger.

But it soon appeared that the malice of her cruel enemy was not less than his covetousness; and that he was determined never to let the poor lady rest till he had gained possession of her castle. His leaving the neighbourhood was only a pretence, to put her off her guard; and it succeeded but too well. Her cousin, Sir William Courtenay, a very brave knight, who had helped to defend her most valiantly during the siege, in consequence of believing that La Zouch was now far off, had retired, with his followers, to a castle of his own near Tregony, in Cornwall.

No sooner was this known, than the Baron La Zouch, with three times as many men as he before brought against it, marched suddenly upon Tiverton, surprised the guard of the outer works, and, before the draw-bridge could be raised, he and his soldiers passed over; and though the men-at-arms did their best to defend the castle, after a very short contest, it was compelled to yield, and the Countess and her seven fair daughters, and all who were in it, were completely at his mercy.

Immediately on becoming master of the place, the Baron busied himself with securing his prize; and that night was content to set men to watch; so that neither the Countess, nor any one of the seven, could go forth from their chamber. He sent a message, that he would see her some time on the following day.

To describe the state of her distress would be impossible. She wrung her hands, she tore her hair, she paced her apartment in a state almost bordering on distraction, to find herself, and all she most loved on earth, prisoners to so cruel a foe, She turned to the weeping sisters, not so much to ask their advice, as to express the dreadful fears she entertained on their account, lest, in his fury, the Baron should put them to death, as he was said to be very malignant and revengeful.

As the Countess thus poured out her griefs to them, she said, “I care not for myself, I could bear my fate with patience. But when I think of you, my children, for such you are to me, I wish the most impossible things on your account, so that I could but see you safe. I wish that you had wings, like the birds in the air, to fly away from these towers, and seek shelter afar off in some place of security.”

“Wings, to fly like the birds!” exclaimed Mabel. “O dearest madam, there is one bird in my keeping, whose wings may serve us so well as to do all you wish, The bird, the bird in the golden-wired cage! Who among us has forgotten the words of that grand lady, the Princess Picket?--

‘This bird, I give, will bear a letter
Wherever bid--can bird do better?’

Dear madam, let me venture to be counsellor on this occasion--it is one of great danger, and we must do our best to combat it. Do you instantly write a letter to your gallant cousin, Sir William Courtenay. Tell him all that has happened, and how you are situated; and beg him to lose no time in coming himself, with his brave men-at-arms, to your relief. I will venture to say, that he will soon drive this usurping tyrant out of your castle.”

The Countess of Devon thought the advice of Mabel so good that she lost not a moment in acting upon it. She wrote the letter: the pretty bird was taken from its cage; and with a silken string, she tied the paper round its glossy neck. The window was then opened; and the Countess and all her fair train of daughters, crowded around it to see the feathered messenger set off on his errand. Mabel pronounced these words, as she let fly her little favorite:--

“Fly, pretty bird, and through the air
To Courtenay swift my letter bear.”

The bird with a cheerful note, as if in assent to her desire, outstretched its wings, and in another instant commenced his flight towards the county of Cornwall. But though he was gone, the anxiety of the Countess had not flown away with him. She remembered however swiftly the bird might fly, it was far to Tregony, and that Sir William Courtenay and his men could not come so fast to her relief, as the letter could speed to him to ask it; and what might happen in the interval, she feared even to think upon.

Greatly were those fears increased, when on the next evening, the Baron La Zouch entered her chamber, where she was sitting surrounded by her seven fair daughters now in tears and drooping like the lilies when the drops of dew are on their heads. The Baron appeared calm and stately, which rather surprised his prisoners. He shewed some courtesy in his manner towards the Countess, and begged her to favour him by hearing patiently what he had to say. He then drew from under his cloak a piece of written parchment. The Countess, who wished not to irritate a man in whose power she was so completely placed, suppressed her emotions, and as patiently as she could prepared to listen to him. He thus proceeded:--

“You must be aware, Countess of Devon, that you and these fair gentlewomen, and all in this castle, are so entirely in my power, that, with a word, I could consign both you and them to the lowest dungeon, or, even worse, to instant death.”

“I need not to be reminded,” replied the Countess with dignity, “that I am the conquered, and you the conqueror. But it more becomes you as a man, as a knight, as a gentleman, to shew mercy to me and mine, than it becomes me to ask it.”

“True, haughty lady,” he said, “but mercy is usually asked before it is granted. However, that you may see my disposition towards you is generous, I, who could enforce obedience, come to propose terms; and though only such as are just to myself, yet are they full of mercy to you and yours.

The Countess cheered up a little at hearing this. With what feelings then of indignation did she listen to what followed! To terms the most hard and unjust, and (no longer treated with courtesy) to which she was rather commanded than solicited to accede, in these words, “Sign this,” as the Baron La Zouch spread the written parchment before her on the table, placed the ink-horn by its side. seized with his rough and gauntleted hand her slender fingers, and put into them a pen, and with his rude grasp endeavoured to make her write her name. But she stoutly resisted, saying, “What is it you would have me sign?”

“The resignation of this castle and its dependencies to me, the rightful owner; a resignation for ever; am I not flow its master?”

“I will never sign it,” said the Countess. “I will never do my son, now absent, so great a wrong, though by his own generous act, he has made the castle mine. He gave it, and to him, as its rightful lord, shall it return at my death. I will not sign the paper.”

“You refuse to do so then?” said the Baron.

“I do and firmly,” replied the Countess.

“Your fate then is sealed,” exclaimed La Zouch. “You have deep dungeons in this castle, Madam, they will tell no tales, let what will be acted in them. Many a death-groan have they heard, but may be not the last. Obdurate woman, I will myself see you safely lodged, where your body, like your pride, may find itself brought low before the morning.

With the utmost fury he sprang upon the Countess, as a wild animal springs upon its helpless prey. With his iron grasp he held both her wrists in his hands, and commenced dragging her across the room towards the door, as the sisters vainly endeavoured by their prayers and tears to intercede for their benefactress.

At that moment sounds of the sweetest music came from a remote part of the large chamber, with such a gush of sweetness, that the Baron stopped, and seemed as if suddenly fixed like a statue to the spot where he stood. He still held the Countess by her hands; she was on her knees before him; his body was bent in the act of drawing her along the floor after him. So he remained, but there was no more violence. Gradually, as sound succeeded sound, as note after note dropped on his ear, now high and piercing, but still sweet, like those of the lark as she ascends in the morning air above the clouds, or as a volume of harmony rolled through the apartment, he relaxed his hold. Though the Countess was free from his grasp, his hands continued in a position as if he still held her. Now was he red; now pale. Then would he tremble as if every nerve vibrated to the “concord of sweet sounds.” Scarcely did he draw his breath, for fear of breaking the spell by which his soul was so entranced. At length his head drooped; a faintness seemed to overpower him, he staggered and fell upon a couch that stood near.

On seeing this, Mabel approached and whispered in the ear of her sister--”Drink, drink, give him drink; and with it give the sleeping potion. He will then slumber for one whole hour. Lose no time; for, O sister, sister, I hear the approach of horsemen. Look out! See who comes.”

“I see them! I see them!” exclaimed Margaret, as she rushed to the window. “A noble troop of horsemen; their banner is that of Courtenay. See how he leads them on! But O they are but a small band; they can never gain this castle by force of arms, and we are lost!”

“Not so,” said Mabel softly. “See, he is still under the spell of Ursula’s lute. She still touches its chords, and he is a very child. Give him the drink, and all is safe.”

Without the loss of another moment, Margaret who had the potion given her by the Princess Pickett, flew to a beaufet that was in the room, poured out a cup of wine, and mingled with it the sleeping potion. The Baron, faint from the power of the music, which had so completely overwhelmed his soul, took the cup from her hand, and at once drank off the contents. In a few minutes the force of the drug became evident; he was fast locked in the arms of sleep.

“This will last but one hour,” said the Countess.” What must now be done? All the doors are locked upon us; we are still but as caged birds.”

“But here is that which shall give us liberty,” said sister Alice. “The key! the key!

“Through every door this little key
Will give escape or entrance free.

“But we must wait till the watch is withdrawn from near the postern gate, for that is the only way we may escape unobserved.”

“You are right,” said the Countess. “And the subterraneous passage, which runs under the moat, is wholly unknown to the Baron or his men. That passage is entered by a secret door, which covers the steps by which you descend to it, near the postern. I know well the way and the secret. My son taught it to me when he made me mistress of this castle. I know all, and I will be your guide. We must take a lamp with us, for no light can enter that subterranean vault. See how the moon rises over the hills, and tips with her silver beams the tops of the forest trees. in half an hour all the castle will be still, and then for our escape.”

Nothing impeded it. The key which the Princess Pickett had given to the sister, with the power to open all locks, gave the Countess and her seven adopted children a free access to every gallery and winding stair to the

walls of the postern, without let or danger. And in like manner they entered and passed the subterranean passage without risk. But as they issued from it on the opposite side of the moat, the watch stationed on the battlements of the castle saw figures, which he could not very well distinguish; he knew not if they were men or women, for a cloud at the instant passed over the moon and rendered every object dark or obscure; so, being as reckless as the Baron, his master, and not heeding who might be struck, he let fly an arrow at the persons he observed in the distance.

The shaft, though aimed at random, struck the Countess in the bosom; she gave a piercing shriek, and fell. The sisters flew to her aid. Isabel had not forgotten the virtue of what seemed, at the time it was presented, a poor and mean gift--the dried, and apparently withered, herbs. She immediately took the little parcel from under her cloak, where she had purposely secured it on the previous night, ran and moistened a sprig in the waters of a spring that was near the spot, and, in another minute, applied it to the wound of the Countess, which she bound up with her scarf. That noble-minded lady no longer felt pain or weakness of any kind; and, accompanied by her seven fair daughters, hastened to join Sir William Courtenay and his band. She at once put him in possession of the secret respecting the subterranean entrance into the castle, gave him the key that opened all locks, bade him despatch, and lose not a moment in securing the means thus to surprise the castle, whilst the guilty Baron and his men were at rest. For herself, she intimated her intention to take shelter in a convent close at hand on the borders of the forest, the abbess of which was her particular friend, and she had been a benefactress to her and to the nuns. All succeeded to her wish. She and the young ladies were soon housed for the night in safety, whilst Sir William Courtenay gathered around him his brave men-at-arms, and, in less than an hour, surprised the castle, and made prisoners of the bold Baron, and all his followers and wicked friends.

The next day Sir. William went to the convent, to bring back the Countess and her adopted children once more in peace to her own home. Whilst on their road, near the outskirts of the forest, they saw a goodly company approaching to meet them. First appeared a car, drawn by four milk-white horses, and well attended by ladies, knights, esquires, and pages; but all of very small stature, except one individual, an elderly female, of the usual

height of ordinary mortals; and an elderly man, still taller, walked by her side.

The Countess soon perceived that the bright and jewelled lady, seated in the car, was no other than her old acquaintance, the Princess Pickett. She and all her train stopped at the very spot where, so many years before, the seven children had been found in the basket by the Countess of Devon, and saved by her, with the assistance of her bloodhound, from a watery grave; the noble animal, though grown very old, now again sprang to her side; for he never forsook his mistress.

The car stopped. The Princess, sparkling and glittering with splendour, rose from her seat, and thus addressed the seven sisters, who came forward to give her a thankful greeting for the precious gifts she had bestowed on them at their last meeting:--

“Ye Seven, who thus have done your duty,
Ye shall have wisdom, wealth, and beauty.
And, to increase your joy the more,
I your own mother here restore;
And, in this aged hermit, find
Your Father, penitent and kind.”

So saying, the Pixy Princess, with great delight, led forward, in the one hand, Bridget, and, in the other, Randolph Rowle, who was no other than the aged hermit the Countess had seen in the forest on a former occasion, when he had served her so well. That Randolph, once so wicked, but now so penitent, had, for many years past, been the sorrowing recluse of those woods, where he had sought to hide his guilt and his shame from all the world.

The seven daughters now gathered round their long lost mother, kissed and embraced her in the fondest manner; and falling on their knees before their father, begged his blessing with some tremour of the nerves. The Pixy then remounted her car, waved her hand in token of farewell, and, followed by her train, in a moment disappeared. She seemed to be enveloped in a mist that suddenly surrounded the spot where she bade the last adieu.

The father of the seven children withdrew again to his hermitage, there to end his days. The Countess of Devon, much affected by their re-union with

their mother, rejoiced to think that she had been the means of preserving their lives so many years before.

In memory, therefore, of that event she gave a large yearly donation to the poor; and with true thankfulness caused Seven Crosses to be erected on the spot, where the seven babes had been saved from a cruel death. About a hundred years ago, they were still to be seen to the admiration of all travellers, as they listened to this wonderful tale. But I know not if now there could be found even one remaining of the

SEVEN CROSSES OF TIVERTON.

Background Notes

NOTES TO "THE SEVEN CROSSES OF TIVERTON; OR, THE STORY OF PIXY PICKETT."

"The quaint old author, Westcote, above mentioned, gives the following account of the Seven Crosses of Tiverton. He begins by stating, that a poor labouring man of that town had, by his wife, seven sons at a birth, "which being so secretly kept, as but known to himself and his wife; he, despairing of Divine Providence (which never deceiveth them that depend thereon, but giveth meat to every mouth, and filleth with his blessing every living thing), resolveth to let them swim in our river, and to that purpose puts them all into a large basket, and takes his way towards the river. The Countess (of Devon) having been somewhere abroad to take the air, or doing rather some pious work, meets him with his basket, and by some, no doubt Divine, inspiration, demands what he carried in his basket. The silly man, stricken dead well near with that question, answers, they were whelps. 'Let me see them,' quoth the lady. 'They are puppies,' replied he again, 'not worth the rearing.' 'I will see,' quoth the good Countess; and the loather he was to show them, the more earnest was she to see them: which he perceiving, fell on his knees and discovered his purpose, with all former circumstances; which understood, she hasteth home with them, provides nurses and all things else necessary. They all live, are bred in learning, and, being come to man's estate, gives each a prebend in this parish. which I think are vanished not to he seen, but the Seven Crosses near Tiverton, set up by this occasion, keeps it yet in memory."

Thomas Westcote wrote about this case in 1630, citing a 'poor labouring man of Chumleigh'. The story seems to have caught the Devonian

imagination and it has been, or some variation, often cited since. After his wife had given birth to seven children, he left for seven years to avoid having any further children. But on his return, within a year, his wife gives birth to seven boys, one for each year he was away.

Frightened and overwhelmed by this, he takes the babies in a basket to drown them, but meets the Countess of Devon (Isabella de Fortibus, lived at Carisbrooke Castle but also had several other residences, the story is set in about 1262) who asks him what he has in his basket that is whimpering. He tries to persuade her that they are just puppies, but as she persists, in the end he falls trembling to his knees and reveals what he was going to do.

The Rev. Baring-Gould gives the town as Hensleigh (near Tiverton--15 miles from Chumleigh) and the man is a tailor. The Countess keeps the babies with the mother, but pays their expenses, a wise move! Their education is at Buckfast Abbey and four become rectors, and three become their curates at Tiverton. They lived in perfect harmony and loved each other dearly and when they died, on the same day, were buried in the same grave at the very spot where the Countess had previously saved them. Seven crosses were placed over the grave to mark the spot but have long since disappeared.

Ralph Whitlock points out a similar story from Wiltshire, about a medieval knight, Sir Thomas Bonham of Wishford, and the sieve in which they were carried was thought o have been preserved for many years in the local parish church, where the family monument also carries a reference to the events.

IV. Fontina; Or, The Pixies' Bath

PART I

DURING the latter part of the turbulent reign of John, king of England, Sir Roger de Stevenson became the guardian, appointed by that sovereign, of the young Henry de Bath, the orphan heir of the honourable house of Bathon, or Bath; whose principal residence, at that time, was Bath Hall, in the parish of North Tawton, Devonshire. On the estate, and within sight of the mansion, was a large circular pool, not very deep, but of such exceedingly pure water, issuing from some spring in the earth, that it was considered to possess a coolness, freshness, and an invigorating quality unequalled even in that county where rocky rivers, streams, and wells of every description are found in such abundance. It was said to be favoured and protected by the Pixies; who, according to tradition and the current opinion, delighted to sport on its margin, to sail on its tiny waves by moonlight (for Pixies are great lovers of moon-shine), and above all to make it their bath.

Whether Pixies delighted in it or not, the poor certainly did so; and when the labourers were toiling in the fields during the harvest either for hay or corn, and got heated under a scorching sun, they would gladly come and slake their thirst at the Pixies' bath. The old, the feeble, or the very poor, who lived principally, if not entirely, by begging an alms at the doors of the monasteries, and of the rich, would hasten on their way, when within a mile of the spot, to drink of these cool waters; and to beg a morsel or a small piece of money at the door of the noble family who dwelt hard by. In order to accommodate these poor people an iron cup, secured by a chain, had been fixed to a stone seat on the margin of the bath; and this little act of charity had often brought a blessing from the lips of the weary and the traveller, on the kind hand that had bestowed it, as they drew a refreshing draught from the spring.

During the minority of Henry de Bath, his guardian lived with him. Sir Roger de Stevenson was proud, covetous, churlish. He liked not to have his purse drawn upon, nor his pride and grandeur disturbed by the solicitations or the presence of the lame, the old and the ragged. With great cruelty,

therefore, did he order the iron cup to be removed, thinking by so doing to hinder poor folk from obtaining water from the pool. But, strange to say, though this was twice done, the cup was found, each time, restored to its former place the next morning. Sir Roger was very angry, and though the servants, one and all, protested that they had nothing to do with it, yet he would insist it was their act and deed in opposition to his will. Accordingly he employed one or two of his own sturdy followers to remove the cup, and took it into his own possession, locked. it up in his strong oak chest, and put the key in his pocket..

But what was his surprise, when on the next morning he found not the cup, but his own iron basinet (a cap worn under a helmet) chained to the stone, and saw a ragged leper very quietly using it to help himself with water from. the pool! Sir Roger now raged. indeed!. His own basinet made the drinking cup of a filthy, beggarly, worthless leper (as he called the poor diseased man, who was taking a draught to slake his thirst), it was past bearing! He immediately called his hounds about him, went to the pool himself:, hissed and clapped his hands, set the dogs upon the suffering wretch, and drove him dreadfully frightened off the premises. The basinet was removed, and scrubbed and scoured and cleaned, as if it had been touched by a man who had the plague as well as the leprosy. This time neither the cup nor the cap were again found at the side of the bath.

But though the affair of the dogs was much talked of, it did not keep away the people from the grounds of young Henry, or from the seeing and the hearing of his proud guardian, Sir Roger de Stevenson. Still would the labourer and the poor come to drink water out of the palms of their own hands for the want of the cup. Still would the children of the village follow their sports on the margin of the pool; still they delighted to swim in it their little play-thing boats; to throw the daisies they had plucked from the meadows upon its surface, and to see which way they would float. Still, so said the country gossips over their evening fires, as they roasted crab apples for their jugs of hot and spiced ale, still were seen little creatures, scarcely six inches high (dressed in coats and cloaks that glittered and sparkled in the moonbeams), skimming like swallows over the surface of the pool; and this might be seen of a summer, or even of a winter’s night. And whilst they so sported, these little creatures were singing so sweetly, that the gossips who told the tale protested, that never in all their lives had they heard

anything like it; never, neither when the minstrels played in the hall at Christmas, nor when they went to church, and there heard the country. singers, on festival days, helped by the pitchpipe.

Some of, the young girls who listened to all this, said, that when going of a morning to milk the cows, or to look for the poultry, they had often found floating on the pooi, quantities of roses and rose-buds, and lilies, and that beautiful little flower called *Eye-bright,* which everybody in Devonshire knew the Pixies were particularly fond of. And therefore it was to be inferred those little beings must have been there on the previous night; for who else would take the trouble to dress up a pool of water after that fashion.

But Sir Roger, who was one of those men who are so morose and moody, that they are neither happy themselves, nor like to see anything approaching to harmless mirth in others, took all this in a very ill-humour. He did not see why either men, women children, or Pixies, should have any enjoyment contrary to his wishes. He determined, therefore, to take such a course with the Pixies' bath, as none but a man so bold and having so much power would have dared to think of doing, he would have the bath destroyed altogether. In vain did his young ward pray that it might be spared, as the people on his estate and all the neighbourhood had so long been accustomed to see it, to drink of it, and to admire its reputed wonders, that the destruction of it would be very ill taken the country round.

In vain did Sir Malpas, the good humoured and jovial parson of the parish, plead for it. Indeed it was said he loved it so well, that after he had made very free with the stout brown ale, at the hall, he always washed his face in, and took a refreshing draught from the pool, before he went to his own home, or ventured to scold his clerk, for taking a cup too much at the buttery hatch. The old nurses who had been accustomed to wash babies' faces in it, if they were girls, in order to make them grow up very fair, pleaded hard to have it left for their use. And the young women, so washed when babies, who on Midsummer eve, after performing certain rights and spells on the margin of the pool, looked with fear and awe upon its dark surface, in the hope to see reflected in it the faces of their future husbands, they also begged very hard to have it spared.

But it was all in vain, Sir Roger was decided; the pool should be destroyed. It was said that the execution of his purpose was hastened by the following

circumstance:--Returning one night to the hall when it was quite dark, as he passed near the water, he heard himself called after in the most contemptuous manner. These calls were accompanied by the strangest sounds, and a hissing and a clapping of hands, even as he had hissed and clapped his hands to set the dogs on the poor leper. And when he shouted and asked who was it so threatened him, the most violent peals of laughter seemed to issue from the pool, as if to deride him and his wrath. He was very angry, went instantly to the hall, procured lighted torches, and with about a dozen stout fellows at his heels, proceeded to survey the pool and the grounds about it, but could see no one and hear nothing; all was dark, silent, and deserted.

The very next day he set to work, and in good earnest began the destruction of the Pixies' bath. But, for a time, never was there such a labour undertaken in vain. The men worked and toiled and worked again and again, and day after day, and all to no purpose; for the pool, emptied by night, was always found full in the morning. But not even this, nor the shaking of heads, nor the turning up of hands and eyes in wonder, nor the threats of the old women and the young ones, too, that Sir Roger would bring evil on himself and all who belonged to him, if he persisted, could make him change his obstinate determination.

"When a pig goes the way his driver would have him," said Mabel, the good woman who had nursed Henry de Bath, "my dear young master's guardian will change his will, to go the right way instead of the wrong, but not till then. Sir Roger will be hard over our young master, John Butler, I fear, by and bye, when he comes old enough to like to have his own ways; and I'm sure they wont be those of his guardian. And I should not wonder if the Pixies dont some day drown him in their bath that he is so bold as to disturb; for, take my word for it, John Butler, Sir Roger will never be able to destroy it."

John the Butler agreed to the same, and said it would be a mighty pity if he could, for the water from the bath made the best ale, when put to the malt and hops, in the whole county.

At jest, after trying a variety of ways to succeed in this determination, Sir Roger was obliged to form an under-ground channel, and to carry the water that rose from the spring in another direction, so as to fall into a ditch that ran by the side of the public road. This method proved effectual, and

nothing remained near the hall but a great, ugly, irregular pit, with a deep hollow in the middle. It was said, that the night before the waters were turned into .the channel thus made to drain them, the most dismal cries, shrieks, and groans were heard from the bath. Everybody now fell to abusing Sir Roger (behind his back) for what he had done, and even he thought the pit thus left looked very unsightly; so that he determined ‘to have it filled up.

Again the men went reluctantly to their painful toil; but so many mischances occurred while they were about it, that nothing for misfortune could be like it in all the world. One man broke his leg, another his arm. Every day, several tumbled head over heels into the deep hollow in the middle, and hurt themselves very much in the fall. One got a broken head, another a broken nose; and although working in a place so lately filled with water, the fleas swarmed in such abundance, that the men tore their very skin from their bones with scratching. At length, driven to despair by such a continuation of disasters and vexations, the poor fellows, one and all, begged Sir Roger not to put his faithful followers to such a task; it evidently exposed them to the terrible wrath of the Pixies. Had those little people been pleased to send a band of men to keep the workmen off the pit, they would not have cared for it; they would have fought man to man; but there was no fighting with Pixies; the only way was to leave them alone and let them have their own way. Sir Roger, finding that his men could really work no more, made a virtue of necessity, and pretended to yield his own will to oblige them. And so the pit was abandoned; it remained, as every body said, as ugly an old hole as could well be seen, and a disgrace to be near the mansion of such a noble and ancient family as that of De Bath.

Unsightly and ugly indeed was the pit; but that was not the worst part of it; soon was it proved to have a terrible power of predicting evil to every member, however near or remote, of the family of De Bath.

The first instance occurred during the month of August, and in so dry a summer, that rivers, and even wells, were, in many places, without water. One evening the pit was observed by the household to be so dry that the earth at the sides and at the bottom was full of great cracks, three or four inches asunder. The next morning it was seen, not only filled with water, but over-flowing at the brim, so as to be very inconvenient to those who passed near it on foot.

Everybody was now startled, and feared something terrible was about to happen to Henry de Bath, or to the household. Should the ill luck fall on Sir Roger, in that case the bath would have over-flowed with joy to them all; for none liked, and all feared him. Even the young master of the Hall began to feel uncomfortable under the arbitrary rule of his guardian. He would have the power to free himself from his control, as soon as he came of age. But Sir Roger wished not to be called too strictly to account for what he had done with the property during the minority, so it kept him a little in check towards his ward; he was less tyrannical with him than with any one else; but still he was bad enough. The swollen bath now attracted the notice of all the neighbourhood. Many came miles to see the wonder; and most went away shaking their heads, and fearing some great calamity.

At length, one afternoon, several men-at-arms were seen riding slowly up the avenue of old trees, towards the hall. They were covered with dust, their armour was dim, their surcoats soiled, they wore no visors, whilst their care-worn and sun-burnt faces told of foreign toil. They bore with them a torn banner, and a noble led war-horse, carrying on his back a helmet, a shield, and part of a broken lance. All this seemed to proclaim tidings of disaster. The leader of this little band of dispirited men stopped before the gate-house, and asked to see the youthful master of the household.

Henry received him and his party in the great hall of the mansion; his guardian was by his side. “What is this?” said the youth; “surely, or I am much mistaken, the device of yonder torn banner--a cross, surmounting a crescent--surely it is the banner of my fair cousin, Sir Gilbert de Bath. He who, though not twenty years old, went with so gallant, so free a spirit, to take part in that crusade set on foot by the Emperor Frederick. Say, do I remember truly?”

“Truly,” replied the stranger; “and, now, most sadly--”

“Sadly! not so, I hope,” said Henry, interrupting him.

“How fares my cousin Gilbert? But you are silent. I fear the worst; a prisoner, may be, in Palestine. O gladly will I pay his ransom, so that the turbaned infidel will but take the gold. Sir Roger, I must have gold; aye, gold in plenty, to pay my dear cousin’s ransom, and to give him back to liberty and to his country. My life for it, he fought bravely.”

He did, indeed," replied the stranger; "he fought bravely, and fell bravely. I was his esquire of the body. He loved you well, Henry de Bath. He thought of you in his dying moments. As he lay outstretched and bleeding on the burning sands before the walls of Jerusalem, which thrice he had attempted to mount in vain, he made me promise, that I would fulfil his wishes. That I would bring to you, with this torn, but still honourable banner, the tidings of his death; of his having met it with his face to the foe; and that, with his last breath, he sent you the assurance of his undying affection. I now fulfil this melancholy duty; here is his banner, here his shield and his broken lance. His noble, war-horse stands at your door; but there is no spirit in him. He is no longer fit to bear a gallant knight; for he no longer raises his head, or chafes at the sound of the trumpet."

Young as he was, Henry de Bath was, nevertheless deeply affected at this melancholy recital. He kindly and courteously entertained the faithful esquire and his little band. The banner, the shield, and the broken lance, he desired might be hung up in the neighbouring church; and, before he retired to rest, he sent a purse of gold to the next monastery, and directed one hundred masses to be sung for the repose of his cousin's soul. He then retired, unattended, to his own chamber, and gave himself up to that strong and unrestrained expression of his grief, in which he would not indulge before his people.

In the morning he rose early; but, early as it was, many of his household were stirring before him. They seemed to be in some commotion. Several were in the court-yard, talking to each other with grave looks and eager expressions; whilst heads were turned, and fingers pointed, towards the spot where, for many weeks, and even so lately as on the preceding evening, the Pixies' Bath had overflowed in so strange and mysterious a manner. There was now no water to, be seen in it; and the unsightly pit, perfectly dry, with its deep hollow in the centre, and all the cracks and fissures at its sides, remained just as it was before a drop of water had risen to cover it.

It may well be supposed what a sensation this must have occasioned in the household at the Hall. All now understood what had been the object of the melancholy and fatal sign. The waters had overflowed like the sorrow of the survivors; their rising had foretold the death of Sir Gilbert. No sooner was that sad event announced to his nearest kinsman, than the waters were buried again in the earth, even like him whose fall they had foretold. Two or

three months after, the same thing was repeated on the death of an old abbess, of the family, of De Bath, who for many years had been the lady superior of a convent of nuns, at Lanherne, in Cornwall.

Five years more, saw young Henry of age, and free from the rule of his guardian. Before that time arrived (as he was more given to learning than to fighting) he had gone to London and turned his attention to the study of the law, which he followed with zeal and ability. Whilst he was so engaged, King John died, and Henry III succeeded to the throne. Here, then, for a while we must pause. The next chapter will treat of very different events to which all the foregoing were but as the prelude.

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PART II.

THE youthful Henry, as it became the head of a family so ancient as that of De Bath, on coming of age visited the court of Henry III, and shortly after received the honour of knighthood from the king's own hand. He speedily rose into favour; for he was of a tall stature, a fine open countenance, courteous in his manners, and of a noble and generous disposition.

This worthy and accomplished gentleman rose into such esteem with his sovereign, that, in a few years, after many distinguished offices had been conferred upon him, King Henry made him one of his *justices itinerant,* or judges who travelled to the large country towns, where criminals were tried for breaking the laws. His rise in the world had been rapid, but well deserved; and he now used the power he possessed, as an honest and a merciful man who had the fear of God constantly before his eyes.

But unmixed good is not the portion of this life. The more Sir Henry became loved and honoured, so much the more was he hated by his late and always unworthy guardian. Though free from his control, yet such was the humility of his disposition and his sense of the authority formerly vested in Sir Roger, that he continued to treat him with all possible deference and respect. His house was still open to him whenever he pleased to make Bath Hall his home. How Sir Roger could find it in his heart to hate so good a man as Sir Henry seems almost incomprehensible, did we not know that bad men always hate good men, because the latter are as a reproof to them. Sir Roger, though he tried hard for it, could never win the sovereign's

favour as his ward had done; and he burnt with envy towards him, and determined to watch an opportunity to ruin him with the king.

Now it so happened that a follower of Sir Roger, from whose assistance he hoped much to carry on his designs against Sir Henry, refused to do his master's bidding; he would not be made the tool to work mischief. Seeing this, De Stevenson, in order to punish and degrade this honest servant, who had been one of his own pages, sent him down to a farm he had in Devonshire, and made him keeper of his sheep. The young man bore his degradation patiently; but he had never been bred to a farming life; and not knowing how to fold the sheep at night so as to keep them safe, the wolves, that were then not uncommon near Dartmoor, did great injury; and every night a sheep or two was lost from the fold. This was just what Sir Roger expected.

He pretended, however, not to believe a word about the wolf, but threw poor Maurice into prison on a double charge; first, that of being connected with a gang of robbers, who made their home in a thick forest in the north of Devon; and secondly, accused him of supplying them with his master's sheep. False witnesses were bribed to support these unjust and wicked charges.

Sir Henry de Bath was the judge appointed to the circuit which embraced the town where Maurice was left to be tried. Before setting out on his duty, he went to his own home in the country, and, whilst there, the wily and treacherous Sir Roger came to see him. Hearing on what business the judge was going, he wanted to tell him a false tale about the man who would be tried before him for stealing sheep, and supplying them to the robbers of the north of Devon.

But Sir Henry only said in reply--"Did you ever learn, Sir Roger, when a judge must be deaf, and when he must hear with both his ears every word that is said to him?"

"No," answered Sir Roger; "a judge should never be deaf."

"O yes, but he must though," replied Sir Henry. "He must be deaf when the matter that is to come before him is spoken of out of court. But in the court he must have both his ears open, the one for the accuser, and the other for the accused; and he must hear both with impartiality and attention. Say no

more, therefore, about your man and the sheep-stealing, for I have my deaf ears on now."

Sir Roger was mightily vexed; but he could say no more.

"Well, Sir Henry," he continued after a pause of a few minutes, "though you will not serve me in this matter, as I expected you would, yet I must serve you."

"Say not so, Sir Roger," said Sir Henry; "I will serve God and you too, for I will endeavour to do justice between you and your man, when the cause comes before me."

"Well, I am content," replied Sir Roger. "Now the thing in which I will serve you is this: the roads between here and the town of assize to which you are journeying are in very bad plight. You say that you set forward tomorrow; you will never reach the town ere nightfall. I advise you, therefore, as there is no convenient inn nor place of rest on the way, to go to the castle which you will see towards the evening to the right of your road, and there pass the night. The owner will not deny hospitality to a gentleman of your rank, nor to your followers."

"Who is the owner?" enquired Sir Henry. "I do not know him."

"He is Simon de Dinant, that baron of Norman blood you have so often heard of in these parts."

"Is he not disaffected to the present king?" said Sir Henry. "A friend to the Earl of Leicester, who is stirring on the Commons so much against Henry?"

"No," replied Sir Roger; "he has rather thrown the curb over Leicester, when, like an unruly steed, he would go too much ahead. Simon, the bold Baron of Dinant, is a friend and not an enemy to the King."

"If so," said Sir Henry, "I will call at his castle gates, and crave the rights of hospitality, and a night's lodging for me and for my men. I thank you, Sir Roger, for giving me such good counsel how to proceed in these dreary ways and long journeys, for I am yet but new in this Western Circuit, and little know where to house with comfort or safety on my road."

Soon after they parted, and each went to rest.

Early the next morning, whilst the Judge was preparing to set out, the nurse of his infancy and his childhood, old Mabel brought him a bowl of milk, to

refresh him before he went down to breakfast in the great hall on beef and ale.

She seemed to be very officious about him, and to linger longer than she needed in his chamber. But Mabel was a privileged person. At last she thus began: “Has my Lord Judge looked out of the window this blessed morning?”

“No, Mabel; I have been too busy. But what is there to be seen by looking out of the window, that you ask me the question?”

“O my Lord, a terrible sight! It breaks my old heart to see it, and think of it. The Pixies’ bath, as people call it, is full again and overflowing; and you are this day going away from home. O my Lord, what does that foretell?”

“No harm, I hope, Mabel. I have no fears, at least none for myself.”

“O but I have for you! Remember, my Lord, how that terrible pool has twice before overflowed; and what it came to tell! And how, as soon as your near kinsman’s death was known in this house, it went back again dry as it was before: but not so our eyes, nor our hearts; for the one had plenty of water, and the other overflowed with sorrow for poor Sir Gilbert’s’ death, and remember how before the decease of my good lady Abbess, your honour’s great aunt--”

“I remember it all,” said the Judge, “yet I must go; my duty calls me away; and I have no fears.

But I have for you. And O,” she continued, forgetting that she was addressing the man and the Judge, in the remembrance of how tenderly she had nursed and loved him when a babe and a child,” and O do not go from home to day, or something fearful may happen to my own dear boy, my poor little Henry.”

The Judge smiled. “Good old Mabel,” he said, “go I must, for I cannot tarry here. But to quiet your apprehensions, I promise you to be very careful of myself in all I do, and wherever I go. I hope that I depart on a good errand, with a wish to do right and act justly; and so I have no cause for alarm.”

“But O, as you value your life, don’t go with that Sir Roger,” said the nurse, “he who behaved so bad to the Pixies. Depend upon it, they will take their revenge upon him one of these days, and not care for who is in his company. Don’t go with him!”

“I am not going with him, Mabel.”

“Thank all the saints for that; but where are you going, my Lord?”

“To hold the assize at Bodmin; and, to avoid the band of robbers who are so strong in the woods, and create so much terror in these parts towards nightfall, I am going to beg hospitality of the Baron de Dinant, and hope this night to rest at his castle.”

“The Baron de Dinant!” exclaimed the old Nurse.

“Don’t go near him, my Lord; better to take the risk of the robbers in the open road, than to darken the gates of Simon de Dinant. People do tell such things of him. They do say he be leagued with worse than robbers--traitors to the king, and that no good comes to anybody who goes near him, and that your guardian is deep in all his plots and ways; do not go to him.”

“You are mistaken, Mabel, what you report is nothing more than idle country tales. My late guardian has too much respect for me to wish me to risk my safety, or my character, by advising me to take shelter under the roof of a suspected Baron. There is nothing to fear in the course I am about this day to pursue. And again I tell you that I fear nothing.”

Mabel shook her head, looked grave, crossed herself, but seeing she could do no good by her advice, she told the judge that she would go and offer up, with her prayers, a candle for his safety, at the shrine of St. Ann in a neighbouring convent of nuns; and so she hoped it might help to prevent any ill from coming upon him from the rising of the waters at the Pixies’ Bath. But her heart was very heavy, and she could not altogether overcome her fears.

Sir Henry set off on his journey, and rested that night at the Baron de Dinant’s; but so little was he pleased with his host, or with some things that dropped from him in conversation, expressing his dissatisfaction with the king and the government, that he determined to go away the next morning as early as he could, and not to trouble Simon de Dinant with his company on his way back.

The trial of Maurice, for aiding and abetting the robbers by stealing for them Sir Roger’s sheep, came on before the court at Bodmin. Sir Henry with great patience heard the evidence on both sides, and having fully examined into the merits of the case, he summed up with perfect

impartiality, and being convinced of the innocence of the accused the man was acquitted.

Sir Roger de Stevenson, on finding what was the verdict, became greatly enraged, and more so when he learnt that from motives of charity Sir Henry had taken poor Maurice into his own service, in his original employment, as a page. Sir Roger's wrath knew no bounds. But he dissembled his real feelings, and appearing to be well satisfied, set off for London with a determination to lose no time in gratifying his revenge, and in working the ruin of Sir Henry de Bath.

In private, therefore, he sought the king, and under a great show of love to his person and anxiety for his safety, pretended that he came, though with reluctance, to make known to him the treason he had detected in his former ward. Henry was startled at hearing such a charge against his favorite judge. But though naturally inclined to mercy, the king was of a weak disposition, and easily fell into the snare that had been so artfully laid for him. He gave credit to the most shameful falsehoods on the testimony of Sir Roger and his followers in evil.

The king, now completely the dupe of these cruel artifices, determined that Sir Henry de Bath should suffer for his supposed disloyalty and ingratitude. He caused, therefore, the unfortunate judge to be summoned before Parliament, to give answer to the charges of corruption and treason.

Conscious of his innocence, Sir Henry boldly came forward; but believing himself to be assailed by some strong and secret enemy, who had suborned a set of low villains to appear against him, he came not alone. He was attended by a noble company of knights and gentlemen from the west of England, who had frankly offered their services and their lives in defence of his innocence.

Seeing how strongly he was supported, and how fearlessly he entered the Parliament, none who were to judge his cause felt disposed to run the risk of finding him guilty for fear of the consequences to their lives, for in those times, scenes of violence often took place in that assembly. The king, who was present, finding how daunted were all the members, flew into a great rage, and cried out with a loud voice, "Whosoever shall kill Henry de Bath, shall be quit of his death, and I do hereby acquit him." Having said this he immediately retired.

Thus encouraged, the followers of Sir Roger de Stevenson would gladly have executed on the spot the terrible fate denounced against the unhappy man by the king. But fortunately Sir John Mansel, who was of the Privy Council,, was present, and now interposed. Saying to these violent men, “Beware what you do. That which our sovereign hath in his wrath commanded, he will be very sorry for when his anger is overblown. And remember the friends of Sir Henry de Bath are powerful as brave. Any outrage committed against his life, will be fiercely revenged upon his destroyers.”

This produced the desired effect; Sir Henry escaped the immediate danger, and was persuaded to go down to his house in the west, and there live privately till the wrath of his sovereign was appeased.

All these particulars were speedily made known to Sir Roger de Stevenson. Greatly did he fear, that should Sir Henry obtain an interview with his royal master, when he was in a more temperate mood, to examine into the truth of the matter, there was every possibility that his own plots would be detected. He resolved therefore as the only way for safety to destroy Sir Henry before the king’s anger could have time to cool; and especially before he could recall his words--that whoever might kill Henry de Bath, should be acquitted of his death, and that he did acquit him. De Stevenson consulted with his followers, and between them it was agreed to follow De Bath to the west of England, to seize him in his own dwelling, and to put him to death on the spot. These evil men bound themselves by an oath, not to desert one the other, nor to betray each other in the execution of this dreadful design.

In the interval, Sir Henry, who had been on the point of marriage with a sister of Sir Arthur Bassett, when he was so suddenly summoned to attend the Parliament; now resolved no longer to delay the celebration of his nuptials. On his return home, he found old Mabel in great joy; for the Pixies’ Bath was again dry, the waters having retired into the earth on the very day (as it appeared) that Sir Henry had been preserved from the wrath of the king. She expressed the liveliest sense of thankfulness for his escape. Nor was she less delighted when she found that the wedding was to take place in a few days, as if nothing had happened.

The morning of Sir Henry’s marriage with the fair Margaret Basset, was bright and sunny. With much state, and attended by all the knights, esquires, and ladies of the neighborhood, Sir Henry and Margaret, mounted on horses

gaily caparisoned, proceeded to the church porch, where, in those days, the marriage ceremony was performed. Old and young greeted them as they passed along, and all the girls and children of the village ran before them, strewing flowers in their path, whilst, as they returned home, the bells struck up a merry peal to give them joy.

A splendid banquet or dinner was to be served up to all the friends and followers of De Bath, in the hall of his ancient dwelling. His tenants, labourers, and the poor, were to be treated with an ox roasted whole in the park. Every heart was to have cause to rejoice in the marriage of the good Sir Henry, the friend of the rich, the benefactor of the poor. The harper, who made it a point to be present at every festival, was seated in the hall, ready to strike upon his harp an air of welcome, the moment the bridal company entered within the doors of the mansion on their return from the church.

Mabel was busied bustling about, here, there, and everywhere, seeing that all was set right and proper at the great, long oak table, and scolding the maidens and the serving men, if the slightest thing was neglected or forgotten. John, the butler, was ready with his store of flagons of wine, ale, mead, metheglin, and hippocras, when there came a sudden cloud over all the mirth and revelry and business of the household.

“By the blessed Saint Bridget!” exclaimed old Mabel, wringing her hands as she looked out at the haill door, “if the Pixies’ Bath be not risen again, and see how it overflows! Yes overflows, as the bride and bridegroom be coming down the avenue of old trees, and in full sight of it all. O to think it should be so, and that on his wedding day! O my poor boy, my dear Henry, what will become of him! To think that I should have nursed him in these arms; and he to live to see this! O to think that it is possible a burial may follow hard on the heels of a bridal in this old hall.” And so she went on lamenting and bewailing; and not a gentleman, not a lady, not a man, woman, or child of any degree there, on that day assembled, but shared in the old nurse’s fears.

All the mirth of the company fled. Sir Henry alone bore himself bravely, indeed cheerfully, as he endeavoured to raise the drooping spirits of his young and lovely bride, and to reanimate his followers and guests. Yet it would not do; every heart feared, all trembled for what was to come; nor were their fears the less because they did not exactly know what to fear. The omen of evil was so marked, and at such a time, there was no mistaking it.

But notwithstanding all these apprehensions, the dinner, wines, and ale were so excellent and all so plentiful, that the company found they had not lost their appetites with their joy; and for persons in such a state of suspense and affliction, they all certainly played a very good part with the spoons and platters; for knives and forks, in those days, were used only by the carver, and not by those for whom he carved.

Cups went round the board, and the health of the bride and the bridegroom was drunk with a cheer, notwithstanding all fears; and so potent was the ale, that some stout fellows, made very bold by it, offered to fight, if they could only see them, the Pixies themselves, or any of their friends and abettors; and the old harper, towards nightfall, got his spirits so raised by a full and flowing cup of metheglin, which Mabel had served to him with her own hand, that he struck the chords of his harp to a joyous measure, as if in defiance of all evil omens.

On hearing this, some of the young men present, led out many a pretty maiden to foot it to the stirring music in the hail, and dancing began right merrily; when, suddenly, a cry was heard from the Pixies' Bath. Scream followed scream in the most fearful manner. All were struck dumb with surprise at the hearing of these fearful shrieks so near them. The harp was hushed--the men and maidens stood motionless in the midst of the dance--the bride turned faint and pale--Sir Malpas put down the cup untested that at the moment he was in the act of raising to his lips--Sir Henry looked surprised--the revelry ceased--all was so quiet that nothing but those cries of suffering could be heard in the hall.

No one spoke; when Mabel, who trembled in every joint, exclaimed with an energy that seemed more than natural for one of her years, "That is the scream of Fontina; she never screams but for one thing. Before midnight, death will be in this place; and who shall say on whose head the stroke will fall!"

"Fontina, Fontina, who is Fontina?" whispered many voices in the hall.

"The spirit of the pool," said Mabel; "the Pixy spirit, and a most fearful one."

The screams continued--the consternation and alarm now became general. Some proposed one thing, some another. At length the young men, brave in numbers as in ale, agreed to go in a body with lighted torches and to

examine around the bath. Could it be a trick played off by any one to cause fear on this occasion? The screams were certainly very terrible; and if it were a spirit, could not Sir Malpas, who was a parson, lay it quietly at the bottom of the pool or in the Red Sea, so as no more to disturb the peace of the company. They then proceeded to the overflowing waters. All was still; not a creature was to be seen, nor a sound to be heard around the Pixies' Bath.

Sir Malpas was now again appealed to; but he declared that he had not his books with him; nothing could be done without his Latin, and that he had left at home. Also, though ghosts and ordinary spirits, he knew very well, could be laid in the Red Sea, yet he had his doubts if it were possible or lawful so to deal with Pixies. He, therefore, very prudently deferred undertaking the work, till he could obtain more information as to how best to proceed with it; and drank off his cup of mead which had been waiting for him; and to make up for lost time he took another.

This occurrence so completely broke what little there was of mirth and merriment, that the company one and all dispersed. Every body seeming anxious to get away as fast as he could; in order, as he hoped, to be out of the reach of death or danger which Mabel had said those terrible screams of Fontina announced to be so near.

All was soon hushed; the hall was left cheerless; half-emptied cups stood on the board; whilst wreaths of drooping flowers, and expiring lamps and torches, told a tale of broken mirth and a suddenly deserted banquet. The doors were fast locked, bolted, and barred, and the watch set for the night in the gate-house, which stood at a little distance fronting the hall door. But the watch had taken too much ale, and speedily slept on his post.

Just before midnight, a trampling of horse was heard in the long avenue, by two or three stragglers who still lingered on the premises. These had been so much overcome by the fumes of stout drink, that they had sunk down upon the ground in their way home, after quitting the hall. They were, however, awake now and sober; and not a little alarmed when (unseen themselves, as they lay shaded by the spreading branches of a large old beech tree) they observed several horsemen armed from head to foot, each bearing a naked sword, passing on at a gentle pace, as if careful to avoid giving any alarm. One of the sleepers awakened was an intelligent young fellow, a tenant of Sir Henry, and he now listened with the most eager

attention; as the leader of the armed band commanded his men to halt. All did so. In a brief and hurried manner, he then addressed them in these words:--

“Let some of you lead your horses forward--station yourselves so as to surround the house. Let no one escape from it. Give death to any man who would pass on. We must, however, if we can, secure this traitor before he comes forth. I will to the hall door, and demand instant admission to Sir Henry de Bath, on business of moment from the king. He will not refuse to see me. Do you, Sir John Fitzallen, and you, Simon de Dinant, stand close by my side, so as to enter with me. I may need support--he may struggle--remember, despatch him on the spot--the king acquits the deed. Now forward, and this night shall yonder old mansion know me again for its master; as in those days when I destroyed the foolish Pixies’ Bath, and swept away the beggars that drank from its waters.”

So spoke Sir Roger de Stevenson, in the pride of his heart; and once more did he place himself at the head of his band of ruffians, to lead them on to treachery and murder. But he had not proceeded ten paces, when suddenly so thick a mist fell on him and his party, and all around them, that neither trees, nor house, nor his followers, nor even his own horse’s ears, could he distinguish. Nothing could exceed the confusion into which they were all thrown. To add to it, two or three entrance paths to the woods were near the spot where this cloud fell so densely upon them; and the animals, not being guided by the rein of their riders with any certainty (for the men pulled, now one way, and then another), took their own road, and carried them all into the thickest and most intricate parts of the forest, instead of following the track towards the house.

Sir Roger, by this strange chance left completely alone, was the only one among them whose intimate acquaintance with the place enabled him to keep the right road. Whilst he approached the Pixies’ Bath, the most fearful shrieks issued from it. He was startled, but still moved on. The mist, if possible, increased; and the screams that now arose from the pool had in them something of exultation; it chilled and curdled the very blood to hear them.

The young tenant who had heard Sir Roger address his men, and who, in a moment, understood how great was the danger of his good master, in the hope to be able to save him, and to give the alarm at the Hall, followed

close, but unsuspected, at the heels of the horse on which Sir Roger rode. Unfortunately, when drawing near the Pixies' Bath, he stumbled over a stone; and, so great was the darkness, he could follow no further. Terrified, and not knowing what to do, or to fear, yet being full of fears, he sat down upon the large stone over which he had stumbled. At that moment he heard something splash into the water and a cry arose from it as if a hundred demons were rejoicing at the fall of a sinner. He heard no more, for be fainted, and knew not how he came to, or by whom he was found, when, on the next morning, Mabel was standing over him as he lay on a bench in the Hall. As soon as he was restored to his senses, and quite himself, he asked for a cup of ale, to refresh him.

"A cup of ale!" exclaimed Mabel; "this is no time nor place for carousing. For, O look there! Look and see an awful sight, how wicked men meet their reward even in this world!"

Well might old Mabel point with her hand in the direction of the Pixies' Bath; for there a fearful sight indeed was to be seen. There stood about it Sir Henry, and his young and beautiful bride leaning on his arm, and gazing upon it with looks of wonder and of thankfulness. Nearly all the household, also, stood around looking on. The a bath was now once more perfectly dry; the waters had retreated; but not before they had consigned to a terrible fate Sir Roger de Stevenson.

It was supposed that, in the darkness of the previous night, the horse he rode had carried him into the pool, mistaking it for the path by the side. It was of depth sufficient in the middle to drown them; and there, in the very centre of that deep, and now dry, hollow pit, was seen, still mounted on his courser's back, Sir Roger de Stevenson--man and horse were both dead. The Pixies had, indeed, accomplished their revenge; but their bath never flowed again; and in a few years every vestige of it was destroyed.

V. The Lady Of The Silver Bell

I HAVE already told you, my young friends, a story in connexion with Tintagel; and now purpose to relate to you another; the events of which occurred in the same place, though at a somewhat more recent period, when a certain Baron was Lord of that ancient castle, and lived there with much splendour and state.

This great Baron had only one child, a daughter, who was as fair as a lily, and when she turned her head, her neck moved with the grace and beauty of the swan; at least in such terms of praise was she described by the old harper in his songs, as, every feast day, he gladdened the halls of Tintagel with the thrilling notes and full chords of his harp. She was commonly called Serena, on account of her generally placid demeanour; and as her father was very fond of seeing her dressed in white and silver, because he thought she looked prettiest when so attired; she was not unfrequently called the silver lady.

Her nurse declared, that, when the child was in the cradle, she had been blessed by the Pixies; and it was that which made her look so fair and beautiful, and caused her to be so lucky in all she took in hand. “But woe be to her,” would the old gossip add, when she said this, “woe be to her, if my lady Serena should offend the Pixies; for, like us mortal sinners, they will often most hate where they have most loved; and especially if they be jealous or offended.”

Although her mother died when she was an infant, Serena received a very good education; for her nurse taught her so well how to work with the needle, that all the finest tapestry hangings in the castle were said to be in part wrought by her. The old minstrel instructed her in playing the harp; and she often sang to it many a Cornish ballad or ditty; and above all, Father Hilary had well disciplined her in her religious duties. She had given him a promise that she would never be absent from church at the ringing of the vesper bell; never, she said, unless prevented by sickness, would she be tempted to stay away when that bell was calling her to prayers, let what would happen. She gave this promise to Father Hilary so seriously, that he, as well as the nurse, assured her, if ever she broke it, the good spirits who

were her guardians would fly away from her, and leave her exposed to injury from the bad ones. Serena said, in reply, “No music was so sweet to her ears as the vesper bell.”

But though the Baron’s daughter had so many good qualities, she had, I am sorry to say, some very great faults. She was excessively vain and fond of dress, and at times sadly whimsical and capricious. When she grew up to womanhood, her father wanted her to marry some one of the gallant young knights who came to the castle; but such was her vanity, she deemed none good enough. Among them was a very gentle and amiable youth, who was so comely and graceful, that every body said how happy she would be as his wife. And the old nurse declared that, from the dreams she had about him, and his having first been brought to the sight of her young lady, by the sounds of sweet music, which seemed to float in the air and to guide his steps to Tintagel, at the very moment Serena was issuing from the castle gates, she was quite sure it was the Pixies, and nothing but the Pixies, who thus led him along to give him, as a very great favour, to Serena for a husband. Serena at first appeared to like him well, and he came very often to the castle; but at length she changed her mind, tossed her head, disappointed him, and said that neither he nor any other of her father’s friends, were handsome enough to please her; and in the caprice of her mood, she declared that she would never marry unless she could meet with a young prince who was handsomer, and dressed better, and played on the lute sweeter, than any one she had ever yet seen or heard.

Her old nurse sighed as she listened to all this, and said, “O my dear young lady, do not talk so! Beware what you say. You have behaved ill and whimsically to that poor young gentleman, whom every body loved; he was so good and kind. Depend upon it, the Pixies will take their revenge one of these days for the manner in which you treated him, or I don’t know them or their doings. The only way to save yourselves from their spite, is to be very penitent for your fault; and to be mindful of your promise to Father Hilary. For if you go wrong again, the evil spirits may take advantage of your folly, sadly to mislead and deceive you; and I should break my old heart if any harm happened to my dear young lady, whom I have nursed in these arms from the hour she was born.”

Serena paid little heed to this good advice, but soon after indulged in such extravagance and gaiety, in so much dancing and singing, that Father Hilary

interfered, and strictly enjoined her, as a sort of penance for spending her time so idly, to repair alone every day for one month to come, to a little chapel which stood near St. Nathan's Kieve, and to be sure, according to her promise, always to enter within its doors before the ringing of the vesper bell had ceased.

St. Nathan's Kieve was three miles and a half from Tintagel, a long and weary way, and over a difficult road; and though Serena now and then went on horseback, yet as walking far through such rough paths was a sort of penance, to please old Hilary, who was rather cross-grained and crabbed, and had no pity for her poor feet, she more frequently walked than rode.

On the day of which I am about to speak, Serena set out early on foot, as she was determined not to be hurried in her walk. She was dressed in a long grey cloak, and upon her head she wore a little grey cap made of cloth; a scallop shell was seen in front of it, to show that she was going on a sort of pilgrimage. As she put on her cloak, her nurse gave her a caution to let nothing stay her by the way, but to go on straight to the chapel, to enter before the bell had ceased ringing, come straight home, for, said the good old woman, "those who allow anything they meet with to delay them when they are going to prayers, are sure to lay themselves open to the power of those wicked spirits that I told you of before, they are sure to be punished for it."

Serena took leave of her aged counsellor with repeated promises to mind what she said. She passed the castle gates in a somewhat hurried manner, for fear .of meeting Father Hilary, as she liked not to be lectured by him on her way. With a quick step did she also pass the village of Trevenna. As she began to ascend the high ground beyond it, she slackened her pace, and looked back upon Tintagel, which now opened with all its grandeur of castle and cliff upon the view. She had never so attentively observed it as on this day; and, she could not tell why, but she then gazed upon it with a melancholy interest.

It was indeed a fine sight, and whilst the walls and towers of her father's ancient dwelling were lit up with a flood of light, the rock called Long Island, was in complete gloom from the overshadowing clouds. This rock wild, lofty, broken, close in shore, though surrounded by the waves, was said to be peopled, and especially after nightfall, by sea-gulls and spirits. Serena now, therefore, looked upon it in its sombre hue with a secret sense

of dread. Nor was it without a shudder that as she turned to continue her walk she saw a solitary magpie pacing up and down on the very road she had to cross. She did not like the evil sign, and she thought that she would take a shorter way, and find out that the country people sometimes took in going to chapel.

But Serena was soon bewildered, and at length got into a strange rough road over a field that descended as precipitously as the roof of a house to the bottom of a ravine, beautifully clothed with wood. She could hear the running of water, and soon came in sight of a stream that ran rapidly under a vast number of trees. This she crossed and still advanced. She now perceived some overhanging rocks, and on the hill above these stood the little chapel. She had not advanced very far, when she heard the vesper bell. Mindful of her promise she determined to retrace her steps as speedily as possible, and no longer linger, though in so lovely a scene.

But at that very moment she heard strains of the most enchanting music. Nothing earthly seemed to mingle with those sounds. “O Serena! Serena, quickly turn, hark to the vesper bell.” She fancied that a voice above the rocks spoke these words. But, alas! she neglected the friendly warning. She looked this way, that way, up the ravine, among the trees, and could see no one; whilst every step she advanced, the music of the unseen musician appeared to move on before her. “I will but tarry a few minutes to see who it is plays thus sweetly, and where the sounds come from,” said Serena, “I shall yet reach the chapel yonder, before the bell has done ringing.”

She now continued descending the difficult and winding path, which turned sharply round among rocks that peered above her head in the most fantastic forms; the roots of the trees clung to them in all directions. So narrow had the path become between the rocks and the stream, that it scarcely afforded room to pass; and as the stones were slippery with moss and damp, and here and there the arm of a tree crossed close above the head, to pass along was both precarious and dangerous.

Again did Serena listen, and still could she hear, even above the sounds of the rushing waters, the vesper-bell. She now in good earnest determined to turn back. But at that moment, such a strain of sweetness arose; it caught her ear, and she became once more fixed by the spell of such enchanting harmony. Alas! it was of more power than the call of duty over her wavering mind.

The music now seemed to come from the opposite side of the stream; and so much was her curiosity excited, that she took the resolution to try to cross it, and to find out the unseen minstrel. She looked round and perceived some large loose stones, which served, though not without risk, for stepping-stones. Serena was light of foot and very active; and so by marking well, where to venture, and springing from rock to rock, she managed to get over the stream. Again did she enter on a narrow path, and followed it for a few yards, when, on a sudden turn, she came in sight of the loveliest waterfall that she had ever beheld.

It was situated at the extremity of a recess among the wildest rocks. These formed so complete an inclosure, that it was only in front facing the fall that a view of it could be gained. The cascade itself was not lofty, not above fifty or sixty feet in height; it was its form and accompaniments which rendered it of such surpassing loveliness. A few yards distant from the fall, there stood fronting it some rocks, which half way up had the appearance of a natural arch; and through this opening the foaming waters were seen leaping and dashing over the rocks, with the most beautiful effect. Thence they rushed on in the wildest tumult over vast masses of granite, which lay in the bed of the stream as if to impede its course. Here and there, occasioned by the hollows beneath, might be found a calm deep pool, undisturbed by the impetuosity of the flood.

Serena stopped, delighted with the beauty of the scene. “This is the sweetest ravine in the world,” she said; “such a beautiful waterfall, and the rocks so wild and broken; and all shut in to keep it, as it were, from the approach of common mortals. Surely this must be the very place in which my nurse tells me, that Merlin of old, the great magician, in the days of Prince Arthur, used to work his spells; where the Pixies make their favourite haunt, and where they are now most powerful, and, therefore, most to be feared. But that must be false; for nothing to be feared can ever come into such a charming scene as this. But I must not linger; and now to hasten back, for here no vesper-bell can be heard, nor even that delightful music which led me hither, for here the waterfall lets no music but its own meet the ear.”

Well might Serena thus admire the scene, for what she so gazed upon were the rocks and fall of Nathan’s Kieve.

Serena gave the cascade one last farewell look, and then turned to retrace her steps; but who shall speak her wonder, when, at a short distance from

the spot she had quitted, she found it impossible to proceed without the danger of stepping upon a human being, who lay outstretched, with a lute by his side, on the narrow path under the rocks, and so close to the water's edge, that no space was left for her to glide by without disturbing him. She paused a moment; her eyes became as much fascinated by the beautiful appearance of the sleeping figure, as her ears had before been charmed by the mysterious music.

It was a strange place for repose. The sleeper was a young man, of a very good person, and handsome features, with light brown curly hair. His attire was at once rich and elegant. He wore such a cloak and vest as Serena had never before seen; the plumage of the finest birds seemed to have been rifled to give it splendour. And then the cap on his head, and the tiara which was bound around his brows, was so radiant and glittering with jewels, that they looked as if diamonds, and emeralds, and rubies, and sapphires had been clustered together so as to emulate in the manner of their arrangement the colours of the butterfly's wing.

Serena gazed till her admiration of the manly beauty and splendid attire of the youthful sleeper became as great as that which she had felt, a little while before, for the music; and far exceeded her admiration of the beauties of the scene. She thought that, if ever she married, it should be to just such a beautiful youth; and then his dress was so graceful, so rich; and as for his tiara, it would be the prettiest thing imaginable to have just such another to bind around her own dark and flowing hair. She felt quite sure none but a prince could altogether be so charmingly dressed, and so handsome; and he it must be who had produced from that lute such exquisite tones.

Serena was now in no hurry to pass on, but looked about her, and seeing an opening in some rocks near at hand, that were overshadowed by thick and pendant boughs, she determined to conceal herself and to survey more at her leisure the noble features and the splendid adornments of the. sleeper; hoping that, when he awoke, he would again touch the strings of his lute. The vesper bell was forgotten; and O to think from what a cause! Serena had given herself up to the influence of a vain curiosity! Soon had she cause to rue her folly; for most sadly was she beguiled by what could be nothing more than an illusion to ensnare and deceive her; the work of an enemy to her peace.

After a while, a thick mist suddenly fell like a cloud over every object around her. The very rocks and trees which sheltered her were no longer visible: The wind moaned, and the river rushed along in tumult as the roar of the waterfall became loud as rolling thunder. Serena trembled in every limb; her heart beat quick; she knew not what to do. Move from the spot of her concealment she dared not; she was on the verge of despair, when gradually the mist rose like a veil that had been thrown over the landscape, and now raised by an invisible hand. The rocks, woods, and waterfall once more were distinctly seen, but under a melancholy aspect; no sun-beam fell upon them; all was shadow and gloom. She looked down on the narrow pathway; but neither the beautiful sleeping youth, nor the lute by his side were to be seen; they ware gone; and she saw only the broken and mossy rocks wet with the spray and foam of the stream!

At length she arose, retraced her steps, and approached the chapel; but the vesper bell had long ceased ringing, and the doors of the chapel were closed--closed indeed, for the vesper service had been concluded half an hour before she reached the spot. Serena could net but feel ashamed of her folly; and she added to it by keeping the knowledge of it confined to her own bosom; for neither to Father Hilary, nor to the nurse did she tell what had happened.

She was, however, often seen stealing down the pathway. that led to Nathan’s Kieve; for by a strange fascination she was fond of going there alone; although it was in that spot she first received those impressions which now rendered her so melancholy and unhappy. At length Father Hilary saw something was the matter, and obtained from her a confession of the truth, but only in part told; for she confined herself to the statement of having wasted her time in wandering up to the waterfall in Nathan’s Kieve, and being too late for the vespers. She blushed, but was so ashamed to confess how much she had been led astray, that she said not one word about the musician, his attire, or the music. But Father Hilary was quite sufficiently shocked by what she confessed, and imposed upon her a very severe penance, namely, that she should take the ten marks given to her by the Baron to buy a splendid dress to wear at a high festival to be held at the castle, and should expend the same in the purchase of

A SILVER BELL,

on which she must cause to be engraved an image of herself attired as a penitent, with her hair hanging down her back, and carrying a taper in her hand, in token of sorrow for what she had done amiss. Serena obeyed, and purchased the silver bell, of which I here give the picture.

This Father Hilary presented in her name to the little chapel situated on the hill above Nathan's Kieve.

But though this was done, and though Serena had worn her old robes at the high festival of Tintagel, to the amusement of all her gaily-clad young friends, who tittered at her shabby apparel and envied her pretty looks, and though she had taken care that her many visits to the waterfall should never again interfere with the hour of ringing the vesper bell; yet was she dull and melancholy. Her spirits flagged, indeed they had never returned with their natural vivacity since that unluckly day on which she committed so great a fault. Still she longed and sighed once more to hear the charming music, and to see the handsome and gaily dressed minstrel. But she was always disappointed in her hopes and expectations.

At length she became so unhappy that she told all her secret to nurse Judy. Now, nurse Judy, though good-natured was not a very wise counsellor, for fearing Father Hilary would put the young lady to a more severe penance than the former did he know all the truth, she gave her very wrong advice as will presently be seen.

She told Serena that she was convinced all that had happened to her was a Pixy delusion, brought about by some of those malignant and spiteful beings, who it was well known were powerful in Nathan's Kieve, and more especially over any one who had been negligent in the performance of their duty. She did not doubt that the music was the work of their spells; and as to the beautiful musician, she felt certain that he was nothing more than some mischievous imp, who had assumed that appearance on purpose to deceive her.

In order therefore to counteract these spells, she persuaded Serena to go and consult old Swillpot, the famous Cornish wizard, who dwelt near the waterfall at Nathan's Kieve, and who, nurse Judy said, was noted for being a kind wizard in his way, that was if he entertained no spite against the person who came to consult him; and more especially if the individual gave him a purse full of money, and a jar of strong rich metheglin or mead,

which had been made at the full of the moon (then considered the best time for making it), and was three years old at least. Judy declared, that she had metheglin in her own particular cupboard which had been made under all the quarters of the moon, and old Swillpot should have that decocted at the full.

Serena, though not without fear, took all the money she had and put it into her purse; she took also Judy's jar of metheglin, which was so large she found it difficult to carry it under her cloak, and set out for the wizard's dwelling.

A very poor and miserable cottage was not the most agreeable place for so delicate a young lady as Serena to visit; but she was unhappy and wanted relief, and so she did not care to be nice, but after a gentle rap at once entered the dwelling. She was civilly received by old Swillpot, more especially when he handled the purse, and took the jar of metheglin, and with a good-humoured chuckle tucked it under his arm. He then bade Serena sit down, and he would presently taIk with her.

Old Swillpot had not much the look of a wizard, for he was stout and burly, had a round full face, not unlike the moon (as that luminary is painted on the face of a clock), a very round red nose, and a beard so thick and long it reached quite down to his waist. He was in an exceeding good humour, placed himself at the head of a little table, produced a brown loaf and some Cornish cheese, as hard as if it had been cut out of the rocks, or from one of the Cornish mines, bustled up to his cupboard, produced a couple of horn cups, opened the jar, and very heartily pressed Serena to partake with him some of her own choice metheglin. This, with a smack of the lips, he pronounced to be excellent, clear as amber, rich as the honey from which it was originally made, and fit for the king himself if he ever came into Cornwall. Serena, not to offend him, just tasted the cup, and then would have proceeded to tell her tale; butt the charms of the metheglin were so much greater than those of the young lady in the estimation of old Swillpot, that not until he had half emptied the jar would he hear a word she had to say.

At last he seemed a little boozy with the strength of the potation; as he sat, neither quite awake nor yet asleep, tapping his fingers on the table, his nose three times redder than it was before, he bade her tell her story, and gave a

yawn and a lengthened hum at the end of every sentence, to let her know how very attentive he was to her discourse.

He then leaned back in his chair, looked wise, considered, made a snatch at a fine tabby cat that was rubbing herself against the side of his chair, took her up on his knee, and rubbed her hair the wrong way, as she raised up her tail till it reached his chin and brushed his beard. After consulting either his own thoughts, or the motion of the cat's tail, it was doubtful which, he very solemnly assured Serena, that all her sufferings and uneasiness proceeded from a wicked delusion--that, in fact, she had been *Pixy-led* in the most injurious manner. Having said this, he proceeded to the subject of her cure--to free her from the powerful spell under which she was still labouring; to cure her vain desire to hear again the mysterious music, and to see the handsome musician, which so disturbed her peace. Lastly, as what she had to do must be performed at the Kieve, and in sight of the waterfall, at the full of the moon, he offered to accompany her to the spot. As the moon would be at the full that very night, he said no time should be lost; it was therefore agreed that they should set out together. fore departing, old Swillpot tucked the jar, containing the remainder of the metheglin, under his arm, and so the speedily gained the place of their destination.

But what were the fears and astonishment of Serena, when, on arriving there, the wizard directed her to climb up to the top of the rock which forms the natural arch in front of the waterfall, and lies directly over what may truly be styled a boiling and foaming cauldron. And, when there, he directed her to perform certain magical rites to appease the Pixies; for Pixies, he still declared, had been her foes

In what all these rites consisted, I do not know; but, watching the moon till a cloud passed over her disk, and then repeating certain words of mysterious signification, were among them. Lastly, she was enjoined to stay on the rock till she heard, even above the fall of the water, the scream of a night-bird that was said to haunt the ravine, and there to make the most dismal shrieks that could be imagined. No one knew where it had a nest. It was popularly believed to be the spirit of the great enchanter, Merlin, thus inhabiting the body of a bird for a certain term of years. Merlin, it was said, had been a cruel enemy to the Pixies. Serena was directed to watch; and when she saw something dark come sailing over the rocks above, on out-spread wings, and with loud screams prepare to dash itself into the midst of

the fall, then was she to address it in a form of words, which the wizard instructed her how to repeat. This done, she might descend from the rock, and would no more be troubled with any mischievous spells or fancies.

Serena, with much fear, and a quickly-beating heart, managed to ascend the rock, and to take her perilous stand upon the natural arch above the rapid and roaring flood: she did all as commanded. At length she heard a flapping of wings, and saw the dark form of a majestic bird, whose plumage shone bright and silvery in the moonbeams, rise from among the trees. Instantly she addressed it, in a firm and plaintive tone--

“Bird of night, ‘tis time to leave
Thy nest, and seek St. Nathan’s Kieve;
Bird of power o’er Pixy dells,
Disenchant me from their spells.
Give me freedom from their thrall,
Ere thou seek’st yon waterfall;
Drive from me idle Fancy’s mood,
Or drown my folly in the flood.”

Serena, as she spoke these last words, raised herself hastily from the summit of the rock on which she was so precariously placed. At that very moment the bird with outspread wings dashed against the moon-illumined waterfall, she lost her footing and tottered. Before she could regain her balance, old Swillpot, as fast as he could make the effort, stepped forward to give assistance. Unfortunately whilst Serena had been performing the rites he dictated, in order to keep the night air from chilling his stomach, he had emptied into it the remaining half of the jar of metheglin, so that he was a little more unsteady than before; and neither his foot in stepping, nor his hand in helping, were so much under his control as at all to be sure of their purpose; and he bungled so terribly in trying to give aid, that his foot slipped, and having caught Serena by the arm, down he pushed her; and both were soused into the water. Swillpot was nearer to the banks, and some how or other managed to scramble out.

But not so the unfortunate young lady; she had been pushed so completely over the rock by the tipsy wizard, that she fell at once into a pool which lay immediately below it; the most deep and dangerous in the whole course of the stream. Poor Serena was seen no more. But long did her memory survive her unhappy fate; long was her story told as a sad example of so

young and so lovely a creature being led into folly by her vain and idle curiosity.

Old Swillpot, who was not of an unkind heart, though he did not possess a very clear head, was so shocked and concerned at what had happened, owing to his having bewildered his brains and rendered his footing unsteady, by making too free with the metheglin; that, as the very severest penance he could possibly inflict upon himself, he renounced strong drink for ever after. And old nurse Judy was so vexed and angry with herself for having recommended her young lady to go and consult him, and for sending such an old fool, as she called him, her best and stoutest metheglin, that she took the resolution never more to give away one drop of it to any mortal creature; and so well did she observe this determination that it never more went down any throat but her own. And as a reward for keeping so strictly her purpose, old Swillpot's red nose seemed to have passed from his face to her own.

It is said to this day, when the moon is at the full, and her beams sparkle, like filaments of diamonds on the beautiful waterfall of Nathan's Kieve, Serena's Silver Bell is heard ringing in a slow and melancholy cadence, like a funeral chime; though the chapel to which it was given has long been destroyed, and neither the belfry nor bell are any more to be found.

VI. The Belfry Rock; Or, The Pixies' Revenge

ON the borders of Dartmoor, in days of yore, there lived a rich old farmer, in one of the fields near whose house, stood a very curious object, a large moor-stone rock, shaped by nature so much like an ancient Gothic church with a tower, that it was known among the country people for miles round by the name of" The Pixies' Church."

It was also encompassed by a Pixy ring; and many old persons declared that ever since they could remember, if you placed your ear close to the rock on a Sunday, you could hear a small tinkling sound, resembling the church bells at Tavistock, and usually at the very time they were ringing to warn the good people of that town for the morning service. It was said, likewise, that the same sound could be heard when the bells of Tavistock chimed, as they always did at four, and eight, and twelve o'clock. One old woman protested that so long ago as when her great grand-father, who was fond of music, was a little boy, he was frequently seen to place his ear against the rock to listen, as he thought, to the Pixies' ringing; and although he had never been at Tavistock, he thus learned the tune of the 100th Psalm which the chimes there used to play daily. He declared that he heard the Pixy music best when he put his head in a hole in the portion of the rock which was called the belfry tower. When he grew up to be a man he learned to play on the bass viol with which he led the choir of a neighbouring village; and it was always noticed that there was no tune he played with so much spirit as the 100th Psalm, which he had so often heard at the belfry rock.

"And, as sure as you are alive," said the ancient dame, who repeated this story round many a Christmas fire, "the Pixies love bell-ringing, and go to church o' Sundays."

Well, it so happened, that the farmer wanted stones, to make the wall of some additional buildings to his house; and the "Church-rock" being near, he bethought him how much time, trouble, and expense would be saved, by making the granite of the tower supply his need. But when he made known his intentions to his workmen, they stood aghast with dread. One and all did

they declare that they would have no hand in the matter. What! dare to strike off even a bit of a stone from the Pixies' church! they would not do such a thing for the weight of the whole rock in gold. It would be sure to bring down the vengeance of the whole band of Pixies upon them; they had scarcely ever ploughed up or disturbed a Pixy ring, but they were sure to suffer for it, by pains in the bones, cramps, and rheumatics; and as to touching the rock, they dared not do it for their lives.

Finding that be could do nothing with his men, the old farmer, being as stout and sturdy as he was obstinate, determined to work himself, and to make his sons help him. And so, in good earnest, they began the work of destruction; and block after block was removed from the musical tower. But this deed of mischief and spoliation was not done without some marks of anger, and even of suffering, from the invisible little beings thus disturbed in their favourite haunts. Low and piercing shrieks were constantly heard from the rock; and the masons (those who had refused to help to take the stones from such a quarry), whilst engaged in raising the building, were terribly troubled with cramps, and felt every night, when they lay down to rest, as if pins were running into their flesh, so that they were heartily glad when the work was completed.

But now began the Pixies' revenge upon the man who had been at the head of thus offending them. One morning, when the old farmer came down into the kitchen, he found a heap of ashes on the hearth, within the ample space of the chimney. It looked absolutely as if there had been a bonfire made of a whole rick of wood; and, on going into the wood-yard, he found the better part of his rick, more especially all the great logs that he had been saving up for the Christmas week, gone. He next proceeded to the cow-house. It was in the depth of Winter; and there he was struck with horror on beholding his finest, fattest, and most favourite cow, the very queen of cows for grace and beauty, standing shivering and shaking, reduced to a living skeleton; her eyes staring out of her head, and her bones scarcely covered with skin. What a sight! "The Pixies have pity on me," exclaimed the old man; "for truly do I fear this is their work." On the two following mornings it was just the same thing--a heap of ashes on the hearth, and now a fat ox reduced to a living skeleton! At length the old farmer plucked up courage, and determined that, on the next night, he would watch and find out the mystery.

He effected his purpose by concealing himself in a hollow place in the wall of the kitchen, called the smuggler's hole; for, if fame did him no wrong, the old fellow was said, now and then, to do business in an unlawful way. Well, there was he concealed. Exactly as the clock struck twelve, he heard a noise something like the humming of bees at the kitchen door; and directly after perceived a little creature, very diminutive, but shaped like a human being, come forth through the key-hole.

Immediately Friskey (for such, it seemed, was the name of this Pixy) took down from a nail, where it hung near the door, the ponderous key (the weight of which was almost too much for him), and with it, at length, the young gentleman managed to unlock the door.

To his utter amazement, what should the old farmer next see, but one of his fine fat oxen driven in by myriads of little creatures; some sitting on the animal's back, others pulling him by the ears, a few swinging on his tail, and a couple of rogues, one perched on the tip of either horn, amusing themselves by turning about, in their antics, like the weather-cocks on the tops of the pinnacles of Tavistock church.

This Pixy progeny, though numerous, were by no means very handsome. The tallest of them was (said the old gossip, the narrator of this most wonderful history) not higher than her kitchen candle-stick; that was, about six inches from crown to toe; and the miniature Pixies, or dwarfs among them, were scarcely half so tall. They looked, added this observing old dame, for all the world like little stoats, standing on their hinder legs. They had fierce black eyes, large mouths, and red fiery tongues, flashing and shining like pen-knives, as they thrust them out.

This band of little imps, who seemed to be of no very gentle or amiable nature, soon drove the poor ox near the kitchen chimney. Then, urchins though they were, they threw him down in a minute; all hands set to work and fairly skinned him, being careful in so doing not to break the hide. Whilst this operation was going on, another party of these diminutive monsters (if so they may be called) busied themselves in bringing in great logs of wood. It was truly wonderful to see such little creatures capable, by their numbers, of removing such loads. The logs were disposed upon the hearth. One of the Pixies then breathed upon them, and immediately they kindled into a flame.

Friskey next clapped his tiny hands, and forthwith three obedient Pixies appeared, each mounted and sitting between the prongs of a pitchfork turned upwards, and so they glided onward towards the fire. The pitchforks stopped of themselves, and then the urchins dismounted; and one putting his fork into the nose of the poor ox, whilst the other did the same to his rump, and the third poked at his side, they had him up in a trice, and contrived to suspend him ready for roasting before the fire. And then they all set to and whirled and turned him backwards and forwards and round about like so many mad turnspits, and basted him with the cook's ladle and with all the butter and cream that they could steal from the dairy; for Pixies are very good cooks, and know that meat is never delicate or tender unless basted with care. The roasting was soon finished; for a fire kindled by such means is strong, swift, and subtle in its operations.

And then, exactly while the old farmer in his hiding hole could count seven, three times was the ox lifted up and three times again let down, before it was transferred to the large kitchen table. This done, one little wretch, far more ugly than all the rest, with something bright and sparkling about his brows (the form of which the farmer could not exactly make out), stamped with his tiny feet, and bade the whole band to the feast. In another moment, out flew a thousand little knives, each in shape resembling a cutlass, and each Pixy fell to "tooth and nail," on the good cheer, cutting and carving and helping himself. They all seemed highly to enjoy their supper, and chatted and talked as fast as they ate in a sort of squeak very like the squeak of mice in a corner. These little wretches contrived in a few minutes, to devour fat and lean, and every part of the ox except the brain, the eyes, and bones and sinews. The bones, however, were picked quite clean, and looked to the wondering farmer, to be as white as drifted snow. They were then cast under the table.

But O how the old man did tremble and quake with fear when he saw that one of the small bones of the beast had fallen near the entrance of the hole in the wall, where he lay concealed. He had, however, courage and presence of mind sufficient to stretch out his hand and catch up this small bone. He then shut to the little softly-sliding panel that formed a sort of door to the entrance of his secret retreat; for he was so overcome with terror that he could not bear any longer to behold such a scene of mischief, and could

hardly suppress his groans for the loss of his favourite ox. However, he could not forbear, now and then, taking a peep at what was still going on.

Presently he perceived the Pixy company set to dancing and capering like mad things; and this they did *in a ring*, holding each other by the hand, and making a humming noise like a tune (though a very wild and strange one) which was only interrupted by the mouselike squeak and a sort of chuckling, for that was their manner of mirth and laughter. After they were pretty well tired with their sports, the little Pixy who looked more old and ugly than all the rest, gave a sharp shrill cry, and immediately all the party began to collect the scattered bones, and to put them together with wonderful ease and precision, fastening them with ligatures and sinews. The little creatures, however, in building up the ox, missed the small bone, and appeared greatly alarmed lest it should bring upon them the anger of their king. But after consulting together, they seemed to form a plan to conceal it from him pretty readily.

They next laid out the skeleton of the ox, as clean and as perfect as if they had been doing it to oblige any Surgeon Hunter, or Professor Owen, for their schools of anatomy. They then took the horns and the hoofs (which they removed before supper) with very great care; and, lastly, drew the skin over the bones with admirable dexterity. It went on without pulling, for there was no flesh left to create the slightest difficulty.

This finished, once more all joined hands, made a ring, and danced three several times round the ox; and, lastly, all united in uttering one small shrill piercing cry. This was repeated thrice more, “and thrice again,” as the witches say in the play of Macbeth, “to make up nine.” Several of them then climbed upon the creature’s back, as nimbly as young cats, and placed themselves about the head, and seemed to breathe and utter sounds in the mouth and ears.

All these rites being accomplished, the leader among the Pixies took several pieces of birch from a broom in the kitchen, and, making one after his own fashion, proceeded to rub down the ox, from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail. Whereupon the animal began slowly to re-animate. First he opened one eye, and then another; shook his ears, and rolled out his tongue; and then he gave such a sudden whisk with his tail, that he tumbled off from it a dozen or two of Pixies who were amusing themselves by hanging upon it, as ship-boys do upon a rope; and, lastly, he gave such a bellow, that it even

startled the old farmer in his hole. Their sport for the night being accomplished, and fearing the ox, with his bellowing, would disturb the house, the Pixy tribe proceeded to drive the poor beast towards the door; but they could. not do even this like other creatures, for they did it by teazing and pinching him in a very wanton manner. And then it was found, that, for want of the small missing bone, the animal limped terribly, and went lame on one leg. They all, however, got out, much in the same way that they got in. Friskey staid behind, to lock the door and hang up the key, and then bobbed through the key-hole after the others.

And now, my young friends, you want to know what became of the old man; and I'll tell you. As soon as all was quiet, he crept out of his smuggling-hole, and went to bed, terribly frightened; but could not get a wink of sleep all the night for thinking of the Pixies. As soon as it was day, he got up, and went straight to the ox-house; and there he found his poor skeleton beast, halting on one leg. Now, there was a strange kind of old woman lived near him, who was called old Joan, the witch; but, though he consulted her upon the case, it seemed that she could do nothing for him, but rather inclined to favour the Pixies; very probably they were her personal friends. However, being hard pressed to give advice, she told the farmer to go to a conjuror, known by the name of the White Wizard of Exeter; a little, short, funny old man, who was very formidable when he chose to use his power over witches and pixies, and little devils of all kinds and degrees.

The farmer did go to Exeter, and related to the White Wizard all that had happened. How he took down the tower of the Pixy church, and broke it up for stones for his building, and every thing which had befallen him; and all that he had both seen and heard with his own eyes and ears. The White Wizard thought the affair a very bad one; but not altogether hopeless. He counselled the farmer to go home, pull down his new building, carry back all the stones to where he had taken them from, put them down on the same spot, but not to attempt to do anything more to them. Although grieved, and vexed to think he must be at so great a loss as all this implied, yet the old man obeyed. Great was his surprise when, on going out the next morning, he found the Pixy church and tower built up again, exactly as it was before, and not a stone out of its place.

But, alas! after he had first disturbed the Pixy tower, nothing went well with him; for, though it had been built up again, he moped about in low spirits, which he could not overcome, and got as lean and as miserable as one of his poor skeleton oxen. All this the old farmer related to the parson of the parish, and said that he made the confession on purpose to ease his conscience before he died, which he did soon after.

Now this very sad and disastrous tale was, for a long period, the subject of narrative at Christmas and Michaelmas eves, over the hot pies and the white ale, also made hot, with the addition of spice, eggs, and sugar, in all the villages bordering on Dartmoor. It was related as a warning both to young and old, never to meddle with, or to destroy, any Pixy rocks, houses or buildings, or rings of any kind or description, as these little Pixy beings, though sometimes of service where they take a fancy, are, nevertheless, spiteful and revengeful in their nature, and will requite an offence with tenfold injury, be it what it may.

Appendix

NOTES TO "PIXY GATHON; OR, THE TAILOR'S NEEDLE."

Ill-wishing in the West of England is to this day an expression used to denote the mischievous and wicked designs of witchcraft. To be *ill-wished* by an old woman, signifies neither more nor less than to be bewitched by her. Sometimes persons who fancy that their children, themselves, or their cattle, are so, go to the *White Witch,* who pretends to the power of curing or removing the evil brought about by the wicked one.

Concerning Anastatia Steer, etc., I beg leave to subjoin, for the amusement of my readers, the following extracts from that curious work--"*A View of Devonshire in 1630*, *with a Pedigree of most of its Gentry, by Thonas Westcote, Gentleman,"* which, though written so long ago, was only very lately published by subscription. Speaking of the great age of many persons in the county of Devon, the worthy author quaintly says--

"To add somewhat more concerning long life, it is to be proved, that Anastatia Steer, late of Roborough, lived full one hundred and forty years, double the age the prophet David allowed for old men in his time, when he said--

"Our time is three score years and ten
That we do live on mould;
If one see four score, surely then
We count him wondrous old."

And speaking of Crediton, he says--

"Their market for kersies hath been very great, especially of the *finer sort;* (and before the *prepetuanos* were wrought) for the aptness and diligent industry of the inhabitants (for making such cloth), did purchase it a super-eminent name above all other towns, whereby grew this common proverb, *as fine as Kerton spinning;* (for we briefly call it Kerton) which spinning was indeed very fine: which to express, the better to gain your belief, it is very true, that one hundred and forty threads of woollen yarn spun in that town were drawn together through the eye of a tailor's needle; which needle and which threads were for many years together to be seen in

Watling Street in London, in the shop of one Mr. Dunscombe, at the sign of the Golden Bottle."

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NOTES TO "THE THREE TRIALS; OR, THE STORY OF CRABBY CROSS."

Tintagel.--The ruins of this once magnificent old castle, traditionally said to have been built by Prince Arthur, stand to this day much as they are described in the tale.

The Rev. Mr. Hawker, in his little volume of elegant poetry, called "Records of the Western Shore," says of the Chough, "This wild bird chiefly haunts the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. The common people believe that the soul of King Arthur inhabits one of these birds, and no entreaty or bribe would induce an old Tintagel quarry-man to kill one of them." Black cats, black hens, and ravens, I believe, from time immemorial, have been considered as the peculiar property of witches: and the evil spirit, who becomes the familiar of any such wicked persons, is said to take up his abode in the body of one of the above named black creatures, or, in some cases, to assume the appearance of any one of them. Some time since, I saw it stated, I think in Prince's "*Worthies of Devon"* (but have lost the reference to the page), that a certain learned divine, deeply versed in magic, had an attendant spirit in the shape of a black hen, which, on some one reading in a great magical hook that lay on the table in the absence of the owner, suddenly became a monstrous and dangerous bird.

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NOTES TO "THE SEVEN CROSSES OF TIVERTON; OR, THE STORY OF PIXY PICKETT."

The quaint old author, Westcote, above mentioned, gives the following account of the Seven Crosses of Tiverton. He begins by stating, that a poor labouring man of that town had, by his wife, seven sons at a birth, "which being so secretly kept, as but known to himself and his wife; he, despairing of Divine Providence (which never deceiveth them that depend thereon, but giveth meat to every mouth, and filleth with his blessing every living thing), resolveth to let them swim in our river, and to that purpose puts them all into a large basket, and takes his way towards the river. The Countess (of Devon) having been somewhere abroad to take the air, or doing rather some

pious work, meets him with his basket, and by some, no doubt Divine, inspiration, demands what he carried in his basket. The silly man, stricken dead well near with that question, answers, they were whelps. ‘Let me see them,’ quoth the lady. ‘They are puppies,’ replied he again, ‘not worth the rearing.’ ‘I will see,’ quoth the good Countess; and the loather he was to show them, the more earnest was she to see them: which he perceiving, fell on his knees and discovered his purpose, with all former circumstances; which understood, she hasteth home with them, provides nurses and all things else necessary. They all live, are bred in learning, and, being come to man’s estate, gives each a prebend in this parish. which I think are vanished not to he seen, but the Seven Crosses near Tiverton, set up by this occasion, keeps it yet in memory.”

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NOTES TO “FONTINA; OR, THE PIXIES’ BATH.”

Sir Henry de Bath, a native of Devon and a most worthy man, and a judge in the reign of Henry III, in consequence of tile king’s mind having been prejudiced against him by an artful and designing enemy, was summoned before the Parliament on the charges of corruption and treason. Conscious of his innocence, be came forward in the most fearless manner, supported by his friends, who entered the house armed. Those who were to sit in judgment upon him, feared so much the consequences to themselves did they condemn him, that not one present would lead the way; whereupon the king, in a fit of passion, denounced him, and promised to pardon any one who should put to death Sir Henry de Bath. He, however, escaped the present danger, and was afterwards reconciled to his sovereign. In the court before Bath House (the ancient family residence near North Tawton, Devon) there was formerly a deep pit. Prince says, “so deep in the centre as the height of a man well mounted on horseback, generally dry, where would sometimes in the dryest season a spring break out, which filled the pit so full it would overflow Its banks.” This overflowing of the waters became a fatal sign of death or calamity to the family of De Bath; and Westcote says in the work already cited, “That in those latter days, it had been seen to do so three times in a little more than thirty years.”

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NOTES TO “THE LADY OF THE SILVER BELL.”

For the wild Pixy incidents which suggested this tale, I am indebted to my husband, the Rev. E. A. Bray, who many years since commenced a little poem on the subject, which is lost.

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NOTES TO "THE BELFRY ROCK; OR, THE PIXIES' REVENGE."

The Belfry Rock, commonly called the Church Rock, on Dartmoor, on account of its resemblance to a church. I know not if it is still in being, as great havoc of late years has taken place on the moor; many rocks have been blasted with gunpowder, broken up for the roads, and otherwise destroyed. But the Church Rock was long remembered; and many old persons have declared, that they could recollect the time when, if you placed your ear close to it on a Sunday, you could hear a low tinkling sound like the bells of Tavistock Church, and always at the time of warning for service; and they also said, that the chimes, at the regular hours of the day for chiming, could be so heard at the rock. All this was duly ascribed to the Pixies, who, it was believed, loved bell-ringing, and went to church. Hence the rock in question received the name of the *Pixies' Church.* It is not at all improbable, that, when the wind was in the right quarter, the sounds heard at the rock were the faint echoes of the Tavistock bells.

For a knowledge of the local tradition, on which the tale of the Belfry Rock is founded, I am indebted to Mr. Merrifield, a barrister, and a man of talent in more things than the law, a native of the town of Tavistock, and the husband of a lady well known for her literary merits.

THE END

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as their own. You should definitely get a refund :/

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Notes

[←1]
”Borders of the Tamar and Tavy.”

[←2]

Given at large in the “Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy,” vol. i, p. 208.

[←3]

In the severe winter of 1853, four soldiers and a poor pedler were also lost in the snow on the moor.

[←4]

“The Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy.”

[←5]

That the soul of Prince Arthur resides in the body of a chough; is the popular belief of many of the peasantry on the coast of Cornwall.