



BY

LADY LINDSAY.

IT was the evening of an April day, a fresh, balmy, spring-like day—the child's birthday.

He had been out gathering wild flowers during the whole afternoon, and had returned, his strong little hands laden with many-coloured anemones, cyclamen, and sweet lilies. His hair was as yellow as the iris, and lifted and waved in the light wind; his eyes were as blue as the gentian, but they were sleepy now, their lids heavy and half-closed, for it was getting late—fully time for bed.

Quickly he pattered up stairs to the small bare room with the white bed in the corner, and quickly also the deft hands of his nurse slipped off his clothing and arrayed him in a long white gown, lifting him up—his fat arms pressed round her neck—and laying him down on the cool sheets and soft downy pillow.

It was a hasty prayer that had been said, I fear me; uttered with good intentions, surely, but with a sleepy mind. An inattentive mind also, perhaps, for on the table close by lay some pretty birthday gifts: a large red and green top, a box of marbles, and a little fish made of gilt cardboard, very bright and shining, very golden and pretty. The fish, as it glittered, seemed almost to leap and quiver in the flickering rays of the candle which the nurse was about to remove from the table.

“Good night,” she said softly.

“My fish!” murmured the child, lazily stretching out towards the toy, and the nurse, with a smile, took it up and placed it within his fingers, which closed tightly over it. Then she carried

the light out of the room, which now was quite dark except for the lingering twilight that made the trees outside the window seem colourless and mysterious.

The child had been watching the trees for some time; the leaves and delicate branches bent and swayed in shadowy movements across the window panes. Gradually, all sense of heaviness left him; he felt as rested and wide-awake as in the morning.

Then suddenly the fish spoke:

“Do not hold me so tight,” it said; “I pray you do not press me so cruelly—you hurt me; let me go!”

“Oh, no, no!” answered the boy.

“I beseech you to let me go!” implored the fish.

It gave a little jump, as though it would gladly bound out of the child's hand.

“Why do you want to go?” asked the boy, without relaxing his hold.

“Because,” answered the fish, “because I long to return to the wonderful country from whence I came—a country more wide, more beautiful than anything you can dream of; a country beneath the crystal water, where are the shining palaces and cities and all the marvels of the deep. Compared to those blissful regions, the earth on which you dwell is but a poor place indeed.”

“No, no, I cannot let you go,” said the child; “tell me something more about that wonderful country!”

“I am sad because I am not there,” said the fish. “I am weary and thirsty. I crave to be

in the cool blue waters again. More than all, I pine to see my lady-love, the sweet and beautiful Queen of the Forget-me-nots. I pray you have pity on me! Nay, if you will but let me go, I will take you with me and show you the shining depths of the river. Only, you cannot stay there long; you must be here again in your own bed by to-morrow morning, and no one must ever know whither you have journeyed. Say, will you come?"

The child sat up and pondered. Certainly, the proposal made by the gold-fish was a very tempting one. The little fish, meanwhile, lay quite still in the boy's open palm, where, although the room was dark, it glittered like a fleck of sunlight.

"Pray come, do come!" it murmured softly, and at last the boy nodded consent, and rose hurriedly from his bed.

All at once—he knew not how it was—he found himself on the bank of a broad river. The water was radiant with the beams of the moon, and seemed to flow like liquid silver.

"Follow me!" said the fish as it darted out of his hand, and fell with a splash into the water. And without any fear or hesitation the child followed, and sank below the surface also.

Yes, here all was beautiful, even more beautiful than the fish had foretold. In the strange bright light tall reeds and water-plants were bowing and

waving, and innumerable fishes were floating and diving and darting. Wherever they went they left long luminous tracks, and when, quitting the surface, they shot suddenly downwards, they brought with them a myriad of air-bubbles that glistened like diamonds.

"Follow me, follow me!" repeated the friendly gold-fish, and the boy swam silently after. In front of them rose a noble edifice, beauteous in form, built up of dark rocks, grand and weird. This was the palace of the King of the Fishes. Giant bulrushes stood like sentinels at the gates, and smooth green dock-leaves filled the hanging balconies. All around were massive thickets of yellow iris and marsh-mallow plainly visible above the ramparts, whilst tiny white flower-cups hung in festoons from the upper windows.

The gold-fish stayed not here, however; it rushed onwards fast, followed by the child, and the two were carried swiftly by the current of the river till, quite unexpectedly, they found themselves in the presence of the lovely Queen of the Forget-me-nots.

She sat alone at the river's edge, partly bending, partly floating in the water, her head resting upon the delicate grasses, and her slender feet bathed by the circling ripples. She was clad in draperies of pale blue, and crowned with starry flowers. In her right hand she held a tiny sceptre dotted



with pink buds. Behind her some wide-leaved plants made a sheltering canopy, and four dragonflies kept constant watch lest anything should harm her.

The little gold-fish quivered all over with delight as it approached the queen and prostrated itself at her feet; but, after the first moment of irrepressible joy, it turned gracefully to its companion, and introduced him to the royal lady.

Then the queen spoke to the child, and asked him many questions, speaking very kindly all the while.

She enquired where he dwelt, how he lived, how he spent his days, where he walked, where he played. She did not seem to have much knowledge of towns, but spoke rapturously of country delights, such as green meadows with cool long grass, where perfumed blossoming peach-trees, tall spiked maize, and vine-wreaths bordered the rushing river. She told how, in the later part of the year, childish feet might stray on pleasant mossy paths, above which ruddy mellow fruit grew within tempting reach—the very prettiest balls in the world to play with.

The gold-fish grew somewhat impatient during this interview, for it seemed to it as though the lovely queen were speaking more of earth and earthly joys than of the watery depths in which it so rejoiced; and yet she was a creature that belonged as much to the water, thought the fish, as to the parching air or heavy ground.

It sighed and flapped away impatiently, darting after a passing fly, and skimming along the surface of the water as though to show its prowess and astonishing agility. The queen, seeing this, in the kindness of her heart felt for the poor fish. Besides, time was passing; further delay was impossible. She turned to the child and told him that he must begin to wend his way homewards.

The boy was unwilling to go. He could not believe that more than a few moments were already spent. Here on the cool bank it was delightful to lie, his head among the soft grasses, at the knee of the queen whose gentle blue eyes rested kindly on his face.

She smiled, yet shook her head in reproach because of his unwillingness to leave her. Finally, in a soft musical voice that chimed with the murmur of the water, she sang to him. It was a song such as he had never heard; it haunted him for

many a long day afterwards. It was a melody that seemed woven of the grey twilight, the shimmering eddies, and the queen's sweet eyes; like her eyes it was sad though sweet, sweet and yet sad. And, whilst she still sang, he rose mechanically to his feet and turned to go, obeying her as though impelled by some invisible but mighty power that bade him depart.

The boy walked along the green sward by the side of the river. His steps made no sound as they fell on the soft turf; he passed on noiselessly and swiftly. He never looked round; he yet seemed to see, crowding all about him, the wonders he had so lately beheld: the shining depths, the palace of green rocks, the broad-leaved plants that swung and rustled, whilst in his willing ears still rang the sweet refrain of the song of the beautiful Queen of the Forget-me-nots.

On a sudden, he found himself in the outskirts of the town. The river had disappeared; houses loomed on either side. He walked on, for he knew his way, although a kind of strangeness, nay, almost a nameless fear, pervaded the place. All was silent and still; at long intervals dim yellow lamps twinkled faintly, and overhead the far brighter stars shone out. The moon was hidden, yet a floating gleam of moonlight overspread the scene. There was not a soul in the slumbering streets. The boy passed on. Presently, he came to the market-place; here all was silent and deserted also. The booths, usually surrounded with peasants in gay attire, were empty and covered over, their goods packed away out of sight. The large white umbrellas, which so often sheltered kindly noisy market-women from the rays of the hot sun, were folded in big loose folds, undisturbed by any breeze. The town looked pallid and ghostly in the moonlight; the quaint old outer walls stood tall and spectral on the green slopes; the inner streets seemed shadowy by contrast in their narrow steepness.

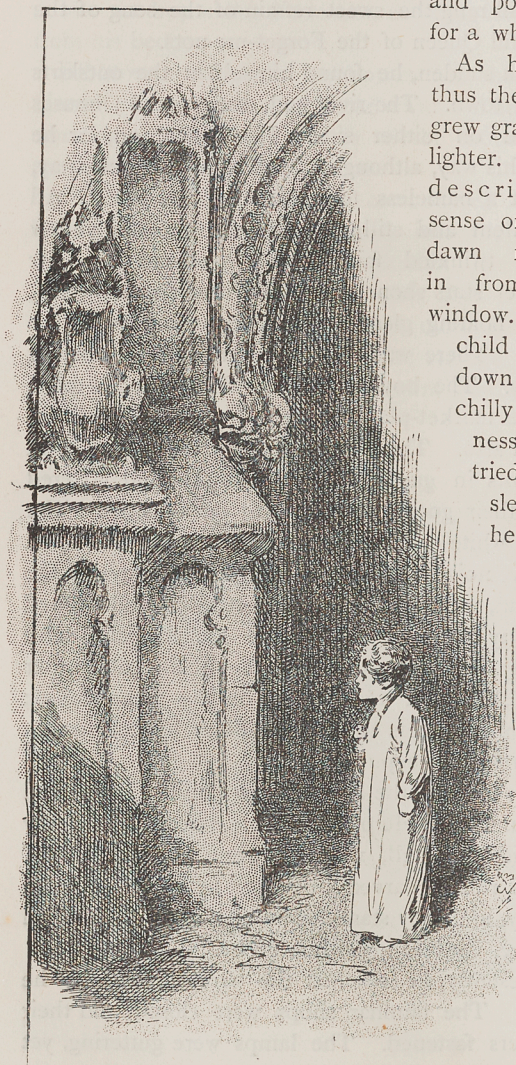
Nevertheless the boy was not afraid. He walked resolutely on. He passed the great frowning gateway of the town-hall, whereon were many monsters' heads rudely carved in stone; he gazed at them boldly, and they stared down at him in their weird silence, content to let him go by.

Presently, he reached the street in which he lived. The familiar shops were closed, and their shutters fastened. The lamps were guttering, yet

it was scarcely dawn. He could see before him the great cathedral; it towered above the neighbouring buildings, majestic and grand in its pre-eminence. The iron doors were shut—even the beggars who, at ordinary times, sat or slept on the marble steps, were absent; everything was curiously empty and locked away. Only when he came to the well-known door of the house where he himself dwelt, did the child find to his surprise that it stood slightly open. At the first touch of his little fingers the door swung heavily yet noiselessly back, and gave him admittance.

Then he shivered; he ran hastily up stairs—the wooden steps did not creak as they were wont to do—he ran on, nor stopped till he reached his own little bed. There he sat down, and pondered for a while.

As he sat thus the room grew gradually lighter. An indescribable sense of early dawn floated in from the window. The child lay down in chilly weariness, and tried to sleep but he could not.



He tossed and turned restlessly from side to side. All at once, he was conscious that some one had softly entered the room, a gentle presence that he felt although the outline of the figure was indistinct in the misty light. But as she drew nearer he recognized her—the Queen of the Forget-me-nots.

There, in her fair pale draperies, her head crowned with the starry water-flowers, she sat at the foot of his bed, leaning forwards and almost touching him with her kind hands.

“Do you not know me?” she asked in the musical voice that was almost a song in itself. “I am the spirit of remembrance. I bring back to every one the remembrance of those they have known and loved, even long, long ago.”

Then, as the boy sat fearlessly up and gazed at the new comer, his heart swelling with an odd sense of peace and joy, her face seemed to brighten yet more, till it shone, and her loving eyes smiled into his eyes.

He gazed more and more intently, and, as he did so, a throb of memory filled his whole being. For the queen—the gentle queen—was surely the very image of his own mother, she who had loved and fondled him when he was but a tiny child, but who, some sad months ago, had gone from him, never, (as he had heard folks say,) oh, never to return! And, even as he thought this, the queen stooped over him, and took him in her arms, and held him tenderly and tightly, bending down close to him a face that was like the face that his child-love had deemed better than aught else in the world, whose form and features he had cherished in his baby heart, though he had never realized until this present moment how clearly he could recall them. And in her gentle tones the queen spoke, half singing, half murmuring, and told him of his mother, till, as he looked up, he cried with tears:

“Oh, mother, mother!”

For he recognized her now; she was surely none other than his own mother, who had come back to him. Eagerly he stretched out his little hands towards her, and sobbed and cried, and grasped her convulsively lest she should leave him again, yet could find no words in his sudden and overpowering excitement, but only the cry: “Oh, mother, mother!”

But she soothed him, and bade him sleep, and rocked him and comforted him, and gradually his

eyes grew heavy, and he leaned against her shoulder that was soft and warm as of old, and, whilst the tears yet glistened on his rosy cheeks, a peaceful drowsiness overcame him. So, presently, he fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

The sun was shining brightly when the child

awoke, and the green leaves waved and danced against a cloudless blue sky. The boy looked around him with wide astonished eyes. There was no one in the room; nothing to remind him of the strange occurrences of the night.

Only, on the floor beside his bed, gleaming and quivering in a dazzling ray of sunlight, lay a little fish made of nothing but gilt cardboard.



FAMOUS OLD STORY-TELLERS.

Oscar Fay Adams

V.

THE BROTHERS GRIMM.

THERE is something very attractive to most people in the thought of literary companionship extending over a long period of years, or for a lifetime even, and the names thus linked together make a double claim upon our remembrance. Who ever thinks of Beaumont without Fletcher, of Erckmann apart from Chatrian, of William Howitt and not at the same time of Mary Howitt his wife?

It is thus we think of Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm and of Wilhelm Karl Grimm his brother.

It is not easy, so intimately were they associated in their life-work, always to think of them as two men with separate and distinct individualities: it is rather of one delightful personality that we speak when we name "the brothers Grimm."

There was but a year's difference in their ages, Wilhelm having been born in Hanau, Germany, in 1784, and Jacob a year later, in 1785.

When very young Jacob was noted for his precocity. He read with ease when his mates were still involved in the mysteries of the alphabet.