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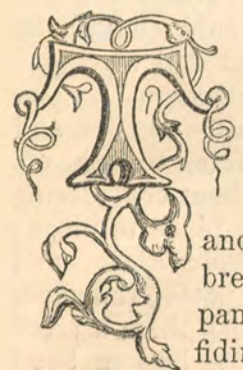
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THE FIRESIDE FAIRY.

THE ROBIN—THE CAT—AND THE CHINA BOWL.



AP, tap-tap, tap."

Pansy looked up from her work, and smiled and nodded at the sound. There was her old familiar morning visiter on the window-sill. It was hardly light, and yet Pansy could make out the bright breast of the Robin close at the window-pane: whilst the bold little fellow, confiding in the love he had found, again and again pecked impatiently at the glass, and looked—with his black bead-like eye—to and fro, as though asking where were the crumbs. "In a minute, Robin—in a minute," said Pansy, "I can't be stopt, you know, at my work—in a minute;" and then the child tript hastily to the cupboard, and returned with some bread. "I don't know what Mrs. Huff would say, if she knew I encouraged you," said Pansy playfully; and she lifted the window, and spread the crumbs for the bird that scarcely moved from the hand that relieved it. "There, then; and dear me—poor little heart!—how the wind cuts! and how it seems to make the most of its feathers to keep itself warm! There, now; make haste and eat your breakfast before cook or that proud thing Susan comes down." So saying, Pansy returned to her work at the hearth, polishing the fender with even affectionate care, for there it was that the Fairy sat, there it was that Hob wielded his magic wand—his elfin poker. And so, singing with a sweet, low voice, and even at early morning, wishing it was night, Pansy worked away, in her employment, forgetting Master Robin.

Robin, however, took care of himself. He picked up his crumbs as though he had little time to lose; then, with the prettiest impudence, flew into the kitchen, and hopped and hopped about the floor.

Pansy, pausing in her work, looked round, and saw burning under the dresser two balls of yellow fire. Instantly, she knew the danger of Robin; but before she could rise to her feet, Jack, like a tiger—and Jack was coloured and barred not much unlike that dreadful animal—Jack the cat sprang forth at the visiter. Pansy screamed in time, and Robin flew upon the table. The cat leapt

after him—Robin flew to the dresser—there was Jack as soon as the bird—Robin took wing among basins, plates, and dishes, the cat pursuing the bird, and Pansy pursuing to seize the cat. She had just grasped the ferocious Jack, when she stumbled, and—how the calamity happened she could scarcely tell, she was so appalled—so terrified—and down came with a crash—Mrs. Mew's best and brightest china bowl!

To the eyes of the workhouse girl the world was instantly clothed in thickest darkness; at her feet where lay the bowl, in twenty pieces—there were all the hopes of life shivered to atoms. Still, however, grasping the cat, she dropt the creature outside the kitchen door, shut it, and then sank upon a seat, and with all her heart and soul wept bitterly.

What would become of her? What should become of her? That bowl had been given to Captain Mew by the "King of Indy." She had heard, ay, twenty times, Mrs. Mew say as much. That bowl was the treasure of Mrs. Mew's life: the one especial thing, in which her widowed heart delighted. And she, the wicked workhouse drudge, had broken the bowl. They would, no doubt, send her to prison; whip her; chain her. Could they hang her?

Who could have left the bowl there? It had been used for the birthnight of a favourite boarder; but how was it that Mrs. Mew herself, as was her custom, had not returned it to her closet before she slept? It was plain that ill-luck had doomed her, the miserable Pansy, to hopeless ruin. But no; it served her right. Had she not opened the window to that odious bird, the bowl would have been safe and sound.

And at this minute, Robin Redbreast—recovered in a trice from his alarm—perched on the top of the clock, sang his merriest and loudest. Poor Pansy cried anew at the song; it somehow seemed to her so wicked and unfeeling. "It's all very well," sobbed Pansy, "but you little know what I shall suffer for you. Go away with you, go. They may kill me, and little you'll care." With this, Pansy threw up the window still higher, when Robin, understanding and feeling the invitation, finished his cadence with a bold flourish, as though mocking the misfortune he had brought upon his benefactress, and took his careless flight.

And now he was gone, the silence seemed to Pansy still more dreadful. Hush! It was Mrs. Huff's foot—

no, the housemaid's—no ; all was still ;—as yet nobody was stirring. Hereupon, Pansy, her face streaming with tears, dropt upon her knees, and tried to begin to gather up the pieces of the broken china.

A queen may have wept when her crown has been shivered ;—but, not even majesty in all its awfulness of sorrow could for the time drink a bitterer draught of misery—could feel a sharper point of wretchedness than that which chilled the heart of Pansy—than that which entered the bosom of the poor parish girl. What misery, as, piece by piece, she picked up the ruin—mandarins and ladies, and trees, and birds, and bridges, and pagodas, all flawed and desolate and broken.

Pansy had gathered in her lap all the pieces, as she heard the foot of the imperious housemaid descending the kitchen stairs. Without a thought, the child, in her terror, placed the fragments in a dresser drawer, and with her face burning, and her heart beating, she endeavoured to proceed with her work. Her looks were not unregarded by Susan. "What's the matter now? In your airs again! Well, I'm sure: why they should bring things like you from the workhouse, only to be in the way of respectable people, of people as have paid poor-rates, I can't tell. No more good than a day-old kitten about the house, and that's what I've told missus again and again. Was there ever such an aggravating cretur!" and Susan rose in indignation at the silence of her trembling victim.

What a long, weary day was it for Pansy! How her heart sank as the cook or maid approached the dresser drawer! How she became hot and cold with every other word of Mrs. Mew,—the very next word to be uttered, being, as she feared, the word—"bowl."

And then the Robin. As if to add to her misery, as if to scoff her suffering, the Robin haunted the house; now hopping on the window-sill; now perching on the rails. And then Jack, the cat, would steal in and about the kitchen, and glare up in the face of Pansy, and rub himself against her as if he knew of the hidden bits of china—as if he were perfectly aware of her hypocrisy, and at the same time played with it and enjoyed it.

But time—let pain and sorrow bless it—time flies, let it bear what weight it may, and at length Mrs. Huff the cook and the sour housemaid departed for their beds, and Pansy—what a blessing—was left alone with a dying fire, and no coals in the scuttle, and the cellar locked,—left alone to sit up for a lodger: a lodger of some one of the many chambers ever being absent.

It was strange, but Pansy felt lightened—almost happy. The Fairy would come—she was sure he would—and would advise and comfort her! With this thought, Pansy moved to the drawer that held the broken bowl. And she sighed, and—she could not help it—her heart fell again as she looked at the pieces. These she brought to the table; and in the very idleness of melancholy, sought to fit piece with piece. She would almost replace every fragment, giving to the bowl its former shape; and then, as though she felt the painful folly of the task, let all the fragments fall again.

For the third time she had done this—for the third time she had turned from the table, and, with her hands in her lap, was watching the dull, black, silent fire—when small white flames leapt up in the grate, dancing and murmuring, and the heart of the fire glowed and throbbled again! Pansy looked for the Fairy: she knew he must be come: no: he was not on his fender seat—not on the hearth. She turned round; and there, upon the table, amid the broken china, stood the mighty little Hob, waving and flourishing his glancing poker. Pansy could not speak for happiness.

"Well," said Hob, dropping himself in a piece of the broken bowl, that served him excellently well for a couch,—“well, this is a pretty business. A very pretty ruin!” and Hob tinkled the steel poker against two or three of the fragments. “Not a crack—a flaw to be got over as anybody's work: an accident committed at no time

whatever by nobody—but downright, undisguised ruin—open destruction.”

“Indeed, sir, I couldn't help it,” cried Pansy, “the cat would have killed”—

“I know all about it. Jack would have eaten up Robin, and you threw yourself between them. So doing, you threw down your mistress's treasure. You strove for mercy, and you brought upon yourself mischief. You took the part of the weak, and you, in your turn, will suffer from the strong.”

Pansy wept and shook her head. She could only say—“I couldn't help it.”

“I am sure you couldn't,” cried Hob; “and I shouldn't care for you as I do, if I thought you could help any such matter. If you could see that tiger Jack carry off a poor bird in his mouth, and say to yourself ‘tis no affair of mine; cats must eat something; what care I?’ if you could say this, you wouldn't want my help; and, I can tell you this, you wouldn't have it. But as the matter stands, I must get my little Pansy out of trouble. Fate herself weeps, when she scourges the merciful.”

“Sir?” said Pansy.

“Well, well, you'll understand that by-and-by. In the meantime, Mrs. Mew must have her china-bowl again; or, who knows, Captain Mew himself may not sleep quietly. Let me see—I think I have some old fairy friends in China. This bowl was made at Nankin—to be sure, I know it at a glance. Well, let us try what is to be done.”

Saying this, Hob rose and with his brilliant poker described a circle wide as the table would contain it. Then waving the potent metal, waving and still waving—the circle was filled with Chinese potters about a span high—all of them with flat yellow faces, almond eyes, and long pig-tails. These potters, first knocking their heads upon the table in reverence to Hob, set about considering the fragments of the bowl. They fitted piece to piece; and then—when the vessel seemed whole again, and Pansy's heart leapt for joy—then every potter vanished, and every two or three potters carried with them a piece of the broken china. Not a morsel of the broken bowl was visible upon the table.

“It is better,” said Hob, “that the bowl should be thus got rid of. Now there is no proof that you broke the bowl. If the pieces had remained, they would have been so many witnesses against you: but taken away, who can say that you broke the bowl? Is not this capital? Is not this the best way of getting you out of the scrape?”

Pansy shook her head.

“What! would you rather have the pieces back, and so bear all the blame? Consider, thus got rid of, the ill-tempered cook—or that upstart housemaid who scolds you so—may bear the fault. Now, with the pieces here, you only will suffer.” Pansy was sad and silent. “Understand, the broken bowl found, you will be constantly abused, and badly beaten. What say you now?”

“I would rather, if you please, sir,” said Pansy, “have the pieces—if they can't be mended—have the pieces as they were.”

“That is now impossible,” answered Hob with a benevolent smile. “See!”

At the word, little Chinese stood upon the table with a bowl upon their shoulders. This bowl they carefully set down. Pansy's eyes brightened, then again were clouded. To be sure, there was the bowl—the very size of the other. But the bowl was plain—unspotted, unpainted, white. No; it could never be taken for Mrs. Mew's bowl.

“All in good time,” said Hob, knowing Pansy's thoughts. “All in good time,” and the Fairy of the Poker waved his wand, whereupon the little Chinese—they were artists, china painters—prepared their colours, that seemed like softened jewels, and were ready all to paint. And in a minute a Chinese lady would step out of a palanquin upon the table. Pansy knew her at once; she had seen her face on the bowl a thousand times, and thought it so fair and beautiful,—and then, preceded by half-a-dozen lanthorns, a fat little mandarin would

descend from his chair, to sit for his portrait on the bowl, whilst Pansy clapt her hands, and blessed his round, foolish, well-known countenance. The flowers, the trees, the bridges, the pagodas, the artists painted out of their own heads; or rather hearts, as artists should paint. Thus, before the clock struck twelve, the bowl—it only had to be glazed and baked—was finished.

“Stay,” says Hob to the painters. Then he waved his poker, and Robin Redbreast—where could he come from?—the Robin that had caused the mischief stood upon the table. “Paint him—put him in somewhere,” and Robin, though it was night, sang—he was such a capital sitter—whilst his miniature was painted.

And now the bowl was duly adorned. “Place the bowl in the grate,” said Hob, and Pansy did as she was commanded. Whereupon, at a motion of the fairy, the fire curled about and covered the vessel. “To-morrow, when you come down, the bowl will be baked, and cold. It may be a little dusty—no matter; place it on the shelf, and all will be well. You have been merciful and just: merciful to the bird, and just to your fellow-servants. Mercy may for a while suffer for its goodness, and justice be persecuted; but, at some time, mercy and goodness are rewarded, kissing one another.”

The next morning it was as Hob had promised. The china bowl, like a certain sort of beauty, was brilliant and cold. Mrs. Mew, when she placed the treasure in her closet, merely remarked that she thought it grew brighter and brighter; and the next time the bowl was produced, also observed, with a sort of grave wonder, it was very odd; she had had the bowl twenty years, and had never noticed that robin in it before. There always seemed something new in the bowl; but then it was known to be the case with real china.

THE HEART'S AWAKENING.

BY MRS. NEWTON CROSLAND.

ONLY yesterday a Child,
She the little rosy maiden,
Hers the glee of laughter wild!
Now her brow with thought is laden.
From behind her eyes there gleams
Light which tells of stranger-dreams,
Faint, like summer morning breaking,
With the shadows warfare making;
It is waking—It is waking!

Gone for aye the childish pace,
Bounding, trotting at our call;
Slowlier, with a sweeping grace,
See her tiny foot-prints fall:
Silenter the babbling tongue,
When her elder friends among;
Yet her speech new music making,
And her words new meaning taking,
Now her Girlish Heart is waking!

She hath opened Nature's books,
Leaf by leaf they turn for her;
And her soul, as still she looks,
Heaveth with a gentle stir.
Stars,—that were but stars before
Shown by scientific lore,
Off such prosy fetters shaking,—
Are with spirit-lustre breaking
On the Heart that's newly waking!

She will sit in listless thrall
Gazing on a fleecy cloud;
Or upon the waterfall;
Or upon a flowery crowd;
Or on bee and butterfly;
Or on birds that climb the sky;
As she were dull earth forsaking—
Life from dream-land only taking,
Meet for Young Hearts just awaking!

There is yet another change
For the pensive little maiden:—
Now Good Angels near her range;
Be their white wings wisdom-laden!
She no longer solely looks
Into Nature's extern books,
Though she musing sits apart:
She hath found a subtler teacher,
And a more impassioned preacher,
In her Waken'd Woman's Heart!

THE ROSES OF EARTH.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF KRUMMACHER.)

EVE, the mother of mortals, walked one day, alone and sorrowful, on the desecrated soil of this sinful earth. Suddenly she espied a rose-tree laden with expanded blossoms, which, like the blush of dawn, shed a rosy light upon the green leaves around them.

“Ah!” cried she with rapture, “is it a deception? or do I indeed behold even here the lovely roses of Eden? Already do I breathe from afar their paradisaical sweetness!”

“Hail, gentle type of innocence and joy! Art thou not a silent pledge, that even among the thorns of earth Eden's happiness may bloom? Surely it is bliss even to inhale the pure fragrance of thy flowers!”

Even while she was speaking, with her joyous gaze bent upon the profusion of roses, there sprang up a light breeze which stirred the boughs of the tree; and lo! the petals of the full-blown flowers silently detached themselves and sank upon the ground. Eve exclaimed with a sigh, “Alas! ye also are children of death! I read your meaning—types of earthly joys.” . . . And in mournful silence she looked upon the fallen leaves.

Soon, however, did a gleam of joy lighten up her countenance while she spake, saying, “Still shall your blossoms, so long as they are enfolded in the bud, be unto me the types of holy innocence.”

So saying, she stooped down to gaze upon the half-closed buds, when suddenly she became aware of the thorns which grew beneath them, and her soul was sore troubled.

“Oh,” cried she, “do ye also need some defence? Do ye indeed bear within the consciousness of sin, and are these thorns the symptoms of your shame? . . . Nevertheless, I bid you welcome, beauteous children of the Spring, as an image of Heaven's bright and rosy dawn upon this thorny earth!”

EDUCATION OF WOMEN.—It seems needful that something should be said especially about the education of women. As regards their intellects they have been unkindly treated—too much flattered, too little respected. They are shut up in a world of conventionalities, and naturally believe that to be the only world. The theory of their education seems to be, that they should not be made companions to men, and some would say, they certainly are not. These critics, however, in the high imaginations they justly form of what women's society might be to men, forget, perhaps, how excellent a thing it is already. Still the criticism is not by any means wholly unjust. It appears rather as if there had been a falling off since the olden times in the education of women. A writer of modern days, arguing on the other side, has said, that though we may talk of the Latin and Greek of Lady Jane Grey and Queen Elizabeth, yet we are to consider that that was the only learning of the time, and that many a modern lady may be far better instructed, although she know nothing of Latin and Greek. Certain it is, she may know more facts, have read more books; but this does not assure us that she may not be less conversable, less companionable. Wherein does the cultivated and thoughtful man differ from the common man? In the method of his discourse. His questions upon a subject in which he is ignorant are full of interest. His talk has a groundwork of reason. This rationality must not be supposed to be dullness. Folly is dull. Now, would women be less charming, if they had more power, or at least more appreciation, of reasoning? Their flatterers tell them that their intuition is such, that they need not man's slow processes of thought. One would be very sorry to have a grave question of law that concerned one's self decided upon by intuitive judges, or a question of fact by intuitive jurymen. And so of all human things that have to be canvassed, it is better, and more amusing too, that they should be discussed according to reason. Moreover, the exercise of the reasoning faculties gives much of the pleasure which there is in solid acquirements; so that the obvious facts in life and history will hardly be acquired by those who are not in the habit of reasoning upon them. Hence it comes, that women have less interest in great topics; and less knowledge of them, than they might have.—*Friends in Council.*