

that he forgot all about the fish, and when the time came for him to return home, his basket was but half full. Quickly he rowed towards the shore through the falling darkness. When he arrived at his father's hut he entered with a trembling heart.

When his father saw the empty basket he caught Jack by the collar and beat him with a thick stick.

Then supperless and sore in every limb he was sent off to bed.

There in the darkness of his little room, lying upon a straw bed, he longed for what he never got—happiness and cheering words, and the sound of a kind father's or loving mother's gentle voice.

The moon came in through the little window and shone upon this weeping little figure. The stars glimmered out as the dawn came up, and found poor Jack still lying, miserable and weary, upon his straw couch in the corner.

When the sun was but a red blaze upon the horizon Jack rose from the sea, and leaving the hut sailed out to sea in his little boat.

Soon he came to the fishing ground, and anchored his boat. He threw out his nets, waited, and pulled them up, but he caught no fish. Again and again he threw the nets, but with no better luck than before.

The day passed, the sun set, the darkness came down, and poor Jack had not even covered the bottom of his basket.

"Father will kill me," he moaned aloud, and started to draw his nets in for the last time.

Suddenly he paused.

Away on the horizon he heard a faint rumble, as though a storm of wind was blowing there. The rumble grew louder and louder, and the sea which was so calm before began to swish against the side of Jack's boat.

A great darkness fell over the sea as the rumbling approached.

"I must hurry home," thought Jack, and with that he quickly pulled up his nets and started to row towards the shore. But hardly had he gone a few yards when a strong current caught the boat and whirled it onwards through the darkness. Jack was powerless to resist, and all he could do was to cling to the seat and peer into the darkness before him. Every moment he expected to see rocks ahead and to be dashed against them. But they never came, and all he saw was blackness on every hand.

Suddenly right away in the darkness he saw a little white light, which twinkled like a star. His boat was rushing towards it, and as it came nearer, the light grew bigger and bigger.

"What can it be?" wondered Jack, and even while he was wondering the opening to a great cave rose up before him, and his boat carried by the waters rushed into it.

Through great crystal corridors he was carried. Through rooms of gold and silver. Through great halls of coral, all of which were lit up with myriads and myriads of tiny red lamps.

The farther his boat went the slower it travelled, until presently it stopped altogether.

Jack found himself in a great big hall with crystal pillars, and a bright red coral floor. The ceiling was of solid gold, and from it hung down little tiny lamps, made of real red pearls, which are only seen in magic land. Jack got out of his boat, and looked around him. Presently his eyes travelled to the other end of the hall, and there he saw something that startled him.

Seated upon a little stool before a blazing fire was a tiny little goblin. He was dressed from head to foot in shining gold. In his hand he held a red-hot poker. This he kept thrusting into the fire. Every time he pulled it out he gazed at it intently, blew on it, and exclaimed, "It is not hot enough yet."

Wondering, Jack approached the little goblin.

"Sir," he said when he came near, "I am nearly dead with hunger. Can you give me anything to eat?"

The goblin turned quickly round, and Jack saw the ugliest little man in all the world. He had an owl's face with two wicked twinkling eyes.

"Certainly," said the goblin with a bow, "just follow me."

Along corridors and through vast rooms Jack was led, until he came to a little iron door.

The goblin opened this.

"Step in," he said, "and I will turn the lights on."

Jack did as he was told, and found himself in darkness. As he stood waiting for the goblin to follow he heard a bang behind him, and turning quickly

round discovered that the door was shut, and that he was a prisoner.

From the other side of the door came a wicked chuckle and the goblin's voice crying:

"Ha, ha, ha! You foolish little boy. You foolish little boy. In a few hours when that poker is hot enough I will touch you with it and you will be turned into a piece of seaweed."

And with that he went away and all was silence.

Jack discovered by feeling with his hands that he was in a little iron cell. In a corner he found a stool, and sitting down on this he tried to think what he should do.

While he sat there in the darkness he heard a voice, the sweet soft voice of a girl, raised in song. So pure, so gentle, so melodious were the notes that he was soon lost in rhapsodies of joy, and could do nothing but sit and listen.

These were the words that the singer sang:

I am lost to the world in this dark, dark cell,
When I was cast by a goblin's spell;
And I long for the sun, the blue, the birds, and
And I long for the sun, the blue, the birds, and
The flowers,
The kiss of the dew, and the sweet gentle
showers;
The touch of my father's dear lips to my
own,
As I sit in this darkness weeping alone.
But here I a prisoner for ever must be,
Alone with my tears and deep misery.

Slowly the sweet voice faded away until there was silence again.

For a time Jack sat lost in thought, and then suddenly jumping up, he determined to escape and rescue the owner of that lovely voice.

Now Jack's common-sense told him that as he had heard the words of the song so distinctly there must be some opening to his cell.

"For," argued he, "in a closed iron cell one would hear scarcely anything."

Going round the room Jack felt carefully with his hands, but he could find no opening. For half-an-hour he continued at this task, and then giving it up as hopeless, he sat on his stool again, and would have given way to despair if an idea had not come to him.

"How silly of me," he cried, jumping up. "How silly of me not to think of it before."

Taking the stool he placed it against the wall, and standing upon this passed his hand over the iron above his head.

Presently he gave a little cry of joy, for his hand suddenly discovered an opening in the wall. By feeling carefully he ascertained that it was a fairly large hole, and that it would probably be large enough for him to scramble through.

In a moment Jack had pulled himself up, and squeezed his shoulders through the hole. Then drawing his rest of his body through he jumped upwards, and found himself standing upon a little bed of straw.

For a few moments he could see nothing but blackness all around him, and then suddenly, as his eyes got used to the dark, he made out the graceful figure of a girl kneeling upon a bed of straw.

Never in all his life, in all his dreams, had Jack seen or pictured so beautiful a child.

Her sweet face, white with suffering, was upturned towards a dimly-lit window; her golden hair, soft as the sunlight was scattered in profusion about her; her pretty little hands were held

up in prayer, and great iron chains were fixed to her pretty wrists.

"So this is the singer," thought Jack.

In a moment he lowered her, and swore to rescue her if he lost his life in so doing.

Going forward he spoke to her as gently as he could.

"Dear maiden," he said, "I have come to save you."

The girl jumped up with a little cry of fright.

"Who are you?" she asked with a trembling voice.

"I am a fisher boy," said Jack. "I was shut up like you in one of the sea-goblin's cells. But I have escaped, and I mean to help you to do the same."

A light of joy came into the maiden's face, and taking one of Jack's hands she kissed it passionately.

"Dear, brave boy," she said, "oh! how I hope you may find a way of escape. I have been in this dreary darkness place for a long, long time. More than two years ago I, Princess Mildred, was stolen away from my father's palace by the sea-goblins, and brought to this dreadful place."

Hardly had she finished speaking when far away in some distant hall of the palace they heard a great roar of voices, crying out in anger. Jack knew in a moment that the sea-goblins had discovered his escape.

"Princess Mildred," he said, "we must get away from here. Come, follow me."

Then, followed by the Princess, he rushed down the dimly-lit corridor as quickly as he could. At the end he stopped, for he heard a funny voice crying:

"Don't leave me here, good people, pray!"

Going to the cell, Jack opened the door. Out staggered the funniest-looking mortal alive. A little tiny man, dressed in armour much too large for him, and carrying a sword as big as himself. The armour was put on the wrong way, and caused him to look a very funny spectacle.

"I am a pirate knight," he said, with a sigh. "But how I do wish I had never left my turnip fields, for I shall never learn how to fight."

"Give me that sword," said Jack. "It will be of more use to me than to you. Come along. Hurry up."

Off he started again, and Princess Mildred and the funny little knight followed quickly after him.

Presently they came to a coral cave, and Jack stopped running, for he knew it to be the hall where he had been brought by the current in the sea. At the further end sat the ugly little sea-goblin with the red-hot poker in his hand. Bidding the princess and the pirate knight stop where they were, Jack moved carefully and slowly towards the mannikin. In his hand he held the little knight's sword.

Suddenly the goblin turned round and saw Jack approaching. Giving vent to a weird shriek, he jumped up and rushed towards him.

The fisher boy stepped back and raised his sword. The little goblin, furious with anger, struck at him with the poker. There was a flash of blue light as it travelled through the air, and a quick leap from Jack as he got out of its way, then with a shower of sparks it smashed to pieces upon the golden pavement.

Raising his sword, Jack struck the ugly sea-goblin to the ground.

Immediately there was heard a great rumbling of thunder, and all the lights of the palace went out, and Jack and his companions were left in utter darkness.

As they stood wondering what would happen they heard the sound of sweet music approaching in the distance, and then a great golden ship lit up with silver lights came out of the darkness and floated towards them down the same stream that had brought Jack to the cave.

On came the golden ship until it was opposite Jack, and then it stopped, and the beautiful music stopped too.

Then a little voice cried:

"Come aboard, brave Jack. Come aboard Princess Mildred and Pirate Knight."

A small golden ladder came down from the ship's side, but Jack could see no one lowering it, nor could he see the person who had called to him.

Quickly he ran to the place where he had left his companions. Taking Princess Mildred by the hand he led her towards the ship, bidding the knight follow them. They came to the ship's side and mounted the little golden ladder, until they stood upon the deck. There a beautiful sight stretched before them. In the centre of the ship, a few feet below them, lay the most beautiful garden that was ever seen.

A mass of sweetly coloured flowers, great and small, grew there, flowers every colour of the rainbow, and green shrubs and grassy banks lay dotted here and there. Before them stretched a path of bright red roses, which made the air fragrant with their scent.

While they stood looking in wonder about them, a little fairy with golden wings suddenly appeared.

"Brave Jack," she cried, "do you remember a little mermaid that once appeared to you?"

"Remember her," cried Jack, "why, I have never missed a day without thinking of her."

"That mermaid," said the fairy, "is our ruler, the Queen of the Sea-Fairies, and she has sent me to bring you to her."

So saying she led them down the path of roses until they came to a fairy bower. Here hundreds and thousands of fairies skipped and played. Some were dressed in gold, some in silver, some in purple, some in red, and some in pure white. Round and round they went, skipping and jumping, and throwing roses in the air. But when they saw Jack they all stopped and cried joyously:

"Here's the brave boy that saved us."

Then they cheered heartily, and threw showers of roses over Jack and his comrades.

When the shouting had died down a little voice cried:

"Brave Jack, I am glad that you are come."

The fisher boy turned round at the sound, and saw seated upon a bank of flowers the pretty little mermaid who had appeared to him while he had been fishing from his boat.

"Dear boy," she continued, "we fairies are very grateful to you. You have saved us from the wicked sea-goblin, who, if you had not come, would have killed everyone of us. And we all thank you very much, and wish to reward you. Therefore we have given you the power to obtain everything you wish for a whole year. Now go with little Golden

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