

THROUGH FAIRYLAND IN A HANSON CAB.

By BENNETT W. MUSSON.

(FROM "ST. NICHOLAS.")

CHAPTER VI.

THE QUEEN'S STORY OF THE SUNS.

As Gretchen finished her luncheon the Poet came toward her. "I have just been writing a song," he said. "Oh, sing it to me!" she cried. "I haven't fitted the music to it yet, but these are the words," was the Poet's reply; and he recited the following verses:—

"THE SUPERIOR STUDENT.

"There once was a student, sing ho!
Who lived on the earth below.
He followed a pace that was far from slow;
His collars were high, but his manners were low.
Sing heigh, sing hi, sing ho!
Sing ho, sing ho! His manners were terribly low!

"That last line is for the chorus," said the Poet.

"At football he was expert,
And seldom, if ever, got hurt.
He kicked the ball so high in the air
That it never came down, but stayed up there.
Sing heigh, sing hi, sing ho!

"But golf was his greatest game,
He made others' scores look tame.
His drives were so remarkably strong
That he took an automobile along.
Sing heigh, sing hi, sing ho!

"He was in the college crew,
And pulled the stroke-oar, too.
The shell went forward so very fast
That in every race it came in last.
Sing heigh, sing hi, sing ho!

"In baseball he quite excelled,
And the highest average held.
He'd bat a dozen home runs, 't was said,
And end by batting the umpire's head.
Sing heigh, sing hi, sing ho!

"His studies he never shirked,
But so very hard he worked
That out of a class of seventy
He was highest of all—save sixty-three.
Sing heigh, sing hi, sing ho!
Sing ho, sing ho! He certainly wasn't slow.

"That last line is for the chorus," said the Poet. "Repetitions are a great advantage in writing poetry, and I don't know how I'd get along without them. See how that 'Sing ho, sing ho' comes in. I once wrote a long poem on that order, that went like this:

"There once was a coachman who carried a cur, a cur, a cur, a cur,
And the dog very gratefully said:
'Thank you, sir, you, sir, you, sir, you, sir,
For my coat some attention did certainly need.
And for your kind efforts I'm thankful indeed.
You've rubbed to a gloss with remarkable speed my fur, my fur,
My fur.'"

"It was very long, and there was scarcely any meaning in it," the Poet added proudly.

Gretchen heard laughter behind her, and, turning, discovered the Queen, the King and the members of the court examining an oil-painting that stood on an easel.

"A painting like this comes every week, and we have great fun criticising them," said the queen.
"Who paints them?" asked Gretchen.

"We don't know," said the king. "The only thing that would show who the artist is is his signature in one corner, and of course no one can read that. I tell you it's a landscape with animals in the foreground," he exclaimed to the queen, who had been insisting that it was a beefsteak with mushrooms.

Everyone had something to say about the picture, all agreeing that it was very bad, and having a great time at the expense of the artist. Gretchen looked about for the Objector, and found him standing apart, looking discouraged.

"Oh, do come and help us find fault!" she cried, running to him. "It's the greatest fun!"

"I will let you into a secret," he said gloomily. "I paint those pictures."

"I will now tell you the story of how Prince Mardo brought the suns to fairyland," just then said the queen, motioning to the others to sit down. "Once upon a time—"

"That's a very old-fashioned way in which to begin a fairy story, your Majesty," said the Objector.

The queen began again: "Long years ago—"

"Not much better," growled the Objector.

"Well, anyway," said the queen, "once upon a time—I mean, long years ago—I will be greatly obliged if you won't interrupt me again," she said, turning to the Objector, who wasn't saying anything. "You put me out so that I hardly know how to commence. Many years ago this band of fairies decided to leave the earth. We found that men were changing, and instead of singing songs, telling tales, and seeking adventures, they had taken to making money and inventing things. With this spirit in man came another in the air called the Modern Spirit, who is our deadliest enemy, as contact with him, or even sight of him, dis-

solves us. I do not say that he is a bad spirit, but I do say that he is very bad for us. With the coming of new inventions the Modern Spirit grew so strong that we decided to move into this mountain.

"It was easy enough to move in, but fighting the place was another matter. We found plenty of natural gas, which gives a poor light, as you may have noticed in the tunnel. After many consultations we decided that the only way to get the proper light was to have some fairy go out and bring in a piece of the sun. This was such a dangerous undertaking that in the whole kingdom there was but one fairy brave enough to undertake it—Prince Mardo, now our king." And the queen pointed dramatically at the king, who was peacefully sleeping, with his crown tipped over one eye.

"With two magicians he went out of this mountain, defying the Modern Spirit. He had a meeting with the Spirit of the Sun, telling him that the sun was so large that it seemed selfish of him not to spare a little sliver for us, and the Sun Spirit agreed to part with a bit of it.

"The next question was, how to get it here. The magicians thought the best plan would be to wait till the sun got directly over the hole in our mountain, then chip off a piece and let it fall in.

"On earth people talk of the morning and afternoon suns, which are one and the same, and it occurred to Mardo that he might get two pieces, and really have morning and afternoon suns; so he arranged this with the Sun Spirit. Then, being very thoughtful, he remembered the moon and went to see the Moon Spirit, who agreed to let him have a corner of the moon that was seldom lit up anyway.

"You can imagine how pleased we were when he came back and told us all about it. It was agreed that the morning sun, which is officially known as the A.M. sun, should rise in the east, go half-way across the sky, and turn and set in the east. The afternoon sun, which is officially known as the P.M. sun, was to rise in the west before the morning sun had set, go half-way up, then come back and set in the west. Magicians were busy arranging forces to run the suns, fairies were appointed to take charge of the places they were to set in, and everyone was praising the bravery of Mardo"; and the queen looked fondly at the king, who was snoring. Gretchen didn't see

where his bravery came in, but she thought it best not to mention this.

"The magicians had figured out the time it would take for a bit of the sun to drop to the earth, and on the day the first piece was to arrive a great crowd gathered about the entrance of the cave. Late in the afternoon a rush of hot air was felt, and a dozen griffins—whom nobody had thought to warn—shot out of the cave and were blown half-way across the country before they could stop; and the worst of it was, their wings were so badly singed that they had to walk back. Bang! After them came the morning sun, and flew right over into the place reserved for the afternoon sun to set in."

"How did you know that it was the morning sun?" asked Gretchen.

"Because it came first."

"Were they both the same size?"

"Yes."

"Then what difference did it make?"

"Well, anyway," said the queen, after a slight pause, "you know how excited fairies get when things go wrong, and you can imagine the confusion when the next day the afternoon sun came in and shot over into the same place. A few days later the moon arrived; and of all the shabby-looking moons you ever saw it was the worst—it looked like the back of a haircloth sofa. By that time we had the morning sun in the proper place, so we gilded the moon, set it up, and things have been running smoothly ever since. But for nearly a week we had two suns in the afternoon, and none at all in the morning."

"I always thought that whatever time the sun rose was morning," said Gretchen.

"Not if it is the afternoon sun," said the queen.

The king was suddenly awakened by falling off his chair. "I have just been thinking that I will go with this little girl when she starts to gild the moon, and take the army with me," he said.

They discussed the manner in which they should travel, and agreed that Gretchen, Leonardo, and Snip should go in a hansom-cab, and didn't agree at all about the way in which the others should go.

"Well!" cried Gretchen, after a dozen different plans had been suggested, "as you all have wings, I can't see why you don't fly."

The queen looked at her severely. "My dear child, flying is distinctly out of date. None but a griffin or other common person would think of doing it. Besides, wings are worn closely trimmed this season."

"As we won't start for a day or two, we can leave these questions till to-morrow," said the king. "I will begin thinking about them at once," and he fell asleep again. The queen seemed sleepy too, and as the others saw this they pretended to be sleepy—all but the Objector, who offered to show Gretchen through the castle.

They walked through an avenue of trees, and presently came to the roof lying on the grass, and beyond this the great front wall of the castle, fully twenty feet high, in which was the grand entrance, a high arched door with the sill at least six feet from the ground. Gretchen asked where the steps were, and the Objector explained that as the castle had been built when flying was in fashion, no stairs were needed. When flying went out, they started to build a grand staircase; but he had declared that going upstairs was unhealthy, so they gave it up. Now the fairies had to run and jump, which was undignified, or be shot in with an immense sling-shot the king had invented, which was dangerous, or go in at the side entrance.

Gretchen found the inside of the castle very interesting, especially the queen's apartments, which were papered with fashion-plates, some of them five hundred years old. The walls of the king's rooms were covered with boxing-gloves, felle, tennis-rackets, golf-clubs, baseball-bats, and pictures of all sorts of games, from ancient hand-ball to mumbletypeg.



"I Paint Those Pictures," said the Objector, Gloomily."