

A STORY FOR CHILDREN. FROM THE GERMAN.



**I**n olden days there lived a Count, who had many castles and estates, and a most beautiful daughter, but no one would associate with him, for it was rumoured he was in league with the Evil One; indeed, from time to time one or other of his servants most mysteriously disappeared.

The last who disappeared was the shepherd. One evening he did not return to the castle. Search was made for him throughout the village, but in vain; no trace of him could be found. After this no one would enter the Count's service as shepherd; but at last, a bold, handsome youth presented himself; he had travelled far as a soldier, and cared nothing for evil spirits. The Count immediately engaged him, and said he could take the sheep to feed wherever he liked, only he must never go into the three valleys to the east of the castle. For a time all went well; the young man drove the sheep into the rich meadows around the castle as his master had ordered, and led a very comfortable life. But he was always thinking of the three valleys, and being a brave youth who did not fear evil spirits, he one day took the cross-bow and bolts he had used when soldiering, put a new string to his bow, and said, as he struck his rusty spear against the ground:—

"I will see who will venture to harm me in the three valleys; it will fare badly with him, I think."

Going towards the east, he soon arrived with his sheep in the first valley, where he found beautiful meadows in which he could safely leave his flock. He looked carefully around, but, except the butterflies fluttering to and fro, and the humming of the bees, there was neither sound nor movement. Then he sat down beneath an oak and began to play on his pipe; suddenly, in the wood near, arose a crashing and cracking as if some mighty animal were breaking through the bushes, and, before our shepherd could fix a bolt in his cross-bow, a powerful giant stood before him and cried:—

"What are you doing here with your grass-eaters, destroying my meadows, you insolent fellow? You shall answer for this."

He did not wait for an answer, but threw his spear with fearful force at the shepherd, who saved himself by springing behind the oak, into which the spear sank so deep that the point stuck out on the other side. Then, fixing a bolt into his cross-bow, the shepherd took aim, and struck the giant so skilfully in the centre of the forehead that he fell with a deep groan to the earth. Before he had time to rise, the shepherd bounded forward and ran his spear through his adversary's neck, nailing him to the ground, and his spirit soon fled. The shepherd took the giant's sword and armour, and was about to return home, when in an opening of the forest he saw a stately castle. The doors were wide open;



he entered. In the spacious hall stood a stone table on which was a cup covered with a silver plate bearing these words :—

Who drinks of this cup  
Shall overcome the Evil One.

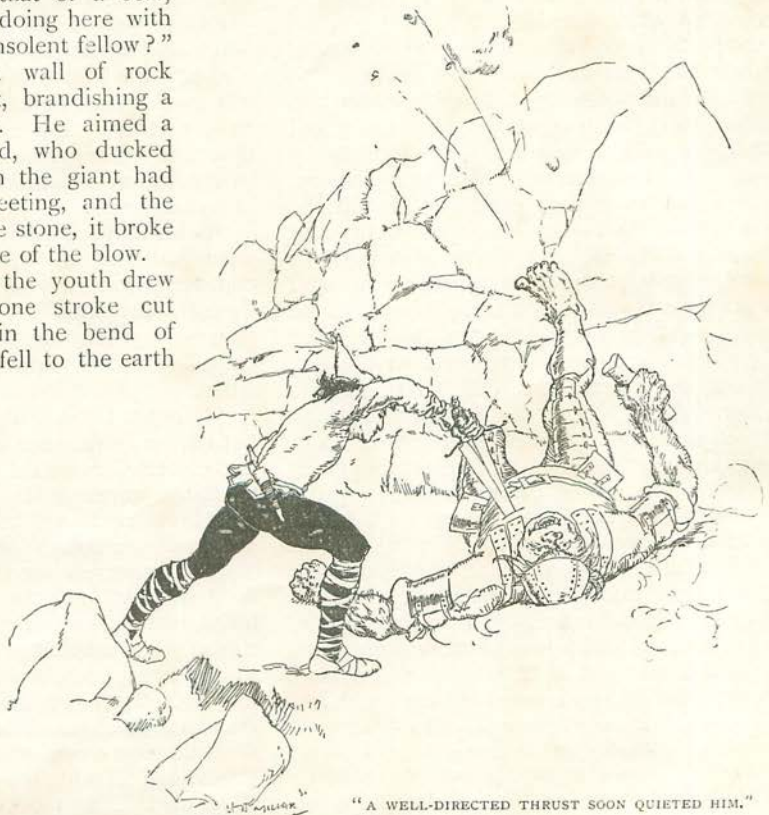
The young man had no confidence in the words or the drink, and left the cup untouched. He laid the dead giant's armour in the hall ; then, taking the key of the door with him, he returned home with his flock, and went to rest without mentioning his adventure to anyone. The next day he tended his sheep on the mountain slopes surrounding the castle, but the second day he could not rest ; so, girding on the sword he had taken from the dead giant, he started with his flock for the second valley, in hopes of fresh adventure. Here also were beautiful pastures, if possible richer and more luxuriant than in the first valley ; the flowers breathed forth their fragrance, the birds sang sweetly, and through the meadows meandered a stream clear as crystal, by whose bank the shepherd lay down to rest. He was just thinking that all adventure and danger were past when an enormous block of rock fell on the ground near him, and a voice rough and wild, like that of a bear, said : " What are you doing here with your grass-eaters, you insolent fellow ? " And from behind a wall of rock stepped a mighty giant, brandishing a ponderous stone club. He aimed a blow at the shepherd, who ducked behind the rock which the giant had thrown as his first greeting, and the club descending on the stone, it broke in pieces from the force of the blow.

Quick as lightning the youth drew his sword, and with one stroke cut through the sinews in the bend of the giant's knee, who fell to the earth with a loud roar. He struck out wildly with his fists, but a well-directed thrust through the heart soon quieted him. The shepherd left him lying there, and turned towards the wall of rock ; here he found a massive door concealed amongst the thicket. Through this he passed, and entered a hall-like cavern, in which, at a stone manger, stood

a snow-white horse ready saddled, and over the manger was engraved this saying :—

Who springs on this white horse  
Shall overcome the Evil One.

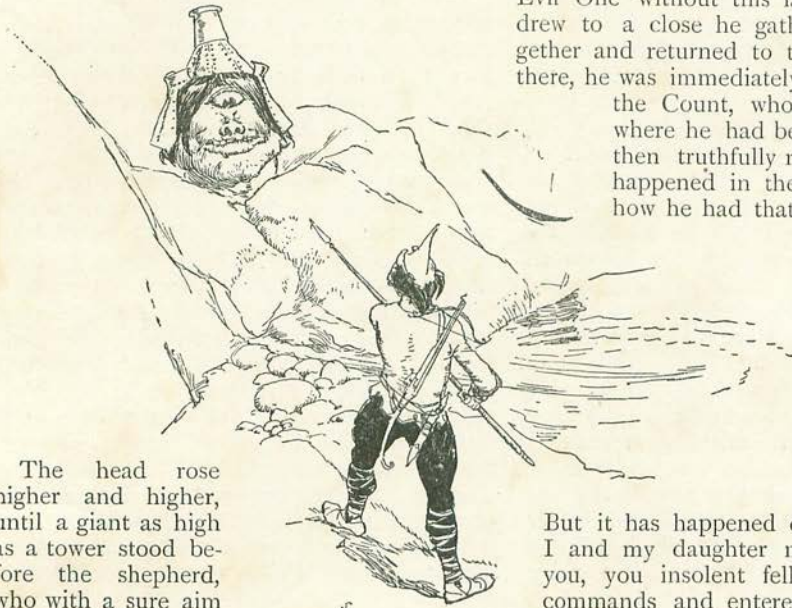
Now, the shepherd thought : " I am strong enough to take care of myself, and I do not want to overcome the Evil One, he has always left me in peace ; but I will remember that here stands a fine horse on which I can ride forth into the wide world." He threw fresh oats into the manger, shut the door, and returned home. The next few days he remained very quiet, lest his movements might have been observed ; then, as no one questioned him, he one fine morning drove his sheep into the third valley. Beautiful meadows glittered in the sunshine ; from a hill of rock a waterfall plashed down, forming a small sea in which sported innumerable fish. The shepherd looked carefully around, searched under every bush, but found nothing. No sound was heard save the continued plash, plash, of the cool water. The day was very sultry, and the shepherd was just preparing for a bathe in the fresh, clear water, when from out a ravine near the sea appeared a horrible human head, with one



" A WELL-DIRECTED THRUST SOON QUIETED HIM."



eye, as large as a plate, in the centre of the forehead, and a voice loud as the roll of thunder shouted: "What do you want here, you insolent earth-worm?"



The head rose higher and higher, until a giant as high as a tower stood before the shepherd, who with a sure aim sent his lance into the eye of his adversary. The monster, thus blinded, groped wildly about with his hands, in hopes to strangle his enemy, but he only seized an oak which he tore up by the roots, and threw it high into the air. Now the victory was easy, for though the giant could no longer be hurt by cuts and thrusts, which slipped off from his body as from a mossy stone, the shepherd soon found other means. He mocked and insulted the blind giant, and by the sound of his voice drew him ever nearer and nearer to the sea, at the side where the cliff overhung the water. At last he sprang for a moment on the edge of the precipice, and gave a loud, mocking cry, then silently concealed himself behind a tree. The giant, deceived by the shout, pursued him eagerly, lost his footing, and fell heavily into the sea.

Then the shepherd went down into the ravine from which the monster had appeared. Here lay a meadow full of beautiful flowers, in the midst of which rose a spacious mansion, built of the trunks of trees. The shepherd entered the hall and saw a mighty spear, on whose shaft these words were cut:—

Who throws this lance  
Shall overcome the Evil One.

He seized the spear, but his arms were too

weak to raise it, and he wearily laid the mighty weapon back in the corner; at the same time he thought, since he had conquered three giants, he could surely overcome the Evil One without this lance. As the day drew to a close he gathered his sheep together and returned to the castle. Arrived there, he was immediately summoned before the Count, who asked him angrily where he had been. The shepherd then truthfully related all that had happened in the three valleys, and how he had that day slain the giant as tall as a tower.

"Woe to you and to me," replied the Count, with pale lips. "I heard the giant's cries of rage, and hoped you were paying for your disobedience with your life.

But it has happened otherwise, and now I and my daughter must suffer because you, you insolent fellow, disobeyed my commands and entered the giants' territories; for it has been made known to me that to-morrow the mighty lord of the giants, the Prince of the Infernal Regions, will appear, and demand my daughter or me as a sacrifice; but before that you, you miserable fellow, shall suffer all the agonies of torture, as a punishment for bringing me into this trouble.

"Seize him!" he cried to the servants who were standing in the entrance-hall. His command was at once obeyed, when the Count's daughter, who had listened with glowing cheeks to the shepherd's story, threw herself on her knees and implored for delay.

"Dearest father," she cried, "should you not rather endeavour to make use of this brave youth for our deliverance than put him to the torture? He has overcome three giants; surely he will be able to vanquish the Prince of the Infernal Regions."

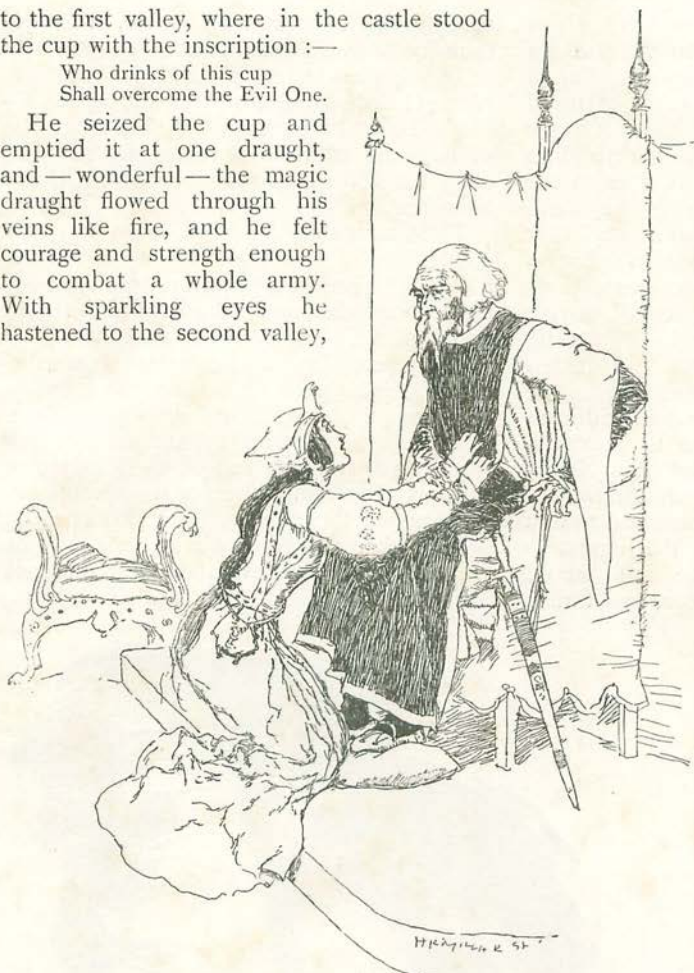
The Count remained for a few moments in deep thought, and then acknowledged that his daughter's suggestion was both good and clever. He asked the shepherd if he were willing to expiate his crime by a combat with the Evil One, and the young man, with a grateful look at his deliverer, at once agreed. With the first dawn of morning he rose from his couch, for he now recalled the words about overcoming the Evil One, and hastened



to the first valley, where in the castle stood the cup with the inscription :—

Who drinks of this cup  
Shall overcome the Evil One.

He seized the cup and emptied it at one draught, and—wonderful—the magic draught flowed through his veins like fire, and he felt courage and strength enough to combat a whole army. With sparkling eyes he hastened to the second valley,



"SHE IMPLORED FOR DELAY."

mounted the white horse, who greeted him with a joyful neigh, and then galloped as if in flight to the third valley, in which stood the mighty lance. Yesterday he could scarcely move it; to-day, with one hand, he swung it high over his head, as if it had been a small arrow.

By sunrise he was again at the Count's castle, waiting eagerly for what would happen, but the day passed and no one appeared. The sun had sunk to rest, and the moon had just risen in all her splendour, when in the north of the heavens was seen what appeared to be a dark storm-cloud. With the speed of lightning it approached the castle, and a voice, as of a bassoon, sounded from out the cloud: "Where are my propitiatory sacrifices?" At the same time a gigantic eagle, with greenish-grey wings, like the storm-cloud, hovered high over the castle, ready to

swoop down on his prey. Then the young man set spurs into his white horse, and shaking his lance high above his head, cried with a loud voice: "There are no sacrifices here for you, you robber! Begone instantly, or you shall feel my arrows!" On hearing these words, the eagle swooped down with a wild cry, before the shepherd could take his cross-bow, and the young man would certainly have perished had it not been for his presence of mind and the strength and activity of his steed. A touch with the spur, and it flew swift as the wind under a very old and thickly leaved linden tree, whose branches hung down almost to the ground, so that the eagle could only break in through the side.

This the bird at once attempted, and it caused his death, for his outspread wings became entangled in the branches, and the brave rider, with one powerful blow of his sword, severed the head from the body. But, oh, horror! instead of blood there came forth from the headless body of the eagle a huge serpent, who, with wide-open jaws, approached the shepherd and tried to enfold him in the rings of its flexible body. By a skilful movement, it encircled the horse and rider, and crushed them until the young man thought he should be pressed into the body of his steed, but the horse pressed himself so close against the tree that the head of the serpent came round on the other side of the trunk, and thus it was hindered from harming the shepherd with its poisonous bite or breath. One stroke of the shepherd's sharp dagger, and the body of the serpent fell in two pieces to the ground; the horse immediately trampled on the head. But the hinder part of the serpent swelled and swelled, the cut became a frightful mouth, which spouted out smoke and flames, while from the rings of the serpent's body grew forth claws and wings, and at last a horrible monster in the form of a



dragon threw itself on the shepherd, whose strength had already begun to fail through the dreadful pressing of the serpent. But in his greatest need a saving thought occurred to him—he turned his horse round: it broke through the branches of the linden tree into the open field, and sped with its rider to the nearest stream, in whose waters they both cooled themselves. The dragon snorted after them, spitting forth fire and smoke. But as the head of the serpent, from whose body the dragon had grown, had been destroyed, there was no deadly poison in its breath, and the rider was safe from the flames through bathing in the stream. So he rode boldly towards the approaching dragon with lance in rest, and tried to approach it from the side; but all his blows glanced off from its scaly body as from a coat of mail. Suddenly it occurred to him to thrust his lance down the monster's throat. He turned his horse and spurred him straight towards the dragon, and thrusting his lance through the smoke and flame, stuck it right into the creature's throat. He was obliged to leave his lance, for his horse, singed by the fiery breath of the dragon, bounded far to one side; but the monster did not attempt to follow them, the lance had stuck deep into its body. It struck wildly with its tail on the ground, until the earth burst, then it shivered and fell over, first on its side, then on its back, a stream of fire poured forth from its wide-open jaws, and with the flames its life passed away.

Thus was the combat ended and the Evil One subdued. Joyfully the shepherd rode back to the Count and his daughter, and told them all that had happened. The Count, embracing him, said, "You are our deliverer, to you I owe my life and all that I possess:

take the half of whatever is mine, or choose from it whatever pleases you."

The shepherd gazed earnestly into the eyes of the Count's lovely daughter, and replied:—

"I know of nothing, sir Count, in the whole world which is dearer to me than your daughter. Give her to me for my wife, if she be willing."

The Count smiled. "Are you willing, my child?"

"I love him more than words can express," said the maiden, and sank on the breast of the shepherd.

The next day the marriage was celebrated with great splendour, and when Heaven had blessed their union with children, and these were grown up, the hero of this story, a shepherd no longer, used to say to his sons when telling them of his adventures: "There are three things by which one can subdue giants and evil spirits, and become great: courage, perseverance, and presence of mind."



"WITH THE FLAMES ITS LIFE PASSED AWAY."