



The Story of the Invisible Kingdom.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

FROM THE GERMAN OF
RICHARD LEANDER.

IN a little house half-way up the mountain-side, and about a mile from the other houses of the village, there lived with his old father a young man called George. There was just enough land belonging to the house to enable the father and son to live free from care.

Immediately behind the house the wood began, the oak trees and beech trees in which were so old that the grandchildren of the people who had planted them had been dead for more than a hundred years, but in front of the house there lay a broken old mill-stone—who knows how it got there! Any one sitting on the stone would have a wonderful view of the valley down below, with the river flowing through it, and of the mountains rising on the other side of the river. In the evening, when he had finished his work in the fields, George often sat here for hours at a time dreaming, with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands; and because he cared little for the villagers, but generally went about silent and absorbed like one who is thinking of all sorts of things,

the people nicknamed him "George the Dreamer." But he did not mind it at all.

The older he grew, the more silent he became, and when at last his old father died, and he had buried him under a great old oak tree, he became quite silent. Then, when he sat on the broken mill-stone, as he did more often than before, and looked down into the lovely valley, and saw how the evening mists came into the valley at one end and slowly climbed the mountains, and how it then became darker and darker, until at last the moon and the stars appeared in the sky in their full glory, a wonderful feeling came into his heart. The waves of the river began to sing, quite softly at first, but gradually louder, until they could be heard quite plainly; and they sang of the mountains, down from which they had come, and of the sea, to which they wished to go, and of the nixies who lived far down at the bottom of the river. Then the forest began to rustle, quite differently from an ordinary forest, and it used to relate the most wonderful tales. The old oak tree, especially, which stood at his father's grave, knew far more than all the other trees. The stars, high up in the sky, wanted so much to tumble down into the green forest and the blue water, that they twinkled and sparkled as if they could

not bear it any longer. But the angels who stand behind the stars held them firmly in their places, and said: "Stars, stars, don't be foolish! You are much too old to do silly things—many thousand years old, and more. Stay quietly in your places."

It was truly a wonderful valley! But it was only George the Dreamer who heard and saw all that. The people who lived in the valley had not a suspicion of it, for they were quite ordinary people. Now and then they hewed down a huge old tree, cut it up into firewood, and made a high stack, and then they said: "Now we shall be able to make our coffee again for some time." In the river they washed their clothes; it was very convenient. And even when the stars sparkled most beautifully, they only said, "It will be very cold to-night: let us hope our potatoes won't freeze." Once George the Dreamer tried to bring them to see differently, but they only laughed at him. They were just quite ordinary people.

Now, one day as he was sitting on the mill-stone and thinking that he was quite alone in the world, he fell asleep. Then he dreamt that he saw, hanging down from the sky, a golden swing, which was fastened to two stars by silver ropes. In the swing sat a charming Princess, who was swinging so high that each time she touched the sky, then the earth, and then the sky again. Each time the swing came near the earth, the Princess clapped her hands with joy and threw George the Dreamer a rose. But suddenly the ropes broke, and the swing, with the Princess, flew far into the sky, farther and farther, until at last he could see it no longer.

Then he woke up, and when he looked round, he saw a great bunch of roses lying beside him on the mill-stone.

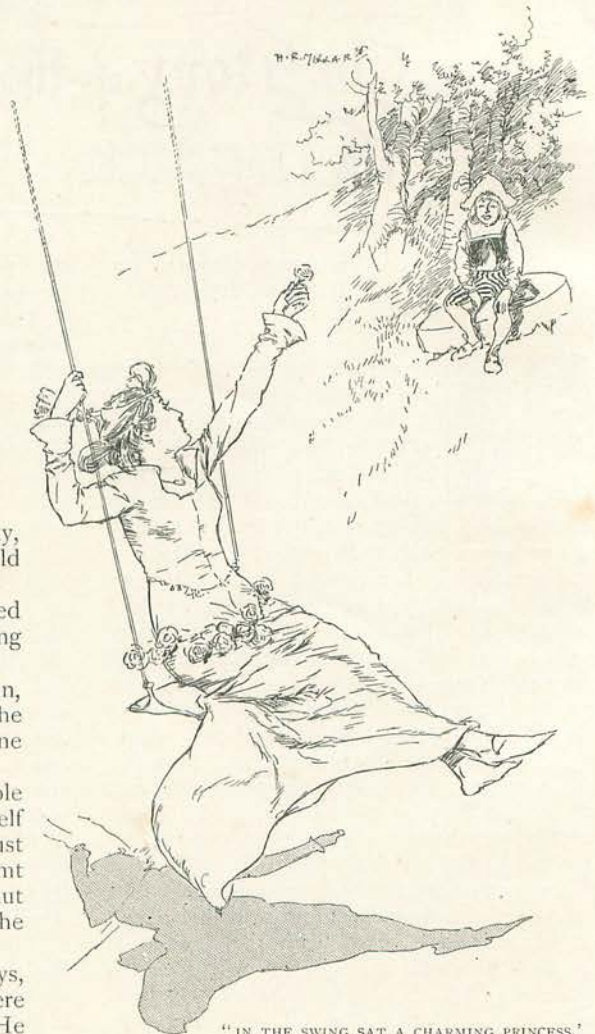
The next day he went to sleep again, and dreamt the same thing, and when he woke up the roses were lying on the stone by his side.

This happened every day for a whole week. Then George said to himself that some part of the dream must be true, because he always dreamt exactly the same thing. So he shut up his house and set out to seek the Princess.

After he had travelled for many days, he saw in the distance a country, where the clouds touched the earth. He

hastened towards it, but came, on his way, to a large forest. Here he suddenly heard fearful groans and cries, and on approaching the place from which they seemed to come, he saw a venerable old man with a silver-grey beard lying on the ground. Two horribly ugly, naked fellows were kneeling on him, trying to strangle him. Then George the Dreamer looked round to see whether he could find some sort of weapon with which to run the two fellows through the body; but he could find nothing, so, in mortal terror, he tore down a huge tree-trunk. He had scarcely seized it when it changed in his hands into a mighty halberd. Then he rushed at the two monsters and ran them through the body, and they let go the old man and ran away howling.

Then George lifted the old man up and comforted him, and asked him why the two



"IN THE SWING SAT A CHARMING PRINCESS."

fellows had wanted to choke him. The old man said that he was the King of Dreams, and had come by mistake into the kingdom of his greatest enemy, the King of Realities. The latter, as soon as he noticed this, had sent two of his servants to lie in wait for him and kill him.

"Have you, then, done the King of Realities any harm?" asked George the Dreamer.

"God forbid!" the old man assured him. "He is always very easily provoked, that is his character. And me he hated like poison."

"But the fellows he sent to strangle you were quite naked!"

"Yes, indeed," said the King, "stark naked. That is the fashion in the land of Realities; all the people, even the King, go about naked, and are not at all ashamed. They are an abominable nation.

But now, since you have saved my life, I will prove my gratitude to you by showing you my country. It is the most glorious country in the whole world, and Dreams are my subjects."

Then the Dream-King went on in front and George followed him. When they came to the place where the clouds touched the earth, the King showed him a trap-door that was so well hidden in the thicket that not even a person who knew it was there would have been able to find it. He lifted it up and led his companion down five hundred steps into a brightly lighted grotto that stretched for miles in undiminished splendour. It was unspeakably beautiful. There were castles on islands in the midst of large lakes, and the islands floated about like ships. If you wished to go into one of them, all you had to do was to stand on



"GEORGE COULD DO NOTHING BUT WONDER AND ADMIRE."

the bank and call out:—

Little castle swim to me,

That I may get into thee.

Then it came to the shore by itself. Further on were other castles, on clouds, floating slowly in the air. But if you said:—

Float down little castle in the air,

Take me up to see thy beauties rare,

they slowly floated down. Besides these, there were gardens with flowers which gave out a sweet smell by day, and a bright light by night; beautifully tinted birds, which told stories; and a host of other wonderful things. George could do nothing but wonder and admire.

"Now I will show you my subjects, the Dreams," said the King. "I have three kinds—good Dreams for good people, bad Dreams

for bad people, and also Dream-goblins. With the last I amuse myself now and then, for a King must sometimes have a joke."

So he took George into one of the castles, which was so queerly built that it looked irresistibly comical.

"Here the Dream-goblins live: they are a tiny, high-spirited, roguish lot—never do any harm, but love to tease." Then he called to one of the goblins: "Come here, little man, and be serious a moment for once in your life. Do you know," he continued, addressing George, "what this rogue does if I, once in a way, allow him to go down to the earth? He runs to the next house, drags the first man he comes across, who is sound asleep, out of bed, carries him to the church tower, and throws him down, head over heels.

Then he rushes down the stairs so as to reach the bottom first, catches the man, carries him home, and flings him so roughly into bed that the bedstead creaks horribly. Then the man wakes up, rubs the sleep out of his eyes, and says: 'Dear me! I thought I was falling from the church tower. What a good thing it was only a dream.'

"Is that the one?" cried George. "Look here, he has been to me before; but if he comes again, and I catch him, it will be the worse for him." He had scarcely finished speaking when another goblin sprang out from under the table. He looked like a little dog, for he had a very ragged waistcoat on, and he let his tongue hang out of his mouth.

"He is not much better," said the King. "He barks like a dog, and is as strong as a giant. When people in their dreams are frightened at something, he holds their hands and feet so that they cannot move."

"I know him, too," interrupted George. "When you want to run away, you feel as stiff and stark as a piece of wood. If you want to move your arms or your legs, you can't do it. But often it is not a dog, but a bear, or a robber, or some other horrid thing."

"I will never allow them to come to you again, George the Dreamer," the King assured him. "Now come and see the bad Dreams. But don't be afraid, they won't do you any harm—they are only for bad people."

Then they passed through a great iron door into a vast space, inclosed by a high wall. Here the most terrible shapes and most horrible monsters were crowded together; some looked like men, others like animals, others were half men and half animals. George was terrified, and made his way back to the iron door. But the King spoke kindly to him and persuaded him to see more closely what wicked people have to dream. Beckoning to a Dream that stood near—a hideous giant, with a mill-wheel under each arm—he commanded him to tell them what he was going to do that night.

Then the monster raised his shoulders, wriggled about with joy, grinned until his mouth met his ears, and said: "I am going to the rich man, who has let his father starve. One day, when the old man was sitting on the

stone steps before his son's house, begging for bread, the son came and said to the servants: 'Drive away that fellow.' So I go to him at night and pass him through my mill-wheels, until all his bones are broken into tiny pieces. When he is properly soft and quivering, I take him by the collar and shake him and say, 'See how you tremble now, you fellow!' Then he wakes up with his teeth chattering, and calls to his wife to bring him another blanket, for he is freezing.



"GEORGE CRIED OUT THAT HE WOULD NOT STAY A MOMENT LONGER."

And when he has fallen asleep once more, I begin it all again."

When George the Dreamer heard this, he rushed out through the door, dragging the King after him, and crying out that he would not stay a moment longer with the bad Dreams. They were too horrible!

The King next led him into a lovely garden where the paths were of silver, the beds of gold, and the flowers, beautifully cut precious stones. Here the good Dreams were walking up and down. The first he

saw was a pale young woman, with a Noah's Ark under one arm, and a box of bricks under the other.

"Who is that?" asked the Dreamer.

"She goes every evening to a little sick boy, whose mother is dead. He is quite alone all day, and no one troubles about him, but towards evening she goes to him, plays with him, and stays the whole night. She goes early because he goes to sleep early. The other Dreams go much later. Let us proceed; if you want to see everything, we must make haste."

Then they went further into the garden, into the midst of the good Dreams. There were men, women, old men, and children, all with dear, good faces, and most beautifully dressed. Many of them were carrying all sorts of things: everything that the heart can possibly wish for. Suddenly George stood still and cried out so loudly that all the Dreams turned round to look.

"What is the matter?" said the King.

"There is my Princess—she who has so often appeared to me, and who gave me the roses," George the Dreamer answered, in an ecstasy.

"Certainly, certainly, it is she," said the King. "Have I not sent you a very pretty Dream? It is almost the prettiest I have."

Then George ran up to the Princess, who was sitting swinging in her little golden swing. As soon as she saw him coming she sprang down into his arms. But he took her by the hand and led her to a golden bench, on which they both sat down, telling one another how sweet it was to meet again! And when they had finished saying so, they began again. The King of Dreams meanwhile walked up and down the broad path which goes straight through the garden, with his hands behind his back. Now and then he took out his watch, to see how the time was getting on; for George the Dreamer and the Princess never came to an end of what they had to say to one another. At length he went to them, and said:—

"That's enough, children. You, Dreamer, are far from your home, and I cannot keep you here over-night, for I have no beds. You see, the Dreams never sleep, but have to go up every night to men on the earth. And you, Princess, must make yourself ready; dress yourself all in pink, and then come to me, so that I may tell you to whom you must appear to-night, and what you must say."

When George the Dreamer heard this, he felt more courageous than ever before in his

life. Standing up, he said, firmly: "My lord the King, I will never more leave my Princess. You must either keep me here below or let her go up with me to the earth: I love her much too much to live without her." Then a tear big as a hazel-nut came into each of his eyes.

"But George, George," answered the King, "it is the prettiest dream I have. Still, you saved my life; so have your own way; take your Princess up with you. But as soon as you have got on to the earth take off her silver veil, and throw it down to me through the trap-door. Then she will be of flesh and blood like every other child of man; now she is only a Dream."

George the Dreamer thanked the King most heartily, and then said: "Dear King, because you are so very good, I should like to ask for one thing more. I have a Princess now—but no kingdom. A Princess without a kingdom is impossible. Cannot you get me one, if it is only a small one?"

Then the King answered: "I have no visible kingdoms to give away, Dreamer, only invisible ones; one of the latter you shall have, one of the biggest and best that I possess."

Then George asked what invisible kingdoms were like. The King told him he would find that out, and would be amazed at their beauty and magnificence.

"You see," he said, "it is often very unpleasant to have anything to do with ordinary, visible kingdoms. For example: suppose you are an ordinary King, and early one morning your Minister comes to your bedside and says: 'Your Majesty, I want a hundred pounds for the kingdom.' Then you open your treasury and find not even a farthing in it! What are you to do? Or again, you wage war and lose, and the King who has conquered you marries your Princess, and shuts you up in a tower. Such things cannot happen in invisible kingdoms."

"But if we cannot see it, of what use would our kingdom be to us?" asked George, still somewhat puzzled.

"You strange man," said the King, and pointing to his forehead, he continued: "You and your Princess see it well enough. You see the castles and gardens, the meadows and forests which belong to your kingdom. You live in it, walk in it, do what you like with it. It is only other people who do not see it."

Then the Dreamer was highly delighted, for he was beginning to be afraid lest the village people should look enviously at him

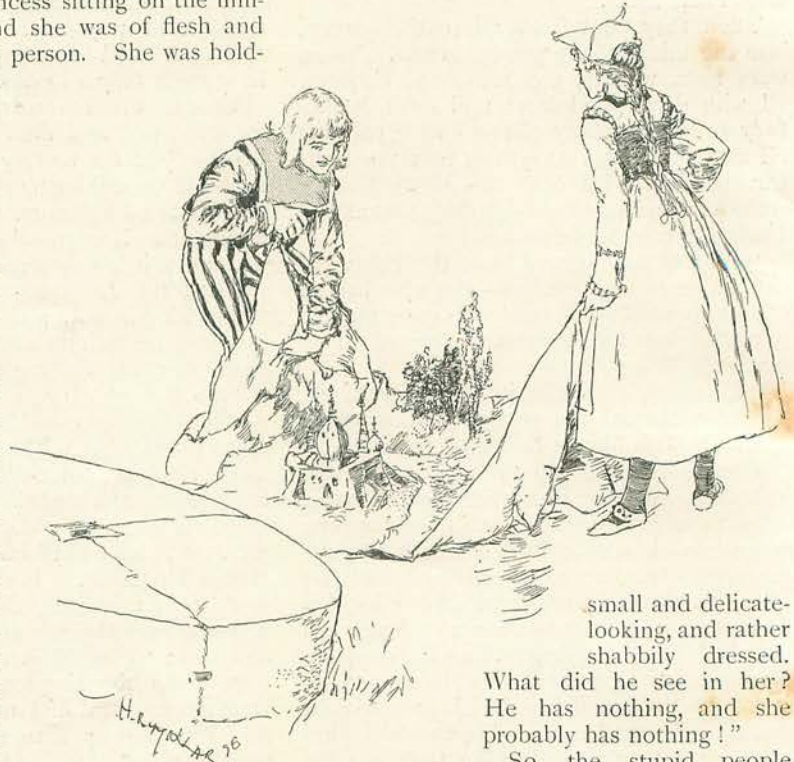
if he came home with his Princess and was King. He took a very touching leave of the King of Dreams, climbed the five hundred steps with his Princess, took the silver veil off her head and threw it down. Then he wanted to shut the trap-door, but it was so heavy that he could not hold it. So he let it fall, and the noise it made was as great as the noise of many cannons shot off at the same time, and for a moment he became unconscious. When he came to himself again he was sitting in front of his cottage with the Princess sitting on the millstone at his side, and she was of flesh and blood like any other person. She was holding his hand, stroking it, and saying: "You dear, good, stupid man, you have not dared tell me how much you love me, for such a long time. Have you been very much afraid of me?"

And the moon rose and illumined the river, the waves beat against the banks, and the forest rustled, but they still sat there and talked. Suddenly it seemed as if a small black cloud was passing over the moon, and all at once something like a large folded shawl fell at their feet; then the moon stood out again in her full glory. They lifted up the cloth and

began to spread it out. But they took a long time over this, for it was very fine and folded many hundred times. When it was quite spread out, it looked like a large map; in the middle was a river, and on both sides were towns, forests, and lakes. Then they noticed that it was a kingdom, and knew that the good Dream-King must have sent it down to them from the sky. And when they looked at their little cottage it had become a beautiful castle, with glass stairs, marble walls, velvet carpets, and pointed blue-tiled towers. Then they took hands and went into the castle, where their subjects were already assembled.

The servants bowed low, drums and trumpets sounded, and little pages went before them strewing flowers. They were King and Queen.

The next morning the news that George the Dreamer had come back, and had brought a wife with him, ran like wildfire through the village. "She is probably very clever," the people said. "I saw her early this morning, when I went into the forest," said a peasant; "she was standing at the door with him. She is nothing special, quite an ordinary person,



H. GARDNER '96
"THEY LIFTED UP THE CLOTH AND BEGAN TO SPREAD IT OUT."

small and delicate-looking, and rather shabbily dressed.

What did he see in her? He has nothing, and she probably has nothing!"

So the stupid people chattered, for they could not see that she was a

Princess; and in their stupidity they did not see that the house had changed into a great, wonderful castle—for the kingdom that had come down from the sky for George the Dreamer was an invisible one. So he did not trouble about the stupid people, but lived happily and contentedly in his kingdom with his Princess, who presented him with six children, each one more beautiful than the other, and they were, all six, Princes and Princesses. But no one in the village knew it, for they were quite ordinary people, and much too silly to notice it.