

A FAIRY TALE FOR CHILDREN.

BY CHARLES SMITH CHELTNAM.

ICANNOT tell how long ago it was—I can only say with certainty that it was long before almanacs were invented or thought of by anybody—when there lived a fairy named Grumstella, who was never so happy as when she was doing harm to somebody.

Now, before King Scoribon was born, one of the best friends of his mother, Queen Dulcetta, was the fairy Tendrilla, of whose company she was very fond, not only because it was so pleasant to her, but because it presented so great a contrast to that of Grumstella, who always contrived to make her visits disagreeable.

At the time when the Queen's little son—afterwards King Scoribon—was born Grumstella was biding her time to do her an ill turn, in revenge for her liking of Tendrilla.

With whirlwind speed she set off for the palace, in order to get there before Tendrilla. The pair of griffins that were drawing her carriage at a break-neck pace through the air were not going fast enough for her impatience, and, just as they were turning a

sharp cloud-corner, she took to lashing them both cruelly, with the result that both fell, and one damaged his legs and the other his wings.

Nobody can fully describe an ugly and wicked fairy's rage, so I can only say that no rage could be greater than Grumstella's, which, if that were possible, became greater still when, on arriving at the palace, she found that her detested rival had already been three minutes and a half with the Queen, and had endowed the baby Prince with good looks, kind-heartedness, and a clever mind.

"You've not left much for *me* to give him," she said, with an evil smile; "but I'll give him *something*."

"What will you give my son?" asked the Queen, uneasily.

"Something that will serve to amuse him—which Tendrilla's gifts are not likely to do."

And as she spoke she opened the Prince's tiny right hand and put a little black spider into it.

The Queen uttered a cry of alarm and the fairy Tendrilla turned pale; and that

delighted Grumstella, who left the palace laughing so boisterously as to frighten a peacock who was spreading his tail on the roof of the palace. So that he fell into the courtyard below in a swoon, which will convey an idea of how shocking her laughter must have been to hear.

When the Prince grew up and became the King he had a daughter, about whom the fairies do not seem to have troubled themselves one way or another. She was called Vivanne, and was as good as she was beautiful, and that was as beautiful as a Princess could be. Of course, when she grew old enough to marry there were many young Princes who wanted to marry her; but she only cared for one of them, Prince Persevere, who was ready to do everything that a Prince could do to win her. But the King, her father, threw obstacles in his way.

King Scoribon had peculiar notions and did peculiar things. One of his peculiarities was a liking for spiders. He had a wing of

the Royal palace fitted up as a museum, in which were specimens of spiders, collected from every part of the world; while adjoining it he had thousands of living spiders, whom it was his pleasure to feed and admire.

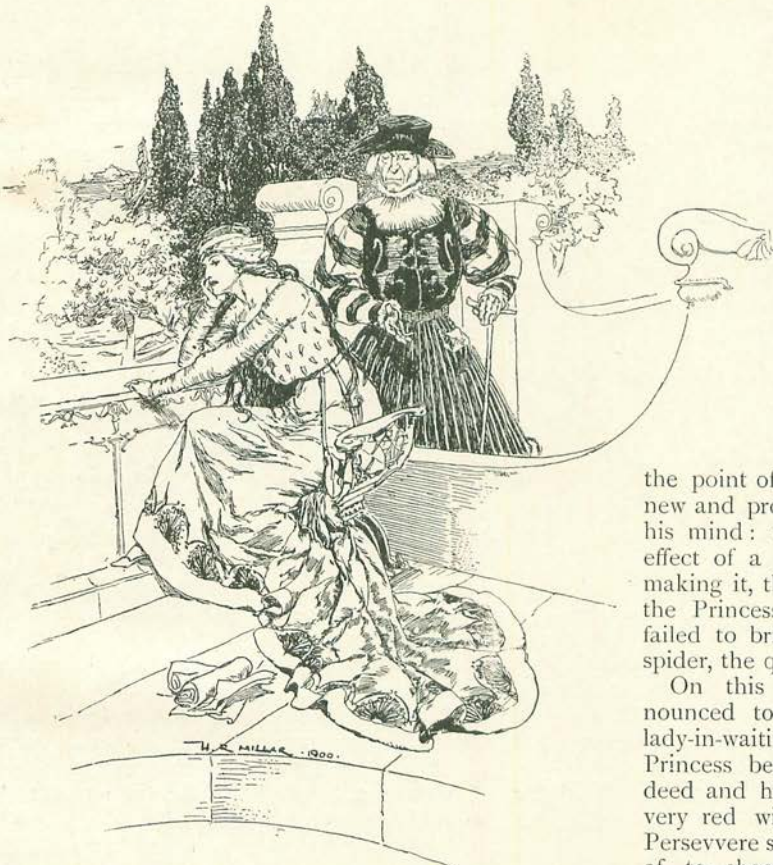
People thought this was merely a queer whim of his, not knowing that it was no whim at all, but the spiteful work of Grumstella, who, being a fairy, had foreseen that the King would never be happy so long as he had the idea that there was still one spider wanting to complete his collection, and that idea she had taken care to instil into his mind by conveying to him a report that there was, hidden in some dim recess, in some remote part of the globe, a spider differing from every other in the world.

The King was constantly thinking of how he could get possession of the coveted insect, to which he knew the name of Crucifix-spider had been given, owing to its being marked with a snow-white cross upon its ebony-black back. He offered tempting

rewards for it, and adventurous travellers had gone to the most likely and most unlikely places in the world in search of it, but without success. More than once he had even thought of going himself in quest of it, but had been deterred from carrying out his purpose by considerations of State. At last,

just as he was on the point of abandoning hope, a new and promising idea entered his mind: what if he tried the effect of a promised reward?—making it, this time, the hand of the Princess Vivanne. If *that* failed to bring him the Crucifix-spider, the quest was hopeless.

On this project being announced to her by a grim old lady-in-waiting the heart of the Princess became very heavy indeed and her beautiful, soft eyes very red with weeping. Prince Persevere said all he could think of to cheer her, and at last succeeded in making her believe



"ON THIS PROJECT BEING ANNOUNCED TO HER THE HEART OF THE PRINCESS BECAME VERY HEAVY INDEED."

that, if the Crucifix-spider was anywhere to be found, he would find it and come back with it in triumph.

When one does not know where one is going it does not matter in what direction one turns one's steps. The Princess kept back her tears, so that he might not go away thinking that she was less hopeful for his success than he said he was, and gave him a pretty gold locket as a love-token for him to wear next his heart and to kiss when his spirits needed cheering. It was a gift from her mother, and contained the wing of a beautiful beetle called a scarab, on which were certain letters of a sentence written in some unknown language—a charm, perhaps; neither the Princess nor her mother knew their meaning.

The Prince often drew forth this token of the Princess's love and kissed it fondly. But though he did this so often, it chanced that he never discovered the locket's contents until one evening when he was resting in the shade of a giant oak tree. Just as he was raising the locket to his lips a big scarab flew blindly up against it and nearly knocked it out of his hand, falling half stunned at the Prince's feet.

"Why don't you mind where you're going?" said the Prince.

"Why don't you, if you come to that?" retorted the scarab, in a tiny, humming voice, while struggling to get upon its legs, for it had fallen on its back.

"I'm not going—I'm resting," said the Prince.

"Well, we won't bandy words over it now it's done," said the scarab; "only you might lend me a hand to get on my feet, will you, after having knocked me over, and if it won't trouble you too much?"

"I shouldn't mind if it did," replied the Prince, stooping and setting the bright little beetle on his hairy legs again.

"Thanks," said the scarab, "for it *was* my fault, after all. No, it wasn't!" it sud-

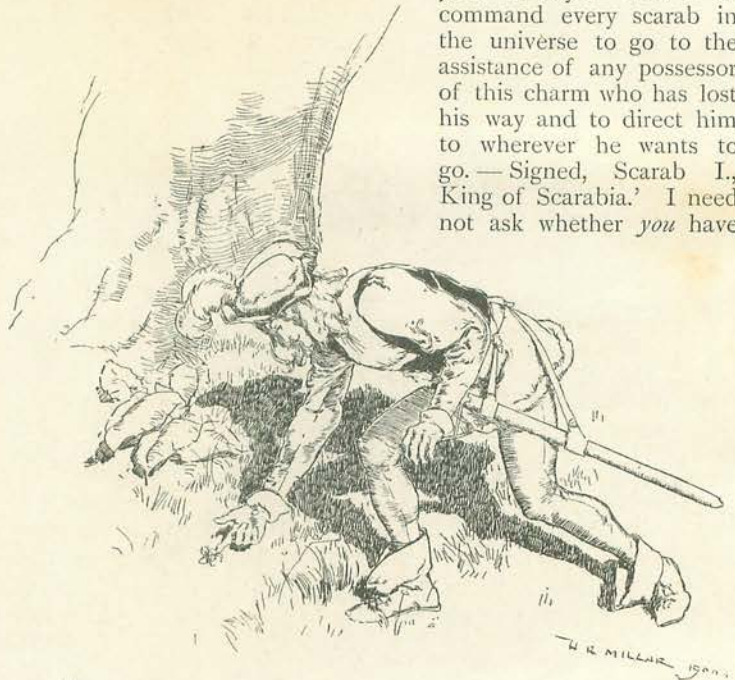
denly said, catching sight of the locket which was hanging open upon the gold chain by which it hung about the Prince's neck; "I *had* to do it!"

"What do you mean by 'had to do it'?" asked the Prince, in a puzzled tone.

"What—don't you know what's inside your locket?" asked the scarab, in astonishment.

Then, for the first time, the Prince became aware of its contents, but without drawing any enlightenment from the discovery; for, of course, he could make nothing of the mysterious letters on the scarab's wing, though he felt sure they meant something—something of importance, he could not help thinking.

"I see you can't make out what you are looking at," said the scarab. "Well, as one good turn deserves another, I'll read it for you. It says: 'This is to command every scarab in the universe to go to the assistance of any possessor of this charm who has lost his way and to direct him to wherever he wants to go.—Signed, Scarab I., King of Scarabia.' I need not ask whether *you* have



"THE PRINCE SET THE BRIGHT LITTLE BEETLE ON HIS HAIRY LEGS AGAIN."

lost your way, because you wouldn't be here if you hadn't."

"Why not here as well as anywhere else?" queried the Prince: "as I was not going anywhere in particular, it was just as likely I should come in this direction as that I should have gone in another."

"Which ever way you went it would be with an object, I suppose?" argued the scarab.

"My object is to find a spider," replied the Prince.

"Well, you need not walk your legs off doing *that*—there's any number of the ugly brutes about you—one half-way up your left arm at this moment," said the scarab.

"But the one I want to find differs from all the rest," the Prince said; "it is as black as jet, and is marked with a white cross on its back. Do you happen ever to have seen such a one?"

"Never," replied the scarab, "and I think I have pried into every hole and corner in this country; but I can give you a hint: you are much more likely to hear news of the brute you want in Spideria."

"Can you direct me the way there?" asked the Prince, eagerly.

"No, I can't, but I know a centipede who may be able to; he's a great traveller—that's why he has so many feet," replied the scarab. "Come on, and I'll introduce you to him."

The Prince thanked and followed his guide by a zig-zag path. Happily the centipede was at home, and received his visitors civilly, though, as a rule, he is not partial to the company of strangers.

"Look here, Centi!" said the scarab, familiarly, "this friend of mine wants you to put him on the road to Spideria—can you do it to oblige me?"

"He won't like it when he gets there—if he ever does," suggested the centipede.

"I'll take my chance," said the Prince, bravely.

"That's easily said, but how are you going to take it?" objected the centipede; "there's only one conveyance—the ship that goes without wind or sail—and you'll

never get on board that. I only got on board by accident, through being laid up with a blister on one of my feet, in a crack in one of the timbers of which that ship is built."

"Only tell me where to find it," begged the Prince.

"Can't," said the centipede, "because the owner, when he isn't using it, hides it where nobody but himself can find it. But I tell you what I can do—I'll introduce you to his brother, and *he* may be able to help you."

The Prince, taking heart, lavished thanks on his new friend, and the three set off to find the brother of the owner of the ship that went without wind or sail; but when they got to his house, which was at the entrance to a deep and dark ravine, it was, unfortunately, to find that he was out, and nobody at home to tell them how soon he was expected to return.

"We can't do any more for you," said both the scarab and the centipede; "still, you needn't give it up, you know—you can hang about here till he turns up. So, good evening, and good luck to you."

On being left to his own devices the Prince thought that the best he could do to kill time was to explore the ravine near which his two obliging little friends had left him. He found it almost choked with tangled bushes and weeds, but through these he forced his way, urged, he could not

tell why, by a wish to see what the farther end of it was like, and found it closed by a high wall of rock in which there were a number of wide fissures. That was all that met his eyes, and he was just going to retrace his steps, thinking that his exploration was not worth the trouble it had cost him to make it, when



"HIS HOUSE WAS AT THE ENTRANCE TO A DEEP AND DARK RAVINE."

the sound of a faint voice reached his ears, calling for help.

Turning instantly in the direction from which the appeal came he beheld, woven in one of the largest openings in the rocky wall, a gigantic spider's web, the central part of which retreated, in the form of a huge funnel, into the heart of the rock. Each thread of the web was of the thickness of bale-cord, and the whole web was big enough and strong enough to have served for a fishing-net for the capture of sharks, sword-fishes, octopuses, or, indeed, any monsters that swim. But what most shocked the Prince was to discover, bound and utterly helpless on one side of the web, a little, grey-bearded man, who had evidently been caught in its meshes.

Without hesitating for a moment, the Prince drew his sword and tore his way through the thorny bushes to release the unfortunate prisoner; but before he could strike a blow at the web an enormous spider

of the tarantula species darted forward from its concealment in the rock and threw out one of its horrible clawed legs and endeavoured to seize him. Enormous in size—the bulk of its dusky brown and speckled body was equal to that of a full-grown man—it was terrific in appearance. In its dreadful head blazed two great red eyes. Its eight legs were nearly all roft. in length and coated with bristles, each as long and as sharp as the quill of a porcupine; and every leg was armed with a claw bigger and sharper than that of an eagle.

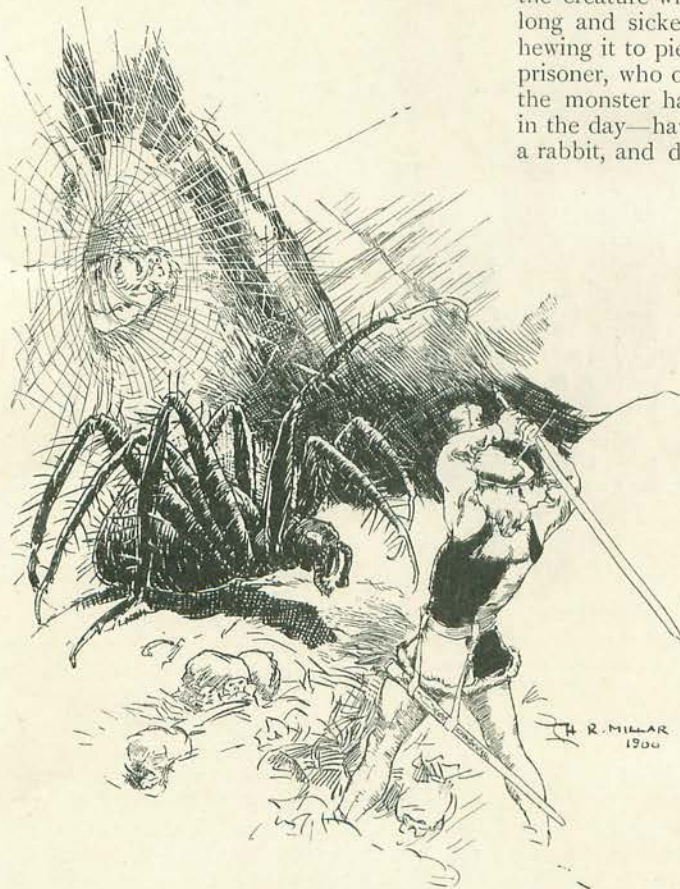
Instinctively the Prince sprang back out of the monster's reach, at the same time striking off a great portion of the outstretched limb with his keen sword, causing the hideous insect to utter a hiss of pain and rage so loud and shrill as to be almost a scream. The Prince felt faint with loathing, but his own danger and the sight of the poor man imprisoned in the meshes of the monster's web nerved him, and he attacked the creature with all his might, and, after a long and sickening encounter, succeeded in hewing it to pieces and releasing its terrified prisoner, who owed his life to the fact that the monster had over-gorged himself earlier in the day—having breakfasted off a hare and a rabbit, and dined off a goat and a brace of eaglets; his human prey he was keeping for his supper.

Warm were the little man's expressions of gratitude for his release, and great was his satisfaction on learning from the Prince that it might be in his power to aid him in the quest he was making. While he and his brave preserver were supping he said:—

"I know that my brother has the ship that goes without wind or sail; but unfortunately he and I are not such friends as brothers should be."

"And you have never seen his ship?" asked the Prince.

"Never," answered the little man, "nor have I ever had the least idea where he hides it. But I can direct you to his house, though I dare not



"HE ATTACKED THE CREATURE WITH ALL HIS MIGHT."

venture there, and you may be able to learn from him—if you find him at home—more than I have succeeded in learning.”

Guided by the little grey man, the Prince lost no time in going to the house of the owner of the ship that nobody besides himself appeared ever to have seen.

The mysterious traveller's house was built upon the sea-shore, in a desolate part of the country, where no one would think of going. No sign of the neighbourhood of any sea-going vessel, large or small, was visible. The Prince's heart sank as he took notice of this; but he knocked at the house door, which was opened after awhile by a man whom he had no difficulty in at once recog-

great a traveller as yourself,” said the Prince, politely.

“Who told you that I am a great traveller?” asked the man he was addressing, sharply.

“Can you imagine that, after visiting so many countries as you have visited, you have left no reputation behind you?” asked the Prince, a little artfully.

The face of the man on the doorstep decidedly brightened under the influence of this well-timed piece of flattery.

“Have *you* been in many countries?” he asked.

“Not many,” replied the Prince, adding: “The fact is, I am rather peculiar in my

tastes. Of course, as a Prince on his travels, I can go anywhere where all other Princes go when they want to see the world, but that does not satisfy me. I want to go to places where other Princes have never been—places *you* only know of,

and you only can reach. Am I not right?”

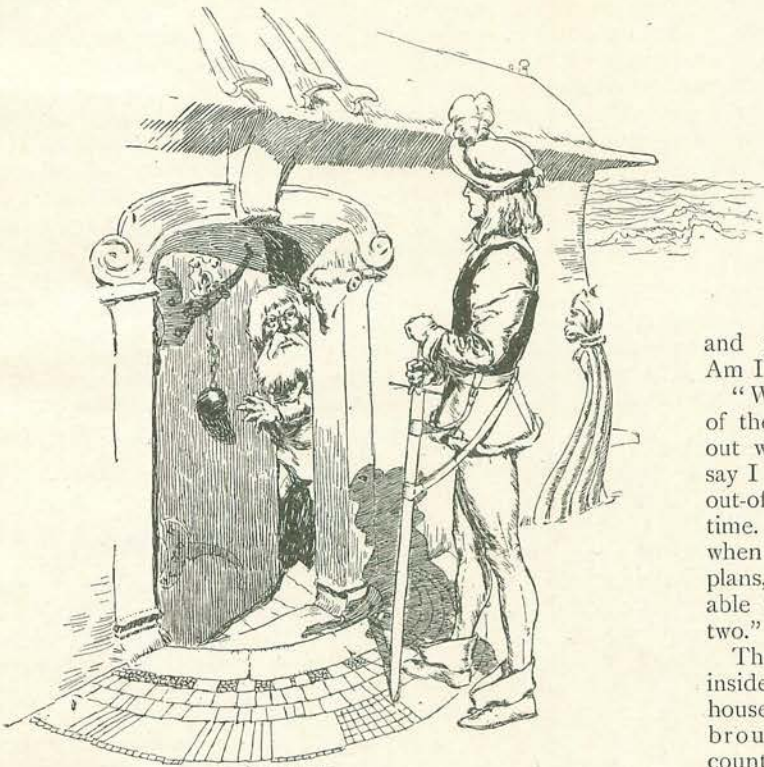
“Well,” said the owner of the ship that went without wind or sail, “I won't say I haven't been to some out-of-the-way places in my time. But come in, and when I've heard your plans, perhaps I may be able to give you a hint or two.”

The Prince found the inside of the traveller's house filled with curios brought from distant countries, and all of strange character.

“What I should like to know,” said his host, as

soon as they were seated, “is this: Who advised you to come to me?”

“Oh!” replied the Prince, “a man in my position has only too many advisers; at the moment, I don't remember how I first came to hear about your travels. By the way,” he went on, “an idea occurs to me: have you ever seen anything like this?” and he showed him the scarab's wing inclosed in his locket,



H. R. MILLAR - 1904 -

“WHO ARE YOU, AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?” ASKED THE MAN.”

nising as the brother of his little grey friend.

“Who are you, and what do you want?” asked the man who stood in the doorway, gruffly and suspiciously, at once.

“My name is Prince Persevere. I am on my travels, and feel sure I could not apply to anyone more able to give me some information of which I stand in need than to so

and repeated the translation of the letters upon it he had learned from his friend, the obliging little scarab.

"Where did you pick that up—you've never been to Scarabia, I suppose?" said the traveller.

"It was a present to me," the Prince said, adding: "Do you know the way there if I should want to go to Scarabia?"

"No, I don't know the way, but I could find it all the same," the mysterious traveller replied, in a tone so curious as almost to startle the Prince, who tried in vain to explain it to himself.

"But even if I should fancy going to Scarabia," the Prince went on, "there is another place I want to go to first of all. Have you ever been to Spideria?"

"Yes, I've been there," said the traveller, and, as he spoke, the Prince thought—though he could not feel sure it was not merely fancy on his part—he saw a slight shudder pass through his host's sturdy frame. "Yes, I've been there, and that's more than anybody else can say, I suppose—and I don't fancy there's a queerer place on the face of the earth for anybody to go to! The King of it is a spider, the Queen of it is a spider, and all their subjects are spiders, and ugly ones, too! But the oddest thing of all there is that the King—though, at first sight, he looks like all the rest—is very much unlike any of the others, and that's why he is their King!"

"I know," cried the Prince, eagerly; "he bears a mark—a wonderfully distinguishing mark on his jet-black back—a white cross!"

"I must, at some time, have let that out in my sleep," muttered the mysterious traveller, hoarsely. "Well," he said, "that's the truth, however *you* came to know it."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Prince, exultingly. "I've set my heart on making the acquaintance of that King! Take me to him, and I'll make your fortune!"

"I've made one already," replied his mysterious host.

"What will tempt you to take me to Spideria?"

"Nothing that I can think of."

"Let me help you to an idea," said the Prince. "I have offered you a second fortune for the service I ask of you; suppose I now tell you that refusal will certainly cost you your life?"

"What do you want to get at that King for?"

"To capture him and bring him away."

The mysterious traveller reflected for a time and then replied, speaking as much to himself as to the Prince:—

"It would be amusing to carry off their King, the poisonous little beasts!—for they'd never be able to find another with the right mark on his back; and then they'd break out into rebellion and perhaps kill each other, which I suppose nobody would much mind their doing."

"Are you making up your mind?" asked the Prince.

"I was, a minute ago, but I've got through the work now. I'll take you under to Spideria."

"You mean over the sea to Spideria?"

"No, I don't," the mysterious ship-owner replied, with a short, dry laugh; "but I've first got to make a bargain with you. Before we go any farther, will you pledge me your word as a Prince that, if I take you there and bring you back, you will not tell anybody how you got there and got back?"

"You have my promise," cried the Prince, joyously. "When can we start?"

"Now, if you like," replied the mysterious traveller, rising.

"I'm ready!" cried the Prince, exultantly, springing to his feet, at the same time pressing his locket to his lips and covering it with fervid kisses.

"Stay a moment, Prince, there is a little piece of ceremonial you will have to go through before leaving the house: you must let me blindfold you."

"Do it, only make haste about it," cried the Prince.

The mysterious traveller made so much haste about it that when the Prince, at his suggestion, removed the bandage which had been tied over his eyes, he found himself in the well-furnished cabin of the ship that went without wind or sail, and was further sensible of being carried through water at an incalculably rapid rate.

Before he had quite got over his first feeling of surprise, another took possession of him: the cabin, which had been fairly well lighted, suddenly became pitch dark.

"What does this darkness mean?" asked the Prince.

"That we are under the island; we shall be under the middle of it presently."

"What island?"

"The one you want to visit—Spideria. Here we are."

As he spoke, the light returned to the cabin and the ship evidently came to a standstill.

"I'll trouble you to let me put that

bandage over your eyes again," said the mysterious traveller, "then we'll land."

Of course, the Prince made no objection to that, and when, at the end of a few minutes, he was permitted to take off the bandage and look about him, he was astonished to find himself on the upper ground of an island so tiny that in five minutes he could have walked over the edge of it in any direction.

"Now," said his mysterious guide, "do what you want to do without losing a moment, if you value your life."

"Why, what dangers are there?" asked the Prince.

"Millions!—and all with raging appetites!" replied the mysterious traveller. "Look out!—they are coming at you already!"

Then the Prince saw that the whole ground was alive with myriads of spiders of all sorts and sizes, and shuddered at the thought of being covered and bitten to death by the greedy hosts.

"Where is their King likely to be?" he cried, in terror.

"In the very middle of them! Make haste! Trample on 'em—crush 'em. Come on, this way!" shouted his guide.

It was a fearful trial of the Prince's courage, but he was determined to capture the Crucifix-spider if human energy could do it. His mysterious companion aided him manfully in battling with the swarming insects that opposed them at every step.

At last they came upon a rampart formed of millions of the most ferocious spiders in the world, and behind it they caught sight of the King, distinguished from all his defenders by the glittering white cross upon his back.

The Prince, heedless of the peril he ran, sprang over the living wall of venomous insects, and in an instant had his prize securely imprisoned in a golden box which he had brought with him for the purpose. Then he fainted, and when he recovered his senses it was to find himself back in the house of the mysterious owner of the ship that went without wind or sail, who refused all offers of reward for his services, and urged him to get back to Court without delay.



"THE PRINCE SPRANG OVER THE LIVING WALL OF VENOMOUS INSECTS."

When he presented the Crucifix-spider to the King the monarch almost danced with joy, and made no further objection to the Prince's marriage with his daughter, whom he thus made the happiest Princess in the world.

A long time after his marriage Prince Persevere felt a strong desire to learn what his friend, the mysterious traveller, was doing; so he went on a visit to him. But when he reached the spot on which his house had stood there was no house to be seen, every trace of it having been removed. From which he inferred that the strange owner of the ship that went without wind or sail had gone away in it to some now unknown country, with the intention of staying there, and had stayed accordingly.