maintained that the ghost was nothing but moonshine.

The Vareys heard of it, and laughed. They saw nothing but themselves, and were not to be scared by numskulls.

The autumn leaves yellowed and fell in golden showers; winter came with its wind and rain and driving showers of sleet and snow.

And then the stranger was seen by Miss Varey in long drab overcoat and top boots, and still he raised his hat with graceful courtesy.

The ground was white with snow one February day, when the young lady, equipped in a small scarlet cloak with the hood drawn over her head, and with pattens on her feet, left the "London House," opposite to the church gates, carrying a small parcel of drapery she had purchased there.

In order to gain the opposite side, she was compelled to walk down the hill to the steps near the ford, and after crossing the cartway ascend the corresponding steps to the side walk. It was rather risky for pattened feet, especially in snowy or frosty weather, but she went and returned without a slip. She had passed the rectory, and was about to plant her foot on the first step at the lych-gate, when who should come riding noiselessly down hill but the unknown, and put her all in a flutter with the mere wave of his hat.

The slightest step awry was apt to twist pattens, and the feet within them. Elsie, surprised out of her composure, must have set down her foot incautiously. The patten slipped and she with it.

Before she could recover herself, the stranger was off his horse and by her side.

"I trust, madam, you have sustained no injury," he cried in some concern, as he raised her from the slippery ground.

"I—I—fear I have twisted my ankle," she stammered out; adding, "Oh dear, how shall I manage to get home?" as she found that but for his support she would again have fallen.

By this time a lad from the "London House," by dint of jumping into the roadway and scrambling out of it, had reached the spot, and answered the gentleman's solicitous inquiry respecting the young lady's abode.

"Miss Varey only lives at the red house overlooking the churchyard, Mr. Anderson," said he, giving more information than was asked for.

"Well, my lad, just loosen the pattens that have done the mischief, and hold my horse whilst I help Miss Varey home."

The lad knelt down in the snow, and released the girl's small feet, but her supporter felt her wince as the twisted ankle was freed from the hard patten straps.

She tried to be brave, but could not use her foot.

"Pray do not attempt too much, Miss Varey. You must suffer me to bear you up," said Mr. Anderson, using her name as if he had not then learnt it for the first time; and as if only half sorry for the mishap which privileged him to put his strange arm around her as a genuine support, and at the same time gave a long desired introduction.

Mrs. Varey was overwhelmed alike with distress for her daughter's accident (though sprained ankles were almost common as pattens), and with gratitude to the gentleman who had left his horse to bring her home; and who did not leave until he had placed her on a sofa and obtained permission to call again, "for an assurance that the injury was not serious."

He might not have preferred this request so composedly had not John Varey entered the room, shaken hands with the stranger, and introduced him as a Mr. Anderson whose business brought him into the neighbourhood, and whose acquaintance he had made long before, when sketching the Angler's Rest and other picturesque spots on the River Lea.

But—not serious! The young lady, who had written sentimental verses over the slipping of a stranger's horse at the ford, grew more and more sentimental as weeks went by, now that he was no more a stranger, but a frequent visitor under their roof, bringing books to relieve the monotony of the hours spent on a couch; more especially when he told how from the time they first met at Hackney ford he had carried her image about with him, and had in fact cultivated her brother's acquaintance in hopes to bring about an introduction—a painless one—to her.

It may be she thought their introduction, as it was, a sufficient panacea for its pain. At all events she bore it very patiently, and when later, in the fine spring weather, she was strong enough to resume her moonlight walks in the churchyard, taking her old seat on the elevated slab when tired of strolling, her poetic reveries had a fuller meaning, her verses a warmer tone. Of anything "serious" to others she did not dream.

Once more the slumbering story of the ghost was revived, and silly nursemaids frightened their young charges with tales of its appearance, thus fostering foolish fears and superstitions.

It chanced one evening when the sweet May moon silvered the fresh foliage and shed a weird light on the grey tablets of the dead that Mr. Anderson encountered by the lych-gate a group of shuddering and terrified people, who warned him not to proceed lest he should lose his senses, for the ghost of the perjured woman was sitting there all in white by her grave, and it was not safe to venture.

He listened, asked when and where the dreaded spirit had been seen, laughed, said it was fancy, or that the ghost was warm flesh and blood.

He might as well have argued with the stones. It was in vain he invited any of the crowd to go forward to the haunted spot.

He went on, laughing as he went. The terrific ghost, arrayed in spotless white, advanced to meet him, and in a minute more was clasped in his strong arms, a loving, living woman.

How merrily she laughed at the mystery she had created by her passion for moonlight musings! How readily she accompanied him to the gate to prove her own identity! And how, on her approach, the people fled, all but one or two of the bravest, who themselves were loth to believe the evidence of their eyes and ears.

The scare had become general. The ghost had been seen at intervals by numbers. The contradiction of one or two could not reach the many.

It was not until Miss Varey went away as the wife of Mr. Anderson, and the house of the Vareys was pulled down to make way for the new church, and busy masons destroyed old associations, that confidence was gradually restored and the path to Church-well frequented as of yore.

But the roadway had been levelled, the brook and ford covered up, the wonderful church, for which no steeple had been planned, stood fair to view, the ancient place of worship had been demolished, leaving its time-worn belfry to ring out the old, ring in the new, long years before the Ghost of Hackney Churchyard vanished from the memory of the living.

To me the story was told on the spot by aged lips; no other than those of the ghost-lady's daughter; herself artistic and poetic—a story I repeat as one more proof how such legends may be "well authenticated by eye witnesses," yet be the variest outcomes of ignorance, cowardice, and superstition.

CINDERELLA'S ANCESTOR.

By EMMA BREWER.

If we desire to trace our well-known fairy tale of Cinderella back to its home and origin, we must turn our steps towards Egypt, that land of wonders, that treasure-house of ancient wisdom and civilisation from which Phœnicians, Greeks, and Romans alike drew their learning and culture.

We must turn back the leaves of the past nearly five thousand years, to a time when Rome and Greece had no existence, when England and Germany were thick tangled forests, the abode of wild beasts, if we would find the great great grandmother of Cinderella.

Even at so early a period of the world's history Egypt was a highly civilised country, and it is not strange that as new nations gradually spread themselves over the face of the earth they should take the ancient Egyptians as models, and become imbued with their learning and romance; and it is not difficult to imagine that Cinderella, who fascinated us when we were children, and who fascinates us even now, should, although under another name, have fascinated an Egyptian prince nearly five thousand years ago.

This is what she is said to have done, and the account of her doings and sayings—in fact, the story of her life—forms part of the history of ancient Egypt.

The story as here given deals only with one part of our Cinderella, viz., that the girl owes her fortune to the slipper or sandal, the unkind sisters forming no part of it.

There is, however, a separate tale in the ancient records, dealing only with the sisters, which no doubt became grafted on to that of Cinderella.

The story goes that more than four thousand years ago there dwelt in the island of Samos a merchant, with his wife and little daughter Nitakert. He had been very unfortunate in business, and resolved to settle in Egypt in order to redeem his position. What his occupation had been in Samos the record does not state, but in Egypt he opened an inn, such a one as we read of in Genesis, partly a caravanserai and partly a wine-shop.

His life in the new country was none too smooth for him, for the Egyptians were not kind to strangers, and as we know from Bible history they would not even take food at the same table with them.

The merchant's only joy amid his incessant cares and troubles was his little daughter Nitakert. She was good and beautiful, and even the Egyptians who came to the shop for their daily portions of wine were charmed out of their reserve.

As the years went on the fame of her beauty spread gradually over the whole town, and customers and travellers came from far and near to behold the rare beauty of the girl. The business increased daily, and he, the poor unknown stranger, was rapidly becoming a rich and respected merchant. His daughter was busy from morning till night, for all the customers desired to be served by her—indeed, the best in the shop gave no pleasure except she handed it.

Thus it happened that Nitakert had very little leisure; she was kept on the alert all day long; but this never made her cross or peevish; on the contrary, she was always kind and amiable. As gay as a lark she flitted hither and thither, and knew how to please everyone.

If there were by chance a quiet morning, she hastened out to the Nile, attended by a maid-servant, and diving into its clear waters acquired new freshness, power, and love of life, doing much the same as Pharaoh's daughter on the morning she found Moses in the cradle of rushes.

Daily baths were necessary to the Egyptians on account of the great heat and their extraordinary love of cleanliness, a love which could be easily satisfied, as all towns were built by the river or on a wide canal. The bath, too, was surrounded by less of ceremony than with us. The dress to be thrown off was but a single light garment, and a yellow striped cloth bound round the head. Sandals were used only by women and the high born. The undressing, therefore, was but the work of a moment, and almost before the bath was over the sun had dried the bather, and the garments were on again.

One morning Nitakert hurried out with her maid to refresh herself in the waters of the Nile. While still delighting in the bath, the servant, who was already out of the water and dressed, was walking up and down the bank, plucking and making up into a posy the magnificent white lotus flowers which grew in masses on the bank.

These flowers were special favourites with the ladies of ancient Egypt. One scarcely ever saw them, whether out walking, or in society, or on a water excursion without a bunch of them in their hands.

Thus employed, the girl was sauntering to and fro, when suddenly she cried in a loud, excited voice, "Nitakert, Nitakert!" and Nitakert looking up from the water beheld a monster vulture making wide circles over her in the air, and coming ever nearer and nearer. Fear took possession of both the girls; they screamed aloud for help, but there was no one near to aid them. The bird was now exactly over them, and it shot down like an arrow. The girls in terror covered both eyes with their hands. A moment later the wings of the mighty vulture rustled again, and mistress and maid, venturing to look up, saw the bird mounting higher and higher, till it vanished from their sight.

Nitakert sprang out of the water, and fell weeping on the neck of her companion. Her great desire was now to get home, and in dressing discovered what the vulture had done—it had robbed her of one of her sandals. This was no great misfortune; she walked home barefoot, and related the adventure, preserving the remaining sandal in memory of it.

Some little time after this it happened that the King of Egypt journeyed out of his capital into the open country, there to sit in judgment, with his council. At the time of which we are speaking affairs were not judged in courts of justice by special judges, according to written laws; *that* came into force later on; but the king gave judgment publicly before everybody in the open air, aided by the advice of his Ministers.

The petitioners drew near, laid before him their pleas, received judgment and departed, glad or sorry, according to the tenor of the king's decision.

On the occasion of which we speak, the attention of the council and pleaders was disturbed. First one and then another looked up, pointing towards heaven, and giving vent to cries of surprise.

The king himself raised his head, which had been bent in thought, and behold!—there, high in the air, hovering over the assembled crowd, was a large vulture. The judgments were forgotten, the proceedings interrupted, and everyone's attention was fixed on the stately bird, who cut the air with his wings, describing first larger and then smaller circles, approaching ever nearer to the assembly of people.

All gazed with breathless expectation, for the vulture (although the two girl-bathers did not know it) was in Egypt an omen of victory and happiness.

At this moment it hovered perpendicularly over the king, and opening one of its claws let something fall. A cry of astonishment issued from a thousand throats at once. Swift as an arrow the vulture shot off, and had soon vanished from all eyes; but in the king's lap lay a tiny sandal.

The king sat speechless, amazement appeared on the faces of the assembled multitude, no one knew what to make of the occurrence. At length the king, breaking silence, asked, "Who will interpret this to me?" One and another nodded their heads thoughtfully, without, however, being able to solve the mystery. At length an old experienced priest stepped forward, and bowing low, said, "Thou, Son of the Sun, hast asked, and thy servant answereth. It is the foot covering of a little maiden which the blessed bird has delivered to thee from the heights of heaven. Up, then, and seek her who has been brought to thy notice in such an extraordinary manner. She will be thy consort and our queen."

All had listened to the words of the sage with attention, and there arose a loud storm of applause.

"Up, up," rang from all sides; "search for the queen."

In triumphal procession the king was conducted back to the town amid the sound of trumpets and the joyful acclamations of the people.

In the city the event of the day was known from individuals who had hurried forward, and soon heralds traversed the capital and made known, amidst the noise of trumpets and drums, that the owner of the sandal was invited to come before the king.

For a wonder the day passed and no one announced herself, yet certainly there was no girl but would gladly have accepted the invitation of the Son of the Sun.

What was to be done? The king had carefully preserved the sandal, and whoever claimed it must not only exactly describe it, but be able to produce its fellow and show that they fitted her feet. No deception was therefore possible, however gladly the Egyptian girls would have attempted it.

In the palace the surprise was great that no one should have come forward to claim it, the belief being that the vulture had not brought it from far. Again the heralds traversed the town and proclaimed a large reward for him through whose aid the unknown maiden should be discovered, but all in vain.

The king had no rest, no pleasure, while this mystery remained unsolved.

"I will and must see her," he cried, "even if I search every hut in my kingdom."

He set off on a journey through the land from the north even to the south, making known as he went his command and desire, and thus it happened that he came to where Nitakert dwelt, and as the herald proclaimed in the open street the object of the king's journey, the answer came from many voices, "That sandal belongs to Nitakert, the lovely stranger; a vulture robbed her of it."

While the bystanders hurried off to Nitakert to communicate to her the herald's announcement, that officer flew back to the king, crying, "Hail to thee, oh king! at last we have found the maiden whom thou seekest."

In the utmost impatience the king moved forward, accompanied by his court. Nitakert had not yet recovered from her amazement when noise and tumult in the street attracted her attention, and running to the door beheld armed men advancing to the sound of cymbals and trumpets, and behind these came archers, followed by a herald, who cried with a loud voice, "Bow the head," and all the people in the street and on the roofs prostrated themselves, crying with loud voices, "Hail to our king, the Son of the Sun."

Now appeared the gilded carriage, drawn by magnificent horses, which in their turn were led by youths robed in white, and within the chariot stood the Son of the Sun, adorned with the red and white royal crown, servants walking on the right and left of him and behind him carrying long poles with fans or screens of ostrich feathers attached, which they held over his head.

The carriage stopped before the wine merchant's door, and the king entered; half an hour later the procession was again in motion, the music ringing out, and the cry of "Bow the head" penetrating the length of the street.

The people rejoiced and shouted "Happiness and blessing to our young queen," for by the king's side stood the lovely Nitakert. Flowers were strewn in the way of the royal chariot, feasts were prepared, accompanied by unfeigned signs of joy and love.

At length the queen arrived in the capital, delighted with everything she saw, but most of all she rejoiced that as time went on she possessed the love of her husband and the respect and devotion of the people. They were devoted to her, and, wrapped about as she was with the mystery of the sandal, they regarded her almost as a celestial being.

And Nitakert deserved this love. She was, in fact, the loving mother of her people; she brought comfort to the deserted, help to the poor, nursing to the sick. No house was too small, no hut too poverty-stricken for her to seek out, spreading happiness and blessing on all sides. Wherever she appeared care and anxiety fled and joy and peace entered.

Years went by, the lovely Nitakert rejoiced in the purest happiness; loving and beloved, she seemed to lack nothing, and had no idea that in all Egypt she had a single enemy.

Yet there were in the kingdom certain people who, holding fast to the ancient right of succession, had never forgiven the king for having so far forgotten what was due to Egypt as to raise a stranger to the throne, and determined to avenge this violation of the laws even at the cost of the king's life.

The secret band of malcontents bound themselves by a solemn oath, therefore, to murder the king and make Nitakert a widow. They carried out their wicked purpose, and we find the once lovely, happy Nitakert a pale, weeping woman, mourning, and wailing, and wringing her hands by the coffin of her

beloved husband, with whom she would gladly have been buried. With tears she made the preparations for his burial. All imaginable signs of love and fidelity were lavished on the dead until, on the seventy-second day of mourning, the hour of burial arrived.

When a king of Egypt died the land mourned for seven weeks of ten days each, beside the day of the death and the day of the burial. During these weeks no sacrifice was made to the gods, no music was heard, no festival was kept, no meat eaten, no grapes or wine taken.

As the embalmed corpse was deposited in the western mountains, and the tomb closed, the sorrowing queen leaned on the walled-up door for a long time, praying and weeping. "Sleep well, my beloved," she murmured. "There is but little left for me to do. I will build my grave, and I will avenge thee. Then, and then only, will I come to thee."

Here, properly speaking, we should leave Cinderella's ancestor, for the tragedy and strong-mindedness which mark the end of Nitakert have no counterpart in our dainty little Cinderella, who is to look pretty and be happy ever after. Yet as there is something more to be told of the Egyptian queen, it would not be right to leave it unsaid.

The funeral over, the queen appeared quite changed. She ordered the master builder to come to her, and directed him to build a pyramid, which should contain a tomb for herself, and a subterranean chamber suitable for festal banquets. In the land of Egypt it was customary to seek shelter from the heat in underground rooms, therefore this was no startling direction.

When the plans for both had been discussed and decided on, Nitakert dismissed the master builder with the command that he was to spare nothing in order to finish the work as quickly as possible. Then she devoted herself to State affairs, and did all that came to her hands with such zeal and judgment, that the Egyptians scarcely missed their king.

With the exception of the secret band of murderers, the whole people were attached to her. Young and old, rich and poor, plebeian and aristocrat, had a deep personal love for her, and great respect for her judgment and power. Later generations bear record of her that she was, with the exception of Isis, the noblest and loveliest lady that ever shared the throne with the Son of the Sun.

But her beauty was no longer the same as before her husband's death; laughter never now lighted up her pale suffering features, a jest or joyous word never now passed her lips, and in her quiet moments her heart and thoughts seemed far distant.

Her favourite occupation when the business of the State had been attended to was to go out and inspect her pyramid. This was not being built of yellow lime or sandstone, as was the custom, but of granite, which was obtained far away on the southern borders of Egypt.

The whole year through thousands of workmen were occupied in breaking the stone, in hewing it, and conveying it down the Nile, and then with it forming the mighty monument. With the same zeal the workmen got on with the subterranean room, and when it was complete Nitakert decorated it with royal magnificence. Its inauguration was, however, still put off until the pyramid was finished.

At length, after six years of incessant labour and longing expectation, both works were complete. In the interior of the proudly soaring pyramid was the little burial chamber containing the granite coffin silently awaiting its dead, and the stones for building up the narrow entrance when the coffin should have received its burden.

No one knew, no one in the least suspected, what plan the unhappy Nitakert had hidden in her heart. For some time after the evil deed had been committed the murderers had feared detection and the vengeance of the queen, but time went by and they were still untouched, nay, more, they were left in possession of their offices and dignities. They had not hoped to have thus escaped, and now, after six long years, not one of them dreamed of any danger, the bitterness of death was passed.

It was at this moment, the works complete, the murderers secure, that the queen invited them to a grand banquet in the subterranean room to celebrate the completion of the pyramid. No individual guest knew who beside himself shared the honour of partaking of the royal feast, and when they were assembled they did not observe that of all those who six years before had sworn the king's death not one was absent. Nor were they aware that a wide canal had been constructed under the earth from the Nile to the pyramid, and was kept in bounds by a sluice or dyke outside the door of the ante-room of the very hall wherein they were sitting.

The adornments of the hall were splendid and costly, and hundreds of lights illuminated it. No one could have suspected the ruin to them all lurking behind the walls. The rarest wine sparkled in golden cups, the costliest viands appeared in priceless dishes. Everything which could rejoice the heart was provided in abundance. Gay music and dancing girls were there, and the guests agreed that it was the most splendid feast they had ever partaken of.

With bright eyes the queen glanced at the number of her guests and heard their demonstrations of joy with delight.

Towards the end of the banquet, when the pleasure was at its height, the pale lady suddenly glided out of the hall. She remained a moment standing in the outer room, while she cast a glance at her guests, and then with a steady hand drew back the bar of the sluice and darted up the steps.

Suddenly there sounded a thundering, rushing, and roaring; the folding door of the hall sprang open, and with frightful force the death-bringing stream pressed in.

Speechless with fright, motionless with horror, each one regarded the other. No scream was heard, no word spoken, no effort made to escape; he who stood remained standing, he who lay on the soft cushions did not rise, destruction came too swift and sure. Death came to them in a few seconds, the brimming cups still in their hands.

This was the vengeance of the woman from whom they had taken her dearest, her greatest treasure. As she had been robbed six years before of her whole happiness unexpectedly and unprepared, so should destruction come with lightning rapidity upon those who had dealt her this blow. She determined that they should lose their life just when it was sweetest to them, and before death overtook them that they should see it in all its grimness.

Nitakert in the meantime hurried to a neighbouring building, where for some hours a large fire had been burning; the floor was covered with burning coals, and the flames licked the walls. Here she sought and found death.

On the seventy-second day afterwards a long funeral procession moved towards the pyramid. As was the custom, the Egyptians sat in judgment on the dead queen and pronounced her worthy of honourable burial.

The people never forgot her, but cherished her memory and handed it down to their children and children's children with love and blessings.

More than four thousand years have passed since Cinderella's ancestor was laid to rest in her granite coffin within the pyramid she had built for herself, yet the guide of to-day points it out to the visitor, and tells a strange legend concerning it, which is easy to recognise. He also relates that sometimes in the clear star-lit nights a bright shimmer floods the pyramids, and a lovely woman is seen gliding round the small granite monument in which she was laid to rest, with a smile so intensely sorrowful that once seen can never be forgotten.

It is difficult to say where in this legend truth ends and fiction begins, but it assures us of one thing, that our Cinderella is of ancient lineage and of royal descent, and that the prince who marries her need have no fear of a *mésalliance*.

That we know anything definite about Cinderella's ancestor is due to the learning and research of Dr. Karl Oppel, who, by diving into old records and hierogylphics, has made clear to us much that was unknown concerning ancient Egypt, its learning, its customs, its origin, and its history.