

50 Classic Children Short Stories

Tom Tit Tot

ONCE upon a time there was a woman, and she baked five pies. And when they came out of the oven, they were that overbaked the crusts were too hard to eat. So she says to her daughter:

'Darter,' says she, 'put you them there pies on the shelf, and leave 'em there a little, and they'll come again.' — She meant, you know, the crust would get soft.

But the girl, she says to herself: 'Well, if they'll come again, I'll eat 'em now.' And she set to work and ate 'em all, first and last.

Well, come supper-time the woman said: 'Go you, and get one o' them there pies. I dare say they've come again now.'

The girl went and she looked, and there was nothing but the dishes. So back she came and says she: 'Noo, they ain't come again.'

'Not one of 'em?' says the mother.

'Not one of 'em,' says she.

'Well, come again, or not come again,' said the woman, 'I'll have one for supper.'

'But you can't, if they ain't come,' said the girl.

'But I can,' says she. 'Go you, and bring the best

of 'em.'

'Best or worst,' says the girl, 'I've ate 'em all, and you can't have one till that's come again.'

Well, the woman she was done, and she took her spinning to the door to spin, and as she span she sang:

'My darter ha' ate five, five pies today.

My darter ha' ate five, five pies today.'

The king was coming down the street, and he heard her sing, but what she sang he couldn't hear, so he stopped and said:

'What was that you were singing, my good woman?'

The woman was ashamed to let him hear what her daughter had been doing, so she sang, instead of that:

'My darter ha' spun five, five skeins today.

My darter ha' spun five, five skeins today.'

'Stars o' mine!' said the king, 'I never heard tell of anyone that could do that.' Then he said: 'Look you here, I want a wife, and I'll marry your daughter. But look you here,' says he, 'eleven months out of the year she shall have all she likes to eat, and all the gowns she likes to get, and all the company she likes to keep; but the last month of the year she'll have to spin five skeins every day, and if she don't I shall kill her.'

'All right,' says the woman; for she thought what a grand marriage that was. And as for the five skeins, when the time came, there'd be plenty of ways of getting out of it, and likeliest, he'd have forgotten all about it.

Well, so they were married. And for eleven months the girl had all she liked to eat, and all the gowns she liked to get, and all the company she liked to keep.

But when the time was getting over, she began to think about the skeins and to wonder if he had 'em in mind. But not one word did he say about 'em, and she thought he'd wholly forgotten 'em.

However, the last day of the last month he takes her to a room she'd never set eyes on before. There was nothing in it but a spinning-wheel and a stool. And says he: 'Now, my dear, here you'll be shut in tomorrow with some victuals and some flax, and if you haven't spun five skeins by the night, your head'll go off.'

And away he went about his business.

Well, she was that frightened, she'd always been such a gatless girl, that she didn't so much as know how to spin, and what was she to do tomorrow with no one to come nigh her to help her? She sate down on a stool in the kitchen, and law! how she did cry!

However, all of a sudden she heard a sort of a knocking low down on the door. She upped and oped it, and what should she see but a small little black thing

with a long tail. That looked up at her right curious, and that said:

'What are you a-crying for?'

'What's that to you?' says she.

'Never you mind,' that said, 'but tell me what you're a-crying for.'

'That won't do me no good if I do,' says she.

'You don't know that,' that said, and twirled that's tail round.

'Well,' says she, 'that won't do no harm, if that don't do no good,' and she upped and told about the pies, and the skeins, and everything.

'This is what I'll do,' says the little black thing. 'I'll come to your window every morning and take the flax and bring it spun at night.'

'What's your pay?' says she.

That looked out of the corner of that's eyes, and that said:

'I'll give you three guesses every night to guess my name, and if you haven't guessed it before the month's up you shall be mine.'

Well, she thought, she'd be sure to guess that's name before the month was up. 'All right,' says she, 'I agree.'

'All right,' that says, and law! how that twirled that's tail.

Well, the next day, her husband took her into the room, and there was the flax and the day's food.

'Now, there's the flax,' says he, 'and if that ain't spun up this night, off goes your head.' And then he went out and locked the door.

He'd hardly gone, when there was a knocking against the window.

She upped and she oped it, and there sure enough was the little old thing sitting on the ledge.

'Where's the flax?' says he.

'Here it be,' says she. And she gave it to him.

Well, come the evening a knocking came again to the window. She upped and she oped it, and there was the little old thing with five skeins of flax on his arm.

'Here it be,' says he, and he gave it to her.

'Now, what's my name?' says he.

'What, is that Bill?' says she.

'Noo, that ain't,' says he, and he twirled his tail. 'Is that Ned?' says she.

'Noo, that ain't,' says he, and he twirled his tail.

'Well, is that Mark?' says she.

'Noo, that ain't,' says he, and he twirled his tail harder, and away he flew.

Well, when her husband came in, there were the five skeins ready for him. 'I see I shan't have to kill you tonight, my dear,' says he; 'you'll have your food and your flax in the morning,' says he, and away he goes.

Well, every day the flax and the food were brought, and every day that there little black impet used to come mornings and evenings. And all the day the

girl sate trying to think of names to say to it when it came at night. But she never hit on the right one. And as it got towards the end of the month, the impet began to look so maliceful, and that twirled that's tail faster and faster each time she gave a guess.

At last it came to the last day but one. The impet came at night along with the five skeins, and that said:

'What, ain't you got my name yet?'

'Is that Nicodemus?' says she.

'Noo, 't ain't,' that says.

'Is that Sammlle?' says she.

'Noo, 't ain't,' that says.

'A-well, is that Methusalem?' says she.

'Noo, 't ain't that neither,' that says.

Then that looks at her with that's eyes like a coal of fire, and that says: 'Woman, there's only tomorrow night, and then you'll be mine!' And away it flew.

Well, she felt that horrid. However, she heard the king coming along the passage. In he came, and when he sees the five skeins, he says, says he:

'Well, my dear,' says he. 'I don't see but what you'll have your skeins ready tomorrow night as well, and as I reckon I shan't have to kill you, I'll have supper in here tonight.' So they brought supper, and another stool for him, and down the two sate.

Well, he hadn't eaten but a mouthful or so, when he stops and begins to laugh.

'What is it?' says she.

'A-why,' says he, 'I was out a-hunting today, and I got away to a place in the wood I'd never seen before. And there was an old chalk-pit. And I heard a kind of a sort of humming. So I got off my hobby, and I went right quiet to the pit, and I looked down. Well, what should there be but the funniest little black thing you ever set eyes on. And what was that doing, but that had a little spinning-wheel, and that was spinning wonderful fast, and twirling that's tail. And as that span that sang:

'Nimmy nimmy not
My name's Tom Tit Tot.'

Well, when the girl heard this, she felt as if she could have jumped out of her skin for joy, but she didn't say a word.

Next day that there little thing looked so malicious when he came for the flax. And when night came she heard that knocking against the window panes. She oped the window, and that come right in on the ledge. That was grinning from ear to ear, and Oo! that's tail was twirling round so fast.

'What's my name?' that says, as that gave her the skeins.

'Is that Solomon?' she says, pretending to be afeard.

'Noo, 'tain't,' that says, and that came further into

the room.

'Well, is that Zebedee?' says she again.

'Noo, 'tain't,' says the impet. And then that laughed and twirled that's tail till you couldn't hardly see it.

'Take time, woman,' that says; 'next guess, and you're mine.' And that stretched out that's black hands at her.

Well, she backed a step or two, and she looked at it, and then she laughed out, and says she, pointing her finger at it:

'Nimmy nimmy not
Your name's Tom Tit Tot.'

Well, when that heard her, that gave an awful shriek and away that flew into the dark, and she never saw it any more.

The Three Sillies

ONCE upon a time there was a farmer and his wife who had one daughter, and she was courted by a gentleman. Every evening he used to come and see her, and stop to supper at the farmhouse, and the daughter used to be sent down into the cellar to draw the beer for supper. So one evening she had gone down to draw the beer, and she happened to look up at the ceiling while she was drawing, and she saw a mallet stuck in one of the beams. It must have been there a long, long time, but somehow or other she had never noticed it before, and she began a-thinking. And she thought it was very dangerous to have that mallet there, for she said to herself: 'Suppose him and me was to be married, and we was to have a son, and he was to grow up to be a man, and come down into the cellar to draw the beer, like as I'm doing now, and the mallet was to fall on his head and kill him, what a dreadful thing it would be!' And she put down the candle and the jug, and sat herself down and began a-crying.

Well, they began to wonder upstairs how it was that she was so long drawing the beer, and her mother went down to see after her, and she found her sitting on the settle crying, and the beer running over the floor. 'Why, whatever is the matter?' said her mother. 'Oh, mother!' says she, 'look at that horrid mallet! Suppose we was to be married, and was to have a son, and he

was to grow up, and was to come down to the cellar to draw the beer, and the mallet was to fall on his head and kill him, what a dreadful thing it would be!' 'Dear, dear! what a dreadful thing it would be!' said the mother, and she sat down aside of the daughter and started a-crying too. Then after a bit the father began to wonder that they didn't come back, and he went down into the cellar to look after them himself, and there they two sat a-crying, and the beer running all over the floor. 'Whatever is the matter?' says he. 'Why,' says the mother, 'look at that horrid mallet. Just suppose, if our daughter and her sweetheart was to be married, and was to have a son, and he was to grow up, and was to come down into the cellar to draw the beer, and the mallet was to fall on his head and kill him, what a dreadful thing it would be!' 'Dear, dear, dear! so it would!' said the father, and he sat himself down aside of the other two, and started a-crying.

Now the gentleman got tired of stopping up in the kitchen by himself, and at last he went down into the cellar, too, to see what they were after; and there they three sat a-crying side by side, and the beer running all over the floor. And he ran straight and turned the tap. Then he said: 'Whatever are you three doing, sitting there crying, and letting the beer run all over the floor?' 'Oh!' says the father, 'look at that horrid mallet! Suppose you and our daughter was to be married, and was to have a son, and he was to grow up, and was to

come down into the cellar to draw the beer, and the mallet was to fall on his head and kill him!' And then they all started a-crying worse than before. But the gentleman burst out a-laughing, and reached up and pulled out the mallet, and then he said: 'I've travelled many miles, and I never met three such big sillies as you three before; and now I shall start out on my travels again, and when I can find three bigger sillies than you three, then I'll come back and marry your daughter.' So he wished them good-bye, and started off on his travels, and left them all crying because the girl had lost her sweetheart.

Well, he set out, and he travelled a long way, and at last he came to a woman's cottage that had some grass growing on the roof. And the woman was trying to get her cow to go up a ladder to the grass, and the poor thing durst not go. So the gentleman asked the woman what she was doing. 'Why, lookye,' she said, 'look at all that beautiful grass. I'm going to get the cow on to the roof to eat it. She'll be quite safe, for I shall tie a string round her neck, and pass it down the chimney, and tie it to my wrist as I go about the house, so she can't fall off without my knowing it.' 'Oh, you poor silly!' said the gentleman, 'you should cut the grass and throw it down to the cow!' But the woman thought it was easier to get the cow up the ladder than to get the grass down, so she pushed her and coaxed her and got her up, and tied a string round her neck, and passed it

down the chimney, and fastened it to her own wrist. And the gentleman went on his way, but he hadn't gone far when the cow tumbled off the roof, and hung by the string tied round her neck, and it strangled her. And the weight of the cow tied to her wrist pulled the woman up the chimney, and she stuck fast half-way and was smothered in the soot.

Well, that was one big silly.

And the gentleman went on and on, and he went to an inn to stop the night, and they were so full at the inn that they had to put him in a double-bedded room, and another traveller was to sleep in the other bed. The other man was a very pleasant fellow, and they got very friendly together; but in the morning, when they were both getting up, the gentleman was surprised to see the other hang his trousers on the knobs of the chest of drawers and run across the room and try to jump into them, and he tried over and over again and couldn't manage it; and the gentleman wondered whatever he was doing it for. At last he stopped and wiped his face with his handkerchief. 'Oh dear,' he says, 'I do think trousers are the most awkwardest kind of clothes that ever were. I can't think who could have invented such things. It takes me the best part of an hour to get into mine every morning, and I get so hot! How do you manage yours?' So the gentleman burst out a-laughing, and showed him how to put them on; and he was very much obliged to him, and said he never should have

thought of doing it that way.

So that was another big silly.

Then the gentleman went on his travels again; and he came to a village, and outside the village there was a pond, and round the pond was a crowd of people. And they had got rakes, and brooms, and pitchforks reaching into the pond; and the gentleman asked what was the matter.

'Why,' they say, 'matter enough! Moon's tumbled into the pond, and we can't rake her out anyhow!' So the gentleman burst out a-laughing, and told them to look up into the sky, and that it was only the shadow in the water. But they wouldn't listen to him, and abused him shamefully, and he got away as quick as he could.

So there was a whole lot of sillies bigger than them three sillies at home. So the gentleman turned back home and married the farmer's daughter, and if they didn't live happy for ever after, that's nothing to do with you or me.

The Rose Tree by William Butler Yeats

'O words are lightly spoken,'
Said Pearse to Connolly,
'Maybe a breath of politic words
Has withered our Rose Tree;
Or maybe but a wind that blows
Across the bitter sea.'

'It needs to be but watered,'
James Connolly replied,
'To make the green come out again
And spread on every side,
And shake the blossom from the bud
To be the garden's pride.'

'But where can we draw water,'
Said Pearse to Connolly,
'When all the wells are parched away?
O plain as plain can be
There's nothing but our own red blood
Can make a right Rose Tree.'

The Old Woman and Her Pig

AN old woman was sweeping her house, and she found a little crooked sixpence. 'What,' said she, 'shall I do with this little sixpence? I will go to market, and buy a little pig.'

As she was coming home, she came to a stile: but the piggy wouldn't go over the stile.

She went a little further, and she met a dog. So she said to him: 'Dog! dog! bite pig; piggy won't go over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the dog wouldn't.

She went a little further, and she met a stick. So she said: 'Stick! stick! beat dog! dog won't bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the stick wouldn't.

She went a little further, and she met a fire. So she said: 'Fire! fire! burn stick; stick won't beat dog; dog won't bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the fire wouldn't.

She went a little further, and she met some water. So she said: 'Water! water! quench fire; fire won't burn stick; stick won't beat dog; dog won't bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the water wouldn't.

She went a little further, and she met an ox. So she said: 'Ox! ox! drink water; water won't quench fire; fire won't burn stick; stick won't beat dog; dog won't

bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the ox wouldn't.

She went a little further and she met a butcher. So she said: 'Butcher! butcher! kill ox; ox won't drink water; water won't quench fire; fire won't burn stick; stick won't beat dog; dog won't bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the butcher wouldn't.

She went a little further, and she met a rope. So she said: 'Rope! rope! hang butcher; butcher won't kill ox; ox won't drink water; water won't quench fire; fire won't burn stick; stick won't beat dog; dog won't bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the rope wouldn't.

She went a little further, and she met a rat. So she said: 'Rat! rat! gnaw rope; rope won't hang butcher, butcher won't kill ox; ox won't drink water; water won't quench fire; fire won't burn stick; stick won't beat dog; dog won't bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the rat wouldn't.

She went a little further, and she met a cat. So she said: 'Cat! cat! kill rat; rat won't gnaw rope; rope won't hang butcher; butcher won't kill ox; ox won't drink water; water won't quench fire; fire won't burn stick; stick won't beat dog; dog won't bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile; and I shan't get home tonight.' But the cat said to her, 'If you will go to yonder cow, and fetch me a saucer of milk, I will kill the rat.' So away went the

old woman to the cow.

But the the cow said to her: 'If you will go to yonder haystack, and fetch me a handful of hay, I'll give you the milk.' So away went the old woman to the hay-stack; and she brought the hay to the cow.

As soon as the cow had eaten the hay, she gave the old woman the milk; and away she went with it in a saucer to the cat.

As soon as the cat had lapped up the milk, the cat began to kill the rat; the rat began to gnaw the rope; the rope began to hang the butcher; the butcher began to kill the ox; the ox began to drink the water; the water began to quench the fire; the fire began to burn the stick; the stick began to beat the dog; the dog began to bite the pig; the little pig in a fright jumped over the stile; and so the old woman got home that night.

How Jack Went to Seek His Fortune

ONCE on a time there was a boy named Jack, and one morning he started to go and seek his fortune.

He hadn't gone very far before he met a cat.

'Where are you going, Jack?' said the cat.

'I am going to seek my fortune.'

'May I go with you?'

'Yes,' said Jack, 'the more the merrier.'

So on they went, jiggelty-jolt, jiggelty-jolt.

They went a little further and they met a dog.

'Where are you going, Jack?' said the dog.

'I am going to seek my fortune.'

'May I go with you?'

'Yes,' said Jack, 'the more the merrier.'

So on they went, jiggelty-jolt, jiggelty-jolt.

They went a little further and they met a goat.

'Where are you going, Jack?' said the goat.

'I am going to seek my fortune.'

'May I go with you?'

'Yes,' said Jack, 'the more the merrier.'

So on they went, jiggelty-jolt, jiggelty-jolt.

They went a little further and they met a bull.

'Where are you going, Jack?'

'I am going to seek my fortune.'

'May I go with you?'

'Yes,' said Jack, 'the more the merrier.'

So on they went, jiggelty-jolt, jiggelty-jolt.

They went a little further and they met a rooster.
'Where are you going, Jack?' said the rooster.
'I am going to seek my fortune.'
'May I go with you?'
'Yes,' said Jack, 'the more the merrier.'
So on they went, jiggelty-jolt, jiggelty-jolt.

Well, they went on till it was about dark, and they began to think of some place where they could spend the night. About this time they came in sight of a house, and Jack told them to keep still while he went up and looked in through the window. And there were some robbers counting over their money. Then Jack went back and told them to wait till he gave the word, and then to make all the noise they could. So when they were all ready Jack gave the word, and the cat mewed, and the dog barked, and the goat bleated, and the bull bellowed, and the rooster crowed, and altogether they made such a dreadful noise that it frightened the robbers all away.

And then they went in and took possession of the house. Jack was afraid the robbers would come back in the night, and so when it came time to go to bed he put the cat in the rocking-chair, and he put the dog under the table, and he put the goat upstairs, and he put the bull in the cellar, and the rooster flew up on to the roof, and Jack went to bed.

By and by the robbers saw it was all dark and

they sent one man back to the house to look after their money. Before long he came back in a great fright and told them his story.

'I went back to the house,' said he, 'and went in and tried to sit down in the rocking-chair, and there was an old woman knitting, and she stuck her knitting-needles into me.' That was the cat, you know.

'I went to the table to look after the money, and there was a shoemaker under the table, and he stuck his awl into me.' That was the dog, you know.

'I started to go upstairs, and there was a man up there threshing, and he knocked me down with his flail.' That was the goat, you know.

'I started to go down cellar, and there was a man down there chopping wood, and he knocked me up with his axe.' That was the bull, you know.

'But I shouldn't have minded all that if it hadn't been for that little fellow on top of the house, who kept a-hollering, „Chuck him up to me-e! Chuck him up to me-e!“ Of course, that was the cock-a-doodle-do.

Mr Vinegar

MR and Mrs Vinegar lived in a vinegar bottle. Now, one day, when Mr Vinegar was from home, Mrs Vinegar, who was a very good housewife, was busily sweeping her house, when an unlucky thump of the broom brought the whole house cutter-clatter, cutter-clatter, about her ears. In an agony of grief she rushed forth to meet her husband. On seeing him she exclaimed, 'O Mr Vinegar, Mr Vinegar, we are ruined, we are ruined: I have knocked the house down, and it is all to pieces!' Mr Vinegar then said: 'My dear, let us see what can be done. Here is the door; I will take it on my back, and we will go forth to seek our fortune.' They walked all that day, and at nightfall entered a thick forest. They were both very, very tired, and Mr Vinegar said: 'My love, I will climb up into a tree, drag up the door, and you shall follow.' He accordingly did so, and they both stretched their weary limbs on the door, and fell asleep. In the middle of the night, Mr Vinegar was disturbed by the sound of voices underneath and to his horror and dismay found that it was a band of thieves met to divide their booty. 'Here, Jack,' said one, 'there's five pounds for you; here, Bill, here's ten pounds for you; here, Bob, there's three pounds for you.' Mr Vinegar could listen no longer; his terror was so great that he trembled and trembled, and shook down the door on their heads. Away scampered the thieves, but

Mr Vinegar dared not quit his retreat till broad daylight. He then scrambled out of the tree, and went to lift up the door. What did he see but a number of golden guineas. 'Come down, Mrs Vinegar,' he cried; 'come down, I say; our fortune's made, our fortune's made! Come down, I say.' Mrs Vinegar got down as fast as she could, and when she saw the money, she jumped for joy. 'Now, my dear,' said she, 'I'll tell you what you shall do. There is a fair at the neighbouring town; you shall take these forty guineas and buy a cow. I can make butter and cheese, which you shall sell at market, and we shall then be able to live very comfortably.' Mr Vinegar joyfully agrees, takes the money, and off he goes to the fair. When he arrived, he walked up and down, and at length saw a beautiful red cow. It was an excellent milker, and perfect in every way. 'Oh!' thought Mr Vinegar, 'if I had but that cow, I should be the happiest man alive.' So he offered the forty guineas for the cow, and the owner said that, as he was a friend, he'd oblige him. So the bargain was made, and he got the cow and he drove it backwards and forwards to show it. By and by he saw a man playing the bagpipes-Tweedle-dum, tweedle-dee. The children followed him about, and he appeared to be pocketing money on all sides. 'Well,' thought Mr Vinegar, 'if I had but that beautiful instrument I should be the happiest man alive my fortune would be made.' So he went up to the man. 'Friend,' says he, 'what a beautiful instrument

that is, and what a deal of money you must make.' 'Why, yes,' said the man, 'I make a great deal of money, to be sure, and it is a wonderful instrument.' 'Oh!' cried Mr Vinegar, 'how I should like to possess it!' 'Well,' said the man, 'as you are a friend, I don't much mind parting with it: you shall have it for that red cow.' 'Done!' said the delighted Mr Vinegar. So the beautiful red cow was given for the bagpipes. He walked up and down with his purchase; but it was in vain he tried to play a tune, and instead of pocketing pence, the boys followed him hooting, laughing, and pelting.

Poor Mr Vinegar, his fingers grew very cold, and, just as he was leaving the town, he met a man with a fine thick pair of gloves. 'Oh, my fingers are so very cold,' said Mr Vinegar to himself. 'Now if I had but those beautiful gloves I should be the happiest man alive.' He went up to the man, and said to him: 'Friend, you seem to have a capital pair of gloves there.' 'Yes, truly,' cried the man; 'and my hands are as warm as possible this cold November day.' 'Well,' said Mr Vinegar, 'I should like to have them.' 'What will you give?' said the man; 'as you are a friend, I don't much mind letting you have them for those bagpipes.' 'Done!' cried Mr Vinegar. He put on the gloves, and felt perfectly happy as he trudged homewards.

At last he grew very tired, when he saw a man coming towards him with a good stout stick in his hand.

'Oh,' said Mr Vinegar, 'that I had but that stick! I

should then be the happiest man alive.' He said to the man: 'Friend, what a rare good stick you have got!' 'Yes,' said the man; 'I have used it for many a long mile, and a good friend it has been; but if you have a fancy for it, as you are a friend, I don't mind giving it to you for that pair of gloves.' Mr Vinegar's hands were so warm, and his legs so tired, that he gladly made the exchange. As he drew near to the wood where he had left his wife, he heard a parrot on a tree calling out his name: 'Mr Vinegar, you foolish man, you blockhead, you simpleton; you went to the fair, and laid out all your money in buying a cow. Not content with that, you changed it for bagpipes, on which you could not play, and which were not worth one-tenth of the money. You fool, you-you had no sooner got the bagpipes than you changed them for the gloves, which were not worth one-quarter of the money; and when you had got the gloves, you changed them for a poor miserable stick; and now for your forty guineas, cow, bagpipes, and gloves, you have nothing to show but that poor miserable stick, which you might have cut in any hedge.' On this the bird laughed and laughed, and Mr Vinegar, falling into a violent rage, threw the stick at its head. The stick lodged in the tree, and he returned to his wife without money, cow, bagpipes, gloves, or stick, and she instantly gave him such a sound cudgelling that she almost broke every bone in his skin.

Nix Nought Nothing

THERE once lived a king and a queen as many a one has been. They were long married and had no children; but at last a baby boy came to the queen when the king was away in the far countries. The queen would not christen the boy till the king came back, and she said: 'We will just call him Nix Nought Nothing until his father comes home.' But it was long before he came home, and the boy had grown a fine, bonny laddie. At length the king was on his way back; but he had a big river to cross, and there was a whirlpool, and he could not get over the water. But a giant came up to him, and said: 'I'll carry you over.' But the king said: 'What's your pay?' 'Oh, give me Nix, Nought, Nothing, and I will carry you over the water on my back.' The king had never heard that his son was called Nix Nought Nothing, and so he said: 'Oh, I'll give you that and my thanks into the bargain.' When the king got home again, he was very happy to see his wife again, and his young son. She told him that she had not given the child any name, but just Nix Nought Nothing, until he should come home again himself. The poor king was in a terrible case. He said: 'What have I done? I promised to give the giant who carried me over the river on his back Nix Nought Nothing.' The king and the queen were sad and sorry, but they said: 'When the giant comes we will give him the hen-wife's boy; he

will never know the difference.' The next day the giant came to claim the king's promise, and he sent for the hen-wife's boy; and the giant went away with the boy on his back. He travelled till he came to a big stone, and there he sat down to rest. He said: 'Hidge, Hodge, on my back, what time of day is that?'

The poor little lad said: 'It is the time that my mother, the hen-wife, takes up the eggs for the queen's breakfast.'

Then the giant was very angry, and dashed the boy on the stone and killed him.

Back he went in a tower of a temper and this time they gave him the gardener's boy. He went off with him on his back till they got to the stone again when the giant sat down to rest. And he said: 'Hidge, Hodge, on my back, what time of day do you make that?'

The gardener's boy said: 'Surely, it's the time that my mother takes up the vegetables for the queen's dinner.'

Then the giant was as wild as could be, and killed him, too.

Then the giant went back to the king's house in a terrible temper and said he would destroy them all if they did not give him Nix Nought Nothing this time. They had to do it; and when he came to the big stone, the giant said: 'What time of day is that?' Nix Nought Nothing said: 'It is the time that my father the king will be sitting down to supper.' The giant said: 'I've got the

right one now'; and took Nix Nought Nothing to his own house and brought him up till he was a man.

The giant had a bonny daughter, and she and the lad grew very fond of each other. The giant said one day to Nix Nought Nothing: 'I've work for you tomorrow. There is a stable seven miles long and seven miles broad, and it has not been cleaned for seven years, and you must clean it tomorrow, or I will have you for my supper.'

The giant's daughter went out next morning with the lad's breakfast, and found him in a terrible state, for always as he cleaned out a bit, it just fell in again. The giant's daughter said she would help him, and she cried all the beasts in the field, and all the fowls in the air, and in a minute they all came, and carried away everything that was in the stable and made it all clean before the giant came home. He said: 'Shame on the wit that helped you; but I have a worse job for you tomorrow.' Then he said to Nix Nought Nothing: 'There is a lake seven miles long, and seven miles deep, and seven miles broad, and you must drain it tomorrow by nightfall, or else I'll have you for my supper.' Nix Nought Nothing began early next morning and tried to lave the water with his pail, but the lake was never getting any less, and he didn't know what to do; but the giant's daughter called on all the fish in the sea to come and drink the water, and very soon they drank it dry. When the giant saw the work done he was in a rage,

and said: 'I've a worse job for you tomorrow; there is a tree, seven miles high, and no branch on it, till you get to the top, and there is a nest with seven eggs in it, and you must bring down all the eggs without breaking one, or else I'll have you for my supper.' At first the giant's daughter did not know how to help Nix Nought Nothing; but she cut off first her fingers and then her toes, and made steps of them, and he climb the tree and got all the eggs safe till he came just to the bottom, and then one was broken. So they determined to run away together, and after the giant's daughter had gone back to her room and got her magic flask, they set out together as fast as they could run. And they hadn't got but three fields away when they looked back and saw the giant walking along at full speed after them. 'Quick! quick!' called out the giant's daughter, 'take my comb from my hair and throw it down.' Nix Nought Nothing took her comb from her hair and threw it down, and out of every one of its prongs there sprung up a fine thick briar in the way of the giant. You may be sure it took him a long time to work his way through the briar bush, and by the time he was well through, Nix Nought Nothing and his sweetheart had run far, far away from him. But he soon came along after them, and was just like to catch 'em up when the giant's daughter called out to Nix Nought Nothing, 'Take my hair dagger and throw it down, quick, quick!' So Nix Nought Nothing threw down the hair dagger and out of it grew as quick as

lightning a thick hedge of sharp razors placed cuss-cross. The giant had to tread very cautiously to get through all this and meanwhile they both ran hard, and on, and on, and on, till they were nearly out of sight. But at last the giant was through, and it wasn't 'long before he was like to catch them up. But just as he was stretching out his hand to catch Nix Nought Nothing his daughter took out her magic flask and dashed it on the ground. And as it broke, out of it welled a big, big wave that grew, and that grew, till it reached the giant's waist and then his neck, and when it got to his head, he was drowned dead, and dead, and dead indeed.

But Nix Nought Nothing fled on till where do you think they came to? Why, to near the castle of Nix Nought Nothing's father and mother. But the giant's daughter was so weary that she couldn't move a step further. So Nix Nought Nothing told her to wait there while he went and found out a lodging for the night. And he went on towards the lights of the castle, and on the way he came to the cottage of the hen-wife whose boy, you'll remember, had been killed by the giant. Now she knew Nix Nought Nothing in a moment, and hated him because he was the cause of her son's death. So when he asked his way to the castle, she put a spell upon him, and when he got to the castle, no sooner was he let in than he fell down dead asleep upon a bench in the hail. The king and queen tried all they could do to wake him up, but all in vain, So the king promised that

if any maiden could wake him she could marry him.

Meanwhile the giant's daughter was waiting and waiting for him to come back. And she went up into a tree to watch for him. The gardener's daughter, going to draw water in the well, saw the shadow of the lady in the water and thought it was herself, and said: 'If I'm so bonny, if I'm so brave, why do you send me to draw water?' So she threw down her pail and went to see if she could wed the sleeping stranger. And she went to the hen-wife, who taught her an unspelling charm which would keep Nix Nought Nothing awake as long as the gardener's daughter liked. So she went up to the castle and sang her charm and Nix Nought Nothing was wakened for a while and they promised to wed him to the gardener's daughter. Meanwhile the gardener went down to draw water from the well and saw the shadow of the lady in the water. So he looked up and found her, and he brought the lady from the tree, and led her into his house. And he told her that a stranger was to marry his daughter, and took her up to the castle and showed her the man: and it was Nix Nought Nothing asleep in a chair. And she saw him, and she cried to him: 'Waken, waken, and speak to me!' But he would not waken, and soon she cried: 'I cleaned the stable, I laved the lake, and I clomb the tree, And all for the love of thee, And thou wilt not waken and speak to me.'

The king and queen heard this, and came to the bonny young lady, and she said: 'I cannot get Nix

Nought Nothing to speak to me, for all that I can do.'

Then were they greatly astonished when she spoke of Nix Nought Nothing, and asked where he was, and she said: 'He that sits there in that chair.' Then they ran to him and kissed him and called him their own dear son; so they called for the gardener's daughter and made her sing her charm, and he wakened, and told them all that the giant's daughter had done for him, and of all her kindness. Then they took her in their arms and kissed her, and said she should now be their daughter, for their son should marry her. But as for the hen-wife, she was put to death. And they lived happy all their days.

Jack Hannaford

THERE was an old soldier who had been long in the wars-so long, that he was quite out-at-elbows, and did not know where to go to find a living. So he walked up moors, down glens, till at last he came to a farm, from which the good man had gone away to market. The wife of the farmer was a very foolish woman, who had been a widow when he married her; the farmer was foolish enough, too, and it is hard to say which of the two was the most foolish. When you've heard my tale you may decide.

Now before the farmer goes to market says he to his wife: 'Here is ten pounds all in gold, take care of it till I come home.' If the man had not been a fool he would never have given the money to his wife to keep. Well, off he went in his cart to market, and the wife said to herself: 'I will keep the ten pounds quite safe from thieves'; so she tied it up in a rag, and she put the rag up the parlour chimney.

'There,' she said, 'no thieves will ever find it now, that is quite sure.'

Jack Hannaford, the old soldier, came and rapped at the door.

'Who is there?' asked the wife.

'Jack Hannaford.'

'Where do you come from?'

'Paradise.'

'Lord a' mercy! and maybe you've seen my old man there,' alluding to her former husband.

'Yes, I have.'

'And how was he a-doing?' asked the goody.

'But middling; he cobbles old shoes, and he has nothing but cabbage for victuals.'

'Deary me!' exclaimed the old woman. 'Didn't he send a message to me?'

'Yes, he did,' replied Jack Hannaford. 'He said that he was out of leather, and his pockets were empty, so you were to send him a few shillings to buy a fresh stock of leather.'

'He shall have them, bless his poor soul!' And away went the wife to the parlour chimney, and she pulled the rag with the ten pounds in it from the parlour chimney, and she gave the whole sum to the soldier, telling him that her old man was to use as much as he wanted, and to send back the rest.

It was not long that Jack waited after receiving the money; he went off as fast as he could walk.

Presently the farmer came home and asked for his money. The wife told him that she had sent it by a soldier to her former husband in Paradise, to buy him leather for cobbling the shoes of the saints and angels of heaven. The farmer was very angry, and he swore that he had never met with such a fool as his wife. But the wife said that her husband was a greater fool for letting her have the money.

There was no time to waste words; so the farmer mounted his horse and rode off after Jack Hannaford. The old soldier heard the horse's hoofs clattering on the road behind him, so he knew it must be the farmer pursuing him. He lay down on the ground, shading his eyes with one hand, looked up into the sky, and pointed heavenwards with the other hand.

'What are you about there?' asked the farmer, pulling up.

'Lord save you!' exclaimed Jack; 'I've seen a rare sight.'

'What was that?'

'A man going straight up into the sky, as if he were walking on a road.'

'Can you see him still?'

'Yes, I can.'

'Where?'

'Get off your horse and lie down.'

'If you will hold the horse.'

Jack did so readily.

'I cannot see him,' said the farmer.

'Shade your eyes with your hand, and you'll see a man flying away from you.'

Sure enough he did so, for Jack leaped on the horse, and rode away with it. The farmer walked home without his horse.

'You are a bigger fool than I am,' said the wife, 'for I did only one foolish thing, and you have done two.'

Binnorie

ONCE upon a time there were two king's daughters who lived in a bower near the bonny mill-dams of Binnorie. And Sir William came wooing the elder and won her love, and plighted troth with glove and with ring. But after a time he looked upon the younger sister, with her cherry cheeks and golden hair, and his love went out to her till he cared no longer for the elder one. So she hated her sister for taking away Sir William's love, and day by day her hate grew and grew and she plotted and she planned how to get rid of her.

So one fine morning, fair and clear, she said to her sister, 'Let us go and see our father's boats come in at the bonny mill-stream of Binnorie.' So they went there hand in hand. And when they came to the river's bank, the younger one got upon a stone to watch for the beaching of the boats. And her sister, coming behind her, caught her round the waist and dashed her into the rushing mill-stream of Binnorie.

'O sister, sister, reach me your hand!' she cried, as she floated away, 'and you shall have half of all I've got or shall get.'

'No, sister, I'll reach you no hand of mine, for I am the heir to all your land. Shame on me if I touch her hand that has come 'twixt me and my own heart's love.'

'O sister, O sister, then reach me your glove!' she

cried, as she floated further away, 'and you shall have your William again.'

'Sink on,' cried the cruel princess, 'no hand or glove of mine you'll touch. Sweet William will be all mine when you are sunk beneath the bonny mill-stream of Binnorie.' And she turned and went home to the king's castle.

And the princess floated down the mill-stream, sometimes swimming and sometimes sinking, till she came near the mill. Now, the miller's daughter was cooking that day, and needed water for her cooking. And as she went to draw it from the stream, she saw something floating towards the mill-dam, and she called out, 'Father! father! draw your dam. There's something white-a merrymaid or a milk-white swan-coming down the stream.' So the miller hastened to the dam and stopped the heavy, cruel mill-wheels. And then they took out the princess and laid her on the bank.

Fair and beautiful she looked as she lay there. In her golden hair were pearls and precious stones; you could not see her waist for her golden girdle, and the golden fringe of her white dress came down over her lily feet. But she was drowned, drowned!

And as she lay there in her beauty a famous harper passed by the mill-dam of Binnorie, and saw her sweet pale face. And though he travelled on far away, he never forgot that face, and after many days he came

back to the bonny mill-stream of Binnorie. But then all he could find of her where they had put her to rest were her bones and her golden hair. So he made a harp out of her breast-bone and her hair, and travelled on up the hill from the mill-dam of Binnorie till he came to the castle of the king her father.

That night they were all gathered in the castle hall to hear the great harper-king and queen, their daughter and son, Sir William, and all their Court. And first the harper sang to his old harp, making them joy and be glad, or sorrow and weep, just as he liked. But while he sang, he put the harp he had made that day on a stone in the hall. And presently it began to sing by itself, low and clear, and the harper stopped and all were hushed.

And this is what the harp sung:

'O yonder sits my father, the king,
Binnorie, O Binnorie;
And yonder sits my mother, the queen;
By the bonny mill-dams o' Binnorie.

'And yonder stands my brother Hugh,
Binnorie, O Binnorie;
And by him my William, false and true;
By the bonny mill-dams o' Binnorie.'

Then they all wondered, and the harper told them how he had seen the princess lying drowned on the

bank near the bonny mill-dams o' Binnorie, and how he had afterwards made his harp out of her hair and breast-bone. Just then the harp began singing again, and this is what it sang out loud and clear:

'And there sits my sister who drowned me
By the bonny mill-dams o' Binnorie.'

And the harp snapped and broke, and never sang more.

Mouse and Mouser

THE Mouse went to visit the Cat, and
found her sitting behind the hall door,
spinning.

MOUSE

What are you doing, my lady, my lady,
What are you doing, my lady?

CAT (*sharply*)

I'm spinning old breeches, good body, good
body,
I'm spinning old breeches, good body.

MOUSE

Long may you wear them, my lady, my lady,
Long may you wear them, my lady.

CAT (*gruffly*)

I'll wear 'em and tear 'em, good body, good
body,
I'll wear 'em and tear 'em, good body.

MOUSE

I was sweeping my room, my lady, my lady,
I was sweeping my room, my lady.

CAT

The cleaner you'd be, good body, good body,
The cleaner you'd be, good body.

MOUSE

I found a silver sixpence, my lady, my lady,
I found a silver sixpence, my lady.

CAT

The richer you were, good body, good body,
The richer you were, good body.

MOUSE

I went to the market, my lady, my lady,
I went to the market, my lady.

CAT

The further you went, good body, good body,
The further you went, good body.

MOUSE

I bought me a pudding, my lady, my lady,
I bought me a pudding, my lady.

CAT (*snarling*)

The more meat you had, good body, good
body,
The more meat you had, good body.

MOUSE

I put it in the window to cool, my lady,
I put it in the window to cool.

CAT (*sharply*)

The faster you'd eat it, good body, good body,
The faster you'd eat it, good body.

MOUSE (*timidly*)

The cat came and ate it, my lady, my lady,
The cat came and ate it, my lady.

CAT (*pouncingly*)

And I'll eat you, good body, good body,
And I'll eat you, good body.

(Springs upon the mouse and kills it.)

Cap o' Rushes

WELL, there was once a very rich gentleman, and he had three daughters, and he thought he'd see how fond they were of him. So he says to the first, 'How much do you love me, my dear?'

'Why,' says she, 'as I love my life.'

'That's good,' says he.

So he says to the second, 'How much do *you* love me, my dear?'

'Why,' says she, 'better nor all the world.'

'That's good,' says he.

So he says to the third, 'How much do *you* love me, my dear?'

'Why, I love you as fresh meat loves salt,' says she.

Well, but he was angry. 'You don't love me at all,' says he, 'and in my house you stay no more.' So he drove her out there and then, and shut the door in her face.

Well, she went away on and on till she came to a fen, and there she gathered a lot of rushes and made them into a kind of a sort of a cloak with a hood, to cover her from head to foot, and to hide her fine clothes. And then she went on and on till she came to a great house.

'Do you want a maid?' says she.

'No, we don't,' said they.

'I haven't nowhere to go,' says she; 'and I ask no wages, and do any sort of work,' says she.

'Well,' said they, 'if you like to wash the pots and scrape the saucepans you may stay,' said they.

So she stayed there and washed the pots and scraped the saucepans and did all the dirty work. And because she gave no name they called her 'Cap o' Rushes'.

Well, one day there was to be a great dance a little way off, and the servants were allowed to go and look on at the grand people. Cap o' Rushes said she was too tired to go, so she stayed at home.

But when they were gone, she offed with her cap o' rushes and cleaned herself, and went to the dance. And no one there was so finely dressed as she.

Well, who should be there but her master's son, and what should he do but fall in love with her the minute he set eyes on her. He wouldn't dance with anyone else.

But before the dance was done, Cap o' Rushes slipt off, and away she went home. And when the other maids came back, she was pretending to be asleep with her cap o' rushes on.

Well, next morning they said to her, 'You did miss a sight, Cap o' Rushes!'

'What was' that?' says she.

'Why, the beautifulest lady you ever see, dressed right gay and ga'. The young master, he never took his

eyes off her.'

'Well, I should have liked to have seen her,' says Cap o' Rushes.

'Well, there's to be another dance this evening, and perhaps she'll be there.'

But, come the evening, Cap o' Rushes said she was too tired to go with them. Howsoever, when they were gone, she offed with her cap o' rushes and cleaned herself, and away she went to the dance.

The master's son had been reckoning on seeing her, and he danced with no one else, and never took his eyes off her. But, before the dance was over, she slipt off, and home she went, and when the maids came back she pretended to be asleep with her cap o' rushes on.

Next day they said to her again, 'Well, Cap o' Rushes, you should ha' been there to see the lady. There she was again, gay and ga', and the young master he never took his eyes off her.'

'Well, there,' says she, 'I should ha' liked to ha' seen her.'

'Well,' says they, 'there's a dance again this evening, and you must go with us, for she's sure to be there.'

Well, come this evening, Cap o' Rushes said she was too tired to go, and do what they would she stayed at home. But when they were gone, she offed her cap o' rushes and cleaned herself, and away she went to the dance.

The master's son was rarely glad when he saw her. He danced with none but her and never took his eyes off her. When she wouldn't tell him her name, nor where she came from, he gave her a ring and told her if he didn't see her again he should die.

Well, before the dance was over, off she slipped, and home she went, and when the maids came home she was pretending to be asleep with her cap o' rushes on.

Well, next day they says to her, 'There, Cap o' Rushes, you didn't come last night, and now you won't see the lady, for there's no more dances.'

'Well, I should have rarely liked to have seen her,' says she.

The master's son tried every way to find out where the lady was gone, but go where he might, and ask whom he might he never heard anything about her. And he got worse and worse for the love of her till 'he had to keep his bed.

'Make some gruel for the young master,' they said to the cook. 'He's dying for the love of the lady.' The cook set about making it when Cap o' Rushes came in.

'What are you a-doing of?' says she.

'I'm going to make some gruel for the young master,' says the cook, 'for he's dying for love of the lady.'

'Let me make it,' says Cap o' Rushes.

Well, the cook wouldn't at first, but at last she

said yes, and Cap o' Rushes made the gruel. And when she had made it, she slipped the ring into it on the sly before the cook took it upstairs.

The young man he drank it and then he saw the ring at the bottom.

'Send for the cook,' says he. So up she comes.

'Who made this gruel here?' says he.

'I did,' says the cook, for she was frightened.

And he looked at her.

'No, you didn't,' says he. 'Say who did it, and you shan't be harmed.'

'Well, then, 'twas Cap o' Rushes,' says she.

'Send Cap o' Rushes here,' says he.

So Cap o' Rushes came.

'Did you make my gruel?' says he.

'Yes, I did,' says she.

'Where did you get this ring?' says he.

'From him that gave it me,' says she.

'Who are you, then?' says the young man.

'I'll show you,' says she. And she offed with her cap o' rushes, and there she was in her beautiful clothes.

Well, the master's son he got well very soon, and they were to be married in a little time. It was to be a very grand wedding, and everyone was asked far and near. And Cap o' Rushes's father was asked. But she never told anybody who she was.

But before the wedding, she went to the cook, and says she:

'I want you to dress every dish without a mite o' salt.'

'That'll be rare nasty,' says the cook.

'That doesn't signify,' says she.

'Very well,' says the cook.

Well, the wedding day came, and they were married. And after they were married, all the company sat down to the dinner. When they began to eat the meat, it was so tasteless they couldn't eat it. But Cap o' Rushes's father tried first one dish and then another, and then he burst out crying.

'What is the matter?' said the master's son to him.

'Oh!' says he, 'I had a daughter. And I asked her how much she loved me. And she said. „As much as fresh meat loves salt.“ And I turned her from my door, for I thought she didn't love me. And now I see she loved me best of all. And she may be dead for aught I know.'

'No, father, here she is!' said Cap o' Rushes. And she goes up to him and puts her arms round him.

And so they were all happy ever after.

Teeny-Tiny

ONCE upon a time there was a teeny-tiny woman who lived in a teeny-tiny house in a teeny-tiny village. Now, one day this teeny-tiny woman put on her teeny-tiny bonnet, and went out of her teeny-tiny house to take a teeny-tiny walk. And when this teeny-tiny woman had gone a teeny-tiny way, she came to a teeny-tiny gate; so the teeny-tiny woman opened the teeny-tiny gate, and went into a teeny-tiny churchyard. And when this teeny-tiny woman had got into the teeny-tiny churchyard, she saw a teeny-tiny bone on a teeny-tiny grave, and the teeny-tiny woman said to her teeny-tiny self, 'This teeny-tiny bone will make me some teeny-tiny soup for my teeny-tiny supper.' So the teeny-tiny woman put the teeny-tiny bone into her teeny-tiny pocket, and went home to her teeny-tiny house.

Now, when the teeny-tiny woman got home to her teeny-tiny house, she was a teeny-tiny bit tired; so she went up her teeny-tiny stairs to her teeny-tiny bed, and put the teeny-tiny bone into a teeny-tiny cupboard. And when this teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep a teeny-tiny time, she was awakened by a teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard, which said:

'Give me my bone!'

And this teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head under the

teeny-tiny clothes and went to sleep again. And when she had been to sleep again a teeny-tiny time, the teeny-tiny voice again cried out from the teeny-tiny cupboard a teeny-tiny louder,

'Give me my bone!'

This made the teeny-tiny woman a teeny-tiny more frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head a teeny-tiny further under the teeny-tiny clothes. And when the teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep again a teeny-tiny time, the teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard said again a teeny-tiny louder,

'Give me my bone!'

And this teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny bit more frightened, but she put her teeny-tiny head out of the teeny tiny clothes, and said in her loudest teeny-tiny voice, 'TAKE IT!'