



LADY ELIZABETH was really a very nice girl. She was affectionate, and generous and distinctly clever. Lady Elizabeth was also pretty, and of course that goes a very long way; but for all that Lady Elizabeth was not happy, for the very simple reason that she was not contented.

The fact was that her father, the Earl, had lost a lot of money, and as earls go, he was poor, and the consequence was that Lady Elizabeth had to put up with a great deal that she did not like, and do a great many things that she did not care to do. She grumbled at having to perform the household duties, she grumbled at the servants, and grumbled because she had to go out and do the shopping and marketing herself.

From morning till evening she sighed for riches, and even if she woke up in the middle of the night, her thoughts turned to gold; and when thoughts continually turn to gold it is very bad for them, and is sure to make the thinker discontented and wretched.



Fresh Fish, all alive, oh!



Now it was through always having the same longing, morning, noon, and night, that a very strange and terrible thing happened to Lady Elizabeth; one of the most wonderful and awkward things that could happen to anybody.

To begin with, I must tell you that there is in the sea a shoal of magic fishes. Some people say that there were originally in the shoal ten thousand fish, other people put the number down at only seven thousand five hundred, but that really doesn't matter much; but what does matter to the story is this, that Lady Elizabeth bought one of these magic fishes in the market, and eat it that same night for her supper.

Not that she knew that the fish she had eaten was anything out of the way. In fact, nobody knew this, neither the cook, nor the fish-monger from whom it

was purchased, nor anybody else; but eat it Lady Elizabeth did and had to take the consequences.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, after supper, trying to keep her heavy eyes open, "I feel ever so sleepy."

"Better go to bed," said the Earl.

"I think I will," replied Lady Elizabeth, with a little yawn,



and giving her father a kiss, she went upstairs to her bedroom.

“Oh, dear,” she exclaimed, as she proceeded to undress herself, “what an unfortunate girl I am. Fancy an earl’s daughter having no maid to help her to bed when she is sleepy. Bah!” and here she stamped her little foot, “I wish everything were gold, that I could sell it.”

Having made this foolish remark, she was naughty enough to break the strings of her petticoat, for they had become knotted. Then she jumped into

bed, and before her pretty head had touched the white pillow she was fast asleep, beyond even the land of dreams.

She slept soundly all the night through, not waking up till the sun was shining in at her window, in all his golden glory; indeed it was a glorious day, golden, bright and beautiful!

Lady Elizabeth jumped from her bed with a song on her lips and her eyes bright with health and beauty. But of a sudden the song ceased, as she cried out in wonder and alarm, and her eyes became fixed with extraordinary astonishment. She had poured the water from the jug into the basin and as soon as she touched it with her pink fingers it had frozen hard. Frozen



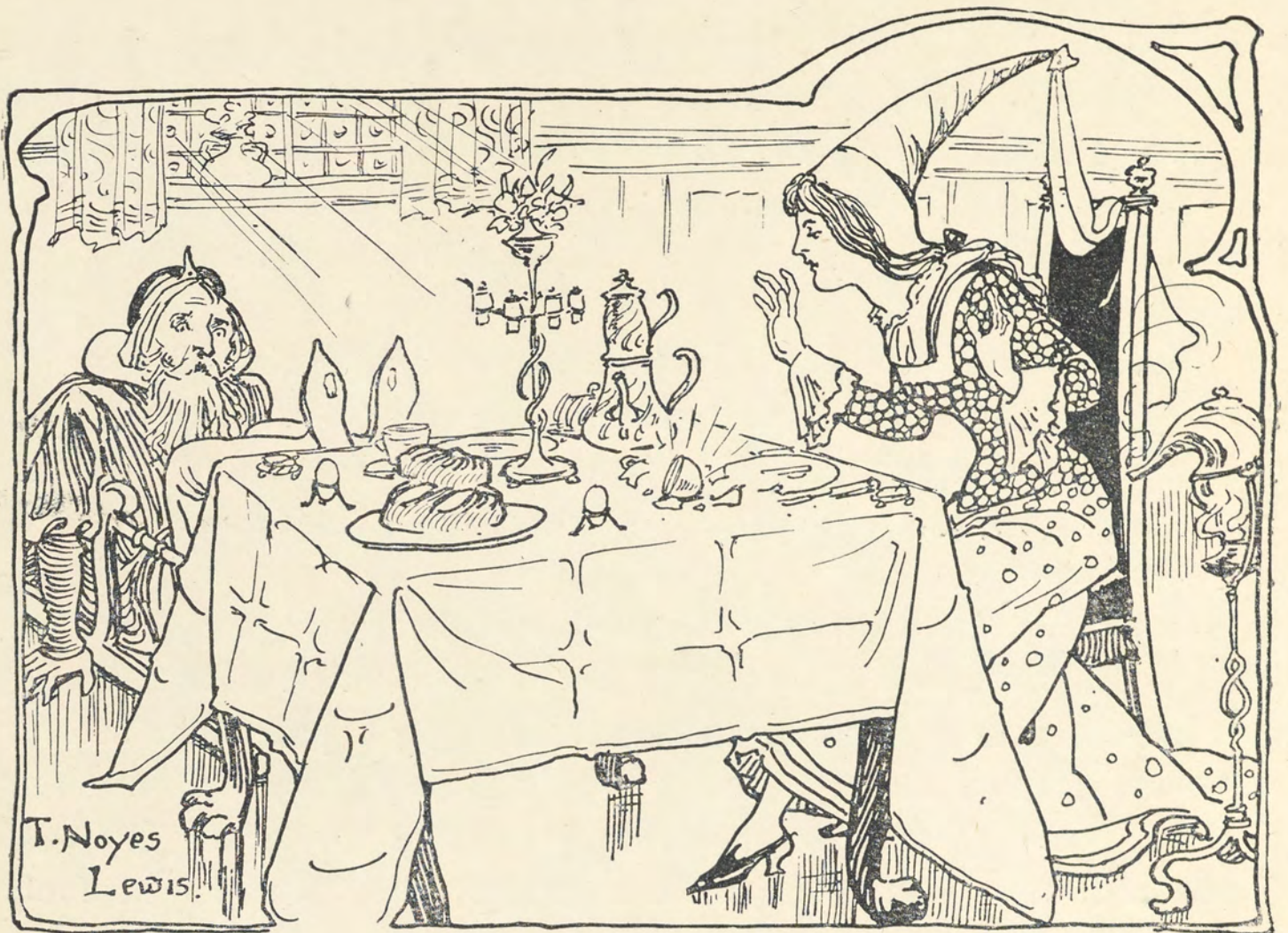
quite solid, not into ice, but into pure gold. Pure gold, worth hundreds of pounds!

It was the same in the bath, a bath both deep and wide, As soon as her little pink toe touched the water it froze into a large block of yellow gold, worth thousands upon thousands of pounds.

She was so bewildered, so excited, so delighted that she could hardly dress herself, but she managed to do so somehow, and then ran downstairs to tell her father the good news. He was a rich man now, and could have servants, and horses and carriages and everything else that he desired!

Lady Elizabeth and the Earl gloated over the gold, and the household came and stared at it in mute wonder. More water was poured into the bath and the same thing happened as before, when touched by Lady Elizabeth's fair fingers it turned into the precious metal. But wonder must give way to other feelings. The Earl's daughter began to feel hungry, very hungry in fact, for she had a good appetite and it was long past breakfast-time;





she had had nothing to eat since her supper of Magic Fish the night before.

It was a nice breakfast, coffee and rolls, fresh butter and eggs, and jams and other nice things. Lady Elizabeth said her grace, sat down, poured herself out a cup of coffee and raised it to her rosy lips.

Lady Elizabeth let the cup fall with a crash, breaking it to atoms, as she sprang to her feet with a scream, while the Earl fell off his chair in amazement. He was an elderly earl, and rather nervous, and sudden shocks upset him.

But really it was enough to upset anybody, for as soon as his daughter's lips touched the coffee it had turned into solid gold. No wonder she dropped the cup, it was so heavy.

She tried a second cup with the same result; then, with trembling fingers, she touched the loaf of bread, when it turned to gold immediately; eggs, jam, butter, even the very crumbs turned

into golden nuggets, and as Lady Elizabeth found it impossible to eat gold, she went without any breakfast whatsoever.

Her father was much concerned. Magicians were sent for from all over the country, but they could do nothing but stare with wonder and help themselves to the golden eggs to pay for their travelling expenses.

The same thing happened at luncheon, at dinner, tea and supper. Lady Elizabeth was starving. In the evening another remarkable event took place. She happened to touch the pet poodle, when it immediately became a golden dog. The Earl, at this, became more nervous than ever, and shrieked whenever his daughter came near him. The servants

shunned her, too, fearful of the consequences of touching her. Poor Elizabeth; a more unhappy girl did not go to bed that night! But she had eaten the Magic Fish and wished for gold, and her wish had been fulfilled.

The same happened the next day. Crowds of people came from far and near to see the wonder of the age, and while they wondered Lady Elizabeth was slowly starving to death.

"Oh," she cried, "if only I could be like an ordinary girl again.





I vow I would never be discontented any more. I would do my best to be cheerful and never, never grumble again."

As she made this vow there came a peal of thunder, and of a sudden the golden water, the golden bread, jam, butter, and even the eggs the magicians had taken for their travelling expenses, turned back into their natural state. And to the joy of Lady Elizabeth, her father, and the people who loved her, she once more could work, eat, and drink again.

From that day to this she was never discontented, and never once longed for the gold which was hers for so short a while.

By the way, I was nearly forgetting to say that the pet poodle did not turn into a live dog again. He remained a golden one and made an exceedingly handsome ornament for the fireplace.

*Edric Vredenburg.*

