



THE LADIES' COMPANION

At Home and Abroad.

EDITED BY MRS. LOUDON, ASSISTED BY THE MOST EMINENT WRITERS AND ARTISTS.

No. V.]

LONDON: SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1850.

{ PRICE 3d.
Stamped 4d.

THE FIRESIDE FAIRY.

HOB'S FIRST VISIT.



LITTLE Pansy Martin, very tired, sat dozing before the dying fire. She had been up a long—long while before it was light, and the clock was now striking eleven. The little thing seemed unconsciously to shiver at the sound, and then hug herself more compactly on her seat—a low stool in front of the grate.

And then, as the flame flickered, the child's pale face nodded—nodded in sleep, and the candle-end burnt low, and shadows swallowed up all about her—all but the red speck of fire that still brought out the child's thin face; a face wherein the finger-prints of care were sharp and deep.

And Pansy continued to sleep, gradually sinking to profoundest rest, when, almost falling from her seat, she was startled into wakefulness. She had thought herself in bed; whereas it might be an hour—or two—or three, before all the folks were in, and the doors locked. And so, with a patient look about her, Little Pansy trimmed the candle, threw about a handful of coals upon the fire, and again sat down to watch, or sleep, but anyway to wait.

The fire kindled up, and out flew a live coal upon the hearth. "I wonder," thought Pansy, as languidly she looked about her—"I wonder if it's a coffin or a purse?" And then the child, with childish fancy quickened by the fireside superstition, looked more earnestly. "Here it is," she said, taking the piece of coal, no bigger than a hazel-shell, in her hand, and turning it over and over—still undecided, still perplexed. Now, it seemed to her very like a purse—and she would certainly have money; and now she could make nothing better of it than a coffin, and there would be a death. Perhaps it was herself that would die—and Pansy looked no whit sadder at the thought.

Still Pansy held in her open hand the piece of coal that tinkled, tinkled with the dying fire. She could not but look at it; could not but listen to it—for now, louder and louder the sound came from it—sweeter, and sweeter, like any music—little Pansy's heart beating thick as she listened. She felt afraid, yet could not throw the coal from her. Afraid, yet pleased—more and more astonished, charmed, delighted.

There never was such music! So low and yet so very sweet; low and soft, as though nobody but herself should hear it; yet so clear and so distinct that she was sure she could count every sound. She had heard nothing

like it before; of that she was assured; and yet, only to hear it seemed to be enough to understand it. Now, she wished to dance—and now, as she looked upon the coal, which she dared not cast away, she felt strangely afraid.

Suddenly, the coal became diamond-bright, growing larger and larger, and still brighter and brighter in her hand; Pansy, in a tremor of strange happiness, intently gazing—she could not, try as she might, do otherwise—at the growing diamond, that, now large as a dove's egg, lay and glittered in her little hand, and threw a pure white light about it. In another minute, the diamond shell broke apart, and a strange little creature, shaped like a man, but not much higher than a knitting-needle, stood, then made a bow, in Pansy's hand.

He was the drollest little fellow; and while Pansy takes courage to take a good look at him, we will try and describe the new-comer. Though so very short and small, he was very old. His face was brown and wrinkled as an over-kept pippin; yet the wrinkles had smiles in all of them. His eyebrows and a little patch of beard, rounded like a bodkin's end, were iron-grey; his eyes black and melting as a fallow-deer's. He had a noble little nose, with decision holding the bridge. His mouth was small and delicate, as though moulded by the soft, gentle, melancholy things that continually flowed from it. His forehead was square and open as an ivory tablet. His hair was thin, and, when he lifted his hat, a bald place, as though marked with Time's forefinger, showed itself on the crown of his head. He was dressed, from top to toe, in the blackest black; a sort of close, thick, velvet-pile that, as he brushed it to and fro with his hand, would give out sparks, even as the mourning coat of Grimalkin the Black will give out electric sparkles in the dark. In his hand he bore what seemed at first a club of steel; and so, indeed, it was: only that the club, unlike the clubs of Ogreland, had in its shape a symbol of peace and good-fellowship; for the club, duly examined, revealed itself a poker: a thing not weightier than a corking-pin, yet in every way a well-wrought, cleanly-fashioned poker.

Pansy, holding her breath, still gazed at her visiter, as he stood in her hand. Then looked about her. What could she do with the little creature,—where put him? At once, the stranger saw the child's distress. "Sit you down, child," said he; "I warrant me, I'll find a seat for myself. Sit you down, Pansy," repeated the little man. The child sank, wonderingly, upon her stool, and her visiter hopped like a cricket from her hand, and in a second was seated at the opposite fire-side, on the edge of the fender. "It's a cold night," said the little man, and he thrust before him, and poked about him with his little steel poker; and though he only thrust and poked at air, the coals in the grate seemed to acknow-

ledge the power of the fairy metal, for they stirred themselves, and crackled, and roared, and put more heart and heat into themselves than was ever known before, in so small a coal assembly. And the little man continued to poke and stir the air, and the red shadows darted through the kitchen, and danced over the ceiling, and the coals blew little trumpets of flame at the bars, as in fealty and honour of their liege lord, throned upon the fender.

"Now we shall do," said the little man, and he let his poker gracefully fall within his arm, like the emperor of the Two Indies when he would lay by his sceptre. "Now, Pansy, we shall do."

"If you please, sir," said the timid girl. "But, kind sir, if I may be so bold—and don't be offended—how did you know my name was Pansy? I thought nobody knew me but mistress, and the lodgers, and they not much—and—"

"And St. Martin," said the visiter.

"To be sure, sir—yes," said Pansy.

"I know you, and all about you: and because you're a quiet, good, patient little girl—come, I won't have any crying, not a tear," said the little man, and he flourished his poker with a gay face, and again the fire roared jovially in the grate. "Because you're a good girl, I'm come to see you, and I shall come again and again to talk to you—and, I hope, do good to you. Much good."

"Thankee, sir," said Pansy, and she rose and bobbed a curtsey; then—in obedience to the steel wand—sank again upon her stool. "Do you indeed know me, sir? If you please"—and the poor little thing looked desolate as she spoke, and her voice moaned piteously—"if you please, sir"—and then the child, obeying the strong little heart within her, arose and fell upon her knees, then folding her hands together, said—"oh, if you please, sir, what am I, sir?"

"'Tis the question of all others I like you to ask," answered the stranger. "But you shall hear all in good time. At present you must hear a little about me: but take your seat again, and don't interrupt me. When I tell you that for more than a thousand years I have been a visiter at all sorts of firesides, you must be certain that I know a great deal. A thousand years! Why, Pansy, I remember when that piece of coal was a bit of a green tree, and had leaves upon it, and—but I am going too far into the night, for you as yet to follow me. All in good time. To talk about yourself, Pansy. I remember you a baby—a little, little baby."

"Do you indeed, sir?" cried Pansy, her tears, in spite of her, falling.

"I was seated in the matron's room—seated at the fire-side as I may be now—when they brought you in. 'Twas a cold, raw summer, and in the matron's room coals still crackled. You were, I should think, some six weeks old; a little doll of a mortal, and—as the matron said—with a look of the mother's grief upon you. Well, you had been trusted to the world in a rush-basket; with just enough about you to keep you warm; no further stock; no paper, no writing; nothing—I remember how the matron stared when she took 'em out—nothing in the basket but a bunch of half-dead heart's-ease. Whereupon, the matron said, if no better name came up, you should be called Pansy, and—and so it seems, you are;" and the little man paused, and looked thoughtfully, tenderly, at the little orphan, alone in the world,—alone to make her daily bread. "Well, Pansy, that's thirteen years ago."

"Yes, sir; they say I'm thirteen, sir," said Pansy.

"And out at service? Drudge at a lodging-house? Thumped and bumped, and bowled about—and made to keep watch, and listen for the midnight knocker. But then, Pansy, so it is with the poor children of the Saints."

"The Saints, sir," said Pansy, "who are they?"

"Why, there's your father—I mean your parish father Saint Martin, he's one of 'em. Then there's Saint Clement and Saint James, and Saint Botolph, and Saint Mary, and Saint Margaret, and Saint Catherine, and Saint Dunstan—and a hundred more—what families they have! What a crowd of boys and girls—poor little souls!

—put out here, put out there—lent on hire—made the best and the worst of. It can't be helped, I suppose. Nevertheless, much as I've seen of the world, I do feel more and more for what I call the children of the Saints. Now, suppose your father"—

Pansy looked startled.

"I say your parish father, father Saint Martin, was some day to come here, and inquire how they treated his child. Do you think father Saint Martin would be satisfied? Well, then, Pansy, as you don't seem quite to understand me—are you satisfied? Are you happy here?"

"They do sometimes stay out very late, sir," said Pansy; "but I'm used to being tired: besides, when it isn't very cold, and they leave me a little coals, I can sleep. I don't know what they'd say if they saw such a fire; and I'm sure I didn't make it."

"No, Pansy; I'll bear you witness there; but you shall have as good a fire every night you sit up, and the coals in the cellar never waste for it. What can I bring you when I come to-morrow? What most do you wish?"

"Then, sir, if I may say—I should like a big, big book; and—and"—

"And what next, Pansy?"

"And to be able to read it—that is, to read it as ladies and gentlemen read, without stopping."

"And why, little one, do you want to read?"

"Because—because"—said Pansy—"it seems to me that a book would tell me what I am, and—oh! I should so like to know."

"It's the best secret to come at, my child," said the little man, his eyes softening; "and, well as I may, I'll help you in the difficulty."

Here the street-door knocker muttered, as though stealthily.

"That's the gentleman in the second floor back," said Pansy, taking the candlestick, and looking affectionately, anxiously, at her visiter.

"I know it," said the little man. "Good night, God's blessing, like his air, surround you!"

"Oh, you'll come again," cried Pansy, with a gush of tears.

"To-morrow," cried Hob—for Hob was his name—the Fireside Fairy.

TO A FRIEND ON HER BIRTHDAY.

THE thoughts, the names, that to the Heart lie nearest,
Dwell ever *there*, and find no voice in song;
It broods above the wealth it holds the dearest
In joy, whose fulness words could only wrong.

Yet its deep blessings, fervent and unspoken,
Are not enough to consecrate *the day*
That gave Thee unto me! Some gentle token
Must mark it ere it pass upon its way;

And be a sign whereon thine eye may linger
In after days, and find it pointing yet
Upon Life's dial, with a silent finger—
To memories too tender for regret!

For there, as Thought its backward course retraces,
The shadow more than *ten degrees* removed,
Falls now on sunny, now on shady places
Yet meets no hour when *Thou* wert not beloved!

We will not chide with Time, dear friend, nor waken
A sigh for hopes that with him harshly fared;
All, all the years upon their wings have taken,
But dearer, sweeter, makes what they have spared.

Unto the chain that long hath firmly bound us,
They add some link yet brighter than the last;
They leave us ever richer than they found us,
To reckon o'er the *treasure of the Past!*



THE FIRESIDE FAIRY.

THE PRINCESS OF BABYLON AND THE CEDAR
PEACOCK.

number of lodgers accommodated in the house of Mrs. Mew, Pansy's high-bred mistress. We should as soon try to count the bees of a swarm. Mrs. Mew was the majestic widow of an officer of militia; and had, on one occasion, awed Pansy with a sight of the cocked hat, and real sword of the deceased soldier. As an officer's lady, Mrs. Mew exacted the fullest measure of respect; as an officer's lady, she ruled her innumerable boarders with the prettiest mixture of assurance and good-humour. After awhile the boldest lodger bowed and said nothing at the decisive, jocund will of Mrs. Mew. To the poor, parish child, Mrs.

HE next night Pansy waited with impatience until the ill-tempered cook and the proud housemaid had gone to bed, leaving her—as they never failed to do—to sit up to open the door. We can hardly take it upon ourselves to set down the number

Mew, in her worst tyranny, was the embodiment of all earthly cleverness. Could the Queen herself know more than Mrs. Mew?

Mrs. Huff, the cook, considered Pansy—the workhouse wench—a thing especially supplied by Saint Martin's parish for the exercise of cooks in their privileged violence. Hence, implements, varying from a pot-lid to a rolling-pin, would, at least thrice a day, fly levelled at the little wretch, whose constant address in avoiding the missile was, as Mrs. Huff would declare, enough to provoke a saint. Pansy had had the audacity to duck her head at a thrown candlestick, suffering the weapon to pass with a crash through the kitchen window, to the indignation of Mrs. Mew, and particularly to the disgust and astonishment of the erring markswoman the cook, who thereupon protested that if that imp of a girl did not leave the house—she, Mrs. Huff, the best of cooks, should and would.

Judith, the housemaid, was the daughter of a tradesman of thirty years' standing: yes, of a tradesman who had paid poors'-rates nobody knew how many years, to feed and bring up bits of things like that scrub of a girl,—and therefore, she, Judith, was never to demean herself by any act of civility towards Pansy. She, Judith, knew *her* father and mother; she had not been picked up in a basket, and christened after the parish.

And these attacks and taunts had fallen with more than usual severity upon Pansy the day after the fairy's visit. And Pansy, full of the past night and the night to come, went about her work with a smiling face, and answered the harshest and unkindest words with the music of

sweetest patience. The cook declared that "that girl had not a bit of feeling—you might as well abuse a post;" and the housemaid asked, with a toss of the head, "what could be expected from things brought up in a workhouse?"

Again and again had Pansy looked at the clock. At length, the cook and maid departed for bed, Mrs. Huff having locked the coal-cellar. There was scarcely a ray of fire in the grate; but quite enough for such an audacious creature as Pansy, who was good for nothing but to break windows, and to care nothing afterwards. But all the unkindness of the day was forgotten, and Pansy—trimmed and tidied to her best—sat, scarcely breathing on her stool, listening to the clock, whose every tick seemed like a solemn march to tell the coming of the fairy.

Suddenly, the dim, dark fire threw out jets of white flame; the coals, heaped up, roared most comfortable music; and Hob, the fairy, flourishing his steel poker, stood upon the hearth. Little Pansy, clapping her hands, sprang to her feet.

"How d'ye do, child?" asked Hob. "But why do I ask? Better and better. Not even the candlestick has frightened you. 'Twas a near miss, that. Had I not jumped astride it as it flew, and carried my brass horse through the window, the filthy thing had marked my little Pansy."

"Oh, good sir, and was it you? Well, I thought it was all my own doing—and were you in the kitchen then—and was it you that saved me?"

"I've not been far off all the day," said Hob. "And you've been a good girl—yes, a very good girl. As for the pride of Judith, that shall be duly rewarded; and Mrs. Huff, never fear it, shall have her recompense. In the meanwhile, Pansy, patience. Patience is the surest of all conjurors. Patience turns little acorns into large ships."

"How, sir?" asked Pansy. "And what is an acorn? I don't know that I ever saw an acorn?"

"Look at that, then," said the fairy, and in a trice he threw up an acorn into Pansy's hand.

"How pretty!" said Pansy, and she never had seen an acorn. "A ship in this!"

"Just as in you, a little simple child, there is a noble, beautiful, excellent woman, with patience and wisdom to grow and shape you. But then there must be no conceit—no folly to spoil you. Your affections must not be trimmed and fashioned to seem what they were never intended to be; you must not depart from what is natural, to make yourself appear a wonder. You must leave your heart in the hands of Heaven, and not try to make a mere thing of it for the astonishment of the world. I've known a young, beautiful thing trimmed and shaped into nothing better than a lovely monster. Do you understand me, Pansy?"

"A little, sir—not all," replied the child, and the dawn of mind seemed breaking through her looks.

"Well, then, Pansy, I'll try and make my meaning better known by a little story."

"Thank you, sir," cried Pansy; and the child, with a sweet seriousness deepening her face, listened.

"Once upon a time," said Hob, with a sparkle of the eye at the musical old words—words that, like silver bells, have rung millions of little hearts to earnest, solemn worship of the strange and beautiful—"once upon a time, there was a Princess of Babylon. Now this Princess was so lovely that, when a child, the people would, on certain festivals, crowd to the gardens of the palace only to behold her. It was thought a long holiday, only for one moment to look upon her. And the Child-Princess grew up, and as she grew, she became still more and more beautiful; and she was worshipped with devotion deeper and deeper. And as the Princess ripened towards womanhood, her increasing beauty became a trouble to the wise men and counsellors of the king her father. 'Our Princess is of such surpassing beauty,' they would say, 'there is no prince, or lord of the earth, worthy to be her husband. Alas! that our Princess should be so perfect that no man may hope to wed her!'—A sad condition for a Princess, was it not, Pansy?"

Pansy coloured, but could find no answer. The fairy Hob, with a smile, continued.

"But, as time passed, the Princess promised to make less and less the difficulty of the wise men, the counsellors of her father. For the poor Princess had suffered the evil of greatness, and had been worshipped out of flesh and blood, into an idol of herself. You may think it sad, child, in your hours of drudgery, sad and hard to rise in cutting winter mornings, and in bitter cold to do your work; to clean and scrub, and feel the frost biting your fingers' ends; to have harsh, screaming words early and late, and scarcely ever to look upon a face that meets you with a smile. Nevertheless, creeping from your garret, shuddering at the winter air, and doomed to drudge under sharpest tongues, you are happier than was this poor Princess of Babylon. Better sometimes is it for a human creature to sit among the ashes than to be lifted to a throne; for this poor Princess, feeding upon the worship that was every day offered to her, believed she was no longer a creature of this world; and so, in the folly of her illusion, she thought, the more she took upon herself, the more she showed her greatness. There was nothing so rich, which by wastefully destroying it, she would not show her contempt of. She would, in the fury of her conceit, throw golden coin to the fish in the river. Fish she fed upon, she would say, should taste of gold. She would have all kinds of birds caught, and collars of precious stones, with her name cut in them, hung about their necks; then the birds set free again, that they might carry the glory of her name to all the ends of the earth. And doing these things, the Princess of Babylon came to full womanhood. And, truly, there was no king, no prince, who sought her for his wife; for though all men wondered at her marvellous beauty, all men feared her—her vanity had made her loveliness so terrible.

"Now, in the royal gardens there was a glorious cedar. No man knew the age of that mighty tree. Story ran that it was as old as the world, its roots twisting deep about the heart of the earth; the heart, whose first pantings had beat under the twig cedar. That tree was solemn as a temple. Thousands and thousands of years had died and been buried beneath its sanctifying boughs. The silver wings of angels had glanced adown its everlasting green, and been folded below its branches. Poor was the heart that did not swell with natural worship at that tree—so calm, so solemn, so religious in its shadow and mightiness."

"Can a tree be so beautiful?" asked Pansy, the fairy pausing. "I should like to see such a tree," and the child's eyes glistened with a tender devotion. "I feel that I could love such a tree—love it almost as if it was a living thing."

"It is a living thing," said Hob. "There is a spirit in every tree, a spirit that looks and speaks, if you will but teach your eyes and ears to see and listen to it. And this cedar looked like a guardian genius of the gardens, and low and solemn were its sometime sighs. Well, the poor beautiful Princess had no eyes, no heart for the cedar. To her, it was ugly and monstrous as it grew—growing after its own heart. The Princess resolved that the cedar should be cut, dwarfed and fashioned into a certain shape. No sooner was her will made known than sorrow possessed all Babylon. The wise men and counsellors of the king besought him to check the fury of the Princess. The cedar was a sacred tree; some grievous judgment would follow its profanation. The people rose and clamoured; come what might, the cedar should remain sacred!

"Now this contention of the people was a new pleasure to the Princess. It gave zest to her desire—it made conquest delicious. She would work her will with the cedar, even were she determined to consume it with fire, and scatter abroad its ashes. The king, her father, wept and prayed; but the selfish, beautiful Princess, who thought nature never comely in her own attire, would have her way with the cedar.

"Well, certain artists were commanded to the task.

Mourning was upon Babylon ; for ruin was at work amid the sacred branches of the mighty cedar. The Princess rejoiced in herself, and day after day, saw the tree cut and trimmed, and fashioned ; and in a month the tree that, for thousands of years, had been a growing and still growing wonder, was now debased, degraded, outraged, violated. The solemn cedar was become of the shape of a Peacock ; and the foolish and beautiful Princess laughed and clapped her hands in the folly and wickedness of her triumph.

"Short hour of rejoicing! Miserable victory! Most blighting conquest! Who shall profane nature, and escape the retribution?"

"The first night that saw the change complete—the first night the melancholy stars wept on the outraged tree—the first night the winds murmured among its boughs of mockery—the Princess gave a feast, and, in the madness of a revel, thought to hush reproach. How thousands danced around the Cedar Peacock—the work of the Princess! How they praised the majestic port of its neck and head—how they lauded the interminable sweep of its mighty tail! Never before had human art so beautified and exalted nature! Thus cried the slaves of the Princess; but there was mourning for the fall of the cedar in every house in Babylon.

"The revel ended, and there was silence in the palace. Suddenly, as from the bowels of the night, there issued a scream, at which the very walls seemed to shudder! Again and again that scream—a peacock note of ten thousand thousand times the power of peacock might. A scream that seemed to tear earth and sky with its rending harshness.

"All rushed from the palace, when, behold, the Cedar Peacock had flown from its root—flown close to the chamber window of the Princess. Her wickedness had given a voice—a crying and appalling voice—to the profanation. She had outraged nature, and nature clamoured against her!

"Unhappy Princess! She travelled from Babylon—the Cedar Peacock flew with her! It was not in the power of steel or fire to destroy that still tormenting bird. Wherever the Princess lay—on highest mountain or in deepest vale—there, every night, roosted the Cedar Peacock. There the Peacock, to its open-eyed victim, screamed and screamed.

"The Princess travelled all over the earth, and still with her flew the Cedar Peacock. She returned to Babylon to die; and with her returned the Cedar Peacock.

"In a few, few years, the Princess was become a withered, haggard woman. It seemed that every scream of the Cedar Peacock jagged a wrinkle in her cheek. The Princess died; and from that hour the Cedar perished.

"Who shall profane nature, and escape the retribution? Who?"

But here a lodger knocked at the door, and the Fireside Fairy vanished.

THE CARRIER PIGEON.

SPEED, speed upon thy way!
I send thee on a gentle errand,—fly,
And work my bidding ere the parting ray
Fades from the western sky.

The summer woods are dark,
And murmur lovingly, yet pause not thou
That bearest tokens onwards to thine ark,
More sure than leaf or bough!

In sunshine bathe thy breast,
Stay not within the swift and glancing rill
To dip thy wing; for thee a sweeter rest
Is waiting,—onward still!

Forth from the casement—there
She leans to gaze upon the sky; and now
The evening light lies golden on her hair,
Lies warm on cheek and brow.

She looks unto the west,—
It is for thee she watches: thou wilt be
Soon by her hand, her gentle hand, carest,—
How softly, tenderly!

But first beneath thy wing
It trembles, while she seeks my letter; well
She knows, ere yet she frees the silken string,
All that it hath to tell!

And yet the heart would fain
Hear what it best hath loved repeated oft;
It falls and rises, beating with the strain,
In measured cadence soft.

Like childhood's ear that drinks
Some oft-told story, some remembered rhyme,
It knows and greets each coming word, yet thinks
Them sweeter every time.

Ah! would that to *her* heart
She chanced but once to press the folded line,
Then all the warmth to sudden life would start
I breathed on it from mine!

The love, the tenderness,
That found in words no kindred language, *there*
Would seek a fond interpreter to guess
All they may ne'er declare.

I do but stay thy flight,—
Speed on thy way! The summer Heavens are wide,
Yet through their broad and untracked fields of light
Thou wilt not need a guide.

My thoughts before thee fly,—
Thou needest but to follow where they lead;
They have *one* way—ah, would that with thee, I
Might also follow!—Speed!

THE ADVENTURES OF CARLO FRANCONI,

AN ITALIAN PEASANT. RELATED BY HIMSELF.

Translated by Mrs. JAMES WHITTLE, late Miss CATHERINE TAYLOR.

(Continued from page 89.)



OUR way lay through France; and the kind-hearted peasantry, who were then busied in the vintage, often invited us to join their noon-day meal. It was a lovely autumn, and as yet we had experienced no severe weather; an occasional storm drove us to seek shelter beneath some shed, or wide spreading tree, but we were too well inured to a mountain life to fear what rain or wind could do to us. At length we reached Boulogne, and by this time our little stock of money enabled us boldly to take our passage in a vessel that was sailing for London. Poor Nanina was terrified when she saw the steam-boat, and was told that in it she would sail away on to the wide sea. I comforted her as best I could, hiding my own fears that I might not add to hers. We had a fine passage, and about noon entered the Thames. The sight of the numberless vessels that crowded the noble river filled us with astonishment, and Nanina's exclamations of natural and unfeigned delight interested many of the passengers for us. One young lady came to us, and sitting down by Nanina began to speak to her; but, alas! not one word could we understand; we could only shake our heads in reply, when much to our surprise she addressed us in our own beloved language, asking where we came from, and what we were going to do. Nanina simply replied, that we were come from Campiano to London, to make our fortune; at which the young lady smiled. We told her that we were going to see a friend of our father's, who lived in London, and who would, we were



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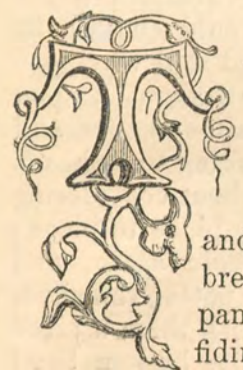
No. IX.]

LONDON: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1850.

{ PRICE 3d.
Stamped 4d.

THE FIRESIDE FAIRY.

THE ROBIN—THE CAT—AND THE CHINA BOWL.



AP, tap-tap, tap."

Pansy looked up from her work, and smiled and nodded at the sound. There was her old familiar morning visiter on the window-sill. It was hardly light, and yet Pansy could make out the bright breast of the Robin close at the window-pane: whilst the bold little fellow, confiding in the love he had found, again and again pecked impatiently at the glass, and looked—with his black bead-like eye—to and fro, as though asking where were the crumbs. "In a minute, Robin—in a minute," said Pansy, "I can't be stopt, you know, at my work—in a minute;" and then the child tript hastily to the cupboard, and returned with some bread. "I don't know what Mrs. Huff would say, if she knew I encouraged you," said Pansy playfully; and she lifted the window, and spread the crumbs for the bird that scarcely moved from the hand that relieved it. "There, then; and dear me—poor little heart!—how the wind cuts! and how it seems to make the most of its feathers to keep itself warm! There, now; make haste and eat your breakfast before cook or that proud thing Susan comes down." So saying, Pansy returned to her work at the hearth, polishing the fender with even affectionate care, for there it was that the Fairy sat, there it was that Hob wielded his magic wand—his elfin poker. And so, singing with a sweet, low voice, and even at early morning, wishing it was night, Pansy worked away, in her employment, forgetting Master Robin.

Robin, however, took care of himself. He picked up his crumbs as though he had little time to lose; then, with the prettiest impudence, flew into the kitchen, and hopped and hopped about the floor.

Pansy, pausing in her work, looked round, and saw burning under the dresser two balls of yellow fire. Instantly, she knew the danger of Robin; but before she could rise to her feet, Jack, like a tiger—and Jack was coloured and barred not much unlike that dreadful animal—Jack the cat sprang forth at the visiter. Pansy screamed in time, and Robin flew upon the table. The cat leapt

after him—Robin flew to the dresser—there was Jack as soon as the bird—Robin took wing among basins, plates, and dishes, the cat pursuing the bird, and Pansy pursuing to seize the cat. She had just grasped the ferocious Jack, when she stumbled, and—how the calamity happened she could scarcely tell, she was so appalled—so terrified—and down came with a crash—Mrs. Mew's best and brightest china bowl!

To the eyes of the workhouse girl the world was instantly clothed in thickest darkness; at her feet where lay the bowl, in twenty pieces—there were all the hopes of life shivered to atoms. Still, however, grasping the cat, she dropt the creature outside the kitchen door, shut it, and then sank upon a seat, and with all her heart and soul wept bitterly.

What would become of her? What should become of her? That bowl had been given to Captain Mew by the "King of Indy." She had heard, ay, twenty times, Mrs. Mew say as much. That bowl was the treasure of Mrs. Mew's life: the one especial thing, in which her widowed heart delighted. And she, the wicked workhouse drudge, had broken the bowl. They would, no doubt, send her to prison; whip her; chain her. Could they hang her?

Who could have left the bowl there? It had been used for the birthnight of a favourite boarder; but how was it that Mrs. Mew herself, as was her custom, had not returned it to her closet before she slept? It was plain that ill-luck had doomed her, the miserable Pansy, to hopeless ruin. But no; it served her right. Had she not opened the window to that odious bird, the bowl would have been safe and sound.

And at this minute, Robin Redbreast—recovered in a trice from his alarm—perched on the top of the clock, sang his merriest and loudest. Poor Pansy cried anew at the song; it somehow seemed to her so wicked and unfeeling. "It's all very well," sobbed Pansy, "but you little know what I shall suffer for you. Go away with you, go. They may kill me, and little you'll care." With this, Pansy threw up the window still higher, when Robin, understanding and feeling the invitation, finished his cadence with a bold flourish, as though mocking the misfortune he had brought upon his benefactress, and took his careless flight.

And now he was gone, the silence seemed to Pansy still more dreadful. Hush! It was Mrs. Huff's foot—

no, the housemaid's—no ; all was still ;—as yet nobody was stirring. Hereupon, Pansy, her face streaming with tears, dropt upon her knees, and tried to begin to gather up the pieces of the broken china.

A queen may have wept when her crown has been shivered ;—but, not even majesty in all its awfulness of sorrow could for the time drink a bitterer draught of misery—could feel a sharper point of wretchedness than that which chilled the heart of Pansy—than that which entered the bosom of the poor parish girl. What misery, as, piece by piece, she picked up the ruin—mandarins and ladies, and trees, and birds, and bridges, and pagodas, all flawed and desolate and broken.

Pansy had gathered in her lap all the pieces, as she heard the foot of the imperious housemaid descending the kitchen stairs. Without a thought, the child, in her terror, placed the fragments in a dresser drawer, and with her face burning, and her heart beating, she endeavoured to proceed with her work. Her looks were not unregarded by Susan. "What's the matter now? In your airs again! Well, I'm sure: why they should bring things like you from the workhouse, only to be in the way of respectable people, of people as have paid poor-rates, I can't tell. No more good than a day-old kitten about the house, and that's what I've told missus again and again. Was there ever such an aggravating cretur!" and Susan rose in indignation at the silence of her trembling victim.

What a long, weary day was it for Pansy! How her heart sank as the cook or maid approached the dresser drawer! How she became hot and cold with every other word of Mrs. Mew,—the very next word to be uttered, being, as she feared, the word—"bowl."

And then the Robin. As if to add to her misery, as if to scoff her suffering, the Robin haunted the house; now hopping on the window-sill; now perching on the rails. And then Jack, the cat, would steal in and about the kitchen, and glare up in the face of Pansy, and rub himself against her as if he knew of the hidden bits of china—as if he were perfectly aware of her hypocrisy, and at the same time played with it and enjoyed it.

But time—let pain and sorrow bless it—time flies, let it bear what weight it may, and at length Mrs. Huff the cook and the sour housemaid departed for their beds, and Pansy—what a blessing—was left alone with a dying fire, and no coals in the scuttle, and the cellar locked,—left alone to sit up for a lodger: a lodger of some one of the many chambers ever being absent.

It was strange, but Pansy felt lightened—almost happy. The Fairy would come—she was sure he would—and would advise and comfort her! With this thought, Pansy moved to the drawer that held the broken bowl. And she sighed, and—she could not help it—her heart fell again as she looked at the pieces. These she brought to the table; and in the very idleness of melancholy, sought to fit piece with piece. She would almost replace every fragment, giving to the bowl its former shape; and then, as though she felt the painful folly of the task, let all the fragments fall again.

For the third time she had done this—for the third time she had turned from the table, and, with her hands in her lap, was watching the dull, black, silent fire—when small white flames leapt up in the grate, dancing and murmuring, and the heart of the fire glowed and throbbled again! Pansy looked for the Fairy: she knew he must be come: no: he was not on his fender seat—not on the hearth. She turned round; and there, upon the table, amid the broken china, stood the mighty little Hob, waving and flourishing his glancing poker. Pansy could not speak for happiness.

"Well," said Hob, dropping himself in a piece of the broken bowl, that served him excellently well for a couch,—“well, this is a pretty business. A very pretty ruin!” and Hob tinkled the steel poker against two or three of the fragments. “Not a crack—a flaw to be got over as anybody's work: an accident committed at no time

whatever by nobody—but downright, undisguised ruin—open destruction.”

“Indeed, sir, I couldn't help it,” cried Pansy, “the cat would have killed”—

“I know all about it. Jack would have eaten up Robin, and you threw yourself between them. So doing, you threw down your mistress's treasure. You strove for mercy, and you brought upon yourself mischief. You took the part of the weak, and you, in your turn, will suffer from the strong.”

Pansy wept and shook her head. She could only say—“I couldn't help it.”

“I am sure you couldn't,” cried Hob; “and I shouldn't care for you as I do, if I thought you could help any such matter. If you could see that tiger Jack carry off a poor bird in his mouth, and say to yourself ‘tis no affair of mine; cats must eat something; what care I?’ if you could say this, you wouldn't want my help; and, I can tell you this, you wouldn't have it. But as the matter stands, I must get my little Pansy out of trouble. Fate herself weeps, when she scourges the merciful.”

“Sir?” said Pansy.

“Well, well, you'll understand that by-and-by. In the meantime, Mrs. Mew must have her china-bowl again; or, who knows, Captain Mew himself may not sleep quietly. Let me see—I think I have some old fairy friends in China. This bowl was made at Nankin—to be sure, I know it at a glance. Well, let us try what is to be done.”

Saying this, Hob rose and with his brilliant poker described a circle wide as the table would contain it. Then waving the potent metal, waving and still waving—the circle was filled with Chinese potters about a span high—all of them with flat yellow faces, almond eyes, and long pig-tails. These potters, first knocking their heads upon the table in reverence to Hob, set about considering the fragments of the bowl. They fitted piece to piece; and then—when the vessel seemed whole again, and Pansy's heart leapt for joy—then every potter vanished, and every two or three potters carried with them a piece of the broken china. Not a morsel of the broken bowl was visible upon the table.

“It is better,” said Hob, “that the bowl should be thus got rid of. Now there is no proof that you broke the bowl. If the pieces had remained, they would have been so many witnesses against you: but taken away, who can say that you broke the bowl? Is not this capital? Is not this the best way of getting you out of the scrape?”

Pansy shook her head.

“What! would you rather have the pieces back, and so bear all the blame? Consider, thus got rid of, the ill-tempered cook—or that upstart housemaid who scolds you so—may bear the fault. Now, with the pieces here, you only will suffer.” Pansy was sad and silent. “Understand, the broken bowl found, you will be constantly abused, and badly beaten. What say you now?”

“I would rather, if you please, sir,” said Pansy, “have the pieces—if they can't be mended—have the pieces as they were.”

“That is now impossible,” answered Hob with a benevolent smile. “See!”

At the word, little Chinese stood upon the table with a bowl upon their shoulders. This bowl they carefully set down. Pansy's eyes brightened, then again were clouded. To be sure, there was the bowl—the very size of the other. But the bowl was plain—unspotted, unpainted, white. No; it could never be taken for Mrs. Mew's bowl.

“All in good time,” said Hob, knowing Pansy's thoughts. “All in good time,” and the Fairy of the Poker waved his wand, whereupon the little Chinese—they were artists, china painters—prepared their colours, that seemed like softened jewels, and were ready all to paint. And in a minute a Chinese lady would step out of a palanquin upon the table. Pansy knew her at once; she had seen her face on the bowl a thousand times, and thought it so fair and beautiful,—and then, preceded by half-a-dozen lanthorns, a fat little mandarin would

descend from his chair, to sit for his portrait on the bowl, whilst Pansy clapt her hands, and blessed his round, foolish, well-known countenance. The flowers, the trees, the bridges, the pagodas, the artists painted out of their own heads; or rather hearts, as artists should paint. Thus, before the clock struck twelve, the bowl—it only had to be glazed and baked—was finished.

“Stay,” says Hob to the painters. Then he waved his poker, and Robin Redbreast—where could he come from?—the Robin that had caused the mischief stood upon the table. “Paint him—put him in somewhere,” and Robin, though it was night, sang—he was such a capital sitter—whilst his miniature was painted.

And now the bowl was duly adorned. “Place the bowl in the grate,” said Hob, and Pansy did as she was commanded. Whereupon, at a motion of the fairy, the fire curled about and covered the vessel. “To-morrow, when you come down, the bowl will be baked, and cold. It may be a little dusty—no matter; place it on the shelf, and all will be well. You have been merciful and just: merciful to the bird, and just to your fellow-servants. Mercy may for a while suffer for its goodness, and justice be persecuted; but, at some time, mercy and goodness are rewarded, kissing one another.”

The next morning it was as Hob had promised. The china bowl, like a certain sort of beauty, was brilliant and cold. Mrs. Mew, when she placed the treasure in her closet, merely remarked that she thought it grew brighter and brighter; and the next time the bowl was produced, also observed, with a sort of grave wonder, it was very odd; she had had the bowl twenty years, and had never noticed that robin in it before. There always seemed something new in the bowl; but then it was known to be the case with real china.

THE HEART'S AWAKENING.

BY MRS. NEWTON CROSLAND.

ONLY yesterday a Child,
She the little rosy maiden,
Hers the glee of laughter wild!
Now her brow with thought is laden.
From behind her eyes there gleams
Light which tells of stranger-dreams,
Faint, like summer morning breaking,
With the shadows warfare making;
It is waking—It is waking!

Gone for aye the childish pace,
Bounding, trotting at our call;
Slowlier, with a sweeping grace,
See her tiny foot-prints fall:
Silenter the babbling tongue,
When her elder friends among;
Yet her speech new music making,
And her words new meaning taking,
Now her Girlish Heart is waking!

She hath opened Nature's books,
Leaf by leaf they turn for her;
And her soul, as still she looks,
Heaveth with a gentle stir.
Stars,—that were but stars before
Shown by scientific lore,
Off such prosy fetters shaking,—
Are with spirit-lustre breaking
On the Heart that's newly waking!

She will sit in listless thrall
Gazing on a fleecy cloud;
Or upon the waterfall;
Or upon a flowery crowd;
Or on bee and butterfly;
Or on birds that climb the sky;
As she were dull earth forsaking—
Life from dream-land only taking,
Meet for Young Hearts just awaking!

There is yet another change
For the pensive little maiden:—
Now Good Angels near her range;
Be their white wings wisdom-laden!
She no longer solely looks
Into Nature's extern books,
Though she musing sits apart:
She hath found a subtler teacher,
And a more impassioned preacher,
In her Waken'd Woman's Heart!

THE ROSES OF EARTH.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF KRUMMACHER.)

EVE, the mother of mortals, walked one day, alone and sorrowful, on the desecrated soil of this sinful earth. Suddenly she espied a rose-tree laden with expanded blossoms, which, like the blush of dawn, shed a rosy light upon the green leaves around them.

“Ah!” cried she with rapture, “is it a deception? or do I indeed behold even here the lovely roses of Eden? Already do I breathe from afar their paradisaical sweetness!”

“Hail, gentle type of innocence and joy! Art thou not a silent pledge, that even among the thorns of earth Eden's happiness may bloom? Surely it is bliss even to inhale the pure fragrance of thy flowers!”

Even while she was speaking, with her joyous gaze bent upon the profusion of roses, there sprang up a light breeze which stirred the boughs of the tree; and lo! the petals of the full-blown flowers silently detached themselves and sank upon the ground. Eve exclaimed with a sigh, “Alas! ye also are children of death! I read your meaning—types of earthly joys.” . . . And in mournful silence she looked upon the fallen leaves.

Soon, however, did a gleam of joy lighten up her countenance while she spake, saying, “Still shall your blossoms, so long as they are enfolded in the bud, be unto me the types of holy innocence.”

So saying, she stooped down to gaze upon the half-closed buds, when suddenly she became aware of the thorns which grew beneath them, and her soul was sore troubled.

“Oh,” cried she, “do ye also need some defence? Do ye indeed bear within the consciousness of sin, and are these thorns the symptoms of your shame? . . . Nevertheless, I bid you welcome, beauteous children of the Spring, as an image of Heaven's bright and rosy dawn upon this thorny earth!”

EDUCATION OF WOMEN.—It seems needful that something should be said especially about the education of women. As regards their intellects they have been unkindly treated—too much flattered, too little respected. They are shut up in a world of conventionalities, and naturally believe that to be the only world. The theory of their education seems to be, that they should not be made companions to men, and some would say, they certainly are not. These critics, however, in the high imaginations they justly form of what women's society might be to men, forget, perhaps, how excellent a thing it is already. Still the criticism is not by any means wholly unjust. It appears rather as if there had been a falling off since the olden times in the education of women. A writer of modern days, arguing on the other side, has said, that though we may talk of the Latin and Greek of Lady Jane Grey and Queen Elizabeth, yet we are to consider that that was the only learning of the time, and that many a modern lady may be far better instructed, although she know nothing of Latin and Greek. Certain it is, she may know more facts, have read more books; but this does not assure us that she may not be less conversable, less companionable. Wherein does the cultivated and thoughtful man differ from the common man? In the method of his discourse. His questions upon a subject in which he is ignorant are full of interest. His talk has a groundwork of reason. This rationality must not be supposed to be dullness. Folly is dull. Now, would women be less charming, if they had more power, or at least more appreciation, of reasoning? Their flatterers tell them that their intuition is such, that they need not man's slow processes of thought. One would be very sorry to have a grave question of law that concerned one's self decided upon by intuitive judges, or a question of fact by intuitive jurymen. And so of all human things that have to be canvassed, it is better, and more amusing too, that they should be discussed according to reason. Moreover, the exercise of the reasoning faculties gives much of the pleasure which there is in solid acquirements; so that the obvious facts in life and history will hardly be acquired by those who are not in the habit of reasoning upon them. Hence it comes, that women have less interest in great topics; and less knowledge of them, than they might have.—*Friends in Council.*