

# ***Puss-cat Mew***

**by Edward Knatchbull-Hugessen, 1829-1893**

**Published: 1869**  
in »Stories for My Children«



Every child knows the sweet nursery rhyme of *Puss-cat Mew*—

*Puss-cat Mew jumped over a coal;  
In her best petticoat burnt a great hole;  
Puss-cat Mew shan't have any milk  
Till her best petticoat's mended with silk.*

But very few children, or big people either, know who Puss-cat Mew was, or what was the history upon which those lines were made. I do not know that I should ever have found it out, only that I happened to overhear the White Stable Cat talking to the Brown Kitten that lives in the cottage over the road. I was lying down on the croquet-ground bank, smoking my cigarette, and thinking of the pretty blue sky up at which I was looking, and watching the fleecy white clouds that slowly followed each other over the face of it, and wondering whether it would rain next day, or be fine and bright enough for Ned's cricket-match, when I heard soft voices talking near me. I raised myself on my elbow to listen, and soon discovered whence they came. The White Cat

had got the Brown Kitten into the arbour between the croquet-ground and the kitchen-garden, and, whilst they were watching the young robins which had just been fledged, and plainly expecting that one would hop within reach before long, they were talking over old times and old legends, and the White Cat was telling the whole story about Puss-cat Mew—which by this means I am able to tell to you.

There was, so she said, many years ago a worthy couple who had an only son, to whom they were tenderly attached. The boy grew up strong and hearty, and was withal of a clever turn of mind and a right cheerful disposition. But, somehow or other, he could never fancy his father's trade, which was that of a miller, and was seized with a great desire to see more of the world than he could do by remaining at home. His parents did not appear (so far as the White Cat knew) to have offered any great opposition to his wishes; so after the usual kissing and crying on the part of his mother, and good advice on the part of the honest old father, our young friend boldly started off on his travels.

He journeyed on merrily enough for a year or more, during which time he had many adventures, but none worth relating, until one day he came to a large and gloomy forest, in which he hoped to find shade and rest, and possibly some adventures worth telling when he got home again. The first thing, however, which met his eye was a large board nailed against a tree, with an inscription upon it. He walked up, no doubt expecting to see „Trespassers, beware!“ written up, or „Whosoever is found trespassing in these woods will be prosecuted according to law“, or some other gratifying announcement, such as usually greets the eyes of a weary traveller just as he is proposing to himself a pleasant change from the dusty highway to the soft moss of the shady wood before him.

No such words, however, greeted the eyes of our traveller. Something much more curious and unusual did he read. This was the inscription:

Within this wood do Ogres dwell,  
And Fairies here abide as well;  
Go back, go back, thou miller's son,  
Before thy journey is begun.

„Well,“ exclaimed the young man, when he had read these words, „this beats cock-fighting! How can they know here that I am a miller's son? and how could they have found out that I was coming just to this place, and so have got this board put up all ready? However, if they know as much as this, they might also have known that Joe Brown is not the chap to turn back for a trifle when he has once started. Go back, indeed! Not for Joe! None of my noble name ever yet knew what fear was, and I am quite resolved that I will never disgrace my family!“

With these brave words on his lips and noble sentiments in his heart, Joe Brown marched forward boldly into the wood, and proceeded for some considerable distance without meeting anything to annoy him in the slightest degree. The turf was soft under his feet, the trees above his head afforded the most welcome shade, and the birds poured forth their sweet melody in a manner which rejoiced his heart, and made him think that he had never heard better music in his life. At last, however, he came to a rather open space, when he saw immediately before him, some thirty or forty yards off, an old dead Oak, with two great branches, with scarce a leaf upon them, spreading out right and

left. Almost as soon as he noticed the Tree, he perceived, to his intense surprise, that it was visibly agitated, and trembled all over. Gradually, as he stood stock-still with amazement, this trembling rapidly increased, the bark of the tree appeared to become the skin of a living body, the two dead limbs became the gigantic arms of a man, a head popped up from the trunk, and an enormous Ogre stood before the astonished traveller. Stood, but only for an instant; for, brandishing a stick as big as a young tree, he took a step forward, uttering at the same moment such a tremendous roar as overpowered the singing of all the birds, and made the whole forest re-echo with the awful sound.

There was no time for Joe to think of escape, and the difficulty would have been great had he had plenty of time; but at the very moment of the giant's advance, and before the echo of his roar had died away, a low, sweet voice whispered in the wayfarer's ear, in soothing and reassuring accents, „Stand hard, Joey“; and he had scarcely time to look down and perceive that the words came from a beautifully-marked Tortoiseshell Cat before he began to find his legs stiffen, his body harden; and almost before he could say „Jack Robinson“ (which, by the way, was an expression he would probably never have thought of), he was turned into a Hawthorn-tree of apparent age and respectability, having a hollow place in its trunk, into which the Cat quietly crept and lay perfectly still.

With another roar, the Ogre made two or three strides forward, taking about ten yards in each stride, and then suddenly pulled up short, and stared around stupidly.

„I saw a Mortal,“ he growled, in a voice that made the Hawthorn-tree feel as if every berry would fall off him—„I swear I saw a Mortal, but I don't see him now! It's those bothering Fairies again—I know it is—confound them and their tricks!“

And he stamped so hard on the ground that every mole and rabbit for a mile round felt it; and, in fact, there was a paragraph in the *Mole Chronicle* next day, stating that the shock of an earthquake had been distinctly felt at that particular time on that very day.

„Spiflicate those Fairies!“ again said the Ogre in an angry tone, using the worst word he knew of, which had the great merit of being understood by nobody. „Here have I been waiting in my oak dress for hours to catch a Mortal, and spank my great grandfather if those Fairies haven't sold me again! It is really too bad that this should go on!“ And he then moved sulkily off, muttering the well-known „*Fe-fi-fo-fum*,“ which is so popular a song among Ogres.

As soon as he was well out of sight, the Tortoiseshell Cat stepped purring out of the hole in the Hawthorn-tree, and began to rub herself gently against the trunk. Joe Brown felt his bark again becoming skin, his sap blood, and his branches arms, and in a few moments was again himself. He stretched immediately, yawned and sneezed, to be sure that he was just as he had been before, and, having satisfied himself in this respect, turned to thank his friend and deliverer the Cat. But there was no Cat there. He stood transfixed with amazement. How had she disappeared? Where had she gone to? „And what the dickens was he to do?“ He uttered these last words audibly, and had scarcely done so when a voice near him exclaimed—

„Don't say *dickens*, Joe Brown; it is merely a substitute for a worse word, which your friends in this wood much object to.“

And, as he turned round to see who or what had now spoken to him, the same voice, which appeared to proceed from an old Hornbeam Pollard which stood near, chanted these words in a low but clear voice:

*„Within this forest Ogres dwell,  
And Fairies here abide as well:  
If these two races could agree,  
No chance of life, O man, for thee.  
But, though the Ogres of the wood  
Eat human flesh, and thirst for blood,  
An honest man will ever find  
The Fairies friendly to his kind.  
In vain the Ogres rage and fume,  
And form of trees in fraud assume,  
The Fairies watch by night and day  
To rob them of expected prey.  
And you, poor mortal, only must  
To fairy aid entirely trust;  
For if you on yourself rely,  
By Ogre cruelty you'll die.  
So if in danger or in doubt,  
On Fairies call to help you out,  
And, all your scrapes to pull you through,  
Call—and at once—for Puss-cat Mew.“*

„Well, I never!“ said Joe, when the voice ceased. And no more he ever had, nor any one else that I ever heard of. And there he stood for a minute, thinking what to do next. It was plainly a place in which there was plenty to be found in the way of adventures, and, of course, it was highly satisfactory to think that there would be always a friend at hand, in the shape of a Fairy, to get you out of any difficulty. On the other hand, he thought it rather beneath him to have to be turned into a tree—or anything else; for, as far as he could see, he might as well be turned next time into a thistle, or a fungus, or any other unpleasant thing, and he didn't quite like the idea. Besides, he had only the word of a voice—evidently belonging to a partisan of the Fairies—to tell him that his friends were really the stronger: and from what he had already seen it appeared to him that unless a Fairy was there in the very nick of time, an Ogre of the kind which he had seen might destroy him in a moment before help could come. He thought therefore that, after all, he was better out of the forest than in it; for although he did not desire to shun danger, he was wise enough to know that it is no proof of a brave man to run blindly into it; and he therefore determined to leave the forest, and keep round the outside till he got beyond it on his journey. He then turned round to retrace his steps, when, to his astonishment, he again heard a voice singing to him in these words—

*„Of courage we know that Joe Brown has no lack,  
Fa de jo dum, fol de rol do;  
He chose to go on when he might have gone back,  
Fa de jo dum, fol de rol lo.  
But his choice it was made when he entered the wood,*

*Fa de jo dum, fol de rol do,  
And he can't go back now—don't he wish that he could?  
Fa de jo dum, fol de rol lo.“*

„All right,“ rejoined Joe, „my name's Easy“ (which was an entire falsehood, as we know that it was „Brown“). „If I can't go back, I'll go forward.“ And on he marched with a firm step, for he thought this voice seemed to be chaffing him, and he didn't like to be chaffed by a fellow whom he couldn't even see to chaff back again! So he pushed on for a little way, and then sat down under a fir-tree, and began to eat some bread and cheese which he had brought with him.

As everything seemed perfectly quiet around him, and he experienced no interruption, he began to think that what had happened must really have been a dream, and that, after all, a bold heart and his own right arm were the best things to rely on, and that it was nonsense to suppose that any Fairy could really help him, or that any danger would occur to him from which he could not extricate himself by his own caution and courage. As this thought took full possession of his mind, he could not help finishing it aloud with the remark—

„And as to *Puss-cat Mew*, what good can it possibly be to me to call out such a name as that if I was in trouble?“

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when a low sigh reached his ears, and he plainly heard the sound of some creature running away over the dead leaves; but though he turned quickly, he could see no one.

He finished his bread and cheese, and was just thinking of lighting his pipe, when, to his great surprise, he felt a light tap on his shoulder, followed by a cuff on the side of the head, which knocked his wide-awake off, and made his ears tingle for a long time afterwards. Looking up in surprise and rage, he beheld, close to him, a most decided Ogre. Ten feet or more was he in height—with a fur-cap on his head, a grim and most forbidding countenance, very red nose, eyes bloodshot and set deep in his head, prominent teeth looking uncomfortably sharp, and a chin with a bristly beard, which had evidently not been shaved for a fortnight. Wishing to act upon the plan which he had laid down for himself, and determined not to lose heart, Joe put the best face upon the matter at once.

„Come,“ said he, „leave off, will you? None of that! Hit one of your own size!“

„Fool!“ exclaimed the Giant moodily; „a truce to your idle jesting. This is no time or place for it. You've put your foot in it nicely.“

„I don't see why,“ replied Joe. „I've a right to be here as much as any other fellow, and— Come, I say, you let me go, will you?“

For the other cut his speech short by seizing him, and, in spite of all his struggles, tied his hands and feet with a bit of whipcord which he drew out of his pocket. He then put his finger to his mouth and gave a whistle, which Joe thought was the most fearful sound he ever heard, like seventeen railway trains screeching at the same time, as they entered their tunnels. A crunching of sticks followed, as if some heavy animals were approaching, and two Ogres, who could be little less than sixteen or eighteen feet high, came running up, and touched their hats to the Ogre who had captured Joe.

„I've got one, my men,“ said this monster, who was evidently an Ogre of superior rank; „and I think he looks young and tender. Carry him up to the castle, and when I come home I'll give orders about him. I shan't want any luncheon to-day, for since I caught those school-children at the picnic the other

morning, and rather over-ate myself with the tender dears, crunch my jawbones if I haven't been off my feed."

Joe Brown now felt exceedingly uncomfortable, but had no means whatever of resisting. The servant Ogres produced a large game-bag, into which they popped the unfortunate young miller; and there he lay at the bottom of it, along with an old woman and a young girl, both of whom appeared half dead with fright. The old woman would say but little, and was evidently of no friendly disposition, although in like misfortune with the two others. But the young girl was more communicative, and said that she was a teacher in a school not far from the forest, and having joined the children in a picnic a day or two before, had been surprised by the sudden appearance of a terrible Ogre. Those of the children who bore the best characters escaped with comparative ease; the idle ones were less fortunate, and three, who had neglected to learn their collects the Sunday before, and had fidgeted notably during the whole of the sermon, were instantly devoured before the eyes of their affrighted Teacher. She had made her escape at the time, but as several of her little lambs were still missing, had ventured into the forest again that day to search for them, and had just been seized by the cruel Ogres. She added, that the old woman was a noted Witch of the neighbourhood, who had done as much harm to mankind as the Ogres, but that it was well known that Witches had no power in any forest in which Ogres and Fairies both lived. The old lady, therefore, having foolishly entered the forest in search of a particular herb of great value, with which she wished to make some magic broth, had been caught by the Ogres, and would certainly find no mercy at their hands. Joe listened with attention, and, in return, told his story to the poor School-teacher.

Thus they whiled away the time until their bearers came to a stop, and taking the game-bags off their shoulders, opened them, and let the captives out. They were in a small room paved with stones, a beam across the top of it, and rows of hooks fastened in the beam, which bore fruit by no means likely to inspire them with hope. A stout farmer, in boots and breeches, quite dead, hung by the chin from one hook, and from his appearance was evidently nearly fit for dressing. A priest hung next, with his throat cut from ear to ear, who did not seem to have been long dead; and these two were the sole occupants of the Ogre's larder.

Joe Brown began to dislike the look of things very much, especially when one of the Ogres said to the other, „Did the Prince say they was to be killed and hung up directly?“

„No, you duffer,“ replied the other; „to wait till he came home.“ And with these words the three wretched Mortals were left alone. The old Witch now began to use the most fearful language, abusing Ogres, Fairies, and even her two companions, whom she said she would tear to pieces if she had but got them out of the wood; but as she hadn't, and could do nothing where she was, they cared but little for her threats.

Presently the door opened, and one of the two servant Ogres entered, and cut the cord which bound Joe's arms and legs, at the same time driving him and his fellow-captives before him through the door. They passed along a cold damp passage till they came to a door at the end of it, on the left hand. This being opened, they found themselves in a large hall, with a big fire at one end, and a table before it, at each side of which sat an Ogre in an enormous arm-chair. At a glance Joe saw that whilst one of these Ogres was the one who had caught

him, the other was the Oak-tree Ogre from whom he had escaped in the morning.

„Ho, ho,“ laughed the latter, when he saw the captives enter. „Man’s marrow-bones and liver! this is the Mortal whom I saw this morning, and who unaccountably gave me the slip! Girls’ pettitoes! we’ve got him now, though! And, as I live, here’s the old Witch. Ha! my pet, my duckling, my tender love, don’t I long to fix my teeth in your giblets! How good they will be!“

And he leered horribly at the old woman, who thereupon burst out into a torrent of abuse:

„You bloodthirsty brute—you cannibal—you wretch—you detestable monster—you anthropophagous demon—“

But she got no further; for the Giant, who had risen as he finished his own speech, cut hers short by such a terrific kick as doubled the old Witch up like a ball, and sent her up with such force towards the roof, that striking a beam, which broke her back directly, she was as dead as mutton before she reached the ground again: the Giant’s foot, however, caught her again, and she went up once more, and then fell with a dull thud against the pavement.

„Take her away, and dress her directly,“ said the Ogre; „there is nothing so good to eat as your real Witch, but they should always be dressed the same day, or they become tough, and don’t get tender again for an age. As for these other two, as we have game already hanging in the larder, we might keep them for a day or two, only there’s no knowing what tricks those confounded Fairies might play—perhaps they’d better be killed and hung up at once; take them down, bleed the girl to death, that her flesh may be as white as possible, and cut the man’s throat in the back yard.“

The School-teacher instantly fainted, and Joe heard with very disagreeable feelings; for no one likes the prospect of being killed like a pig, and afterwards eaten by an Ogre; though it must be allowed that if the former fate happened to any of us, the latter would cause us little pain or trouble. But the reason of the Ogre’s order for his slaughter brought back to our traveller’s mind the voice and the warning which he had heard. How foolish had he been! He had trusted to his own strength and courage, and this was the result! What could he do? Was it now too late? There was certainly no time to lose; for as soon as the Ogre’s order had been given, the servants raised the unhappy School-teacher from the ground, and giving Joe a push, drove him along the passage down which they had just before passed, at the end of which was a small yard, which they had crossed on leaving the larder, and which had every appearance of being the very back yard in which his throat was to be cut. He was half-way down the passage when these thoughts came into his head, and in a voice of regret and despair he sighed forth the words, „O for my Puss-cat Mew to help me now!“

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when there came down the passage a soft breath of air from the fresh woodlands which he had so lately left; it seemed to carry with it the most delicious perfume you can imagine—so sweet, and yet not too sweet; so strong, and yet not too strong—that nothing was ever so perfectly exquisite. And with the perfume there came a sweet, soft, clear voice—

*„Faithless child of mortal race,  
Courage take, and heart of grace;  
Banish doubt, away with fear,*

*Puss-cat Mew is ever near!*"

The servant Ogres did not seem to hear the voice, at least they paid no attention to it; but the perfume was hateful to their blood-spoiled and brutalized senses.

„Ugh! what a horrible smell!“ they each exclaimed; and immediately fell down in a fainting-fit. At the same moment Joe saw the Tortoiseshell Cat standing at the end of the passage, and beckoning to him, and you may well believe that he lost no time in hurrying up to her. But he stopped when he came close, for he remembered his poor fellow-captive, and he could not bear the thoughts of leaving her to perish.

„Oh, Puss-cat Mew,“ said he, „pray save that girl too!“

The Cat drew herself up with an angry kind of purr, and made no movement; upon which Joe, being a brave fellow, and too chivalrous to neglect a lady in distress, declared that he must go back and bring the poor creature out. The Cat set up her back and looked cross, but the same low voice came floating over the yard from the free forest—

*„Fear not for the maiden left,  
Though of human aid bereft;  
Yet she Ogres need not dread,  
Saints and angels guard her head;  
Spirits of the children taught,  
And to know religion brought,  
To her rescue soon will fly,  
Nought her danger here to die.“*

This somewhat reassured Joe, but that which did so even more was to see the School-teacher rise from the place where the fainting Giants had dropped her, and follow him into the yard. A door stood open from the yard into the forest, through which the three passed, and the Teacher turned down a path to the left, which she said she somehow felt quite certain would lead her right. The Cat said not a word, but moved quietly along till the Teacher was gone, when she came up to Joe, and rubbed herself against his legs, seeming almost to smile as she looked up into his face.

„O you little darling!“ he exclaimed; „you dear, good, charming little Puss-cat Mew! there never was, and never will be, such another Cat in the world as you. How shall I ever thank you enough for getting me out of that horrible place!“

Still the Cat spoke not, probably because cats don't generally speak, except under peculiar circumstances; but then Joe thought that his circumstances were rather peculiar, and expected this Cat might perhaps make an exception in his favour. But she kept on, still without speaking, till they had gone for some distance; then, without a word, good, bad, or indifferent, she disappeared behind a large old oak-tree, near which they were passing.

Joe was terribly puzzled, for he didn't know which way to go, or what to do; and, moreover, he began to feel rather hungry, which was not surprising, as it was now getting late, and he had tasted nothing since that bread and cheese which he had just finished before his capture by the Ogre. He searched his pockets over and over again, but could only find a few crumbs, which went but a very little way towards satisfying his hunger; and he therefore sat down under



the old oak, and began to consider what was the best thing to do next. He had not sat there long, however, before a loud shout at no very great distance convinced him that his flight had been discovered, and that the Ogres were in pursuit. However, he felt no alarm this time, being quite sure that his friends would not desert him. Nor indeed did they do so, for on a second roar being heard, evidently nearer than the first, a noise inside the tree immediately followed, and a passage opened, apparently of itself, in the tree, through which Joe instantly entered. What was his surprise and joy to find within the large hollow space inside the tree a small table with a white cloth upon it, which displayed a still further attraction in the shape of a fine beefsteak, with rich yellow fat and steaming gravy, together with a foaming pot of porter by its side. At the same time came the old, friendly voice—

*„Son of Mortal, do not fear,  
Fairies will no harm allow;  
Eat thy steak and drink thy beer,  
Ogres shall not hurt thee now.“*

Joe needed no second invitation, but, sitting down at once, made as good a dinner as he had ever made in his life. Whilst he was eating, he heard the Ogres trampling through the wood, and peeping out through a hole in the oak, saw no less than seven of these monsters passing by, and heard them talking about his escape, and abusing the Fairies as the cause. Presently, however, their voices died away, and all sounds in the forest ceased. The inside of the oak was large, and, looking round, Joe perceived a comfortable bed made up in a corner.

„Well,“ said he, „this is the very thing for me!“ and without more ado he tumbled into it, and was fast asleep in a very few moments.

How long he slept I cannot say, but it was late in the evening when he laid down, and when he opened his eyes it was broad daylight. He jumped up, and rubbed his eyes two or three times before he could remember where he was, but after a while he began to recollect all that had happened, and to think that it was high time to take some steps to escape from the neighbourhood of such unpleasant people as the Ogres, from whom he had taken refuge in his present curious quarters. Accordingly, he got up, and was charmed to see that a bath stood near him, ready filled with water, of which he speedily availed himself, and, after a good wash, found himself fresh enough to be quite ready to start upon another day's adventures.

The first thought that occurred to him was how to get out of the oak. This, however, did not trouble him long, for scarcely had he laid his hand against the inside of the tree, when a door flew open for him of its own accord, and he passed out into the forest. All was quiet, and the morning sun lit up the woodland scenery with its bright rays; the birds were singing, and everything appeared as beautiful and joyous as if there were no such beings as Ogres in the world. Uncertain whether to turn to the right or the left, he got rid of the difficulty by going straight on, and, as he did so, began to wonder whether he should now be allowed to leave the forest, or be still as unable to do so as he was the day before.

As he walked along, meditating upon this point, he came suddenly upon a very little man, sitting on a faggot, and sharpening a stick with a penknife. Little indeed was his body, but his head was enormously big; his hair was red,

his nose was hooked, and he squinted fearfully. Joe didn't like the looks of him a bit, but he thought to himself that it was wrong to judge by appearances, and that, if the worst came to the worst, he could manage to get the better of such a chap as that in a fair stand-up fight. So he bowed civilly, and without more ado asked the little man if he could show him the way out of the forest.

The little man instantly jumped up, squinting more than ever, and, looking Joe straight in the face, exclaimed, in a voice so harsh and unpleasant as to increase the feeling of distrust which had already taken possession of the traveller—

„Out of the forest? Eggs and nuts! that I can, my fine fellow. Follow me, and I'll soon put you right“; and so saying, he set off at a short trot, stopping every moment to beckon Joe to follow. Joe began to do so; but scarcely had he gone a step, before a low sigh seemed to steal across his ear, like that which he had heard under the fir-tree the day before, and, being wiser by experience, he immediately came to a full stop. His companion turned round upon this, and sharply asked him what he was about?

„It strikes me,“ replied Joe, „that you are not leading me the right way out of the wood.“

„Strikes you?“ answered the little man, angrily; „what strikes you, and who strikes you, and what do you mean by it? If you know the way better than I do, you had better go first; and if not, follow me without any nonsense. Don't suppose that I'm to be humbugged; come on!“ and with these words he walked close up to Joe Brown, and taking hold of his coat with one hand, pointed with the other in the direction he had been going.

Joe still hesitated. „You see,“ he said, „this is a queer sort of place, and I've been in one bad scrape already.“

„You'll be in another in half a minute,“ said his guide, „if you're such a fool as to stand shilly-shallying here“; and without more to-do he gave Joe such a pull by the coat as nearly threw him off his balance, and made him aware that there was more strength in the little man than he had thought possible in so small a body.

„I wish I could consult Puss-cat Mew,“ he said, almost without meaning to speak; and the words were scarcely out of his mouth, when a low, angry purr was heard, and, springing in suddenly between Joe and his companion, Puss-cat Mew, without the least warning, gave the latter such a scratch down his ugly face, that the blood followed the marks of her claws immediately, and the victim roared aloud, and struck a fearful blow at the Cat. This, however, she easily avoided, and in the short battle which followed not once could the little man strike her; whilst she, darting in at every opportunity, so scratched his head and face, that he presently fled bellowing into the Wood with all possible speed, and left the astonished Joe alone with his faithful friend.

Joe now hoped that he should receive some explanation from the Cat as to what had just occurred, and some plain directions as to what course he was to pursue in order to get out of the forest; for although it was undoubtedly a fine thing to have such good friends there to save him from Ogres and other enemies, he by no means desired to spend the rest of his life in that particular place.

Puss-cat Mew, however, said never a word; and yet Joe thought she must be able to speak, because he was very sure that it was from her that the words „Stand hard, Joey,“ came when they first met. All she did, after looking up at

him in a friendly manner, and rubbing against his leg, was to trot on into the wood, and beckon with her fore-paw for him to follow, which he did without the least hesitation. They went on and on under the high trees for some little way, until, as they were slowly descending a hill where the underwood was somewhat thicker, Joe thought he heard again the distant shout of an Ogre. He pulled up short, but, as the Cat beckoned to him and seemed to frown, soon went on again, and at the bottom of the hill saw that the wood fell away gradually from an open grassy space, in the middle of which bubbled up a clear spring of water, from which a stream seemed to take its birth, and to flow merrily forward into the woods below.

Puss-cat Mew paused at the edge of the wood, where the open space began, and without entering it herself, pointed to Joe, and made signs that he should do so; which he immediately did. Hardly had he set foot within the space and trod upon the green grass, than there sprang up around him a myriad Fairy forms, like those that children see in the Christmas pantomimes, only smaller and prettier; and oh! so graceful in every movement that it was marvellous to see them. They formed a circle round the astonished Joe, and began a dance, the like of which he had never seen or heard of before, whilst at the same time they were accompanied by the sweetest possible music, which proceeded from invisible minstrels.

Joe stood entranced and delighted; this was indeed Fairyland, and to have seen such a sight and heard such sounds was really worth the dangers which he had encountered. After the dancing had continued for some little time, the Fairy forms fell back behind the fountain, in front of which Joe was standing, and ranged themselves in a semicircle, whilst one of their number, coming forward and standing under the very spray of the water as it bubbled up, sang sweetly forth the following words:

*„Seldom is a Mortal seen  
On the magic Fairy Green;  
Seldom will the Fairies rise  
Thus to dance for mortal eyes;  
Seldom may a Mortal hear  
Strains to Fairy minstrel dear.  
Mortal! since to thee kind Fate  
Gives these glades to penetrate,  
Listen with an awe profound  
Whilst I tell of foes around;  
Listen, ere thou longer stray,  
Hear my mandate—and obey.  
Wherefore didst thou come to roam  
All around the Ogres' home?  
Daring Mortal! were it not  
Plot is met by counterplot,  
Ere thou reach'dst Fairy Green  
Food for Ogres thou hadst been.  
Seven Ogres, fierce and strong,  
Terrify this forest long;  
Slaves to whom there likewise be  
Dwarfs of might—in number three.*

*Then beware, thou miller's son,  
Of these Dwarfs speak thou to none;  
Trust, alone to Fairies true  
And the faithful Puss-cat Mew.  
Thus I give thee, on our green,  
Message from the Fairy Queen!*"

Here the Fairy stopped; and Joe, who was no great poet, but of a practical turn of mind, took off his hat, as civilly as he could, and with great respect addressed her in the following words:

„If you please, ma'am, would you be kind enough to speak for once without rhyme, and tell me how I can get out of this forest?"

With a gracious smile, the Fairy instantly replied.

„Joe Brown," said she, „you must be well aware that the universal custom of Fairies all over the world, and at all times, has been to speak in verse, and to address by the general term *Mortal* the individual whom they honoured by speaking to him. But as you are a good sort of fellow, and I am directed by our Queen to do what I can for you, I have no objection to give you a little information in English prose. You must know that the seven Ogres who inhabit a castle in the middle of this wood are about the worst Ogres, as well as the greatest scamps, in the country. Old Grindbones is the chief one; and Smashman, his nephew, is every bit as bad as he: the other five are of an inferior class; but no man, woman, or child is safe within half a mile of any of them. We Fairies have done, and still do, everything that can be done, to protect the unhappy people who will keep coming into the forest; but, of course, we have other things to do, and we cannot be always bothering ourselves with these matters, which really ought to be settled by the Rural Police. What makes it much worse is the recent arrival of three Dwarfs, who have bound themselves to serve the Ogres for a certain payment, and who do their best to entice travellers to the castle of their masters. The names of these dwarfs are Juff, Jumper, and Gandleperry; and, fortunately for you, it was Jumper whom you lately met, and whose very appearance set you upon your guard. Had it been Gandleperry, I would not have answered for the consequences, for a slyer or more arrant knave doesn't exist. However, all you have now to do is, to walk quite straight forward, and on no account either scratch your left leg or turn your head round for a moment. If you do, evil may follow; if not, half a mile will bring you to the edge of the wood; when, if you stand upon your head whilst you count ten, throw up your hat in the air twice, and take off your boots and carry them in your hand, you will find yourself able to leave the forest and go where you will."

Having made this speech, which the White Cat told the Brown Kitten was supposed to be the very longest ever made by a Fairy, the pretty creature gracefully waved her hand to Joe, and in a moment the whole of the party vanished from his sight. He stood for a moment plunged in thought, and then boldly stepped forward, determined, at all hazards, to get out of the wood. Half a mile was no great distance, and he thought it would be easy enough to do as he had been told by his kind adviser. He had not gone ten yards, however, before his right leg began to itch violently, just as happens to people when they walk across the corn-fields directly after harvest. Without a thought, he stooped down, and relieved it by a violent and comfortable scratching. Then his left leg

began to itch horribly too; but just as he was going to treat it in the same manner, he remembered the Fairy's warning, and stopped himself in time. Oh! how he longed to scratch his leg! but he bravely bore it, and went on as fast as he could. He was half-way to the edge of the wood, when he heard a voice behind him, calling out—

„Joe! Joe Brown! stop a minute, will ye?“

But the warning had been so lately given, that he never turned his head and only hurried on all the faster. He was actually within twenty yards of the outside, and in another minute would have been there—and this story, for all I know, would never have been written—when, close behind him, he heard a scream, a loud scream, which startled him so as to make him forget everything he had been thinking of before. It was the voice of a woman in distress, and, to his ears, sounded as if it was certainly the voice of his own mother.

„Oh Joe, dear Joe,“ it said, in heartrending accents, „don't leave me behind, please don't. I'm caught in the brambles here, and can't get on anyhow.

Joe loved his mother dearly, and without thinking for a moment of anything else, turned round, head and all, and made for the thicket whence the sound had come. He reached it, but could see no mother, nor indeed any woman at all. What he did see, however, was more remarkable than comforting. A Dwarf was sitting upon a fallen tree, with his two thumbs one in each of his waistcoat-pockets, peering into the thicket, as if he was looking for something. Very unlike the Dwarf whom Joe had met before was this little man. He was older, had a black coat and buff waistcoat on, and his face was by no means disagreeable to look at, if there had not been a certain odd appearance about his eyes, which made Joe feel at once that he was a deep old fellow, who knew what was what as well as most people.

„Did you scream, sir?“ said Joe.

„Scream, sir?—no, sir: I did not scream,“ answered the Dwarf, with perfect politeness; „but I certainly heard a scream, sir, and a woman's scream. In fact, I was just looking for the person who did scream, sir. I think it must have been in the thicket beyond, sir, and not here. Perhaps you will aid me in my search, since we are both on the same errand?“

Joe, who smelt mischief, would have given the world to refuse, but hardly knew how to do so, and, accordingly, took a step or two towards the other thicket, into which he and the Dwarf carefully looked, but could see no woman, principally because no woman was there. For you must know that the scream had really proceeded from the little man himself, who was none other than the celebrated Dwarf Gandleperry, who had come out to entrap the unfortunate Joe, and to deliver him to the Ogres. The Dwarfs' bargain with the Ogres was that they should have the head of every other Mortal whom they brought to the Ogres—for there is nothing Dwarfs like so much as brains, and they will go any distance, and play any trick, in order to secure this delicacy.

Of course, I say, they found no woman, and heard no more screams; but the Dwarf began to talk to Joe in such a pleasant and amusing manner, that he soon lost his first feeling of mistrust, and began to think that he had found an agreeable companion. Instead of walking straight back, however, the little man bore to the left, so that they soon left the Fairy Green behind them on the right. Joe asked what was the sound of falling water which he heard; to which his companion replied, that there was a spring which rose down there, but that the ground was so wet and soft about it, that it was best to go someway round. Joe

ought to have known from this that something was wrong, since he had so recently crossed the place himself; but somehow his senses were lulled to rest, and he seemed to walk on in a kind of dream, listening to the Dwarf, and being only half awake to the reality of the scene. He was roughly awakened, however, before long; for, as they entered the thicker part of the wood, beyond the Fairy Green, two other Dwarfs suddenly sprang out of a neighbouring thicket, each armed with a thick stick, and fell upon Joe in a moment. His companion, too, ceasing from his pleasant conversation, joined in the attack, and shouted loudly at the same time—

„Well done, Juff! down with him, Jumper!“ and then, as Joe recognised in one of the new-comers the ill-looking Dwarf from whom Puss-cat Mew had before delivered him, he became suddenly aware that he had fallen into the hands of three rascals who would certainly deliver him to the Ogres if he could not escape. Joe was a strong man, and a bold, and he fought bravely; but three to one is fearful odds. He knocked one of Juff's teeth down his throat, and caught Jumper a regular stinger on his red rose; but Gandleperry evaded his blows, and struck him such a tremendous crack over the head with a life-preserver, that he sank down senseless on the ground, whilst the other two Dwarfs rained blows upon him with their sticks till they felt pretty sure they had left no breath in his body. Then they all three stood a few yards off, and burst into a roar of savage laughter.

„So much for the Fairies' pet,“ said Jumper. „It's worth all the scratches on my face to have caught this ugly brute“; and he laughed again.

„Well,“ said Gandleperry, „I thought I could manage it, and so I have. Now you two fellows had better carry him up to the castle.“

„Thank you for nothing,“ answered Juff; „do you expect us to go and carry a great lumbering carcass like that, whilst you go lounging about and amusing yourself? Not a yard will I carry him, unless you help.“

„You forget yourself strangely,“ said Gandleperry; „but I have no time for disputes. Bring the carrion up or not, as you please. I shall go on to the castle and tell Grindbones that the Mortal is caught and killed, and he will probably come and meet you, or at least send one of his servants to bring the game in.“ And with these words he quietly walked away.

„This won't do,“ said Juff to Jumper, as soon as he was gone. „I'll tell you what the old boy means to do. He'll tell his story first, and get all the credit with the old Ogre, and then, whilst we are bringing the booty in, he will get the promise of the head, and our share will be but small. Don't let us be done by old Gandleperry like this! Let us slip off and get to the castle before him, and the Ogres can send their own servants to fetch the Mortal's body.“

This proposal appeared to please Jumper, and off they both set as fast as they could go.

Poor Joe lay still enough, and no one would have given much for his life at that moment. But the Dwarfs had scarcely left the place when something so cold and refreshing touched his forehead, that it brought back his senses directly. He slowly opened his eyes, and beheld a sight the most welcome that could have met his gaze. Puss-cat Mew was leaning over him, and bathing his face and head with some mixture of so refreshing a character, that it seemed to put new life into him every moment. She looked very grave and sad, and was evidently quite alive to the danger he was in. Drawing from her apron pocket a small box, she took out of it a very little bottle, which she gave to him, and

made signs that he should drink its contents. Having done so, he found himself so much better that he was able, though with difficulty, to stand upright, and very slowly to creep along after his faithful friend, who kept beckoning and urging him along, until they came to the very selfsame oak in which he had slept the night before. Luckily it was at no great distance from the place where he had been so cruelly beaten by the three Dwarfs, for, had it been much further, he could not have struggled so far before his enemies would have overtaken him. As it was, the back door had scarcely opened to receive him before he heard the roar of the infuriated Ogres, who had come back with the Dwarfs and found their prey gone. Their shouts of rage rent the forest air, and poor Joe trembled as he lay on his bed and listened to the fearful sounds.

When he was safely in bed, Puss-cat Mew brought a pot of wonderful ointment, which she ordered him to rub carefully into every part of him that had been bruised by the blows of the Dwarfs; which he did, and experienced great relief.

For three days and three nights, however, the poor fellow remained in the oak, carefully nursed by his kind friend, and requiring nothing except that she should speak to him, which she never did, by any accident. On the fourth morning he felt so well and strong that he expressed his desire to go out, and, touching the bark as before, found himself again in the forest. His guide showed him the same way as before, and he arrived quite safely at the Fairy Green, where she again disappeared.

He boldly stepped into the open space, as he had done upon his first visit, but no Fairy forms arose around him. Perhaps they were angry at his foolish disobedience of the directions given him; but still that could hardly be the case, or why had they allowed Puss-cat Mew to help him again? And as he came near the spring, the old, soft, low voice stole gently through the air, and said to him, in friendly tones—

„Remember, Mortal, thou hast seen  
The revels of the Fairy Green;  
Hast heard the words of warning true  
From one who falsehood never knew.  
Unchanged is truth, so ponder o'er  
The same directions as before.  
Obey—and never count the cost;  
But disobey, and thou art lost!“

Joe heard with attention, and determined that, come what might, he would not be tempted again to forget the directions which he had received. He set off from the Fairy Spring, and walked briskly towards the edge of the forest. His legs both itched violently as before, but not a scratch did they get, and he arrived within a few yards of the edge without the slightest adventure of any kind. Then, suddenly, he heard a voice calling to him loudly—

„Joe, Joe,“ it said, „turn round, you rascal Joe! You coward! are you afraid of an old man? I'll fight ye for half-a-crown, Joe! Turn and come on! don't run away like a cur with his tail between his legs.“

Joe heard plainly enough, and recognised the tones of the wily Gandleperry, but was resolved to make no mistake this time; so, although the Dwarf called him all the bad names he could lay his tongue to, he kept boldly on until he

reached the edge of the forest. Then he immediately stood upon his head and counted ten, as he had been told by the Fairy. Next he threw his hat in the air, and then began to take off his boots. All this time the angry Dwarf was abusing him with all his might, but to no purpose. Off came Joe's boots; he took them in his hand, and in another moment was outside the forest. Hardly was he there when he boldly turned round, knowing that the spell was broken, and there he saw, not only Gandleperry gnashing his teeth in rage and fury, but three of the Ogres running up behind him, and showing plainly enough their fury and disappointment. But, luckily for him, the magic power which had kept him so long in the wood was even more powerful over them, and they were not able to pass the edge of the forest. They were therefore compelled to content themselves with yells and threats, which did Joe not the slightest harm, and he walked off, highly delighted at having at last been able to leave the scene of his troubles. He began to whistle a merry tune, which he had not done all the morning before, having been told, I suppose, by some wise person or another, that „you should never whistle till you are out of the wood.“

As Joe walked onwards, he cast many a thought back to his friends the Fairies, and especially to that kind and faithful Puss-cat Mew to whom, as he rightly felt, he owed everything; and he sighed heavily as he thought that perhaps he might never more see one who had become so dear to him, and in whom he had begun to take the deepest interest. His path lay over rough ground, with brakes and briars growing around on every side, for several hundred yards after he had left the forest; and it then led him suddenly into a broad track, on one side of which was a fence of tangled thorns, through which no human being could ever have forced his way; whilst on the other was a steep precipice, over which if a fellow fell, his friends would have found him in several pieces if they took the trouble to go round, and down to the bottom, to look after him. As, however, the pathway was at least a dozen yards wide, Joe thought little about these obstacles to his going right or left, and trudged steadily on.

All at once he became aware of another obstacle of a different nature. The path, at a short distance before him, sloped rapidly down to the valley below; and just where it began to do so, nearly in the middle of the path, sat an old woman in a red cloak; while, to his great astonishment, a broad—very broad—bar of iron, perfectly red-hot, stretched completely across the path right and left of her. As turning back was out of the question, Joe boldly advanced; but when he got within a couple of yards of the bar, it began to fizz and glow, and threw out such a strong heat that he stepped back a pace or two, quite unable to proceed.

„Well, Dame,“ he said, addressing the old woman, „what's the matter here? Do you keep a toll-bar? or why mayn't I pass on?“—The person he addressed had her back to him, but, turning round when he spoke, disclosed a face very much wrinkled, the nose of which was like the beak of a hawk, and the chin at least a yard and a half long.

„I am sure you are welcome to pass,“ said she; „but I have nothing to do with it. I am only here to see whether anybody burns themselves. In fact, you know, I'm not the master, but the Bar-maid.“

Joe thought she was the queerest-looking barmaid he had ever seen, and didn't quite believe her story; however, he did not say so, but went again up to the bar, with the same result. The old woman said no more, but sat still,



knitting away at a pair of stockings all the time with the greatest composure. Joe was fairly puzzled, and at last, in despair, exclaimed—

„Well, it really does seem a strange thing, that after escaping the Ogres and Dwarfs, I am to be stopped here by a bar of iron. Oh, Puss-cat Mew! can't you help me now?“

At that very moment he turned his head, and, to his great delight, perceived his friend sitting down behind him in the middle of the pathway.

„O you beauty!—you darling!“ he cried: „now I shall be all right again!“

And kneeling down, he took her in his arms, and kissed her again and again with joy and gratitude; whilst she softly purred, as if by no means displeased at the attention. But when he put her down, she no longer led the way, as she had done in the forest, but merely rubbed against his leg, and kept on purring. Joe was fairly puzzled for some time, till at last he thought he understood that she wanted to be carried; and accordingly he took her up in his arms again, and walked up to the bar. To his great surprise, as he neared it, it quietly sank into the earth, leaving a black, burnt mark where it had descended, over which he stepped, and found himself free to go down the grassy slope of the hill before him, which he now saw with astonishment would lead him right down upon the river, upon which, but a short distance off, stood his father's mill. He had hardly time, however, to remark this, when his surprise was increased tenfold. Puss-cat Mew sprang out of his arms the very moment they crossed the black line; her skin fell off, her whole appearance changed, and she stood before him the most charming young Lady he had ever seen. I cannot attempt to describe her; but let everybody that reads this story think who is the prettiest person he or she has ever seen, and Puss-cat Mew was just like her. All I do know is, that, under a gown which was quite smart enough for the occasion, she had the most magnificently embroidered petticoat you can imagine.

But this was not all that happened. The red cloak of the old woman fell off her shoulders, her head with the ugly face disappeared, and there stood in her place a grand and lovely Lady, small, but exquisitely made, and with something so noble and royal in her appearance, that Joe Brown took off his hat directly, and made a very low bow.

„Joe Brown,“ said the Lady, in a voice so sweet and yet so dignified that it filled Joe with admiration—„Joe Brown, the time is come when you may be told much which you might not know before. I am the Queen of the Fairies, and Puss-cat Mew is my favourite daughter. As you are a good young man, I am willing to bestow her hand upon you, and a better wife could no man wish; but it is necessary to tell you several things which it is most important for you to know. Owing to circumstances which I must not explain, the destiny of Fairies and of mankind is linked together in a curious way, and both of them have something akin to the mere animals. For instance, it is well known that the face of every man who comes into the world wears, when he grows up, an expression like the face of some animal—a horse, a sheep, a dog, a fox, or some other creature of the same sort. Now, in Fairies, destiny takes a different turn. We are liable to be obliged actually to take the shape of some animal during a portion of our lives; and thus it is that my daughter has appeared to you as a Cat. The only way in which she could hope permanently to resume her own shape was by marrying a Mortal, and you are the fortunate object of her choice. The bar which you have just passed, and which will rise again after you have descended the hill, prevents any one from leaving the outskirts of this forest and

descending into the valley. The Ogres cannot leave the forest; and although Fairies can of course do more than such wretches as they, yet no Fairy can pass this bar unless carried by a Mortal, except on very special occasions, and for a short time only. You could not have passed the bar without Fairy aid, nor could Puss-cat Mew have done so without you. Take her, then, Joe, and make her a good husband. Remember, however, that you obey the directions which I now give you. Once every year, on the anniversary of the day on which you are married, Puss-cat Mew must wear that garment which she now has on, her best embroidered petticoat. That would seem to you a simple thing enough, but you little know how much depends upon it. It is necessary that, for three years to come, my dear daughter should daily drink a basin of milk; at the end of that time, no rules will be necessary, and she will be quite safe, and beyond the power of evil. But if, during the three years, she omits for one day to drink her milk, and forgets to wear the petticoat on her marriage anniversary, her enemies will have power over her, and she will have to become a Cat again. And one more thing I must tell you, namely, that if during the time that she is wearing her petticoat it gets the least bit torn or burnt, no one but a Fairy can mend it, and it must be mended in this forest, and with Fairy silk. Until this is done, she will be lost to you, and you may fancy the difficulty of getting it done in a place where our enemies are so continually on the watch. Here there is no milk, so that no Fairy has a chance of drinking for three years, and thus being able to keep a Mortal shape. Puss-cat Mew, therefore, will depend upon your care and attention, and I am sure you will never repent the day on which she becomes your wife."

Joe listened with respectful attention to the words of the Fairy Queen, and faithfully promised that which was required: He didn't the least object to marry the young lady who stood blushing before him, for not only was he exceedingly grateful for all the services she had rendered him as Puss-cat Mew, but he had really become exceedingly fond of her; and this fondness was by no means diminished when he looked upon the great beauty of her present appearance. The Fairy Queen now kissed her daughter; and bidding them both farewell, disappeared from their sight; whilst Joe tenderly embraced his bride, and they descended the hill together, and made the best of their way to the old miller's house.

Joe's father and mother were delighted to see him again, and still more so with the beautiful wife whom he had brought with him. Puss-cat Mew was welcomed with the greatest tenderness, which she returned with an affection which greatly pleased the old couple. Moreover, they soon found that it was a great advantage to have a Fairy for a daughter-in-law, for she was the handiest creature imaginable, and everything she laid her hand to seemed to prosper. The mill went merrily, and money came so fast into the miller's pocket, that he was able to enlarge his house, which he made very comfortable, and to greatly increase his business.

So time rolled on, and Joe began to think himself the happiest fellow in the world—and so I dare say he was while those jolly days lasted. He never forgot the cup of milk for his wife—it was placed every morning on a little table by her bedside; and, in case of any accident, the miller had three fine cows in his meadow by the river, so that there might always be a good supply of the delicious fluid.

At last the year passed away, and the day dawned which was the first anniversary of Joe's wedding-day. Puss-cat Mew did not forget the embroidered petticoat, which had been carefully put away the year before. She took it out of the wardrobe with great care, and put it on just as it was; and very well she looked in it. They had had many consultations as to how she had better pass the day so as most surely to avoid any danger to the important garment, and at last it was determined that Puss-cat Mew should remain all day in the front room, and keep as quiet as possible. So she did, and the day passed off without any particular occurrence till quite towards the evening. Then, as it grew chilly, the fire was lighted and blazed up merrily. The old people were sitting on one side of it, Joe and his wife on the other, when suddenly a large coal, all alight, bounced from the fire and fell close to Joe's mother. They all started up, but Puss-cat Mew was quicker than any of them, and springing over the coal, caught the old lady's dress and pulled it away lest it should catch fire. Unlucky action! In so doing she either touched the coal with her own dress, or the wind of her dress in passing over it made it flare up; whatever was the cause, however, the sad result was the same; in one instant her petticoat caught light, and, although Joe extinguished it in a moment, a large and undeniable hole was burnt in it! Her face grew deadly pale at the same moment, her dress fell from her, and in the twinkling of an eye Joe and his parents saw nothing before them but a Tortoiseshell Cat, which, with a melancholy mew, vanished from their sight, whilst at the same moment a harsh and cruel voice was heard to exclaim the fatal words—

*„Puss-cat Mew jumped over a coal,  
In her best petticoat burnt a great hole;  
Puss-cat Mew shan't have any milk  
Till her best petticoat's mended with silk.“*

They all three looked round, and beheld the hateful face of Jumper, gleaming with malicious pleasure. Joe rushed out, but the Dwarf was off at the top of his speed, and there was no chance of catching him. Poor Joe Brown! He threw himself on the ground in the deepest misery, and his parents' efforts to console him were all in vain. His loved, his beautiful wife was gone—gone for ever—and probably in the power of her enemies. He felt that life without her was impossible, and his first impulse was to kill himself in the quickest way he could. However, on reflection, he remembered that this would do neither himself nor Puss-cat Mew the slightest good, and would, moreover, please her enemies more than anything else. He took a second and a better resolution, and this was to devote the rest of his life to the endeavour to recover his lost and loved one.

From what the Fairy Queen had told him, it was evident that the forest was the place in which alone this could be accomplished, and the question was whether he could manage to get the petticoat mended in the forest without being slain by the Ogres or entrapped by the crafty Dwarfs. His old father had often told him that „courage overcame difficulties“, and although both father and mother were very much averse to his leaving them again, yet when they saw that he was quite determined to do so, and remembered how much he owed to Puss-cat Mew, they could say no more; and, after tenderly embracing and blessing him, bade him farewell.

This was a very different starting from his last, when he had nothing to think of but the adventures of which he was in search, and was as light-hearted and merry as could be. Now, his heart was heavy enough, and his hopes were all set upon the recovery of his lost treasure. The petticoat was safely tied up and fastened to his waist, and with a stout oaken staff in his hand he set out for the forest.

As he walked along, however, he thought long and anxiously as to what would be the best course to pursue; for, after all, he could hardly hope to escape his enemies and succeed in recovering his wife, unless some help could be found. Whilst he was thinking, he drew nearer and nearer to the forest, until he was quite close to it; and at that moment he perceived a Fox standing at the edge of the wood, and looking steadily at him. The animal did not run away, or appear the least frightened, but, on his coming near, sat up on its hind-legs and began to talk to him at once—

„Joe Brown,“ it said, „you are come upon a dangerous business. I know your story, and am come to give you all the aid in my power; for I pity you from the bottom of my heart.“

„Thank you, Mr. Fox,“ replied poor Joe; „if you really can help me, I shall never forget your kindness.“

„Well,“ rejoined the animal, „you know that foxes are by no means fools, and I hope to show you that I am not a friend to be despised. Take these three hairs from my brush, and be careful to remember what I now tell you. These are the means by which your dearest wishes may be accomplished; but first you must place each one separately upon the palm of your left hand, and pronounce the magic word *Leeneitz*.“

Joe took the three hairs as he was told, and laying the first one upon the palm of his left hand, pronounced the word as the Fox had done, when the hair immediately turned into a bright steel dagger, sharp and strong.

„This,“ said the Fox, „is a dagger which even the tough hide of an Ogre cannot turn aside; it will stand you in good stead in the hour of need.“

Joe then tried the second hair, which, upon the magic word being spoken, changed into a snuff-box, full of such strong snuff, that, even though the lid was shut, it set Joe sneezing at once.

„Now,“ said the Fox, „this snuff makes you sneeze, it is true, but it also sends any one who smells it to sleep very shortly; and if your enemies have once taken a good pull at it, they will be quiet enough for a few hours, I'll warrant you.“

Joe then tried the third hair, which, somewhat to his surprise, became a left-hand glove.

„Do not despise it, Joe Brown,“ said the Fox; „when this glove is upon your left hand, you will be invisible. Thus you have three powerful weapons to use against your foes, although you must remember that you can only use one of them at a time; but as I notice that your oaken staff there is tipped with lead, I think you are really so well armed, that only common courage and caution are needful to give you every hope of success.“

„I thank you,“ said Joe, „from the bottom of my heart; but, oh! can you tell me where I shall be likely to find my wife—my own beloved Puss-cat Mew?“

The Fox shook his head solemnly, and replied—„That belongs to others to tell. I have performed my part, as directed by One who has a right to direct me, and I can say and do no more for you.“ With which words he darted after a hare

which was sauntering by at the moment, and was out of sight instantly. But Joe felt more cheerful after what he had heard and the gifts which he had received. He boldly entered the wood, and shaped his course towards where he supposed the Fairy Spring to be. As he went along, however, something suddenly dropped upon him from a tree and lighted on his shoulders, with its legs one on each side of his neck, while a voice at the same time exclaimed, in rough tones of exultation—

„I’ve nabbed him! I’ve nabbed him!“

In an instant Joe recognised the voice of one of the Dwarfs, and, dropping suddenly upon his knees, sent the little man flying over his head; but, not knowing how near the other Dwarfs might be, he then put on the left-hand glove as fast as he could, determined to try its powers. The Dwarf jumped up in a fury, but his face expressed blank astonishment as he looked at where Joe had been standing, and where indeed he was really standing still, but the Dwarf could not see him. It was Juff who had made this attack and been so roughly thrown on the ground, and he now exclaimed, in a voice of mingled anger and surprise—

„Why, where on earth has the fellow got to? Vile Mortal—where are you?“

Joe stood quite still, delighted to have proved the power of his glove, and the truth of the Fox.

„This must be seen to,“ said Juff, and ran growling off in a rage.

Joe could have probably slain him, as the little villain seemed to be all alone, but he was full of anxiety to reach the Fairy Spring, where he hoped to hear news of his dear one; so he thought not of pursuit, but pushed forward till he came close to the spot. He stepped sadly on to the green space. The fountain seemed no longer to sparkle so brightly and play so merrily as it had done when he first saw it. There was something mournful in its appearance, and the stream seemed to sigh as it slowly trickled away into the forest.

Joe sat down upon the ground, and fairly sobbed aloud. At last, in a sad tone of voice, he said—

„Oh, Fairies, tell me of my darling! tell me how to recover my adorable Puss-cat Mew!“

Soft and low came the voice this time, in sweet but plaintive strain, and Joe clasped his hands tightly and listened:

*„Puss-cat Mew in dungeon pines:  
Every day the Ogre grim  
On the flesh of Mortal dines,  
Boasting none can conquer him:  
Boasts he too, that villain dread,  
Shortly he will capture you,  
And will lay your bleeding head  
At the feet of Puss-cat Mew.  
Should this monster, whom we hate,  
In the forest take thy life,  
Know the solemn doom of Fate  
Puss-cat Mew must be his wife!  
Speaking only Ogre tongue,  
Fairy music all forgot,  
Doomed to nourish Ogres young—*

*Can there be more cruel lot?  
Mortal! steel thy gallant heart,  
Be thou cautious, bold, and true,  
From the forest ne'er depart  
Till thou rescue Puss-cat Mew!*

Joe jumped up with a bound, and raised his oak-staff high in the air.

„By everything I hold dear!“ he cried, „never will I turn back from this venture till I rescue my true love from so terrible a fate. Courage! I should be a recreant knave indeed if I had it not. The blood of all the Browns foams and boils in my veins. I am ready for the fray!“ and without more to say or do, he walked out of the green and marched boldly forward.

He had not gone far before he heard footsteps, and looking round, having first put on his glove, he perceived the Dwarf Juff, with two of the Ogres, talking eagerly. „Why don't he eat her?“ said the Dwarf.

„You little hop-o'-my-thumb!“ growled one of the Giants, „you can't eat a Fairy, you know, or he'd have made but a mouthful of her. But if he catches that lout of a Mortal whom she is so sweet on, he can eat him, and then he has the right to marry her. But I know one thing—I wouldn't marry such a squalling Cat for ninepence-halfpenny. The row she makes after that Joe! I wish I had him here! I'd Joe him! Wouldn't you, Mumble-chumps?“

„Yes,“ returned the other Ogre, to whom he had spoken; „yes, brother Munch'emup, I think we could show him a trick or two worth mentioning.“

„Why don't you do it, then?“ said a loud voice close to them; and Joe, with his glove on, hit Juff such a crack on the head that the little wretch rolled over like a ninepin.

„Help, oh, help me!“ he roared in agony, as Joe dealt him another blow; but the Ogres could see nobody, and therefore did nothing, whilst Juff lay there bellowing.

However, Joe, finding how well he was concealed by his glove, and being highly indignant with the Ogre Munch'emup, who had spoken so disrespectfully of Puss-cat Mew, dealt him a blow across the shins with his staff, which made him jump.

„What do you mean by kicking me, Mumble-chumps?“ asked he.

„I didn't touch you,“ answered the other, to whom Joe at the same time administered a like blow.

„But I'm not going to stand being kicked by you!“ and as Joe dealt them another blow apiece, the two monsters furiously attacked each other, each believing that his friend had assaulted him.

Joe stepped back and watched the fight with interest, until a blow from Mumble-chumps felled Munch'emup to the ground, where he lay senseless. Joe now thought that he had better play out his part in the game, so he saluted the other Ogre with a tremendous stroke on the wrist, which was nearly broken by the lead-tipped staff.

The Giant roared with fury, but could see no one to strike, and another blow on the inside of the kneecap brought him on his knees. Then Joe struck him on the head with his full force, crying out as he did so—

„Puss-cat Mew sends you this!“ and the Ogre toppled over with a groan.

To make matters safe, Joe (having taken off his glove) took his steel dagger, and put an end to the two murdering villains who lay there. As to the wretch

Juff, he begged hard for mercy, and Joe was inclined to spare him on account of his size, and would probably have done so had not the old voice at that moment sounded in his ears, less softly and sweetly than ever before—

*„Spare not the Dwarfs! for they are sent  
Down to that dungeon day by day;  
With jeers they Puss-cat Mew torment;  
Wherefore 'tis justice bids thee slay!“*

„Say you so?“ cried Joe; „then, by my grandmother's petticoat, this rascal jeers no more!“ and he raised his staff over his head.

„Oh dear, oh dear!“ yelled Juff, „I didn't do it—I didn't mean to—I wasn't there—it was somebody else.“ And he howled in abject terror; but Joe, having once invoked his grandmother's petticoat, which was the most solemn form of adjuration known among the Brown family, hesitated no longer, but dashed out the brains of the miserable Dwarf with his staff immediately.

But the mention of the garment which had caused all his troubles made Joe recollect that it was still fastened to his waist, and indeed he had found it rather inconvenient during his late exertions. Moreover, he had now fully made up his mind to attack the Ogres in their castle, but he did not see how he was likely to get the petticoat mended with Fairy silk there, and he determined to retrace his steps to the Fairy Green and there leave it. The spring appeared to bubble up rather more merrily when he stepped upon the green, but there was still a melancholy look about the place. Joe spread the garment carefully out before the spring, and, as he found the Fairies always spoke in rhyme, thought he would try his own hand at it, and accordingly spoke thus—

*„With Fairy silk this petticoat,  
They tell me, must be mended;  
And thus the girl on whom I doat  
Will find her sorrows ended.  
To get it mended therefore now  
My one incessant care is;  
So please inform me where and how,  
You dear delightful Fairies!“*

And Joe felt rather proud of himself after this first attempt at rhyming, which was duly answered by the friendly voice—

*„Leave the sacred garment here;  
Leave it, youth, and never fear.  
To the fight thyself devote,  
Leave to us the petticoat!“*

Thus reassured, Joe left the petticoat on the green, shouldered his oaken staff, and marched on. Through the wood he toiled up the gradual ascent, till, without interruption, he came very near to the castle of the Ogres.

As he came up to the gate, he heard a great noise, and having put on his glove, he quietly entered the courtyard, in which he found the two Ogres, Grindbones and Smashman, playing at bowls with petrified men's heads; whilst

their three remaining servants, whose names were Grimp, Grump, and Gruby, were in attendance, and the two Dwarfs, seated on a low stone bench, looking on. There, then, were all his enemies at once; but Joe knew that caution was necessary. When invisible, he could only use his staff, or his course might have been easier; but no two of the three gifts could be used at the same time: moreover, he mistrusted Gandleperry, whose cunning was evidently superior to that of all the rest. He therefore remained quiet, silently turning over in his mind what was the best thing to do next, when, to his disgust, Grindbones presently turned round and said aloud—

„Now, you Dwarfs, it is time for you to go and tease Puss-cat Mew. Where’s that fellow Juff? Man’s eyes and cheeks! he is never here to the time!“

With a wily leer Gandleperry replied—

„He is out after that poor fool of a Mortal, whom he will probably entice here soon; but Jumper and I are enough to tease that conceited Fairy minx. I wish our power was great enough to allow us to touch her; wouldn’t we tear her flesh for her, and make that pretty face rather different!“ And with a fearful scowl he and Jumper left the seat and entered the house.

Joe instantly perceived that this was his chance of discovering his darling. Keeping on his glove, he followed the two Dwarfs into the house, down a stone passage, till they came to a flight of stairs—at the top of which Gandleperry suddenly stopped; and exclaimed to his companion:

„Did you hear anything, Jumper? I thought I heard a step; and there’s an uncommon smell of Mortal here, too!“

„No,“ replied Jumper, „I heard nothing; and as to a smell of Mortal, I should be surprised if there wasn’t, for don’t you remember how the alderman, whom the Ogres caught yesterday, was chased up and down by the servant Ogres to make him tender? Here it was they worried him at last, and I should think the place would smell for a week.“

Gandleperry made no reply, but taking a lucifer-box from a shelf in the wall, struck a light, and, with candle in hand, descended the steps, and Jumper after him. Joe cautiously followed, and counted thirty steps, at the bottom of which they came to a low door, which Gandleperry opened by means of a key which he took from Jumper, who carried it at his belt. They all three entered, and Joe could hardly restrain his passion at the sight which met his eyes. On a low chair, in the middle of a vaulted room, lighted only by a dim lamp fixed in the wall, sat Puss-cat Mew. She seemed only the wreck of her former self. Her tortoiseshell skin was no longer bright and glossy, her eyes no longer sparkled with their old joyous, loving light; she sat with her head supported by one of her paws, and sorrow and suffering were written on her countenance. A tin can of cold water was by her side, and an untasted loaf with it.

„Now, prisoner,“ said Jumper, „how are you to-day, my minnikin Miss?“

Then Gandleperry seated himself cross-legged opposite her on the floor, put a thumb into each waistcoat-pocket, approached his face so near to her that Joe longed to attack him, and with a malicious grin, leering up into her face, thus accosted her,

„Pettikin, dear, how is she this nice, bright day? Oh, how lovely it is in the forest! Birds are singing, the sun is shining, flowers are blossoming—oh, so delightful it is! And here is poor Pussy sitting all alone in a nasty damp dungeon! Where’s her Joe now, eh? You little meek-faced beast!—you can’t get out!—no, not a bit of it! And, I say, what do you think? Here’s a bit of news for



you! Joe's caught! Oh yes, he is! Such a go! Ain't the Ogres just pleased! Joe-giblets for soup! Joe's feet and ears cold for breakfast! Roast loin of Joe for dinner! Joe and onions for the servant Ogres, and Joe's head and brains for the dear little Dwarfs! And then Puss-cat Mew will have to marry the nice, kind, handsome old Ogre that beats all his wives till their bones are broken and their flesh is tender, and then has them made into pies to take but for luncheon when he goes shooting! O you pet Puss-cat!—Miaw-aw-aw.“

And the Dwarf put out his tongue at the poor victim, and imitated the mewling of a cat. Joe was fearfully enraged, but he felt that everything depended upon his prudence, and he therefore restrained himself, and waited.

Puss-cat Mew made no answer to these taunts at first, but only sighed. As Gandleperry, however, continued, and Jumper chimed in with even coarser insults, she spoke at last in a soft voice and said,

„You do well, wretched creatures, to abuse one who is permitted for a time to be in your power, but your own hour of sorrow and misfortune may be near, and then you will remember Puss-cat Mew.“

This remark had but little effect upon the Dwarfs, and they continued to tease and revile the poor Lady for half an hour, during which time Joe stood still near the door, grinding his teeth with vexation. It was, however, fortunate for him that he had waited, for an event now occurred, than which nothing could have served him better. The crafty Gandleperry had long been dissatisfied with his position in the Ogres' castle with respect to the two other Dwarfs, whose presence deprived him of the large share of Mortal heads and brains which he desired, and who, moreover, were inclined to side together against the superiority over them which he claimed. He had therefore long determined to get rid of one or other of them upon the first opportunity, and the time seemed to him to have now arrived. When they had tormented poor Puss-cat Mew till they could think of nothing else, Gandleperry told Jumper to go before him up the stairs, and he would fasten the door; and as the latter did so, Joe saw with horror that Gandleperry drew a sharp knife from his belt, and struck his brother Dwarf a fearful blow over the shoulder into the neck. With an unearthly yell, Jumper fell to the ground; but he never yelled again, for Gandleperry jumped on him and cut his throat in a moment, as if he had been a pig! He then dragged him back into the dungeon, and making a horrible face at Puss-cat Mew, said to her—

„Here is a nice companion for you, Pettikin; pray be kind to him till I have time to fetch him away or bury him! He won't make a noise or disturb you! Ta-ta!“

And he kissed his hand to the poor creature in fearful mockery! But his triumph was short. Joe now saw the opportunity he had so long waited for, and a tremendous blow upon the head stretched Gandleperry senseless and bleeding upon the body of his murdered mate, and avenged the insults he had heaped upon the unfortunate prisoner.

Joe drew off his glove in a moment, and with a purr of joy Puss-eat Mew rushed into his arms. They had, however, no time to talk or to think of happy things. Five deadly enemies were alive, and there was no safety yet.

Puss-cat Mew told Joe that she had no power to help him now, and that he must judge and act for himself. „No one,“ she said, „would come near her dungeon again till late in the evening, when one or both of the chief Ogres, after their dinner, might probably come down to laugh at her.“

Joe could not bear to leave her with the bodies of the Dwarfs, neither could he take her up where she would be seen by the Ogres; he therefore locked the door of the dungeon, and left her at the bottom of the stairs till she should hear of him again, telling her at the same time to come up directly if she heard him call. Then, again putting on his glove, he ascended the stairs. In the dining-room, which was on the first floor, and a pleasant room enough, sat the two chief Giants, each on one side of a round table, with dishes and plates before them. Joe just peeped in, and then creeping down again, saw the three servant Ogres sitting sleepily over the fire in the servants' hall. He advanced very quietly, and, after a few moments, found that the lazy fellows were really all dozing. He therefore took off his glove, and, taking out his snuff-box, went behind the chair of one, and, opening the box, held it so immediately under his nose that its strength actually prevented his sneezing, and sent him to sleep more soundly than ever. Joe had previously stuffed his own nose quite full of the cotton-wool in which the box had been wrapped; and thus feeling secure from the effects of the snuff, he held the box under the nose of each of the servant Ogres until they were all buried in slumbers which would render them harmless for some time to come. Then Joe put on his glove again, and walked up to the dining-room, where the two chief Ogres were at dinner. They were very merry, for they were feasting off the alderman of whose fate Joe had lately heard, and who seemed to have been fat enough to have been Lord Mayor. There was a smoking haunch of alderman upon the table, to which both the Ogres seemed to have paid great attention, and they were accompanying the meal with deep draughts of some strong spirit. Joe advanced slimly to the table, and stood for a short time watching the monsters.

„Flesh and brains!“ said the elder of the two, „but this Mortal was fat and well-to-do. I wish all Mortals were as fat and juicy.“

„Yes,“ replied the other; „they would be choice morsels then, and not like that vile pedlar the other day, who was all skin and bone.“

And so ran the discourse of the creatures upon their dreadful meal, until Joe sickened with disgust. Having eaten and drunk heartily, the Ogres threw themselves back in their chairs, extended their legs, and in a few moments snored loudly, making so hideous a noise that Joe could compare it to nothing but a hundred fat hogs rolled into one, and all grunting at the same time. When he saw them thus, Joe boldly drew off his glove, and taking a full handful of the snuff in his hands, instantly flung it into the face and eyes, one after the other, of both his enemies. And so much more went into their eyes than up their noses, the effect was not to send them to sleep, but to half-blind them, and put them in a furious passion. Quick as lightning Joe had his glove on again, whilst the Giants, both jumping up at the same moment, upset the table with a tremendous crash, and roared for their servants, who, however, could not awake if they wished to, and therefore never came.

„Did you throw something at me, nephew?“ asked old Grindbones.

„Certainly not,“ replied the young Ogre.

„Then the Fairies have played us some trick! What is it? Where are they? Confound this stuff!“ said Grindbones, and he stamped violently on the floor, and roared again for Grimp, Grump, and Gruby. „Stay,“ said he; „man's marrowbones! I will know the cause of this!“ and he walked through a door which led into a room close by, whilst the younger Ogre sank back into his chair, growling to himself and, not having had so much snuff as his uncle,

being rather more disposed for sleep; and having withal drunk heavily of the spirits, he began to nod again.

But the old Ogre had gone to fetch something in which he had great trust. It was a tame Magpie, from whom nothing was invisible, and who would soon tell him if anything was wrong. He took her out of her cage, and hastened back to the room where he had left his nephew. But no Magpie was needed to tell him what was going on. As soon as Smashman began to show signs of sleep, Joe, feeling that there was no time to lose, drew off his glove, drew out his steel dagger, and, stepping speedily but quietly behind his chair, plunged the weapon up to the hilt in his throat. The Ogre gave a loud sobbing sound, half screech, half speech, and as Joe plucked out the dagger, his head fell forward and the blood gushed from a fearful wound. It was at this moment that the old Ogre entered the room from the side door by which he had left it, and saw in a moment what had happened. In an instant he rushed upon Joe with a dreadful howl, but Joe sheathed his dagger and popped on his glove just in time to escape him, and made for the door. As he rushed towards it, however, the Magpie, seated on the Ogre's shoulder, shouted out to him—

„This way, Master, to the door that opens on to the stairs. I can see him—quick! quick!" And so well did the old fellow follow her directions, that Joe only just got through the door in time, and dashed down stairs, calling at the top of his voice for Puss-cat Mew to follow him out of the castle. Down he rushed, out of the door, into the yard; but as ill-luck would have it, a nail in the doorpost caught his glove, which fell from his hand, and as he rushed from the yard the Ogre saw him, and, no longer wanting the eyes of the Magpie to help him, rushed furiously in pursuit, making the forest re-echo with his hideous cries of rage.

If he had not eaten and drunk so much, nothing could have saved Joe, since the monster could go twice as fast as he could; but the quantity of alderman and spirits which he had taken caused old Grindbones to go somewhat slower and less steadily than usual, and gave Joe a good chance for his life.

He rushed forward at the top of his speed in a straight line for the Fairy Green, the Ogre furiously blundering after him, and the Magpie flying by his side and chuckling with excitement as she encouraged her master. Joe saw the green and the spring before him, and strained every nerve to reach it. The enemy gained upon him at each stride, and actually stretched out his hand to seize him at the very instant that he stepped within the green space.

Here, however, occurred something which Joe had never thought of, but which the Giant, if he had not been mad with rage and drink, would probably have recollected. The spot, sacred to the Fairies and beloved by them, received a friendly Mortal kindly, and Joe hastened forward as usual to the spring. But the huge Ogre had no sooner advanced upon it for a couple of yards, than the whole space began to quiver and shake like a quicksand, and the monster found himself sinking in at every step. He strove to turn and fly, but it was too late. In an instant, a myriad Fairy forms were dancing around him with light laughs of derision. He struck at them in vain; deeper and deeper he sank, till the soft earth had drawn him down, so that only the upper half of his body was visible. Then he uttered an awful yell, which scared every creature in the forest, and his struggles were tremendous; but they only seemed to cause him to sink deeper. And as he slowly sank down, making the most horrible faces and contortions, the soft, sweet voice sang once more from the Fairy Spring—

*„See where the monster Ogre lies  
At mercy of the Fairy race;  
In vain his bulky form he tries  
To move across th'enchanted space.  
A mass of wickedness so great  
No Fairy Green could e'er endure;  
And here the wretch must meet his fate,  
And here his punishment is sure.  
So happiness to all the wood  
And all the Fairies shall accrue;  
His death shall work for wondrous good,  
And triumph to our Puss-cat Mew!“*

And as the voice sounded, the Giant still sank, and he threw up his arms in despair above his head; and when only his waving arms and his head were seen, so that it was plain he could not escape and his end was certain, the cruel and wicked Magpie flew down and perched upon her master's head, and began to have a peck at his eyes. But such ingratitude was not allowed, and when a Fairy came near to drive her away, the bird flew off chattering to a neighbouring tree, in the branches of which was hid an Adder, who dealt her a mortal wound as she sat there abusing the Fairies for spoiling her fun.

And now there were only the head and neck and one hand of the Ogre to be seen above the ground; and Joe was anxiously waiting and gazing, when, looking up, he perceived his own beloved Puss-cat Mew approaching from the forest, and drawing near to the green. At the same moment spoke the old voice in his ear—

*„Mortal! do thou lightly tread,  
And, with dagger keen and true,  
Take the monster Ogre's head  
To the feet of Puss-cat Mew!“*

Joe could not hesitate to obey the command given by one who had proved so true an adviser. He seized his dagger, and advancing lightly over the green, raised it in his hand, and was about to strike the wretched Grindbones, when all of a sudden the terrific sound of a fearful explosion rent the air, and, looking towards the hill on which the Ogres' castle had stood, he perceived stones and rockwork, earth and trees, filling the air, whilst the terrible noise deadened every other sound, and was succeeded by a dread stillness even more alarming.

What do you think had happened? The truth is, that Gandleperry had not been killed, but only stunned by the blow which Joe had given him. After a while, he had come to himself again, and sitting up, found himself in a very uncomfortable position. There was Jumper's body unpleasantly close, and the dungeon door fast locked, and after thinking for a little while, he began to feel pretty certain that the Fairies were at the bottom of it all. Puss-cat Mew was gone, and how to get out he did not know. However, groping about the floor, he came upon his lucifer-match box, which he had brought down with the candle, and, immediately striking a light, began to search every corner of the dungeon, to find some means of getting out. At last he perceived a low door in one corner

of the room, and at the handle of this he tugged, and then he pushed as hard as he could against it; and at last it suddenly gave way, so that, candle in hand, he stumbled forward into another vault.

Now, many years before, when the Ogres had first taken possession of that castle, it had belonged to a band of robbers, whom the monsters had killed, eaten, or dispersed. These robbers had stored all their gunpowder in one of the vaults below the castle, and there it had been left; for gunpowder is not a thing which Ogres use, except occasionally to flavour their soup. In the course of time some of the casks which held the powder had decayed and burst, and so the vault was half full of loose gunpowder, strewn about over the floor.

Into this vault Gandleperry stumbled, and the candle which was in his hand fell on the powder. There was so much of it that the whole castle was blown to the skies in the explosion that followed. The wretched Gandleperry was of course blown to atoms, and the three Ogres, Grimp, Grump, and Gruby, who were sleeping off the effects of Joe's snuff in the room above, flew all in different directions—heads, arms, and legs being torn off and driven through the air with the masses of wood and stone which were sent up.

In one minute no living thing remained in the castle of the Ogres, and the castle itself was one vast blackened ruin! The dying Grindbones heard the noise, and a fearful groan which he gave seemed to show that he understood that it betokened the downfall of the power and pride of his race. That groan, however, was his last, for Joe hesitated no longer, but, in obedience to the Fairy's command, plunged his steel dagger into the monster's throat, and had just time to sever his head from his body before the latter disappeared for ever, swallowed up by the fatal quicksand of the Fairy Green. The ground, having closed over the Ogre's carcass, immediately resumed its former placid appearance. Joe hastened to meet Puss-cat Mew, and laid the head of her enemy at her feet. Then leading her on to the green space, upon which she now came with him readily, they saw the spring bubbling up more merrily than ever, and the stream seemed to laugh and chuckle with joy as it darted on. And then, as they came close to the spring, once more the soft, clear voice spoke in sweet and happy accents—

*„The hour is come: the foe is slain,  
And Puss-cat Mew is free again;  
Again has Fortune blest the Right,  
And Wrong has perished in the fight.  
Go, happy Mortal, take the Bride  
Who stands all blushing by your side,  
And Heaven be merciful to you,  
As you are kind to Puss-cat Mew!“*

And, as the voice concluded, Puss-cat Mew lightly bounded forward and disappeared behind the spring. In one moment, however, she reappeared, but no longer in the shape of a cat, which she had lately worn. Clad in the same dress which she had on when he first saw her in mortal form at the iron bar, and with her embroidered petticoat mended and as good as new, Joe saw his own dear beautiful wife standing before him, whilst the Fairy Queen led her by the hand, and Fairy forms danced around in gay and festive merriment. Then the Queen addressed the happy Joe in these words—

„Joe Brown, you have borne your trials well, and right gallantly have you fought, and thus deserved the success which has attended your efforts. There is no longer any difficulty in leaving the forest; the iron bar has perished with the Ogres and the Dwarfs, and Puss-cat Mew is able at once to resume her human form, and to become yours again. Take her, then, and remember the conditions on which alone you can keep her. Observe them carefully, and many years of happy life will be before you both. Bless you, my children!“

Then Joe and Puss-cat Mew knelt before the Fairy Queen, who solemnly blessed them; and the Fairies sang sweet songs as the loving pair walked away; and as they turned round to cast a lingering look of regret at the dear old Fairy Green and Spring, they saw the Fairy mother just mounting on a rainbow to have a last look at them as they left the forest!

Safely they reached the hill, and safely descended; and you may fancy the delight of the old miller and his wife when they saw them enter the house again, and heard all the wonderful adventures that had happened to Joe.

I am sure you can guess the rest of the story. The three years passed over without any accident. Puss-cat Mew took her milk regularly (which people should always do when they have any medicine, nice or nasty, to take), and everything went on as well as possible. They had sons who were strong, and daughters who were beautiful; and, though nobody knows it, for certain, it is strongly suspected that the „Miller’s Daughter“, about whom Mr. Tennyson wrote such pretty poetry, was descended directly from our dear Puss-cat Mew.

The Ogres’ castle became a well-known ruin, visited by many people, who wondered when it was built, and what it had been. Well, Stonehenge is a vast ruin, and no one knows what it was, or when it was built; and if I should tell you that the Ogres’ castle is Stonehenge, and that Stonehenge is the Ogres’ castle, who is to contradict me?

Now, children, go and find out all about Stonehenge directly; but whether you agree with this part of the story or not, remember that you now know the true history of Puss-cat Mew; and I am glad to say that, in spite of all their former trials and troubles, she and Joe Brown lived very happily together all the rest of their lives!

There! that is all the White Cat told the Brown Kitten; and you see how lucky it is that I understand the language of the animals!

