# ГОВАРД ПАЙЛ

# TWILIGHT LAND

Говард Пайл

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**Пайл Г.**

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# Howard Pyle
# Twilight Land

## Introduction

I found myself in Twilight Land. How I ever got there I cannot tell, but there I was in Twilight Land.

What is Twilight Land? It is a wonderful, wonderful place where no sun shines to scorch your back as you jog along the way, where no rain falls to make the road muddy and hard to travel, where no wind blows the dust into your eyes or the chill into your marrow. Where all is sweet and quiet and ready to go to bed.

Where is Twilight Land? Ah! that I cannot tell you. You will either have to ask your mother or find it for yourself.

There I was in Twilight Land. The birds were singing their good-night song, and the little frogs were piping “peet, peet.” The sky overhead was full of still brightness, and the moon in the east hung in the purple gray like a great bubble as yellow as gold. All the air was full of the smell of growing things. The high-road was gray, and the trees were dark.

I drifted along the road as a soap-bubble floats before the wind, or as a body floats in a dream. I floated along and I floated along past the trees, past the bushes, past the mill-pond, past the mill where the old miller stood at the door looking at me.

I floated on, and there was the Inn, and it was the Sign of Mother Goose.

The sign hung on a pole, and on it was painted a picture of Mother Goose with her gray gander.

It was to the Inn I wished to come.

I floated on, and I would have floated past the Inn, and perhaps have gotten into the Land of Never-Come-Back-Again, only I caught at the branch of an apple-tree, and so I stopped myself, though the apple-blossoms came falling down like pink and white snowflakes.

The earth and the air and the sky were all still, just as it is at twilight, and I heard them laughing and talking in the tap-room of the Inn of the Sign of Mother Goose – the clinking of glasses, and the rattling and clatter of knives and forks and plates and dishes. That was where I wished to go.

So in I went. Mother Goose herself opened the door, and there I was.

The room was all full of twilight; but there they sat, every one of them. I did not count them, but there were ever so many: Aladdin, and Ali Baba, and Fortunatis, and Jack-the-Giant-Killer, and Doctor Faustus, and Bidpai, and Cinderella, and Patient Grizzle, and the Soldier who cheated the Devil, and St. George, and Hans in Luck, who traded and traded his lump of gold until he had only an empty churn to show for it; and there was Sindbad the Sailor, and the Tailor who killed seven flies at a blow, and the Fisherman who fished up the Genie, and the Lad who fiddled for the Jew in the bramble-bush, and the Blacksmith who made Death sit in his apple-tree, and Boots, who always marries the Princess, whether he wants to or not – a rag-tag lot as ever you saw in your life, gathered from every place, and brought together in Twilight Land.

Each one of them was telling a story, and now it was the turn of the Soldier who cheated the Devil.

“I will tell you,” said the Soldier who cheated the Devil, “a story of a friend of mine.”

“Take a fresh pipe of tobacco,” said St. George.

“Thank you, I will,” said the Soldier who cheated the Devil.

He filled his long pipe full of tobacco, and then he tilted it upside down and sucked in the light of the candle.

Puff! puff! puff! and a cloud of smoke went up about his head, so that you could just see his red nose shining through it, and his bright eyes twinkling in the midst of the smoke-wreath, like two stars through a thin cloud on a summer night.

“I’ll tell you,” said the Soldier who cheated the Devil, “the story of a friend of mine. Tis every word of it just as true as that I myself cheated the Devil.”

He took a drink from his mug of beer, and then he began.

“Tis called,” said he —

# The Stool of Fortune

Once upon a time there came a soldier marching along the road, kicking up a little cloud of dust at each step – as strapping and merry and bright-eyed a fellow as you would wish to see in a summer day. Tramp! tramp! tramp! he marched, whistling as he jogged along, though he carried a heavy musket over his shoulder and though the sun shone hot and strong and there was never a tree in sight to give him a bit of shelter.

At last he came in sight of the King's Town and to a great field of stocks and stones, and there sat a little old man as withered and brown as a dead leaf, and clad all in scarlet from head to foot.

"Ho! soldier," said he, "are you a good shot?"

"Aye," said the soldier, "that is my trade."

"Would you like to earn a dollar by shooting off your musket for me?"

"Aye," said the soldier, "that is my trade also."

"Very well, then," said the little man in red, "here is a silver button to drop into your gun instead of a bullet. Wait you here, and about sunset there will come a great black bird flying. In one claw it carries a feather cap and in the other a round stone. Shoot me the silver button at that bird, and if your aim is good it will drop the feather cap and the pebble. Bring them to me to the great town-gate and I will pay you a dollar for your trouble."

"Very well," said the soldier, "shooting my gun is a job that fits me like an old coat." So, down he sat and the old man went his way.

Well, there he sat and sat and sat and sat until the sun touched the rim of the ground, and then, just as the old man said, there came flying a great black bird as silent as night. The soldier did not tarry to look or to think. As the bird flew by up came the gun to his shoulder, squint went his eye along the barrel – Puff! bang – !

I vow and declare that if the shot he fired had cracked the sky he could not have been more frightened. The great black bird gave a yell so terrible that it curdled the very blood in his veins and made his hair stand upon end. Away it flew like a flash – a bird no longer, but a great, black demon, smoking and smelling most horribly of brimstone, and when the soldier gathered his wits, there lay the feather cap and a little, round, black stone upon the ground.

"Well," said the soldier, "it is little wonder that the old man had no liking to shoot at such game as that." And thereupon he popped the feather cap into one pocket and the round stone into another, and shouldering his musket marched away until he reached the town-gate, and there was the old man waiting for him.

"Did you shoot the bird?" said he.

"I did," said the soldier.

"And did you get the cap and the round stone?"

"I did."

"Then here is your dollar."

"Wait a bit," said the soldier, "I shot greater game that time than I bargained for, and so it's ten dollars and not one you shall pay me before you lay finger upon the feather cap and the little stone."

"Very well," said the old man, "here are ten dollars."

"Ho! ho!" thought the soldier, "is that the way the wind blows?" – "Did I say ten dollars?" said he; "twas a hundred dollars I meant."

At that the old man frowned until his eyes shone green. "Very well," said he, "if it is a hundred dollars you want, you will have to come home with me, for I have not so much with me." Thereupon he entered the town with the soldier at his heels.

Up one street he went and down another, until at last he came to a great, black, ancient ramshackle house; and that was where he lived. In he walked without so much as a rap at the door,

and so led the way to a great room with furnaces and books and bottles and jars and dust and cobwebs, and three grinning skulls upon the mantelpiece, each with a candle stuck atop of it, and there he left the soldier while he went to get the hundred dollars.

The soldier sat him down upon a three-legged stool in the corner and began staring about him; and he liked the looks of the place as little as any he had seen in all of his life, for it smelled musty and dusty, it did: the three skulls grinned at him, and he began to think that the little old man was no better than he should be. “I wish,” says he, at last, “that instead of being here I might be well out of my scrape and in a safe place.”

Now the little old man in scarlet was a great magician, and there was little or nothing in that house that had not some magic about it, and of all things the three-legged stool had been conjured the most.

“I wish that instead of being here I might be well out of my scrape, and in a safe place.” That was what the soldier said; and hardly had the words left his lips when – whisk! whir! – away flew the stool through the window, so suddenly that the soldier had only just time enough to gripe it tight by the legs to save himself from falling. Whir! whiz! – away it flew like a bullet. Up and up it went – so high in the air that the earth below looked like a black blanket spread out in the night; and then down it came again, with the soldier still griping tight to the legs, until at last it settled as light as a feather upon a balcony of the king’s palace; and when the soldier caught his wind again he found himself without a hat, and with hardly any wits in his head.

There he sat upon the stool for a long time without daring to move, for he did not know what might happen to him next. There he sat and sat, and by-and-by his ears got cold in the night air, and then he noticed for the first time that he had lost his head gear, and bethought himself of the feather cap in his pocket. So out he drew it and clapped it upon his head, and then – lo and behold! – he found he had become as invisible as thin air – not a shred or a hair of him could be seen. “Well!” said he, “here is another wonder, but I am safe now at any rate.” And up he got to find some place not so cool as where he sat.

He stepped in at an open window, and there he found himself in a beautiful room, hung with cloth of silver and blue, and with chairs and tables of white and gold; dozens and scores of waxlights shone like so many stars, and lit every crack and cranny as bright as day, and there at one end of the room upon a couch, with her eyelids closed and fast asleep, lay the prettiest princess that ever the sun shone upon. The soldier stood and looked and looked at her, and looked and looked at her, until his heart melted within him like soft butter, and then he kissed her.

“Who is that?” said the princess, starting up, wide-awake, but not a soul could she see, because the soldier had the feather cap upon his head.

“It is I,” said he, “and I am King of the Wind, and ten times greater than the greatest of kings here below. One day I saw you walking in your garden and fell in love with you, and now I have come to ask you if you will marry me and be my wife?”

“But how can I marry you?” said the princess, “without seeing you?”

“You shall see me,” said the soldier, “all in good time. Three days from now I will come again, and will show myself to you, but just now it cannot be. But if I come, will you marry me?”

“Yes I will,” said the princess, “for I like the way you talk – that I do!”

Thereupon the soldier kissed her and said good-bye, and then stepped out of the window as he had stepped in. He sat him down upon his three-legged stool. “I wish,” said he, “to be carried to such and such a tavern.” For he had been in that town before, and knew the places where good living was to be had.

Whir! whiz! away flew the stool as high and higher than it had flown before, and then down it came again, and down and down until it lit as light as a feather in the street before the tavern door. The soldier tucked his feather cap in his pocket, and the three-legged stool under his arm, and in he went and ordered a pot of beer and some white bread and cheese.

Meantime, at the king's palace was such a gossiping and such a hubbub as had not been heard there for many a day; for the pretty princess was not slow in telling how the invisible King of the Wind had come and asked her to marry him; and some said it was true and some said it was not true, and everybody wondered and talked, and told their own notions of the matter. But all agreed that three days would show whether what had been told was true or no.

As for the soldier, he knew no more how to do what he had promised to do than my grandmother's cat; for where was he to get clothes fine enough for the King of the Wind to wear? So there he sat on his three-legged stool thinking and thinking, and if he had known all that I know he would not have given two turns of his wit upon it. "I wish," says he, at last – "I wish that this stool could help me now as well as it can carry me through the sky. I wish," says he, "that I had a suit of clothes such as the King of the Wind might really wear."

The wonders of the three-legged stool were wonders indeed!

Hardly had the words left the soldier's lips when down came something tumbling about his ears from up in the air; and what should it be but just such a suit of clothes as he had in his mind – all crusted over with gold and silver and jewels.

"Well," says the soldier, as soon as he had got over his wonder again, "I would rather sit upon this stool than any I ever saw." And so would I, if I had been in his place, and had a few minutes to think of all that I wanted.

So he found out the trick of the stool, and after that wishing and having were easy enough, and by the time the three days were ended the real King of the Wind himself could not have cut a finer figure. Then down sat the soldier upon his stool, and wished himself at the king's palace. Away he flew through the air, and by-and-by there he was, just where he had been before. He put his feather cap upon his head, and stepped in through the window, and there he found the princess with her father, the king, and her mother, the queen, and all the great lords and nobles waiting for his coming; but never a stitch nor a hair did they see of him until he stood in the very midst of them all. Then he whipped the feather cap off of his head, and there he was, shining with silver and gold and glistening with jewels – such a sight as man's eyes never saw before.

"Take her," said the king, "she is yours." And the soldier looked so handsome in his fine clothes that the princess was as glad to hear those words as any she had ever listened to in all of her life.

"You shall," said the king, "be married to-morrow."

"Very well," said the soldier. "Only give me a plot of ground to build a palace upon that shall be fit for the wife of the King of the Wind to live in."

"You shall have it," said the king, "and it shall be the great parade ground back of the palace, which is so wide and long that all my army can march round and round in it without getting into its own way; and that ought to be big enough."

"Yes," said the soldier, "it is." Thereupon he put on his feather cap and disappeared from the sight of all as quickly as one might snuff out a candle.

He mounted his three-legged stool and away he flew through the air until he had come again to the tavern where he was lodging. There he sat him down and began to churn his thoughts, and the butter he made was worth the having, I can tell you. He wished for a grand palace of white marble, and then he wished for all sorts of things to fill it – the finest that could be had. Then he wished for servants in clothes of gold and silver, and then he wished for fine horses and gilded coaches. Then he wished for gardens and orchards and lawns and flower-plats and fountains, and all kinds and sorts of things, until the sweat ran down his face from hard thinking and wishing. And as he thought and wished, all the things he thought and wished for grew up like soap-bubbles from nothing at all.

Then, when day began to break, he wished himself with his fine clothes to be in the palace that his own wits had made, and away he flew through the air until he had come there safe and sound.

But when the sun rose and shone down upon the beautiful palace and all the gardens and orchards around it, the king and queen and all the court stood dumb with wonder at the sight. Then,

as they stood staring, the gates opened and out came the soldier riding in his gilded coach with his servants in silver and gold marching beside him, and such a sight the daylight never looked upon before that day.

Well, the princess and the soldier were married, and if no couple had ever been happy in the world before, they were then. Nothing was heard but feasting and merrymaking, and at night all the sky was lit with fireworks. Such a wedding had never been before, and all the world was glad that it had happened.

That is, all the world but one; that one was the old man dressed in scarlet that the soldier had met when he first came to town. While all the rest were in the hubbub of rejoicing, he put on his thinking-cap, and by-and-by began to see pretty well how things lay, and that, as they say in our town, there was a fly in the milk-jug. "Ho, ho!" thought he, "so the soldier has found out all about the three-legged stool, has he? Well, I will just put a spoke into his wheel for him." And so he began to watch for his chance to do the soldier an ill turn.

Now, a week or two after the wedding, and after all the gay doings had ended, a grand hunt was declared, and the king and his new son-in-law and all the court went to it. That was just such a chance as the old magician had been waiting for; so the night before the hunting-party returned he climbed the walls of the garden, and so came to the wonderful palace that the soldier had built out of nothing at all, and there stood three men keeping guard so that no one might enter.

But little that troubled the magician. He began to mutter spells and strange words, and all of a sudden he was gone, and in his place was a great black ant, for he had changed himself into an ant. In he ran through a crack of the door (and mischief has got into many a man's house through a smaller hole for the matter of that). In and out ran the ant through one room and another, and up and down and here and there, until at last in a far-away part of the magic palace he found the three-legged stool, and if I had been in the soldier's place I would have chopped it up into kindling-wood after I had gotten all that I wanted. But there it was, and in an instant the magician resumed his own shape. Down he sat him upon the stool. "I wish," said he, "that this palace and the princess and all who are within it, together with its orchards and its lawns and its gardens and everything, may be removed to such and such a country, upon the other side of the earth."

And as the stool had obeyed the soldier, so everything was done now just as the magician said.

The next morning back came the hunting-party, and as they rode over the hill – lo and behold! – there lay stretched out the great parade ground in which the king's armies used to march around and around, and the land was as bare as the palm of my hand. Not a stick or a stone of the palace was left; not a leaf or a blade of the orchards or gardens was to be seen.

The soldier sat as dumb as a fish, and the king stared with eyes and mouth wide open. "Where is the palace, and where is my daughter?" said he, at last, finding words and wit.

"I do not know," said the soldier.

The king's face grew as black as thunder. "You do not know?" he said, "then you must find out. Seize the traitor!" he cried.

But that was easier said than done, for, quick as a wink, as they came to lay hold of him, the soldier whisked the feather cap from his pocket and clapped it upon his head, and then they might as well have hoped to find the south wind in winter as to find him.

But though he got safe away from that trouble he was deep enough in the dumps, you may be sure of that. Away he went, out into the wide world, leaving that town behind him. Away he went, until by-and-by he came to a great forest, and for three days he travelled on and on – he knew not whither. On the third night, as he sat beside a fire which he had built to keep him warm, he suddenly bethought himself of the little round stone which had dropped from the bird's claw, and which he still had in his pocket. "Why should it not also help me," said he, "for there must be some wonder about it." So he brought it out, and sat looking at it and looking at it, but he could make nothing of it for the life of him. Nevertheless, it might have some wishing power about it, like the magic stool. "I wish,"

said the soldier, “that I might get out of this scrape.” That is what we have all wished many and many a time in a like case; but just now it did the soldier no more good to wish than it does good for the rest of us. “Bah!” said he, “it is nothing but a black stone after all.” And then he threw it into the fire.

Puff! Bang! Away flew the embers upon every side, and back tumbled the soldier, and there in the middle of the flame stood just such a grim, black being as he had one time shot at with the silver button.

As for the poor soldier, he just lay flat on his back and stared with eyes like saucers, for he thought that his end had come for sure.

“What are my lord’s commands?” said the being, in a voice that shook the marrow of the soldier’s bones.

“Who are you?” said the soldier.

“I am the spirit of the stone,” said the being. “You have heated it in the flame, and I am here. Whatever you command I must obey.”

“Say you so?” cried the soldier, scrambling to his feet. “Very well, then, just carry me to where I may find my wife and my palace again.”

Without a word the spirit of the stone snatched the soldier up, and flew away with him swifter than the wind. Over forest, over field, over mountain and over valley he flew, until at last, just at the crack of day, he set him down in front of his own palace gate in the far country where the magician had transported it.

After that the soldier knew his way quickly enough. He clapped his feather cap upon his head and into the palace he went, and from one room to another, until at last he came to where the princess sat weeping and wailing, with her pretty eyes red from long crying.

Then the soldier took off his cap again, and you may guess what sounds of rejoicing followed. They sat down beside one another, and after the soldier had eaten, the princess told him all that had happened to her; how the magician had found the stool, and how he had transported the palace to this far-away land; how he came every day and begged her to marry him – which she would rather die than do.

To all this the soldier listened, and when she had ended her story he bade her to dry her tears, for, after all, the jug was only cracked, and not past mending. Then he told her that when the sorcerer came again that day she should say so and so and so and so, and that he would be by to help her with his feather cap upon his head.

After that they sat talking together as happy as two turtle-doves, until the magician’s foot was heard on the stairs. And then the soldier clapped his feather cap upon his head just as the door opened.

“Snuff, snuff!” said the magician, sniffing the air, “here is a smell of Christian blood.”

“Yes,” said the princess, “that is so; there came a peddler to-day, but after all he did not stay long.”

“He’d better not come again,” said the magician, “or it will be the worse for him. But tell me, will you marry me?”

“No,” said the princess, “I shall not marry you until you can prove yourself to be a greater man than my husband.”

“Pooh!” said the magician, “that will be easy enough to prove; tell me how you would have me do so and I will do it.”

“Very well,” said the princess, “then let me see you change yourself into a lion. If you can do that I may perhaps believe you to be as great as my husband.”

“It shall,” said the magician, “be as you say. He began to mutter spells and strange words, and then all of a sudden he was gone, and in his place there stood a lion with bristling mane and flaming eyes – a sight fit of itself to kill a body with terror.

“That will do!” cried the princess, quaking and trembling at the sight, and thereupon the magician took his own shape again.

"Now," said he, "do you believe that I am as great as the poor soldier?"

"Not yet," said the princess; "I have seen how big you can make yourself, now I wish to see how little you can become. Let me see you change yourself into a mouse."

"So be it," said the magician, and began again to mutter his spells. Then all of a sudden he was gone just as he was gone before, and in his place was a little mouse sitting up and looking at the princess with a pair of eyes like glass beads.

But he did not sit there long. This was what the soldier had planned for, and all the while he had been standing by with his feather hat upon his head. Up he raised his foot, and down he set it upon the mouse.

Crunch! – that was an end of the magician.

After that all was clear sailing; the soldier hunted up the three-legged stool and down he sat upon it, and by dint of no more than just a little wishing, back flew palace and garden and all through the air again to the place whence it came.

I do not know whether the old king ever believed again that his son-in-law was the King of the Wind; anyhow, all was peace and friendliness thereafter, for when a body can sit upon a three-legged stool and wish to such good purpose as the soldier wished, a body is just as good as a king, and a good deal better, to my mind.

The Soldier who cheated the Devil looked into his pipe; it was nearly out. He puffed and puffed and the coal glowed brighter, and fresh clouds of smoke rolled up into the air. Little Brown Betty came and refilled, from a crock of brown foaming ale, the mug which he had emptied. The Soldier who had cheated the Devil looked up at her and winked one eye.

"Now," said St. George, "it is the turn of yonder old man," and he pointed, as he spoke, with the stem of his pipe towards old Bidpai, who sat with closed eyes meditating inside of himself.

The old man opened his eyes, the whites of which were as yellow as saffron, and wrinkled his face into innumerable cracks and lines. Then he closed his eyes again; then he opened them again; then he cleared his throat and began: "There was once upon a time a man whom other men called Aben Hassen the Wise – "

"One moment," said Ali Baba; "will you not tell us what the story is about?"

Old Bidpai looked at him and stroked his long white beard. "It is," said he, "about – "

# The Talisman of Solomon

There was once upon a time a man whom other men called Aben Hassen the Wise. He had read a thousand books of magic, and knew all that the ancients or moderns had to tell of the hidden arts.

The King of the Demons of the Earth, a great and hideous monster, named Zadok, was his servant, and came and went as Aben Hassen the Wise ordered, and did as he bade. After Aben Hassen learned all that it was possible for man to know, he said to himself, "Now I will take my ease and enjoy my life." So he called the Demon Zadok to him, and said to the monster, "I have read in my books that there is a treasure that was one time hidden by the ancient kings of Egypt – a treasure such as the eyes of man never saw before or since their day. Is that true?"

"It is true," said the Demon.

"Then I command thee to take me to that treasure and to show it to me," said Aben Hassen the Wise.

"It shall be done," said the Demon; and thereupon he caught up the Wise Man and transported him across mountain and valley, across land and sea, until he brought him to a country known as the "Land of the Black Isles," where the treasure of the ancient kings was hidden. The Demon showed the Magician the treasure, and it was a sight such as man had never looked upon before or since the days that the dark, ancient ones hid it. With his treasure Aben Hassen built himself palaces and gardens and paradises such as the world never saw before. He lived like an emperor, and the fame of his doings rang through all the four corners of the earth.

Now the queen of the Black Isles was the most beautiful woman in the world, but she was as cruel and wicked and cunning as she was beautiful. No man that looked upon her could help loving her; for not only was she as beautiful as a dream, but her beauty was of that sort that it bewitched a man in spite of himself.

One day the queen sent for Aben Hassen the Wise. "Tell me," said she, "is it true that men say of you that you have discovered a hidden treasure such as the world never saw before?" And she looked at Aben Hassen so that his wisdom all crumbled away like sand, and he became just as foolish as other men.

"Yes," said he, "it is true."

Aben Hassen the Wise spent all that day with the queen, and when he left the palace he was like a man drunk and dizzy with love. Moreover, he had promised to show the queen the hidden treasure the next day.

As Aben Hassen, like a man in a dream, walked towards his own house, he met an old man standing at the corner of the street. The old man had a talisman that hung dangling from a chain, and which he offered for sale. When Aben Hassen saw the talisman he knew very well what it was – that it was the famous talisman of King Solomon the Wise. If he who possessed the talisman asked it to speak, it would tell that man both what to do and what not to do.

The Wise Man bought the talisman for three pieces of silver (and wisdom has been sold for less than that many a time), and as soon as he had the talisman in his hands he hurried home with it and locked himself in a room.

"Tell me," said the Wise Man to the Talisman, "shall I marry the beautiful queen of the Black Isles?"

"Fly, while there is yet time to escape!" said the Talisman; "but go not near the queen again, for she seeks to destroy thy life."

"But tell me, O Talisman!" said the Wise Man, "what then shall I do with all that vast treasure of the kings of Egypt?"

"Fly from it while there is yet chance to escape!" said the Talisman; "but go not into the treasure-house again, for in the farther door, where thou hast not yet looked, is that which will destroy him who possesses the treasure."

"But Zadok," said Aben Hassen; "what of Zadok?"

"Fly from the monster while there is yet time to escape," said the Talisman, "and have no more to do with thy Demon slave, for already he is weaving a net of death and destruction about thy feet."

The Wise Man sat all that night pondering and thinking upon what the Talisman had said. When morning came he washed and dressed himself, and called the Demon Zadok to him. "Zadok," said he, "carry me to the palace of the queen." In the twinkling of an eye the Demon transported him to the steps of the palace.

"Zadok," said the Wise Man, "give me the staff of life and death;" and the Demon brought from under his clothes a wand, one-half of which was of silver and one-half of which was of gold. The Wise Man touched the steps of the palace with the silver end of the staff. Instantly all the sound and hum of life was hushed. The thread of life was cut by the knife of silence, and in a moment all was as still as death.

"Zadok," said the Wise Man, "transport me to the treasure-house of the king of Egypt." And instantly the Demon had transported him thither. The Wise Man drew a circle upon the earth. "No one," said he, "shall have power to enter here but the master of Zadok, the King of the Demons of the Earth."

"And now, Zadok," said he, "I command thee to transport me to India, and as far from here as thou canst." Instantly the Demon did as he was commanded; and of all the treasure that he had, the Wise Man took nothing with him but a jar of golden money and a jar of silver money. As soon as the Wise Man stood upon the ground of India, he drew from beneath his robe a little jar of glass.

"Zadok," said he, "I command thee to enter this jar."

Then the Demon knew that now his turn had come. He besought and implored the Wise Man to have mercy upon him; but it was all in vain. Then the Demon roared and bellowed till the earth shook and the sky grew dark overhead. But all was of no avail; into the jar he must go, and into the jar he went. Then the Wise Man stoppered the jar and sealed it. He wrote an inscription of warning upon it, and then he buried it in the ground.

"Now," said Aben Hassen the Wise to the Talisman of Solomon, "have I done everything that I should?"

"No," said the Talisman, "thou shouldst not have brought the jar of golden money and the jar of silver money with thee; for that which is evil in the greatest is evil in the least. Thou fool! The treasure is cursed! Cast it all from thee while there is yet time."

"Yes, I will do that, too," said the Wise Man. So he buried in the earth the jar of gold and the jar of silver that he had brought with him, and then he stamped the mould down upon it. After that the Wise Man began his life all over again. He bought, and he sold, and he traded, and by-and-by he became rich. Then he built himself a great house, and in the foundation he laid the jar in which the Demon was bottled.

Then he married a young and handsome wife. By-and-by the wife bore him a son, and then she died.

This son was the pride of his father's heart; but he was as vain and foolish as his father was wise, so that all men called him Aben Hassen the Fool, as they called the father Aben Hassen the Wise.

Then one day death came and called the old man, and he left his son all that belonged to him – even the Talisman of Solomon.

Young Aben Hassen the Fool had never seen so much money as now belonged to him. It seemed to him that there was nothing in the world he could not enjoy. He found friends by the dozens and scores, and everybody seemed to be very fond of him.

He asked no questions of the Talisman of Solomon, for to his mind there was no need of being both wise and rich. So he began enjoying himself with his new friends. Day and night there was feasting and drinking and singing and dancing and merrymaking and carousing; and the money that the old man had made by trading and wise living poured out like water through a sieve.

Then, one day came an end to all this junketing, and nothing remained to the young spendthrift of all the wealth that his father had left him. Then the officers of the law came down upon him and seized all that was left of the fine things, and his fair-weather friends flew away from his troubles like flies from vinegar. Then the young man began to think of the Talisman of Wisdom. For it was with him as it is with so many of us: When folly has emptied the platter, wisdom is called in to pick the bones.

"Tell me," said the young man to the Talisman of Solomon, "what shall I do, now that everything is gone?"

"Go," said the Talisman of Solomon, "and work as thy father has worked before thee. Advise with me and become prosperous and contended, but do not go dig under the cherry-tree in the garden."

"Why should I not dig under the cherry-tree in the garden?" says the young man; "I will see what is there, at any rate."

So he straightway took a spade and went out into the garden, where the Talisman had told him not to go. He dug and dug under the cherry-tree, and by-and-by his spade struck something hard. It was a vessel of brass, and it was full of silver money. Upon the lid of the vessel were these words, engraved in the handwriting of the old man who had died:

"My son, this vessel full of silver has been brought from the treasure-house of the ancient kings of Egypt. Take this, then, that thou findest; advise with the talisman; be wise and prosper."

"And they call that the Talisman of Wisdom," said the young man. "If I had listened to it I never would have found this treasure."

The next day he began to spend the money he had found, and his friends soon gathered around him again.

The vessel of silver money lasted a week, and then it was all gone; not a single piece was left.

Then the young man bethought himself again of the Talisman of Solomon. "What shall I do now," said he, "to save myself from ruin?"

"Earn thy bread with honest labor," said the Talisman, "and I will teach thee how to prosper; but do not dig beneath the fig-tree that stands by the fountain in the garden."

The young man did not tarry long after he heard what the Talisman had said. He seized a spade and hurried away to the fig-tree in the garden as fast as he could run. He dug and dug, and by-and-by his spade struck something hard. It was a copper vessel, and it was filled with gold money. Upon the lid of the vessel was engraved these words in the handwriting of the old man who had gone: "My son, my son," they said, "thou hast been warned once; be warned again. The gold money in this vessel has been brought from the treasure-house of the ancient kings of Egypt. Take it; be advised by the Talisman of Solomon; be wise and prosper."

"And to think that if I had listened to the Talisman, I would never have found this," said the young man.

The gold in the vessel lasted maybe for a month of jollity and merrymaking, but at the end of that time there was nothing left – not a copper farthing.

"Tell me," said the young man to the Talisman, "what shall I do now?"

"Thou fool," said the Talisman, "go sweat and toil, but do not go down into the vault beneath this house. There in the vault is a red stone built into the wall. The red stone turns upon a pivot. Behind the stone is a hollow space. As thou wouldst save thy life from peril, go not near it!"

"Hear that now," says the young man, "first, this Talisman told me not to go, and I found silver. Then it told me not to go, and I found gold; now it tells me not to go – perhaps I shall find precious stones enough for a king's ransom."

He lit a lantern and went down into the vault beneath the house. There, as the Talisman had said, was the red stone built into the wall. He pressed the stone, and it turned upon its pivot as the Talisman had said it would turn. Within was a hollow space, as the Talisman said there would be. In the hollow space there was a casket of silver. The young man snatched it up, and his hands trembled for joy.

Upon the lid of the box were these words in the father's handwriting, written in letters as red as blood: "Fool, fool! Thou hast been a fool once, thou hast been a fool twice; be not a fool for a third time. Restore this casket whence it was taken, and depart."

"I will see what is in the box, at any rate," said the young man.

He opened it. There was nothing in it but a hollow glass jar the size of an egg. The young man took the jar from the box; it was as hot as fire. He cried out and let it fall. The jar burst upon the floor with a crack of thunder; the house shook and rocked, and the dust flew about in clouds. Then all was still; and when Aben Hassen the Fool could see through the cloud of terror that enveloped him he beheld a great, tall, hideous being as black as ink, and with eyes that shone like coals of fire.

When the young man saw that terrible creature his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and his knees smote together with fear, for he thought that his end had now certainly come.

"Who are you?" he croaked, as soon as he could find his voice.

"I am the King of the Demons of the Earth, and my name is Zadok," answered the being. "I was once thy father's slave, and now I am thine, thou being his son. When thou speakest I must obey, and whatever thou commandest me to do that I must do."

"For instance, what can you do for me?" said the young man.

"I can do whatsoever you ask me; I can make you rich."

"You can make me rich?"

"Yes, I can make you richer than a king."

"Then make me rich as soon as you can," said Aben Hassen the Fool, "and that is all that I shall ask of you now."

"It shall be done," said the Demon; "spend all that thou canst spend, and thou shalt always have more. Has my lord any further commands for his slave?"

"No," said the young man, "there is nothing more; you may go now."

And thereupon the Demon vanished like a flash.

"And to think," said the young man, as he came up out of the vault – "and to think that all this I should never have found if I had obeyed the Talisman."

Such riches were never seen in that land as the young man now possessed. There was no end to the treasure that poured in upon him. He lived like an emperor. He built a palace more splendid than the palace of the king. He laid out vast gardens of the most exquisite beauty, in which there were fountains as white as snow, trees of rare fruit and flowers that filled all the air with their perfume, summer-houses of alabaster and ebony.

Every one who visited him was received like a prince, entertained like a king, given a present fit for an emperor, and sent away happy. The fame of all these things went out through all the land, and every one talked of him and the magnificence that surrounded him.

It came at last to the ears of the king himself, and one day he said to his minister, "Let us go and see with our own eyes if all the things reported of this merchant's son are true."

So the king and his minister disguised themselves as foreign merchants, and went that evening to the palace where the young man lived. A servant dressed in clothes of gold and silver cloth stood at the door, and called to them to come in and be made welcome. He led them in, and to a chamber lit with perfumed lamps of gold. Then six black slaves took them in charge and led them to a bath of white marble. They were bathed in perfumed water and dried with towels of fine linen. When they came forth they were clad in clothes of cloth of silver, stiff with gold and jewels. Then twelve handsome white slaves led them through a vast and splendid hall to a banqueting-room.

When they entered they were deafened with the noise of carousing and merrymaking.

Aben Hassen the Fool sat at the head of the table upon a throne of gold, with a canopy of gold above his head. When he saw the king and the minister enter, he beckoned to them to come and sit beside him. He showed them special favor because they were strangers, and special servants waited upon them.

The king and his minister had never seen anything like what they then saw. They could hardly believe it was not all magic and enchantment. At the end of the feast each of the guests was given a present of great value, and was sent away rejoicing. The king received a pearl as big as a marble; the minister a cup of wrought gold.

The next morning the king and the prime-minister were talking over what they had seen. “Sire,” said the prime-minister, “I have no doubt but that the young man has discovered some vast hidden treasure. Now, according to the laws of this kingdom, the half of any treasure that is discovered shall belong to the king’s treasury. If I were in your place I would send for this young man and compel him to tell me whence comes all this vast wealth.”

“That is true,” said the king; “I had not thought of that before. The young man shall tell me all about it.”

So they sent a royal guard and brought the young man to the king’s palace. When the young man saw in the king and the prime-minister his guests of the night before, whom he had thought to be only foreign merchants, he fell on his face and kissed the ground before the throne. But the king spoke to him kindly, and raised him up and sat him on the seat beside him. They talked for a while concerning different things, and then the king said at last, “Tell me, my friend, whence comes all the inestimable wealth that you must possess to allow you to live as you do?”

“Sire,” said the young man, “I cannot tell you whence it comes. I can only tell you that it is given to me.”

The king frowned. “You cannot tell,” said he; “you must tell. It is for that that I have sent for you, and you must tell me.”

Then the young man began to be frightened. “I beseech you,” said he, “do not ask me whence it comes. I cannot tell you.”

Then the king’s brows grew as black as thunder. “What!” cried he, “do you dare to bandy words with me? I know that you have discovered some treasure. Tell me upon the instant where it is; for the half of it, by the laws of the land, belongs to me, and I will have it.”

At the king’s words Aben Hassen the Fool fell on his knees. “Sire,” said he, “I will tell you all the truth. There is a demon named Zadok – a monster as black as a coal. He is my slave, and it is he that brings me all the treasure that I enjoy.” The king thought nothing else than that Aben Hassen the Fool was trying to deceive him. He laughed; he was very angry. “What,” cried he, “do you amuse me by such an absurd and unbelievable tale? Now I am more than ever sure that you have discovered a treasure and that you wish to keep the knowledge of it from me, knowing, as you do, that the one-half of it by law belongs to me. Take him away!” cried he to his attendants. “Give him fifty lashes, and throw him into prison. He shall stay there and have fifty lashes every day until he tells me where his wealth is hidden.”

It was done as the king said, and by-and-by Aben Hassen the Fool lay in the prison, smarting and sore with the whipping he had had.

Then he began again to think of the Talisman of Solomon.

“Tell me,” said he to the Talisman, “What shall I do now to help myself in this trouble?”

“Bear thy punishment, thou fool,” said the Talisman. “Know that the king will by-and-by pardon thee and will let thee go. In the meantime bear thy punishment; perhaps it will cure thee of thy folly. Only do not call upon Zadok, the King of the Demons, in this thy trouble.”

The young man smote his hand upon his head. “What a fool I am,” said he, “not to have thought to call upon Zadok before this!” Then he called aloud, “Zadok, Zadok! If thou art indeed my slave, come hither at my bidding.”

In an instant there sounded a rumble as of thunder. The floor swayed and rocked beneath the young man's feet. The dust flew in clouds, and there stood Zadok as black as ink, and with eyes that shone like coals of fire.

"I have come," said Zadok, "and first let me cure thy smarts, O master."

He removed the cloths from the young man's back, and rubbed the places that smarted with a cooling unguent. Instantly the pain and smarting ceased, and the merchant's son had perfect ease.

"Now," said Zadok, "what is thy bidding?"

"Tell me," said Aben Hassen the Fool, "whence comes all the wealth that you have brought me? The king has commanded me to tell him and I could not, and so he has had me beaten with fifty lashes."

"I bring the treasure," said Zadok, "from the treasure-house of the ancient kings of Egypt. That treasure I at one time discovered to your father, and he, not desiring it himself, hid it in the earth so that no one might find it."

"And where is this treasure-house, O Zadok?" said the young man.

"It is in the city of the queen of the Black Isles," said the King of the Demons; "there thy father lived in a palace of such magnificence as thou hast never dreamed of. It was I that brought him thence to this place with one vessel of gold money and one vessel of silver money."

"It was you who brought him here, did you say, Zadok? Then, tell me, can you take me from here to the city of the queen of the Black Isles, whence you brought him?"

"Yes," said Zadok, "with ease."

"Then," said the young man, "I command you to take me thither instantly, and to show me the treasure."

"I obey," said Zadok.

He stamped his foot upon the ground. In an instant the walls of the prison split asunder, and the sky was above them. The Demon leaped from the earth, carrying the young man by the girdle, and flew through the air so swiftly that the stars appeared to slide away behind them. In a moment he set the young man again upon the ground, and Aben Hassen the Fool found himself at the end of what appeared to be a vast and splendid garden.

"We are now," said Zadok, "above the treasure-house of which I spoke. It was here that I saw thy father seal it so that no one but the master of Zadok may enter. Thou mayst go in any time it may please thee, for it is thine."

"I would enter into it now," said Aben Hassen the Fool.

"Thou shalt enter," said Zadok. He stooped, and with his finger-point he drew a circle upon the ground where they stood; then he stamped with his heel upon the circle. Instantly the earth opened, and there appeared a flight of marble steps leading downward into the earth. Zadok led the way down the steps and the young man followed. At the bottom of the steps there was a door of adamant. Upon the door were these words in letters as black as ink, in the handwriting of the old man who had gone:

"Oh, fool! Fool! Beware what thou doest. Within here shalt thou find death!"

There was a key of brass in the door. The King of the Demons turned the key and opened the door. The young man entered after him.

Aben Hassen the Fool found himself in a vast vaulted room, lit by the light of a single carbuncle set in the centre of the dome above. In the middle of the marble floor was a great basin twenty paces broad, and filled to the brim with money such as he had found in the brazen vessel in the garden.

The young man could not believe what he saw with his own eyes. "Oh, marvel of marvels!" he cried; "little wonder you could give me boundless wealth from such a storehouse as this."

Zadok laughed. "This," said he, "is nothing; come with me."

He led him from this room to another – like it vaulted, and like it lit by a carbuncle set in the dome of the roof above. In the middle of the floor was a basin such as Aben Hassen the Fool had seen in the other room beyond; only this was filled with gold as that had been filled with silver, and

the gold was like that he had found in the garden. When the young man saw this vast and amazing wealth he stood speechless and breathless with wonder. The Demon Zadok laughed. “This,” said he, “is great, but it is little. Come and I will show thee a marvel indeed.”

He took the young man by the hand and led him into a third room – vaulted as the other two had been, lit as they had been by a carbuncle in the roof above. But when the young man’s eyes saw what was in this third room, he was like a man turned drunk with wonder. He had to lean against the wall behind him, for the sight made him dizzy.

In the middle of the room was such as basin as he had seen in the two other rooms, only it was filled with jewels – diamonds and rubies and emeralds and sapphires and precious stones of all kinds – that sparkled and blazed and flamed like a million stars. Around the wall, and facing the basin from all sides, stood six golden statues. Three of them were statues of the kings and three of them were statues of the queens who had gathered together all this vast and measureless wealth of ancient Egypt.

There was space for a seventh statue, but where it should have stood was a great arched door of adamant. The door was tightly shut, and there was neither lock nor key to it. Upon the door were written these words in letters of flame:

“Behold! Beyond this door is that alone which shall satisfy all thy desires.”

“Tell me, Zadok,” said the young man, after he had filled his soul with all the other wonders that surrounded him – “tell me what is there that lies beyond that door?”

“That I am forbidden to tell thee, O master!” said the King of the Demons of the Earth.

“Then open the door for me,” said the young man; “for I cannot open it for myself, as there is neither lock nor key to it.”

“That also I am forbidden to do,” said Zadok.

“I wish that I knew what was there,” said the young man.

The Demon laughed. “Some time,” said he, “thou mayest find for thyself. Come, let us leave here and go to the palace which thy father built years ago, and which he left behind him when he quitted this place for the place in which thou knewest him.”

He led the way and the young man followed; they passed through the vaulted rooms and out through the door of adamant, and Zadok locked it behind them and gave the key to the young man.

“All this is thine now,” he said; “I give it to thee as I gave it to thy father. I have shown thee how to enter, and thou mayst go in whenever it pleases thee to do so.”

They ascended the steps, and so reached the garden above. Then Zadok struck his heel upon the ground, and the earth closed as it had opened. He led the young man from the spot until they had come to a wide avenue that led to the palace beyond. “Here I leave thee,” said the Demon, “But if ever thou hast need of me, call and I will come.”

Thereupon he vanished like a flash, leaving the young man standing like one in a dream.

He saw before him a garden of such splendor and magnificence as he had never dreamed of even in his wildest fancy. There were seven fountains as clear as crystal that shot high into the air and fell back into basins of alabaster. There was a broad avenue as white as snow, and thousands of lights lit up everything as light as day. Upon either side of the avenue stood a row of black slaves, clad in garments of white silk, and with jewelled turbans upon their heads. Each held a flaming torch of sandal-wood. Behind the slaves stood a double row of armed men, and behind them a great crowd of other slaves and attendants, dressed each as magnificently as a prince, blazing and flaming with innumerable jewels and ornaments of gold.

But of all these things the young man thought nothing and saw nothing; for at the end of the marble avenue there arose a palace, the like of which was not in the four quarters of the earth – a palace of marble and gold and carmine and ultramarine – rising into the purple starry sky, and shining in the moonlight like a vision of Paradise. The palace was illuminated from top to bottom and from end to end; the windows shone like crystal, and from it came sounds of music and rejoicing.

When the crowd that stood waiting saw the young man appear, they shouted: “Welcome! Welcome! To the master who has come again! To Aben Hassen the Fool!”

The young man walked up the avenue of marble to the palace, surrounded by the armed attendants in their dresses of jewels and gold, and preceded by dancing-girls as beautiful as houris, who danced and sung before him. He was dizzy with joy. “All – all this,” he exulted, “belongs to me. And to think that if I had listened to the Talisman of Solomon I would have had none of it.”

That was the way he came back to the treasure of the ancient kings of Egypt, and to the palace of enchantment that his father had quitted.

For seven months he lived a life of joy and delight, surrounded by crowds of courtiers as though they were a king, and going from pleasure to pleasure without end. Nor had he any fear of an end coming to it, for he knew that his treasure was inexhaustible. He made friends with the princes and nobles of the land. From far and wide people came to visit him, and the renown of his magnificence filled all the world. When men would praise any one they would say, “He is as rich,” or as “magnificent,” or as “generous, as Aben Hassen the Fool.”

So for seven months he lived a life of joy and delight; then one morning he awakened and found everything changed to grief and mourning. Where the day before had been laughter, to-day was crying. Where the day before had been mirth, to-day was lamentation. All the city was shrouded in gloom, and everywhere was weeping and crying.

Seven black slaves stood on guard near Aben Hassen the Fool as he lay upon his couch. “What means all this sorrow?” said he to one of the slaves.

Instantly all the slaves began howling and beating their heads, and he to whom the young man had spoken fell down with his face in the dust, and lay there twisting and writhing like a worm.

“He has asked the question!” howled the slaves – “he has asked the question!”

“Are you mad?” cried the young man. “What is the matter with you?”

At the doorway of the room stood a beautiful female slave, bearing in her hands a jewelled basin of gold, filled with rose-water, and a fine linen napkin for the young man to wash and dry his hands upon. “Tell me,” said the young man, “what means all this sorrow and lamentation?”

Instantly the beautiful slave dropped the golden basin upon the stone floor, and began shrieking and tearing her clothes. “He has asked the question!” she screamed – “he has asked the question!”

The young man began to grow frightened; he arose from his couch, and with uneven steps went out into the anteroom. There he found his chamberlain waiting for him with a crowd of attendants and courtiers. “Tell me,” said Aben Hassen the Fool, “why are you all so sorrowful?”

Instantly they who stood waiting began crying and tearing their clothes and beating their hands. As for the chamberlain – he was a reverend old man – his eyes sparkled with anger, and his fingers twitched as though he would have struck if he had dared. “What,” he cried, “art thou not contented with all thou hast and with all that we do for thee without asking the forbidden question?”

Thereupon he tore his cap from his head and flung it upon the ground, and began beating himself violently upon the head with great outcrying.

Aben Hassen the Fool, not knowing what to think or what was to happen, ran back into the bedroom again. “I think everybody in this place has gone mad,” said he. “Nevertheless, if I do not find out what it all means, I shall go mad myself.”

Then he bethought himself, for the first time since he came to that land, of the Talisman of Solomon.

“Tell me, O Talisman,” said he, “why all these people weep and wail so continuously?”

“Rest content,” said the Talisman of Solomon, “with knowing that which concerns thine own self, and seek not to find an answer that will be to thine own undoing. Be thou also further advised: do not question the Demon Zadok.”

"Fool that I am," said the young man, stamping his foot; "here am I wasting all this time when, if I had but thought of Zadok at first, he would have told me all. Then he called aloud, Zadok! Zadok! Zadok!"

Instantly the ground shook beneath his feet, the dust rose in clouds, and there stood Zadok as black as ink, and with eyes that shone like fire.

"Tell me," said the young man; "I command thee to tell me, O Zadok! Why are the people all gone mad this morning, and why do they weep and wail, and why do they go crazy when I do but ask them why they are so afflicted?"

"I will tell thee," said Zadok. "Seven-and-thirty years ago there was a queen over this land – the most beautiful that ever was seen. Thy father, who was the wisest and most cunning magician in the world, turned her into stone, and with her all the attendants in her palace. No one since that time has been permitted to enter the palace – it is forbidden for any one even to ask a question concerning it; but every year, on the day on which the queen was turned to stone, the whole land mourns with weeping and wailing. And now thou knowest all!"

"What you tell me," said the young man, "passes wonder. But tell me further, O Zadok, is it possible for me to see this queen whom my father turned to stone?"

"Nothing is easier," said Zadok.

"Then," said the young man, "I command you to take me to where she is, so that I may see her with mine own eyes."

"I hear and obey," said the Demon.

He seized the young man by the girdle, and in an instant flew away with him to a hanging-garden that lay before the queen's palace.

"Thou art the first man," said Zadok, "who has seen what thou art about to see for seven-and-thirty years. Come, I will show thee a queen, the most beautiful that the eyes of man ever looked upon."

He led the way, and the young man followed, filled with wonder and astonishment. Not a sound was to be heard, not a thing moved, but silence hung like a veil between the earth and the sky.

Following the Demon, the young man ascended a flight of steps, and so entered the vestibule of the palace. There stood guards in armor of brass and silver and gold. But they were without life – they were all of stone as white as alabaster. Thence they passed through room after room and apartment after apartment crowded with courtiers and nobles and lords in their robes of office, magnificent beyond fancying, but each silent and motionless – each a stone as white as alabaster. At last they entered an apartment in the very centre of the palace. There sat seven-and-forty female attendants around a couch of purple and gold. Each of the seven-and-forty was beautiful beyond what the young man could have believed possible, and each was clad in a garment of silk as white as snow, embroidered with threads of silver and studded with glistening diamonds. But each sat silent and motionless – each was a stone as white as alabaster.

Upon the couch in the centre of the apartment reclined a queen with a crown of gold upon her head. She lay there motionless, still. She was cold and dead – of stone as white as marble. The young man approached and looked into her face, and when he looked his breath became faint and his heart grew soft within him like wax in a flame of fire.

He sighed; he melted; the tears burst from his eyes and ran down his cheeks. "Zadok!" he cried – "Zadok! Zadok! What have you done to show me this wonder of beauty and love! Alas! That I have seen her; for the world is nothing to me now. O Zadok! That she were flesh and blood, instead of cold stone! Tell me, Zadok, I command you to tell me, was she once really alive as I am alive, and did my father truly turn her to stone as she lies here?"

"She was really alive as thou art alive, and he did truly transform her to this stone," said Zadok.

"And tell me," said the young man, "can she never become alive again?"

“She can become alive, and it lies with you to make her alive,” said the Demon. “Listen, O master. Thy father possessed a wand, half of silver and half of gold. Whatsoever he touched with silver became converted to stone, such as thou seest all around thee here; but whatsoever, O master, he touched with the gold, it became alive, even if it were a dead stone.”

“Tell me, Zadok,” cried the young man; “I command you to tell me, where is that wand of silver and gold?”

“I have it with me,” said Zadok.

“Then give it to me; I command you to give it to me.”

“I hear and obey,” said Zadok. He drew from his girdle a wand, half of gold and half of silver, as he spoke, and gave it to the young man.

“Thou mayst go now, Zadok,” said the young man, trembling with eagerness.

Zadok laughed and vanished. The young man stood for a while looking down at the beautiful figure of alabaster. Then he touched the lips with the golden tip of the wand. In an instant there came a marvellous change. He saw the stone melt, and begin to grow flexible and soft. He saw it become warm, and the cheeks and lips grow red with life. Meantime a murmur had begun to rise all through the palace. It grew louder and louder – it became a shout. The figure of the queen that had been stone opened its eyes.

“Who are you?” it said.

Aben Hassen the Fool fell upon his knees. “I am he who was sent to bring you to life.” he said. “My father turned you to cold stone, and I – I have brought you back to warm life again.”

The queen smiled – her teeth sparkled like pearls. “If you have brought me to life, then I am yours,” she said, and she kissed him upon the lips.

He grew suddenly dizzy; the world swam before his eyes.

For seven days nothing was heard in the town but rejoicing and joy. The young man lived in a golden cloud of delight. “And to think,” said he, “if I had listened to that accursed Talisman of Solomon, called The Wise,’ all this happiness, this ecstasy that is now mine, would have been lost to me.”

“Tell me, beloved,” said the queen, upon the morning of the seventh day – “thy father once possessed all the hidden treasure of the ancient kings of Egypt – tell me, is it now thine as it was once his?”

“Yes,” said the young man, “it is now all mine as it was once all his.”

“And do you really love me as you say?”

“Yes,” said the young man, “and ten thousand times more than I say.”

“Then, as you love me, I beg one boon on you. It is that you show me this treasure of which I have heard so much, and which we are to enjoy together.”

The young man was drunk with happiness. “Thou shalt see it all,” said he.

Then, for the first time, the Talisman spoke without being questioned. “Fool!” it cried; “wilt thou not be advised?”

“Be silent,” said the young man. “Six times, vile thing, you would have betrayed me. Six times you would have deprived me of joys that should have been mine, and each was greater than that which went before. Shall I now listen the seventh time? Now,” said he to the queen, “I will show you our treasure.” He called aloud, “Zadok, Zadok, Zadok!”

Instantly the ground shook beneath their feet, the dust rose in clouds, and Zadok appeared, as black as ink, and with eyes that shone like coals of fire.

“I command you,” said the young man, “to carry the queen and myself to the garden where my treasure lies hidden.”

Zadok laughed aloud. “I hear thee and obey thee, master,” said he.

He seized the queen and the young man by the girdle, and in an instant transported them to the garden and to the treasure-house.

“Thou art where thou commandest to be,” said the Demon.

The young man immediately drew a circle upon the ground with his finger-tip. He struck his heel upon the circle. The ground opened, disclosing the steps leading downward. The young man descended the steps with the queen behind him, and behind them both came the Demon Zadok.

The young man opened the door of adamant and entered the first of the vaulted rooms.

When the queen saw the huge basin full of silver treasure, her cheeks and her forehead flushed as red as fire.

They went into the next room, and when the queen saw the basin of gold her face turned as white as ashes.

They went into the third room, and when the queen saw the basin of jewels and the six golden statues her face turned as blue as lead, and her eyes shone green like a snake’s.

“Are you content?” asked the young man.

The queen looked about her. “No!” cried she, hoarsely, pointing to the closed door that had never been opened, and whereon were engraved these words:

“Behold! Beyond this door is that alone which shall satisfy all thy desires.”

“No!” cried she. “What is it that lies behind yon door?”

“I do not know,” said the young man.

“Then open the door, and let me see what lies within.”

“I cannot open the door,” said he. “How can I open the door, seeing that there is no lock nor key to it?”

“If thou dost not open the door,” said the queen, “all is over between thee and me. So do as I bid thee, or leave me forever.”

They had both forgotten that the Demon Zadok was there. Then the young man bethought himself of the Talisman of Solomon. “Tell me, O Talisman,” said he, “how shall I open yonder door?”

“Oh, wretched one!” cried the Talisman, “oh, wretched one! Fly while there is yet time – fly, for thy doom is near! Do not push the door open, for it is not locked!”

The young man struck his head with his clinched fist. “What a fool am I!” he cried. “Will I never learn wisdom. Here have I been coming to this place seven months, and have never yet thought to try whether yonder door was locked or not!”

“Open the door!” cried the queen.

They went forward together. The young man pushed the door with his hand. It opened swiftly and silently, and they entered.

Within was a narrow room as red as blood. A flaming lamp hung from the ceiling above. The young man stood as though turned to stone, for there stood a gigantic Black Demon with a napkin wrapped around his loins and a scimitar in his right hand, the blade of which gleamed like lightning in the flame of the lamp. Before him lay a basket filled with sawdust.

When the queen saw what she saw she screamed in a loud voice, “Thou hast found it! Thou hast found it! Thou hast found what alone can satisfy all thy desires! Strike, O slave!”

The young man heard the Demon Zadok give a yell of laughter. He saw a whirl and a flash, and then he knew nothing.

The Black had struck – the blade had fallen, and the head of Aben Hassen the Fool rolled into the basket of sawdust that stood waiting for it.

“Aye, aye,” said St. George, “and so it should end. For what was your Aben Hassen the Fool but a heathen Paniem? Thus should the heads of all the like be chopped off from their shoulders. Is there not some one here to tell us a fair story about a saint?”

“For the matter of that,” said the Lad who fiddled when the Jew was in the bramble-bush – “for the matter of that I know a very good story that begins about a saint and a hazel-nut.

“Say you so?” said St. George. “Well, let us have it. But stay, friend, thou hast no ale in thy pot. Wilt thou not let me pay for having it filled?”

"That," said the Lad who fiddled when the Jew was in the bramble-bush, "may be as you please, Sir Knight; and, to tell the truth, I will be mightily glad for a drop to moisten my throat withal."

"But," said Fortunatus, "you have not told us what the story is to be about."

"It is," said the Lad who fiddled for the Jew in the bramble-bush, "about – "

# Ill-Luck and the Fiddler

Once upon a time St. Nicholas came down into the world to take a peep at the old place and see how things looked in the spring-time. On he stepped along the road to the town where he used to live, for he had a notion to find out whether things were going on nowadays as they one time did. By-and-by he came to a cross-road, and who should he see sitting there but Ill-Luck himself. Ill-Luck's face was as gray as ashes, and his hair as white as snow – for he is as old as Grandfather Adam – and two great wings grew out of his shoulders – for he flies fast and comes quickly to those whom he visits, does Ill-Luck.

Now, St. Nicholas had a pocketful of hazel-nuts, which he kept cracking and eating as he trudged along the road, and just then he came upon one with a worm-hole in it. When he saw Ill-Luck it came into his head to do a good turn to poor sorrowful man.

"Good-morning, Ill-Luck," says he.

"Good-morning, St. Nicholas," says Ill-Luck.

"You look as hale and strong as ever," says St. Nicholas.

"Ah, yes," says Ill-Luck, "I find plenty to do in this world of woe."

"They tell me," says St. Nicholas, "that you can go wherever you choose, even if it be through a key-hole; now, is that so?"

"Yes," says Ill-Luck, "it is."

"Well, look now, friend," says St. Nicholas, "could you go into this hazel-nut if you chose to?"

"Yes," says Ill-Luck, "I could indeed."

"I should like to see you," says St. Nicholas; "for then I should be of a mind to believe what people say of you."

"Well," says Ill-Luck, "I have not much time to be pottering and playing upon Jack's fiddle; but to oblige an old friend" – thereupon he made himself small and smaller, and – phst! he was in the nut before you could wink.

Then what do you think St. Nicholas did? In his hand he held a little plug of wood, and no sooner had Ill-Luck entered the nut than he stuck the plug in the hole, and there was man's enemy as tight as fly in a bottle.

"So!" says St. Nicholas, "that's a piece of work well done." Then he tossed the hazel-nut under the roots of an oak-tree near by, and went his way.

And that is how this story begins.

Well, the hazel-nut lay and lay and lay, and all the time that it lay there nobody met with ill-luck; but, one day, who should come travelling that way but a rogue of a Fiddler, with his fiddle under his arm. The day was warm, and he was tired; so down he sat under the shade of the oak-tree to rest his legs. By-and-by he heard a little shrill voice piping and crying, "Let me out! let me out! let me out!"

The Fiddler looked up and down, but he could see nobody. "Who are you?" says he.

"I am Ill-Luck! Let me out! let me out!"

"Let you out?" says the Fiddler. "Not I; if you are bottled up here it is the better for all of us;" and, so saying, he tucked his fiddle under his arm and off he marched.

But before he had gone six steps he stopped. He was one of your peering, prying sort, and liked more than a little to know all that was to be known about this or that or the other thing that he chanced to see or hear. "I wonder where Ill-Luck can be, to be in such a tight place as he seems to be caught in," says he to himself; and back he came again. "Where are you, Ill-Luck?" says he.

"Here I am," says Ill-Luck – "here in this hazel-nut, under the roots of the oak-tree."

Thereupon the Fiddler laid aside his fiddle and bow, and fell to poking and prying under the roots until he found the nut. Then he began twisting and turning it in his fingers, looking first on one side and then on the other, and all the while Ill-Luck kept crying, "Let me out! let me out!"

It was not long before the Fiddler found the little wooden plug, and then nothing would do but he must take a peep inside the nut to see if Ill-Luck was really there. So he picked and pulled at the wooden plug, until at last out it came; and – phst! pop! out came Ill-Luck along with it.

Plague take the Fiddler! say I.

"Listen," says Ill-Luck. "It has been many a long day that I have been in that hazel-nut, and you are the man that has let me out; for once in a way I will do a good turn to a poor human body." Therewith, and without giving the Fiddler time to speak a word, Ill-Luck caught him up by the belt, and – whiz! away he flew like a bullet, over hill and over valley; over moor and over mountain, so fast that not enough wind was left in the Fiddler's stomach to say "Bo!"

By-and-by he came to a garden, and there he let the Fiddler drop on the soft grass below. Then away he flew to attend to other matters of greater need.

When the Fiddler had gathered his wits together, and himself to his feet, he saw that he lay in a beautiful garden of flowers and fruit-trees and marble walks and what not, and that at the end of it stood a great, splendid house, all built of white marble, with a fountain in front, and peacocks strutting about on the lawn.

Well, the Fiddler smoothed down his hair and brushed his clothes a bit, and off he went to see what was to be seen at the grand house at the end of the garden.

He entered the door, and nobody said no to him. Then he passed through one room after another, and each was finer than the one he left behind. Many servants stood around; but they only bowed, and never asked whence he came. At last he came to a room where a little old man sat at a table. The table was spread with a feast that smelled so good that it brought tears to the Fiddler's eyes and water to his mouth, and all the plates were of pure gold. The little old man sat alone, but another place was spread, as though he were expecting some one. As the Fiddler came in the little old man nodded and smiled. "Welcome!" he cried; "and have you come at last?"

"Yes," said the Fiddler, "I have. It was Ill-Luck that brought me."

"Nay," said the little old man, "do not say that. Sit down to the table and eat; and when I have told you all, you will say it was not Ill-Luck, but Good-Luck, that brought you."

The Fiddler had his own mind about that; but, all the same, down he sat at the table, and fell to with knife and fork at the good things, as though he had not had a bite to eat for a week of Sundays.

"I am the richest man in the world," says the little old man, after a while.

"I am glad to hear it," says the Fiddler.

"You may well be," said the old man, "for I am all alone in the world, and without wife or child. And this morning I said to myself that the first body that came to my house I would take for a son – or a daughter, as the case might be. You are the first, and so you shall live with me as long as I live, and after I am gone everything that I have shall be yours."

The Fiddler did nothing but stare with open eyes and mouth, as though he would never shut either again.

Well, the Fiddler lived with the old man for maybe three or four days as snug and happy a life as ever a mouse passed in a green cheese. As for the gold and silver and jewels – why, they were as plentiful in that house as dust in a mill! Everything the Fiddler wanted came to his hand. He lived high, and slept soft and warm, and never knew what it was to want either more or less, or great or small. In all of those three or four days he did nothing but enjoy himself with might and main.

But by-and-by he began to wonder where all the good things came from. Then, before long, he fell to pestering the old man with questions about the matter.

At first the old man put him off with short answers, but the Fiddler was a master-hand at finding out anything he wanted to know. He dinned and drummed and worried until flesh and blood could stand it no longer. So at last the old man said that he would show him the treasure-house where all his wealth came from, and at that the Fiddler was tickled beyond measure.

The old man took a key from behind the door and led him out into the garden. There in a corner by the wall was a great trap-door of iron. The old man fitted the key to the lock and turned it. He lifted the door, and then went down a steep flight of stone steps, and the Fiddler followed close at his heels. Down below it was as light as day, for in the centre of the room hung a great lamp that shone with a bright light and lit up all the place as bright as day. In the floor were set three great basins of marble: one was nearly full of silver, one of gold, and one of gems of all sorts.

"All this is mine," said the old man, "and after I am gone it shall be yours. It was left to me as I will leave it to you, and in the meantime you may come and go as you choose and fill your pockets whenever you wish to. But there is one thing you must not do: you must never open that door yonder at the back of the room. Should you do so, Ill-Luck will be sure to overtake you."

Oh no! The Fiddler would never think of doing such a thing as opening the door. The silver and gold and jewels were enough for him. But since the old man had given him leave, he would just help himself to a few of the fine things. So he stuffed his pockets full, and then he followed the old man up the steps and out into the sunlight again.

It took him maybe an hour to count all the money and jewels he had brought up with him. After he had done that, he began to wonder what was inside of the little door at the back of the room. First he wondered; then he began to grow curious; then he began to itch and tingle and burn as though fifty thousand I-want-to-know nettles were sticking into him from top to toe. At last he could stand it no longer. "I'll just go down yonder," says he, "and peep through the key-hole; perhaps I can see what is there without opening the door."

So down he took the key, and off he marched to the garden. He opened the trap-door, and went down the steep steps to the room below. There was the door at the end of the room, but when he came to look there was no key-hole to it. "Pshaw!" said he, "here is a pretty state of affairs. Tut! tut! tut! Well, since I have come so far, it would be a pity to turn back without seeing more." So he opened the door and peeped in.

"Pooh!" said the Fiddler, "There's nothing there, after all," and he opened the door wide.

Before him was a great long passageway, and at the far end of it he could see a spark of light as though the sun were shining there. He listened, and after a while he heard a sound like the waves beating on the shore. "Well," says he, "this is the most curious thing I have seen for a long time. Since I have come so far, I may as well see the end of it." So he entered the passageway, and closed the door behind him. He went on and on, and the spark of light kept growing larger and larger, and by-and-by – pop! out he came at the other end of the passage.

Sure enough, there he stood on the sea-shore, with the waves beating and dashing on the rocks. He stood looking and wondering to find himself in such a place, when all of a sudden something came with a whiz and a rush and caught him by the belt, and away he flew like a bullet.

By-and-by he managed to screw his head around and look up, and there it was Ill-Luck that had him. "I thought so," said the Fiddler; and then he gave over kicking.

Well; on and on they flew, over hill and valley, over moor and mountain, until they came to another garden, and there Ill-Luck let the Fiddler drop.

Swash! Down he fell into the top of an apple-tree, and there he hung in the branches.

It was the garden of a royal castle, and all had been weeping and woe (though they were beginning now to pick up their smiles again), and this was the reason why:

The king of that country had died, and no one was left behind him but the queen. But she was a prize, for not only was the kingdom hers, but she was as young as a spring apple and as pretty as a picture; so that there was no end of those who would have liked to have had her, each man for his own. Even that day there were three princes at the castle, each one wanting the queen to marry him; and the wrangling and bickering and squabbling that was going on was enough to deafen a body. The poor young queen was tired to death with it all, and so she had come out into the garden for a bit of rest; and there she sat under the shade of an apple-tree, fanning herself and crying, when —

Swash! Down fell the Fiddler into the apple-tree and down fell a dozen apples, popping and tumbling about the queen's ears.

The queen looked up and screamed, and the Fiddler climbed down.

"Where did you come from?" said she.

"Oh, Ill-Luck brought me," said the Fiddler.

"Nay," said the queen, "do not say so. You fell from heaven, for I saw it with my eyes and heard it with my ears. I see how it is now. You were sent hither from heaven to be my husband, and my husband you shall be. You shall be king of this country, half-and-half with me as queen, and shall sit on a throne beside me."

You can guess whether or not that was music to the Fiddler's ears.

So the princes were sent packing, and the Fiddler was married to the queen, and reigned in that country.

Well, three or four days passed, and all was as sweet and happy as a spring day. But at the end of that time the Fiddler began to wonder what was to be seen in the castle. The queen was very fond of him, and was glad enough to show him all the fine things that were to be seen; so hand in hand they went everywhere, from garret to cellar.

But you should have seen how splendid it all was! The Fiddler felt more certain than ever that it was better to be a king than to be the richest man in the world, and he was as glad as glad could be that Ill-Luck had brought him from the rich little old man over yonder to this.

So he saw everything in the castle but one thing. "What is behind that door?" said he.

"Ah! that," said the queen, "you must not ask or wish to know. Should you open that door Ill-Luck will be sure to overtake you."

"Pooh!" said the Fiddler, "I don't care to know, anyhow," and off they went, hand in hand.

Yes, that was a very fine thing to say; but before an hour had gone by the Fiddler's head began to hum and buzz like a beehive. "I don't believe," said he, "there would be a grain of harm in my peeping inside that door; all the same, I will not do it. I will just go down and peep through the key-hole." So off he went to do as he said; but there was no key-hole to that door, either. "Why, look!" says he, "it is just like the door at the rich man's house over yonder; I wonder if it is the same inside as outside," and he opened the door and peeped in. Yes; there was the long passage and the spark of light at the far end, as though the sun were shining. He cocked his head to one side and listened. "Yes," said he, "I think I hear the water rushing, but I am not sure; I will just go a little further in and listen," and so he entered and closed the door behind him. Well, he went on and on until – pop! there he was out at the farther end, and before he knew what he was about he had stepped out upon the sea-shore, just as he had done before.

Whiz! whirr! Away flew the Fiddler like a bullet, and there was Ill-Luck carrying him by the belt again. Away they sped, over hill and valley, over moor and mountain, until the Fiddler's head grew so dizzy that he had to shut his eyes. Suddenly Ill-Luck let him drop, and down he fell – thump! bump! – on the hard ground. Then he opened his eyes and sat up, and, lo and behold! there he was, under the oak-tree whence he had started in the first place. There lay his fiddle, just as he had left it. He picked it up and ran his fingers over the strings – trum, twang! Then he got to his feet and brushed the dirt and grass from his knees. He tucked his fiddle under his arm, and off he stepped upon the way he had been going at first.

"Just to think!" said he, "I would either have been the richest man in the world, or else I would have been a king, if it had not been for Ill-Luck."

And that is the way we all of us talk.

Dr. Faustus had sat all the while neither drinking ale nor smoking tobacco, but with his hands folded, and in silence. "I know not why it is," said he, "but that story of yours, my friend, brings to my mind a story of a man whom I once knew – a great magician in his time, and a necromancer

and a chemist and an alchemist and mathematician and a rhetorician, an astronomer, an astrologer, and a philosopher as well."

"Tis a long list of excellency," said old Bidpai.

"Tis not as long as was his head," said Dr. Faustus.

"It would be good for us all to hear a story of such a man," said old Bidpai.

"Nay," said Dr. Faustus, "the story is not altogether of the man himself, but rather of a pupil who came to learn wisdom of him."

"And the name of your story is what?" said Fortunatus.

"It hath no name," said Dr. Faustus.

"Nay," said St. George, "everything must have a name."

"It hath no name," said Dr. Faustus. "But I shall give it a name, and it shall be – "

# Empty Bottles

In the old, old days when men were wiser than they are in these times, there lived a great philosopher and magician, by name Nicholas Flamel. Not only did he know all the actual sciences, but the black arts as well, and magic, and what not. He conjured demons so that when a body passed the house of a moonlight night a body might see imps, great and small, little and big, sitting on the chimney stacks and the ridge-pole, clattering their heels on the tiles and chatting together.

He could change iron and lead into silver and gold; he discovered the elixir of life, and might have been living even to this day had he thought it worth while to do so.

There was a student at the university whose name was Gebhart, who was so well acquainted with algebra and geometry that he could tell at a single glance how many drops of water there were in a bottle of wine. As for Latin and Greek – he could patter them off like his A B C's. Nevertheless, he was not satisfied with the things he knew, but was for learning the things that no schools could teach him. So one day he came knocking at Nicholas Flamel's door.

"Come in," said the wise man, and there Gebhart found him sitting in the midst of his books and bottles and diagrams and dust and chemicals and cobwebs, making strange figures upon the table with jackstraws and a piece of chalk – for your true wise man can squeeze more learning out of jackstraws and a piece of chalk than we common folk can get out of all the books in the world.

No one else was in the room but the wise man's servant, whose name was Babette.

"What is it you want?" said the wise man, looking at Gebhart over the rim of his spectacles.

"Master," said Gebhart, "I have studied day after day at the university, and from early in the morning until late at night, so that my head has hummed and my eyes were sore, yet I have not learned those things that I wish most of all to know – the arts that no one but you can teach. Will you take me as your pupil?"

The wise man shook his head.

"Many would like to be as wise as that," said he, "and few there be who can become so. Now tell me. Suppose all the riches of the world were offered to you, would you rather be wise?"

"Yes."

"Suppose you might have all the rank and power of a king or of an emperor, would you rather be wise?"

"Yes."

"Suppose I undertook to teach you, would you give up everything of joy and of pleasure to follow me?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you are hungry," said the master.

"Yes," said the student, "I am."

"Then, Babette, you may bring some bread and cheese."

It seemed to Gebhart that he had learned all that Nicholas Flamel had to teach him.

It was in the gray of the dawning, and the master took the pupil by the hand and led him up the rickety stairs to the roof of the house, where nothing was to be seen but gray sky, high roofs, and chimney stacks from which the smoke rose straight into the still air.

"Now," said the master, "I have taught you nearly all of the science that I know, and the time has come to show you the wonderful thing that has been waiting for us from the beginning when time was. You have given up wealth and the world and pleasure and joy and love for the sake of wisdom. Now, then, comes the last test – whether you can remain faithful to me to the end; if you fail in it, all is lost that you have gained."

After he said that he stripped his cloak away from his shoulders and laid bare the skin. Then he took a bottle of red liquor and began bathing his shoulder-blades with it; and as Gebhart, squatting

upon the ridge-pole, looked, he saw two little lumps bud out upon the smooth skin, and then grow and grow and grow until they became two great wings as white as snow.

"Now then," said the master, "take me by the belt and grip fast, for there is a long, long journey before us, and if you should lose your head and let go your hold you will fall and be dashed to pieces."

Then he spread the two great wings, and away he flew as fast as the wind, with Gebhart hanging to his belt.

Over hills, over dales, over mountains, over moors he flew, with the brown earth lying so far below that horses and cows looked like pismires and men like fleas.

Then, by-and-by, it was over the ocean they were crossing, with the great ships that pitched and tossed below looking like chips in a puddle in rainy weather.

At last they came to a strange land, far, far away, and there the master lit upon a sea-shore where the sand was as white as silver. As soon as his feet touched the hard ground the great wings were gone like a puff of smoke, and the wise man walked like any other body.

At the edge of the sandy beach was a great, high, naked cliff; and the only way of reaching the top was by a flight of stone steps, as slippery as glass, cut in the solid rock.

The wise man led the way, and the student followed close at his heels, every now and then slipping and stumbling so that, had it not been for the help that the master gave him, he would have fallen more than once and have been dashed to pieces upon the rocks below.

At last they reached the top, and there found themselves in a desert, without stick of wood or blade of grass, but only gray stones and skulls and bones bleaching in the sun.

In the middle of the plain was a castle such as the eyes of man never saw before, for it was built all of crystal from roof to cellar. Around it was a high wall of steel, and in the wall were seven gates of polished brass.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.