

after wast thou reared?—and where dwelleth the maid whom thou for thy true love hast chosen?"

"In Denmark was I born, and there, too, was I reared; and in Denmark dwells my dear love, with whom I will live and die."

Then spake the daughter of elves to her handmaid:

"Go fetch me a horn," said she, "filled with the red wine of the elves; and cast into the wine but two grains of elfin-corn.

"A pledge of wine in a wild-deer's horn,
With two grains blended of elfin-corn."

Soon the handmaid returned, and in her hands she bore a horn, its brim beaded with the rosy wine that sparkled within it.

"Now drink to me, Sir Boesmer," said the elf-maiden; "drink to me, and I, too, will drink to thee; and thereafter shalt thou be free to go whithersoever thou wilt."

He set the horn to his lips, but at the first touch of the wine all memory of the earth he had left passed from him;—his parents he forgot, his sisters, and his brothers; he forgot, too, his heart's dear love, with whom he would live and die.

"Tell me now, Sir Boesmer, and tell me truly," said the elf-maiden; "where wast thou born, and in what place thereafter wast thou reared?—and where dwelleth the maid whom thou for thy true love hast chosen?"

"In elfland was I born," answered he, "and in elfland was I reared;—and there art thou, my own dear love, with whom I will live and die."

Fulfilled was the heart's desire of the elf-maiden; and young Boesmer lay at her side; but for him his father and his mother sorrowed and wept; his sisters and his brothers; but deeper even than these mourned for him his true love:

Deeper his true love sorrowed for him,
With tears in the cloister her eyes were dim
The leaf's on the linden.

2.

AGNES AND THE MERMAN.

Upon the bridge stood Agnes, when up from the blue waves rose the merman. As the purest gold was his hair, and filled with gentle peace were his eyes; and to her he said:

"Oh, hear me, Agnes, so fair and so fine,"
—(*Singing the birds were*)—

"And wilt thou be the all-dearest of mine?"
—(*Beautiful Agnes.*)—

"I will be thine all-dearest," answered she. To the merman answered Agnes: "Thine all-dearest will I be if thou take me with thee under the blue billows." Her ears he closed and her lips he sealed, and into the ocean deep he led her down the glimmering ways to the dim sea-floor.

There happily they dwelt, eight years together, and seven sons and a daughter Agnes bore to the faithful merman—seven sons and a dear daughter, and as at the cradle of her youngest she sat, lo! the faint sweet clang of church-bells in far England sounded in her ears. Then stood she before the merman. "And might I but once again enter the church upon yonder green earth?" said she.

"Right well may'st thou go," said the merman, "if so be thou comest again to the little ones thy children."

"That indeed will I," answered Agnes; "in very deed; for naught upon earth is there that lieth nearer to my heart."

"But when to church thou goest," said the merman, "adorn not thy breast with the red gold; and when through the churchyard thy feet lead thee, shake not over the shoulders of thee thy golden hair; and when in the church thou treadest, smile not beneath thy scarlet-hooded robe, nor go thou in to thy dear mother"; and thereto he said:

"And when named by the priest is the Holy,"
—(*Singing the birds were*)—

"Bend not in reverence lowly,"
—(*Beautiful Agnes.*)—

But as towards the church she went, lo! Agnes on her hands set gems of red gold, and therewith her breast she adorned; and as through the churchyard her feet led her, she loosened over her shoulders her flowing hair of bright gold.

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH.

She smiled, too, under her scarlet-hooded robe as towards the seat of her mother she stepped:

And when named by the priest was the Holy,
She bowed her in reverence lowly.

Then said her mother as near her she stood: "Agnes! Agnes! and whence art thou come hither?—Agnes! Agnes! dear daughter," said she, "where hast thou been this long while? Where hast thou tarried, and wherefore paleth thy cheek so wanly?"

"Upon the ocean's floor there stands my dwelling, and there has the merman to me given troth. No sun shines brightly, and therefore are my cheeks grown so wan. To him have I borne seven sons, and a little daughter is the eighth of my children."

"What did the merman give thee at the bride-feast as dowry?" asked her mother.

"Five gold rings he gave me," said Agnes, "and within them lay both roses and lilies; and a golden band he gave me—by no better is the Queen's hand encircled, — and golden-buckled shoon, than which no finer were found, were it even on the feet of a queen; and, above all, a golden harp he gave me, whereto my sorrow of heart I might sigh did I grieve in my sea-home. But now upon the green earth will I remain, and never more to the ocean deep will I return."

They thought, these two, that they were alone and unseen, but near them stood the merman, and their words fell heavily on his heart. He stood at the church door, and, as the holy place he entered, all the carven images turned from him their faces. As the purest gold was his hair, and filled with sorrow were his eyes as he said:

"Agnes! Agnes! come back with me to thy sea-home—come back to thy little children, thou for whom their hearts are filled with longing."

"Yea, let their hearts overflow with their longing; to them never will I return."

"Oh! think thou of the grown ones, and of the little ones, and, most of all, think of her who, loving, lieth in the cradle."

"No," answered she — "no, never will I think of the grown ones, nor the little ones, and least of her who in the cradle lies."

The merman lifted his right hand,
—(*Singing the birds were*)—
Dule and darkness cover the land.
—(*Beautiful Agnes.*)—

AGNES AND THE MERMAN.

Darkness came, the skies were obscured, the land and the town were hidden. Blindly hither and thither moved Agnes. No way could she find. She thought to have crossed the green lands, over the meads went her thoughts to her mother's holm; but she—she took the path to the ocean deeps. To the green holm of her mother went her thoughts, but her feet led her on the way to the sea-floor.

"Welcome, Agnes, under the blue billows," cried the merman. "Oh, welcome! but never more shalt thou tread on the green earth; never more shalt thou tread on the earth-meadows,—and never more shalt thou see thy dear children. But here on the grey stones shalt thou sit, and with bones of dead men shalt thou play; yet to thee will I spare thy harp of gold, whereto thy sorrow of heart thou may'st sigh, grieving in thy sea-home."

Men hear a sad murmur in woodland ways;

—(*Singing the birds were*)—

Agnes her harp in the ocean plays—

—(*Beautiful Agnes.*)—