

gold, as though it were a golden cupola upon some heathen temple. And the winds took delight in scattering the golden leaves. "Thus flies beauty," they cried, whirling the leaves along the grass where daisies still lingered; "You shall be stripped of your pride; you shall be bared to the frosts of the lengthening nights of autumn."

The frosts came when the red star of the Scorpion glittered evilly in the still nights; and the linden sighed for the short summer nights of Orion, and the ghostly lovers in its shadow.

You would never suppose that the winds could become so cruel; their summer caresses were all pretence; they were hard of heart, and bare of love.

"I am alone again," murmured the tree, its leaves scattered, "alone and bare to the red star of winter. So the summer goes; so went the last; so will the next; and there is not one will stay with me now my beauty is gone."

But the little elf that had not dared to love the linden when she stood so beautiful through the three seasons, crept to the root of the tree.

"I longed to love you when the young buds tingled in the broken days of August; when the leaves spread to the warm suns of October; when they glowed golden in the misty morns of April. I longed to love you, to love you more than did the winds, or the bees, or the birds, or the lovers;—and because your beauty gave me joy, I shall keep your roots warm through the bitter nights of June; and your loveliness will come again." And the little elf made its bed at the root of the linden, and there it slept through the winter, giving the warmth of love to the tree, that dreamed and dreamed, and was happy.

It awakened in the spring, and looked down with misty eyes towards where the little sleeping elf had lain; but the elf had stolen away.

"You dear thing," said the linden; "it is not only my passing beauty that you love then;—you give love, and that creates new beauty. At least I can make your bed softer and warmer, little elf."

And it covered the roots with mosses and lichens and dry leaves; and as the autumn nights came silently in the mists the little elf returned to its winter bed, whispering as it nestled in the mosses, "I believe the beautiful linden is kind of heart to me;—the beautiful linden, oh, the beautiful linden."

Skovenklang.

THERE was once a young girl who had learned to sing a song in a strange language without knowing anything of the meaning of it. Her aunt used to sing it as she walked about the house sweeping and dusting; and there was one line, the last, of which the young girl particularly liked the sound.

Translated, the first stanza of the song was this:

Two thrushes sat on beechen spray,
Such goodly friends in truth were they;
So hushed they sat, and sad at heart,
For they, alas! so soon must part,
A song they then alternate sang,
It sadly through the forest rang.

Now these were the words of the strange language:

To Drosler sad paa Boge-kvist,
Saa gode Venner var de vist;
Med Sorg i Lind saa tyst de sad;
Thi ak! de skulde skilles ad;
Saa sang de begge to en sang,
Den soergeligt i Skoven klang.

She thought Skovenklang was the name of somebody; and she made up her mind that when she grew up and wrote a story, the name of the hero, or the villain, should be Skovenklang.

She may be grown up now, but she has not written the story, so I shall tell you what I know of him.

This Skovenklang was a lively elf, very fond of teasing the birds and fays. He did nothing but enjoy life;—why should he work when there was no need to do so? There were apples, and nuts, and honey, and such good things, nearly all the year, so why need he trouble?

Ah, you will say; nearly all the year;—but how of the winter? Yes, there was the winter; but Skovenklang was sensible too; and like the squirrels he built a cosy nest in a hollow tree, laid by a good store of apples and nuts while they were plentiful, and when the land grew cold with sleety wind, and white with snow, there he lay snugly dozing, nibbling now and again at his nuts or apples, listening to the winds, and dreaming of new tricks to play when the summer came again.

It was now near the time of winter, and he had stored up enough for the cold days, when he chanced in his roaming

on what he thought to be the dim thatched storehouse of one of the fays, finding rows on rows of bulbs in little heaps, brown ones, purple, round, flat,—many colours, and shapes, and sizes.

"This must be a family storehouse," he said to himself; "it seems too much for only one of them,—though I have heard that these fay girls are green-eye-greedy. . . . — How horribly tidy," he said as he looked at the neat little heaps; and he had a mind to scatter them all about. Yet there was something that pleased him too, and he left them as they were.

"I shall try some, though," he said; "there are so many she will never miss a few," and he took one or two from one heap, one or two from another, until his wallet was nearly full; and he took a handful or two of tiny black and brown grains, saying to himself, "Some kind of hundreds-and-thousands I suppose" as he hurried away, thinking he heard voices.

He frisked about on his way to his tree, when he found that the tiny grains had all riddled out through the cracks; but the bulbs were there.

He ate one, but did not care for it a bit; and another he cared for even less.

"Pooh," said he; "my own are much better," and he threw the rest out.

"That will not do, though," said he; "she may see them; for those fay-girls' eyes are dark, but sharp as sharp,"—and he gathered them up again and took them away to a favourite play-valley close by, where he hid them in the ground, one here, one there, so the cunningest fay would never be able to find them.

A few nights later he heard a droning in the air; and he thought "Aha!—the north wind is beginning;"—and he made his nest warm with hay, and dry moss, and fur, and he reached down through the hay and tickled the apples, saying, "The fay-girl's apples are not so good as you!"

How comfortably he dozed and nibbled through the winter; he was quite cheerful and lively when the spring came. He peeped out one day, but there was still snow in the shady corners, and the wind was cold, and he shivered, and crept down into his warm bed again, huddling together and bubbling with his lips till once more he felt cosy and comfortable.

In the early days of spring he did not venture far from his hollow tree. He played in the sunshine, and tilted up the pretty faces of the violets that peeped from the banks, and asked them, "Can you keep a secret?"—and was satisfied

when they did not answer "Yes." He watched the thrushes building; heard them tuning their songs, and mocked the bright-eyed things. He skipped about, and though he teased them they did not fear him. He peeped at their spotted eggs, but did not disturb them;—he was too much interested in the hungry young ones that he knew would soon be cheeping in the nests. But he kept out of the way of the magpies.

Then one day he saw coming the fay-girl whose bulbs he had taken. He skipped behind a silver birch, and peeping from its shelter,

"What have you come after?" he asked.

"What should I have come after?" she replied, which of course was no reply; and she made as if to catch him;—"what is your name?"

"I, Skovenklang;—you don't catch me," said he, shifting from foot to foot.

"What does I stand for?"

"I stands for Me."

"I stands for me?"

"Yes;—I is Me the same as U is You."

"Shouldn't you say 'I am me' and 'You are you?'" said she.

"No I shouldn't, because that's not what I mean," said he;—"besides; that sounds like grammar; and I hate grammar."

"How do you know what grammar is?"

"How do I know?—Haven't I stood behind the school-boys and looked over their shoulders?—Haven't I seen?—Haven't I heard them?—I should hate to be a schoolboy."

"Then the I is not for a name?"

"No, no;—I tell you Skovenklang is my name.—It is like this;" and he stretched his arm as if to see the time by a wristlet dandelion-clock;—"whenever I do a great work, I write under it 'I, Skovenklang didit,'" and he made a sweep with his arm as if he meant the world.

"Shew me how you write."

"Can't," said he, skipping to another tree;—"you don't catch me," he added, as she came nearer.

"Can't what?—shew me, or write?"

"Both."

"But you just said that you write 'I, Skovenklang didit.'"

"No," said the elf;—"I said 'Whenever'; and I never."

"Never what?"

"Work."

"Oh, I see; your works are works of the imagination, and so you only write in imagination?"

NEW ZEALAND TALES.

"What's that?"

"Imagination?—that's fancy; making believe."

"Yes," said he; "that's how I work and write; — and oooh! what lots you can do!"

"Then you have never really written 'I, Skovenklang didit'?"

"Never."

"Well, some day you shall;—oh—oh!— and some day not far away; for look,—look!" she cried, pointing behind him.

"What is it?" he asked, edging away, but watching her.

"Just look!"

"No fear," said he; "if I look, you'll have me."

"No, I promise," said she.

So he looked. They had come to his play-valley; and, where he had hidden the bulbs, there stood lovely flowers;—hyacinths, snow-flakes, narcissi yellow and white, yellow dafodils, all aglow and nodding in the wind.

The fay-girl ran to them; she bent down over a yellow flower, and breathed its delicious sharp fragrance.

"How did they come here?" she cried to the elf as she bent over them, eyeing him sidelong.

"Don't know;—never saw them before."

Not another word did he say, but sat on a root, his elbow on his knee, his hands under his chin, eyes wide open and full of wonder.

"Beauties!" he said at last;—"like cloud and sunshine snowed down."

"Why did you take them?" asked the fay.

"'m?" he said, glancing towards her for a short moment and again to the flowers.

"Why did you take them?" she repeated.

"Never took them," he said;—"never saw them before."

"But they tell me you did take them," and the flowers seemed to nod.

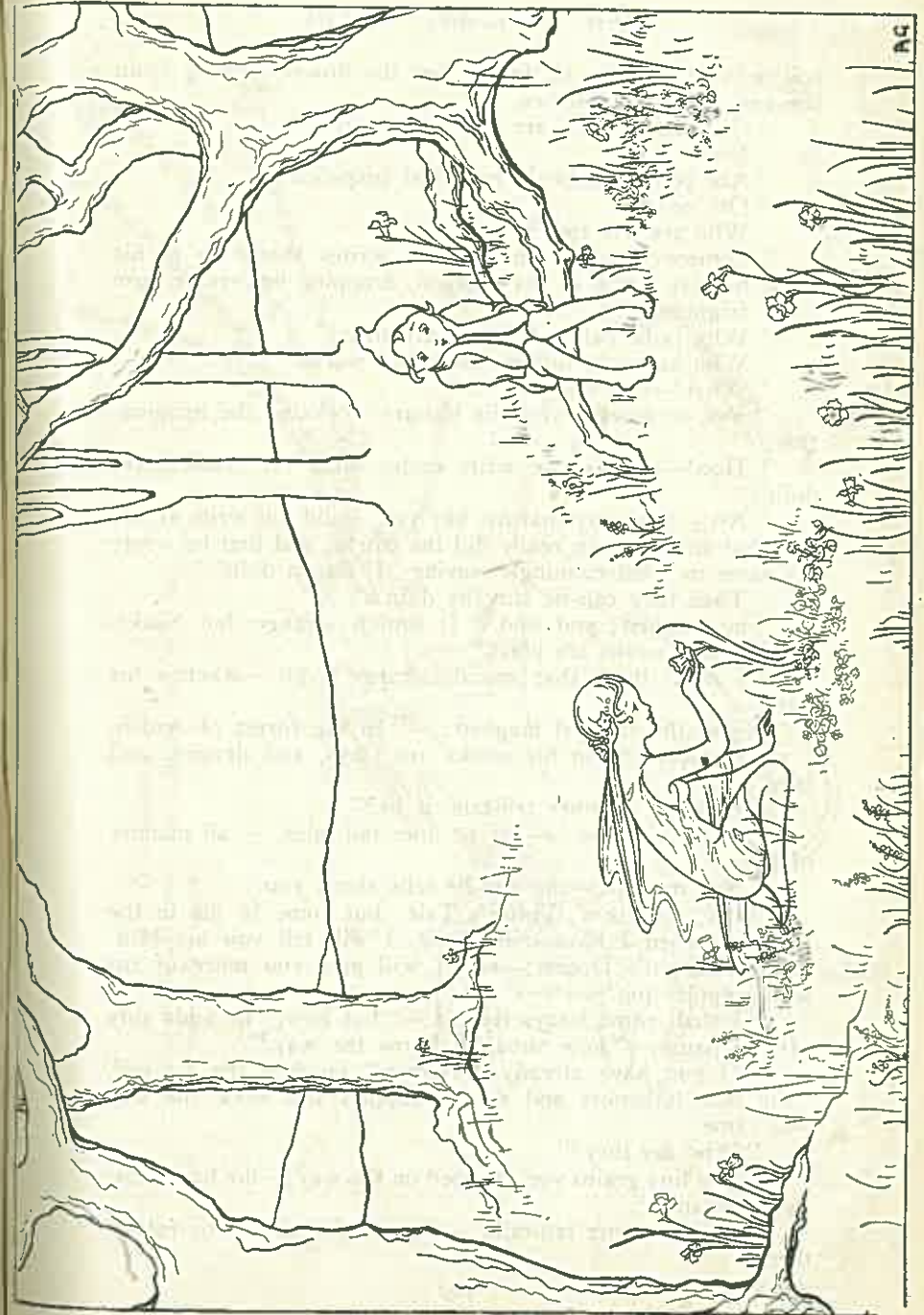
"Little story-tellers," said the elf; "they're not what I took."

"What did you take, then?"

"Little purple and brown things that I thought were your winter apples; but they didn't taste a bit nice; so I hid them in the ground. . . —Hi!" said he, jumping up; "I believe they are standing guard over every one!"

"Of course they are," said the fay; "isn't that what they tell me?"

"Little tell-tales," said he;—"but you may have them all back if you want them," and he started to scrape away the



The elf sat on a root.

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soil, when of course he found that the flowers sprang from the very bulbs themselves.

"Oh!" he cried; "are you a fay-witch?"

"No."

"Are you a teacher?" he asked suspiciously.

"Oh, no!"

"Who are you then?"

"Someone called Shakespeare writes about me in his tales; he says I ride in Dis's wagon, dropping flowers because I am frightened."

"Why is he called Shakespeare then?"

"Who knows?—but he did great works."

"What!—like me?"

"Yes, in a way,—for his too are works of the imagination."

"Hoo!—and did he write under them 'I, Shakespeare didit'?"

"No;—some say that he, like you, could not write at all; and that another man really did the works, and that he wrote his name in them cunningly, saying 'I, Bacon didit'."

"Then they can be sure he didn't."

She laughed; and said, "It sounds strange, but Shakespeare's best works are plays."

"I don't think that sounds strange a bit;—where's his tree?"

Again the fay-girl laughed;—"In the forest of Arden, I suppose;—yes, and his works are plays, and dreams, and tales."

"He's not another tell-tale, is he?"

"A kind of one, — for he does tell tales, — all manner of tales."

"Tell me one;—the one he tells about you."

"Ah; that is a Winter's Tale; but come to me in the summer, when I have more time; I will tell you his Midsummer Night's Dream;—and I will give you more of my winter-apples too."

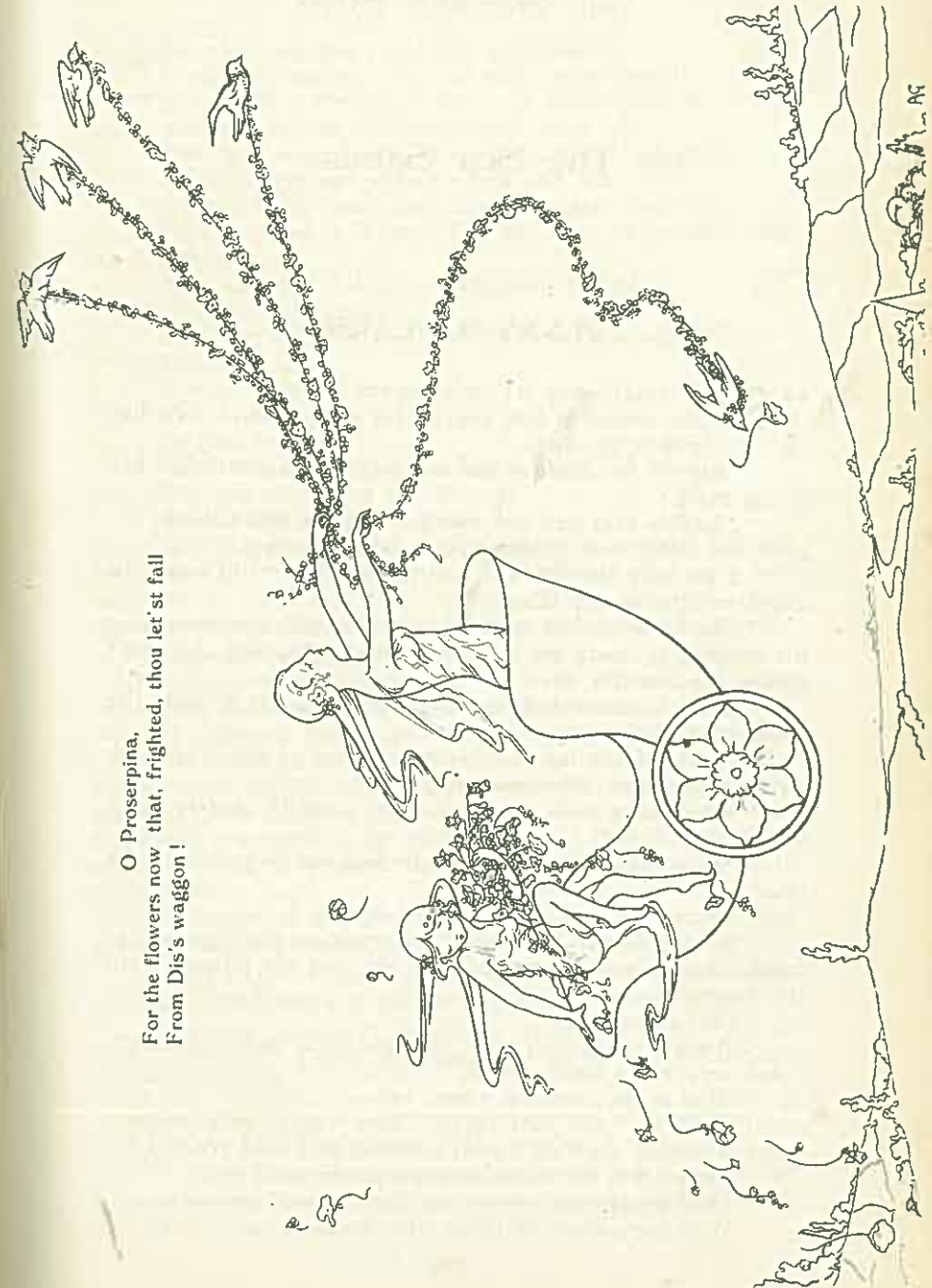
"I shall come," says the elf;—"but how," he adds slyly after a pause,— "how should I know the way?"

"If you have already forgotten," laughed the fay-girl, "the blue larkspurs and scarlet poppies will shew the way you came."

"Who are they?"

"The tiny grains you dropped on the way;—the hundreds-and-thousands."

"What!—more tell-tales?—the world seems to be full of them."



O Proserpina,
For the flowers now that, frightened, thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon!