

Little Brother Primrose and  
Sister Lavender





## Little Brother Primrose and Sister Lavender

### I

**T**HE stronghold of a wise and noble princess was attacked by her enemies. The princess could not gather together her large and faithful army quickly enough to defend her castle, but had to fly by night with her little prince in her arms.

So she fled all through the night, and at day-break they reached the foot of grisly Mount Kitesh, which was on the border of the principality.

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At that time there were no more dragons anywhere in the world, nor fairies, nor witches, nor any monsters. The Holy Cross and human reason had driven them forth. But in the fastnesses of Mount Kitesh the last of the Fiery Dragons had found a refuge, and seven Votaress Fairies attended upon him. That is why Mount Kitesh was so grisly. But at the foot of the mountain lay a quiet valley. There dwelt the shepherdess Miloika in her little willow cabin, and tended her flock.

To that very valley came the princess at dawn with her baby, and when she saw Miloika sitting outside her cabin she went up to her and begged: "Hide me and the little prince in your cabin through the day. At nightfall I will continue my flight with the prince." Miloika made the fugitives welcome, gave them ewes' milk to drink, and hid them in her cabin.

As evening approached, the kind and noble princess said: "I must go on now with the prince. But will you take my Golden Girdle and the prince's little Gold Cross on a red ribbon? If our enemies should chance to find us they would know us by the

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Girdle and the Cross. Put these two things by and take good care of them in your little cabin. When my faithful captains have gathered together an army and driven out the enemy, I shall return to my castle and there you shall be my dear friend and companion.”

“Your companion I cannot be, noble princess,” said Miloika, “for I am not your equal either by birth or understanding. But I will take care of your Girdle and your Cross, because in time of real sorrow and trouble even the heart of a beggar can be companion to the heart of a king.”

As she said this, Miloika received the Girdle and the Cross from the princess for safe keeping, and the princess took up the little prince and went out and away with him into the night, which was so dark that you could not tell grass from stone, nor field from sea.

## II

Many years passed, but the princess did not return to her lands nor to her castle.

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Her great army and her illustrious captains were so disloyal that they all immediately went over to her enemies. And so the enemy conquered the lands of the good and noble princess, and settled down in her castle.

No one knew or could discover what had become of the princess and the little prince. Most probably her escape on that dark night had ended by her falling into the sea, or over a precipice, or perishing in some other way with her baby.

But Miloika the shepherdess faithfully kept the Golden Girdle of the princess and the prince's little Gold Cross.

The smartest and wealthiest swains of the village came to ask Miloika to marry them, because the Golden Girdle and the little Gold Cross on the red ribbon were worth as much as ten villages. But Miloika would have none of them for her husband, saying : " You come because of the Golden Girdle and the little Cross ; but they are not mine, and I must take better care of them than of my sheep or my cabin."

So said Miloika, and chose a penniless and

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gentle youth to be her husband, who cared nothing about the Girdle and Cross of Gold.

They lived in great poverty, and at times there was neither bread nor meal in the house, but they never thought of selling either Girdle or Cross.

Within a few years Miloika's husband fell ill and died; and not long afterwards a sore sickness came upon Miloika, and she knew that she too must die. So she called her two children, her little daughter Lavender and her still smaller son Primrose, and gave them each a keepsake. Round Lavender's waist she bound the Golden Girdle, and round Primrose's neck she hung the Gold Cross on the red ribbon. And Miloika said:

“Farewell, my children! You will be left alone in this world, and I have taught you but little craft or skill; but with God's help, what I have taught you will just suffice for your childish needs. Cleave to one another, and guard as a sacred trust what your mother gave into your keeping, and then I shall always remain with you.” Thus spoke the mother, and died.

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Lavender and Primrose were so little that they did not know how their mother had come by the Girdle and Cross, and still less did they understand the meaning of their mother's words. But they just sat side by side by their dead mother like two poor little orphans and waited to see what would become of them.

Presently the good folk of the village came along and said that Miloika would have to be buried next day.

### III

But that was not the only thing that happened next day. For when the people came back from the funeral, they all went into the house to gossip, and only Lavender and Primrose remained outside, because they still fancied that their mother would yet somehow come back to them.

Suddenly a huge Eagle pounced down upon them from the sky, knocked Lavender down, caught her by the Girdle with his talons, and carried her off into the clouds.



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The Eagle flew away with Lavender to his eyrie, high up on Mount Kitesh.

It did not hurt Lavender at all to fly along like that, hanging by her Gold Girdle. She was only sorry at being parted from her only brother, and kept on thinking: "Why didn't the Eagle take Primrose too!"

So they flew over Mount Kitesh, and there, all of a sudden, Lavender saw what neither she nor anyone else of the inhabitants of the valley had ever seen; for everyone avoided the grisly mountains, and of those who had happened to stray into them not one had ever returned. What Lavender saw was this: all the seven Votaress Fairies who waited upon the Fiery Dragon assembled together upon a rock. They called themselves *Votaresses* because they had vowed, as the last of the fairy kin, to take vengeance upon the human race.

The Fairies looked up, and there was the eagle carrying a little girl. Now the Fairies and the Eagles had made a bargain between them that each should bring his prey to that rock, and there hold a prize-court upon the rock to settle what was to be done

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with the prey and who was to have it. And for that reason the rock was called *Share-spoil*.

So the Fairies called out to the Eagle :

“Ho, brother Klickoon! come and alight on Share-spoil!”

But luckily the bargain was no sounder than the parties to it.

The Eagle Klickoon had taken a fancy to Lavender, so he did not keep to the bargain, nor would he alight on Share-spoil, but carried Lavender on to his eyrie for his eaglets to play with.

But he had to fly right across the summit of the Mountain, because his eyrie was on the far side.

Now, on the top of the Mountain there was a lake, and in the lake there was an island, and on the island there was a little old chapel. Around the lake was a tiny meadow, and all round the meadow ran a furrow ploughed in days of old. Across this furrow neither the Dragon, nor the Fairies, nor any monster of the Mountain could pass. About the lake bloomed flowers, and spread their perfume; there doves took refuge, and nightingales, and all gentle creatures from the mountains.

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Neither clouds nor mist hung over the holy furrow-surrounded Lake; but evermore the sun and moon in turn shed their light upon it.

As Klickoon flew over the Lake with Lavender, she caught sight of the chapel. And as she caught sight of the chapel, she remembered her mother; and as she remembered her mother, she pressed her hand to her heart; and as she pressed her hand to her heart, her mother's trust, the Golden Girdle, came undone upon Lavender.

The Girdle came undone; Lavender dropped from the Eagle's talons straight into the Lake, and the Girdle after her. Lavender caught hold of the Golden Girdle and stepped over the reeds, and the water-lilies, and the water-weeds, and the rushes to the island. There she sat down on a stone outside the chapel. But Klickoon flew on like a whirlwind in a rage, because he could not come near the Holy Lake.

Lavender was safe enough now, for nothing evil could reach her across the furrow. But what was the good of that, when the poor little child was all alone on the top of the grisly Mount Kitesh, and none could come to her, and she could not get away?

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## IV

Meantime the people who had buried Miloika noticed that the Eagle had carried off Lavender. At first they all burst out lamenting, but then one of them said :

“ Good people, it is really as well that the Eagle carried off Lavender. It would have been hard to find someone in the village who could take charge of the *two* children. But for Primrose alone we shall easily find someone who will look after him.”

“ Yes, yes,” the others all immediately agreed, “ it is better so. We can easily look after Primrose.”

They stood yet awhile outside the cabin gazing in the direction towards which the Eagle had disappeared with Lavender into the skies, and then they went back indoors to drink and to talk, repeating all the time :

“ There’s not one of us but will be glad to take Primrose.”

So they said. But not one of them troubled so much about Primrose as to offer him a drink of

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water, although it was very hot. Now Primrose was thirsty and went in to ask for water. But he was so tiny that not one of those people could understand what he said. Primrose wanted someone to get him his little wooden mug; but not one of those people knew that Primrose's little wooden mug was behind the beam.

When Primrose saw all this, he looked round the room for a moment, and then the child thought: "This is no good to me. I am left all alone in the world." So he leaned over the pitcher that stood on the floor, drank as much water as he could, and then set out to see if he could find his little sister Lavender.

He went out of the house and set off towards the sun—the direction in which he had seen the Eagle fly away with Lavender.

### V

The sun was setting beyond Mount Kitesh, and so Primrose, always looking at the sun, presently

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came to Mount Kitesh, too. There was no one beside Primrose to say to him: "Don't go up the Mountain, child! The Mountain is full of terrors." And so he went on, poor, foolish baby, and began to climb up the Mountain.

But Primrose did not know what fear was. His mother had kept him safe like a flower before the altar, so that no harm, not even the smallest, had ever befallen him; he had never been pricked by a thorn, nor scared by a harsh word.

And so no fear could enter Primrose's heart, no matter what his eyes beheld or his ears heard.

Meantime, Primrose had got well up into the Mountain and already reached the first rocks and crags.

And there, below Share-spoil, the Votaress Fairies were all assembled and still discussing how Klickoon had cheated them. Suddenly they saw a child coming towards them, climbing up the Mountain. The Votaresses were delighted; it would be easy to deal with such a little child!

As Primrose came nearer, the Votaresses went down to meet him. In less than no time they had

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surrounded him. Primrose only wondered when he suddenly saw so many ladies coming towards him, each with a great pair of wings! One of the Votaresses went close up to the child to take him by the hand.

Now Primrose was wearing the little Cross round his neck. When the Fairy saw the Cross, she screamed and started away from Primrose, for she could not touch him because of the Cross.

But the Fairies had no intention of letting the child off so easily. They hovered about him in a wide circle and conferred softly about what was to be done with him.

Little Primrose's heart was untroubled within him. The Fairies conferred, and their thoughts were so black that they came out in a cloud of black forest wasps buzzing round their heads. But Primrose just looked at them, and as he could see no harm in them, how was he to be frightened? On the contrary, the wings of one of the Votaresses took his fancy, flapping like that, and so he toddled up to her to see what she was really like.

“That will do nicely,” thought the Votaress.



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“ I cannot touch him, but I will entice him into the Wolf’s Pit.”

For near by there was a pit all covered over with boughs, so that you could not see it ; and the bottom of the pit was full of horrible stakes and spikes. Whoever stepped on the boughs was bound to fall through and kill himself on the spikes.

So the Votaress Fairy enticed Primrose to the Wolf’s Pit, always slipping away from him, and he always following to see what her wings really were. And so they came to the Pit. The Fairy flew over the Pit ; but poor little misguided Primrose stepped on the boughs and fell down the hole.

The Votaresses shrieked for joy, and hurried up to see the child perish on the spikes.

But what do Fairies know about a baby !

Primrose was light as a chicken. Some of the boughs and branches fell down with him, the branches covered the spikes, and Primrose was so small and light that he came to rest upon the leaves as if they had been a bed.

When Primrose found himself lying down upon something soft, he thought : “ I suppose I had

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better go to sleep!" So he tucked his little hand under his head and went sound asleep, never thinking that he was caught in a deep hole and could not get out.

Round him there were still many bare spikes, and the wicked Fairies were bending over the Pit. But Primrose slept peacefully and quietly, as though he were bedded on sweet basil. Primrose never moved. His mother had taught him: "When you are in your bed, darling, shut your little eyes and lie quite still, so as not to frighten your guardian angel."

So the Fairies stood round the Pit, and saw the baby falling asleep like a little duke in his golden crib. "That child is not so easy to deal with, after all," said the Votaresses. So they flew off to Share-spoil, and took counsel as to how they might kill him, since they could not touch him because of the little Cross.

They argued and argued, and at last one of the Votaresses had an idea. "We will raise a storm," said she; "we will cause a terrific rain. A torrent will pour down the Mountain, and the child will be drowned in the Pit."

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“Whoo-ee, whoo-ee!” howled the Votaressees. They flapped their wings for joy, and at once rose up into the air and above the Mountain to roll up the clouds and raise a storm.

## VI

Little Lavender was sitting on the top of the Mountain on her island in the Holy Lake. Round her fluttered lovely butterflies, even settling on her shoulders; and the grey dove guided her young to her lap to let her feed them with seeds. A wild raspberry-cane bent over Lavender, and Lavender ate the crimson fruit, and wanted for nothing.

But she was all alone, poor child! and sad at heart, because she believed she was parted for ever from Primrose, her only brother; and, moreover, she thought: “Did anyone, I wonder, remember to give him a drink or to put him to bed?”

In the midst of these sad thoughts Lavender looked up at the sky and saw a mist, black as night, rolling up round the Mountain. Over Lavender

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and over the holy furrow-surrounded Lake the sun shone brightly ; but all around the mist was gathering and rising, inky clouds drifted and whirled, rose and fell like a pall of smoke, and every now and again fiery flashes darted from the gloom.

It was the Votaresses, flapping their great wings, who had piled up those black clouds upon the Mountain, and it was from their eyes that the fiery flashes shot across the darkness. And then suddenly it began to thunder most terribly within the clouds ; heavy rain beat down all around upon the Mountain, and the Votaresses howled and darted to and fro through the thunder and the rain.

When Lavender saw that, she considered : “ Over my head there is sunshine, and no harm can come to me. But perhaps there is someone abroad on the Mountain in need of help in this storm.”

And although Lavender thought there was never a Christian soul on the Mountain, yet she did as her mother had taught her to do in a storm : she crossed herself and prayed. And as there was still a bell in the ruined chapel, Lavender took hold of the rope and began to toll the bell against the storm.

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Lavender did not know for whom she was praying or for whom she was tolling, but she tolled for a help to anyone who might be in distress.

When the bell on the island began to ring so unexpectedly, after having been silent for a hundred years, the Votaresses took fright up there in the clouds; they got worried and confused; they left off making a storm; they fled in terror in all directions, and hid under the rocks, under the crags, in hollow trees, or in the fern.

In a little while the Mountain was clear, and the sun shone on the Mountain, where there had been no sunshine for a hundred years.

The sun shone; the rain stopped suddenly. But for poor little Primrose the danger was not yet over.

That first great downpour had formed a big torrent in the Mountain, and the wild water was rushing fast towards the very Pit where Primrose was sleeping.

Primrose had heard neither the storm nor the thunder, and now he did not hear the torrent either as it came rushing and roaring with frightful swiftness towards him to drown him.

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The water poured into the Pit, poured in, and in a moment it had overwhelmed the child.

It covered him, overwhelmed him in a moment. There was not a thing to be seen, neither Pit, nor spikes, nor Primrose, nothing but the wild water foaming down the Mountain.

But as the flood rushed into the pit, it eddied at the bottom, surged round and up and back upon itself, and then suddenly the water lifted up the boughs and branches, and little Primrose, too, upon the boughs. It lifted him up, clean out of the Pit, and carried him downhill on a bough.

The torrent was so strong that it carried away great stones and ancient oaks, rolling them along, and nothing could stop them, because they were heavy and stout, and the torrent very fierce.

But tiny Primrose on his bough floated lightly down the flood, as lightly as a white rose-bud, so that any bush could stop him.

And indeed, there was a bush in the way, and the bough with Primrose caught in its branches. Primrose woke up with a start, caught hold of the branch with his little hands, climbed up into the

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bush, and there he sat on the top of the bush, just like a little bird.

Above Primrose the sun shone clear and sweet ; below Primrose foamed the dreadful water ; and he sat in the bush in his little white shirt, and rubbed his eyes in wonder, because he could not make out what had happened and what had waked him up so suddenly.

By the time he had finished rubbing his eyes the water had all run away downhill ; the torrent was gone. Primrose watched the mud squelching and writhing round the bush, and then Primrose climbed down, because he thought :

“ I suppose I ought to go on now, since they have waked me up.”

And so he went on up the hill. And he had slept so sweetly that he felt quite happy, and thought : “ Now I shall find Lavender. ”

## VII

No sooner had the bell stopped ringing than the Votaresses recovered their strength. They took courage and crept out of their hidie-holes. When

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they got out, lo! the sun was shining on the Mountain, and there is nothing in the world the wicked Fairies fear more than the sunlight. And as they could not wrap the whole Mountain in mist all in a hurry, each one quickly rolled herself up in a bit of fog, and off they flew to the Pit to make sure that Primrose was drowned.

But when they got there and looked into the Pit, the Pit was empty; Primrose was gone!

The Fairies cried aloud with vexation, and looked all over the Mountain to see whether the water had not dashed him against a stone. But as the Votaresses looked, why, this is what they saw: Primrose going blithely on his way; the sun was drying his little shirt for him on his back, and he was crooning away to himself as little children will.

“That child will escape us at this rate,” sobbed one of the Votaresses. “The child is stronger than we are. Hadn’t we better ask the Fiery Dragon to help us?”

“Don’t disgrace yourselves, my sisters,” said another Votaress. “Surely we can get the better of a feeble infant by ourselves.”



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So said the Fairy, but she did not know that Primrose in his simplicity was stronger than all the evil and all the cunning in Mount Kitesh.

“We will send the She-bear to kill the child for us,” suggested a Votaress. “Dumb animals do not fear the Cross.” And she flew off at once to the bears’ den.

There lay the She-bear, a-playing with her cub.

“Run along, Bruineen, down that path. There is a child coming up the path. Wait for him and kill him, Bruineen dear,” said the Votaress.

“I can’t leave my cub,” answered Bruineen.

“I’ll amuse him for you,” said the Votaress, and straightway began to play with the little bear.

Bruineen went away down the path, and there was Primrose already in sight.

The great She-bear rose up on her hind-legs, stretched out her front paws, and so went forwards towards Primrose to kill him.

The She-bear was terrible to see, but Primrose saw nothing terrible in her, and could only think :

“Here’s somebody coming and offering me his hand, so I must give him mine.”

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So Primrose raised both his little hands and held them out to the She-bear, and went straight up to her, as though his mother had called him to her arms.

Well, another moment, and the dreadful She-bear would seize him. She had come up to him, and would have caught and killed him at once had he offered to run. But she saw that she had time to consider how she had best take hold of him. So she drew herself right up, looked at Primrose from the right and from the left, and now she was going to pounce.

But at that very moment the little bear cub in the den began to squeal. One of the black wasps that always buzzed round the Votaress's head had stung him. The cub howled lustily, because, although the Bruins are a spiteful folk themselves, they won't stand spite from anybody else. So the cub squealed at the top of his voice, and when Bruineen heard her baby crying she forgot about Primrose and the Mountain! Bruineen dropped on all-fours and trundled away like fury to her den.

The angry She-bear caught the Votaress by the

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hair with her great paw. They fought, they rolled, they tore at each other, and left Primrose in peace.

Primrose followed the She-bear and looked on for a bit while they fought and scuffled; he looked, and then he laughed aloud, silly baby! and went on up the Mountain, and never knew what a narrow escape he had had!

## VIII

Once more the Votareses assembled on Share-spoil to discuss what was to be done about Primrose. They saw that they were weaker than he.

Moreover, they were getting tired of flying to Share-spoil and back and conferring about Primrose, and so they were very angry.

“Well, we will poison the child. Neither spells nor cunning shall help him now,” they resolved. And straightaway one of them took a wooden platter and hurried off to a certain meadow in the Mountain to gather poison berries.

But Primrose, never dreaming that anybody should be talking about him or worrying their brains

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about him, walked gaily over the Mountain, cooing softly to himself like a little dove.

Presently he came to the poison meadow. The path led through the middle of it. On one side of the path the meadow was covered with red berries and on the other side with black. Both were poisonous, and whoever ate of either the one or the other was sure to die.

But how was Primrose to know that there was such a thing as poison in the world, when he had never known any food but what his mother gave him?

Primrose was hungry, and he liked the look of the red berries in the meadow. But he saw someone over there in front of him on the red side picking berries and seemingly in a great hurry, for she never raised her head. It was the Votaress, and she was gathering red berries to poison Primrose.

“That is her side,” thought Primrose, and went over to the black berries, because he had never been taught to take what belonged to another. So he sat down among the black berries and began to eat; and the Fairy wandered far away among the red

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berries and never noticed that Primrose had already come up and was eating black ones.

When Primrose had eaten enough he got up to go on. But, oh dear! a mist rose before his eyes; his head began to ache most dreadfully, and the earth seemed to rock beneath his feet.

That was because of the black poison.

Poor little Primrose! indeed you know neither spells nor cunning, and how are you going to save yourself from this new danger?

But Primrose struggled on all the same, because he thought it was nothing that a mist should rise before his eyes and the ground rock beneath his feet!

And so he came up with the Fairy where she was picking berries. The Votaress caught sight of Primrose, and at once she ran on to the path in front of him with her plateful of red berries. She laid down the platter before him and invited him by signs to eat.

The Votaress did not know that Primrose had already eaten of the black berries; and if she had known, she would never have offered him red

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ones, but would have let him die of the black poison.

Primrose did not care for any more berries, because his head ached cruelly; but his mother used to say to him: "Eat, darling, when I offer you something, and don't grieve your mother."

Now this was neither spell nor cunning what Primrose had been taught by his mother. But it was in a good hour that Primrose did as his mother had taught him.

He took the plate and ate of the red berries; and as he ate, the mist cleared before his eyes, his head and his heart stopped aching, and the ground no longer rocked beneath his feet.

The red poison killed the black in Primrose's veins. He merrily clapped his hands and went on his way as sound as a bell and as happy as a grig.

And now he could see the top of the Mountain ahead of him, and Primrose thought:

"This is the end of the world. There is nothing beyond the top. There I shall find Lavender."

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## IX

The Votaress would not believe her eyes ; she stared after Primrose, and there was he toddling along and the dreadful poison doing him no harm !

She looked and she looked—and then she shrieked with rage. She could not imagine by what miracle Primrose had escaped. All she could see was that the child would slip through her hands and reach the Lake, for he was getting near the top.

The Votaress had no time to fly to Share-spoil and confer with her sisters. In time of real trouble people don't hold conferences. But she flew straight to her brother, the thunder-voiced bird Belleroo.

Belleroo's nest was in a little bog on the Mountain, close to the furrow which ran round the Holy Lake. As he was an ill-tempered bird, he too could not cross the furrow, but the evil Things of the Mountain had appointed his place here on the boundary, so that he might trouble the peace of the Lake with his booming.

“ Kinsman, brother, Belleroo,” the Votaress cried

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out to Belleroo, "there is a child coming up the path. Delay him here at the furrow with your booming, so that he may not escape me across the furrow to the Lake. I am going for the Fiery Dragon."

No sooner had the Votaress said this than she flew like an arrow down the Mountain to fetch the Fiery Dragon, who was lying asleep in a deep gully.

As for Belleroo, he was always all impatience to be told to boom, because he was horribly proud of his loud voice.

Dusk was beginning to fall. It was evening. Nearer and nearer to the furrow came Primrose. Beyond the furrow he could see the Lake, and the chapel looming white on the Lake.

"Here I am at the end of the world; I have only to cross that furrow," thought Primrose.

Suddenly the Mountain rang with the most awful noise, so that the branches swayed and the leaves trembled on the trees, and the rocks and cliffs re-echoed down to the deepest cavern. It was Belleroo roaring.

His boom was terrible. It would have scared the great Skanderbeg himself, for it would have



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reminded Skanderbeg of the boom of the Turkish guns.

But it did not in the least frighten the little innocent Primrose, who had never yet been shouted at in grief or anger.

Primrose heard something making such a noise that the very Mountain shook, and so he went up to see what great thing it might be. When he got there, lo! it was a bird no bigger than a hen!

The bird dipped its beak in a pool, then threw up its head and puffed out its throat like a pair of bellows, and boomed—heavens, it boomed so that Primrose's sleeves fluttered on him! This new wonder took Primrose's fancy so much that he sat down so as to see from near by how Belleroo boomed.

Primrose sat down just below the holy furrow beside Belleroo, and peered under his throat—because by now it was dark—the better to see how Belleroo puffed out his throat.

Had Primrose been wiser he would not have lingered there on the Mountain just below the furrow, where every evil Thing could hurt him, but he would have taken that one step across the

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furrow so as to be safe where the evil Things could not come.

But Primrose was just a little simpleton, and might easily have come to grief just there, within sight of safety.

Primrose was much amused by Belleroo.

He was amused; he was beguiled.

And while he was amusing himself in this fashion, the Fairy went and roused the Fiery Dragon where he slept in a deep gully.

She roused him and led him up the Mountain. On came the fearsome Fiery Dragon, spouting flame out of both nostrils and crushing firs and pine-trees as he went. There wasn't room enough for him, you see, in the forest and the Mountain.

Why don't you run, little Primrose? One jump across the furrow, and you will be safe and happy!

But Primrose did not think of running away. He went on sitting quite calmly below the furrow, and when he saw the flames from the Dragon flaring up in the darkness, he thought to himself: "What is making that pretty light on the Mountain?"

It was a cruel fire coming along to devour

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Primrose, and he, foolish baby! sat looking at it, all pleased and wondering: "What is making that pretty light on the Mountain?"

The Votaress caught sight of Primrose, and said to the Fiery Dragon:

"There is the child, Fiery Dragon! Get your best fire ready!"

But the Dragon was panting with the stiff climb.

"Wait a moment, sister, while I get my breath," answered the Dragon.

So the Dragon took a deep breath, once, twice, three times!

But that is just where the Dragon made a mistake.

Because his mighty breath caused an equally great wind on the Mountain. The wind blew, and bowled Primrose over the furrow and right up to the Holy Lake!

The Votaress gave one shriek, threw herself down on the ground, rolled herself up in her black wings, and sobbed and cried like mad.

The angry Dragon snorted and puffed; he belched fire as from ten red-hot furnaces. But the

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flames could not cross the furrow ; when they reached the furrow they just rose straight upwards as if they had come up against a marble wall.

Sparks and flame crackled and spurted and returned upon Mount Kitesh. Half the Mountain did the Dragon set on fire, but he lost little Primrose !

When the wind bowled Primrose over like that, Primrose only laughed at being carried away so fast. He laughed once ; he laughed twice. . . .

### X

On the island in the Lake, beside the little chapel, sat Lavender.

It was evening, but Lavender could not go to sleep because of the hurly-burly in the Mountain. Lavender heard the Votresses howling and shrieking and Bruineen growling. She heard the Dragon come snorting up from his lair, and saw him spout fire all over the Mountain.

And now she saw the blazing flames shooting upwards to the skies.

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But then she heard something—good gracious! what was it she heard? A laugh, like a little silver bell. Lavender's heart throbbed within her.

The tiny voice laughed again.

Then Lavender could bear it no longer, but called from the Island :

“Who is that laughing in the Mountain?” asked Lavender gently, and all a-tremble at the thought of *who* might answer.

“Who is that calling me from the Island?” answered little Primrose.

And Lavender recognised Primrose's baby-talk.

“Primrose! my own only Brother!” cried Lavender, and stood up white in the moonlight.

“Lavender, little sister!” cried Primrose; and, light as a moth, he stepped over the reeds and the rushes and the water-weeds to the Island. They hugged and they kissed; they sat down side by side in the moonlight by the little chapel. A little did they talk, but they were not clever at making a long story. They clasped each other's little hands and went to sleep.

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## XI

That was how they began to live day after day on the Holy Lake. Primrose was quite happy and desired nothing better.

There was clear water in the Lake, and there were sweet raspberries. There were plenty of flowers and butterflies in the meadow, and fireflies and dew by night. Nightingales and doves nested in the trees.

Every evening Lavender would make Primrose a bed of leaves, and in the morning she bathed him in the Lake and tied up his little shoes. And Primrose thought: "What do we want with a wider world than this within the furrow?"

Primrose was well off; he was only a baby!

And Lavender was happy, but she was troubled about Primrose, how she should look after him and get him food. Because God has so ordered it that the young folk can never get food without the old folk having to think about it.

That is so all the world over, and couldn't be otherwise even on the Holy Lake.

## Little Brother Primrose

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So Lavender was worried. "To-morrow will be St. Peter's Day. Will the raspberries be over when St. Peter's is past? Will the water grow cold and the sun fail when autumn comes? How shall we get through the winter all alone? Will our cottage in the valley go to rack and ruin?"

So Lavender worried, and wherever there is worry, there temptation comes most easily.

One day she sat and mused: "Oh dear! what luck it would be if only we could get back to our cottage!" Just then she heard somebody calling from the Mountain. Lavender looked, and there in the wood on the far side of the furrow stood the youngest of the Votaresses.

She was prettier than the other Votaresses, and loved finery. She had noticed the Golden Girdle on Lavender, and now she wanted that Golden Girdle above anything else in the world.

"Little girl, sister, throw me your Girdle," called the fairy across the furrow.

"I can't do that, Fairy; I had that Girdle from my mother," answered Lavender.

"Little girl, sister, it wasn't your mother's Girdle;

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it belonged to the princess, and the princess has been dead long ago. Throw me the Girdle," said the Fairy, who remembered the princess.

"I can't, Fairy; the Girdle is from my mother," repeated Lavender.

"Little girl, sister, I will carry you and your brother down to the valley, and no harm shall come to you; throw me the Girdle," cried the Fairy once more.

This was a sad temptation for Lavender, who so longed to get away from the Mountain! But all the same she would not sacrifice her mother's keepsake to the greedy fairy, but answered:

"I cannot, Fairy; I had the Girdle from my mother."

The Fairy went away quite sadly, but next day she came back and began again:

"Throw me the Girdle, and I will take you down the Mountain."

"I cannot, Fairy; I had the Girdle from my mother," Lavender answered once more, but with a very heavy heart.

For seven days did the Fairy come, and for seven



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days she tempted Lavender. Temptation is worse than the sharpest care, and poor little Lavender pined away, so great was her wish to get down to the valley. Yet all the same she would not give up the Girdle.

For seven days did the Fairy call, and for seven days did Lavender answer her:

“I cannot, Fairy; the Girdle is from my mother.”

And when she answered thus on the seventh day, the Fairy saw that there was no help for it.

The Fairy went down the Mountain; she sat down on the last, lowest stone, shook down her hair and cried bitterly, so great was her desire for the Golden Girdle of the princess.

## XII

Meantime the good and noble princess was not dead, but had lived for many a year in a far country with her son, the prince.

The princess never told anybody how high-born

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a lady she was, and her son was too young at the time of their flight for him to remember.

And so in that country not a soul knew—not even the prince—that they came of royal blood. But how could anybody tell that she was a princess, when she had neither crown nor Golden Girdle? And though she was good, gentle, and noble, that did not prove that she was a princess.

The princess lived in the house of a worthy peasant, and there she spun and wove for his household.

In this way she earned enough to keep herself and her son.

The boy had grown up into a tall and handsome youth of unusual strength and power, and the princess taught him nothing that was not good and right.

But one thing was bad. The prince had a very hasty and fierce temper. So the people called him *Rowfoot Relya*, because he was so rough and strong—and so poor withal.

One day Rowfoot Relya was mowing his master's meadow, and lay down at noon in the shade to rest.

## Little Brother Primrose

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And a young squire came riding by, and called to Relya :

“ Hi, young man ! jump up and run back along the road and find me my silver spur ; it fell off somewhere on the way.”

When Relya heard that, his princely blood, his hot and hasty blood, was roused to evil within him because the other had disturbed him in his rest and would send him out to find his spur.

“ Won't I, by heaven ! ” cried Relya, “ and you can lie here and rest instead of me ! ” And with that he sprang at the young squire, pulled him off his horse, and flung him down in the shade, so that he lay there for dead.

But Rowfoot Relya, still furious, rushed home to his mother, and cried out upon her :

“ Wretched mother ! why was I born a rowfoot churl, for others to send me out to find their spurs for them in the dust ? ”

Relya's face was quite distorted with rage as he said this.

The mother looked at her son, and her heart grieved sorely. She saw that there would be no more

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peace for her and her son, because she would have to tell him what she had so far kept secret.

“You are not a rowfoot churl, my son,” replied the princess, “but an unfortunate prince.” And she told Relya all about herself and him.

Relya listened; his eyes blazed with a strange fire, and he clenched his hands in bitter anger. Then he asked:

“Is there nothing left, then, mother, of our lands?”

“Nothing, my son, save a little Cross on a red ribbon and a Golden Girdle,” answered his mother.

When Relya heard that, he cried:

“I am going, mother, and I shall bring back that Cross and Girdle, wherever they may be! Threefold will the sight of them increase my princely strength!”

And then he asked:

“And where did you leave the Cross and the Girdle, mother? Did you leave them with the chief of your captains for him and your great army to guard?”

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“No, my son,” replied the princess, “and it is a good thing that I did not, for my captains and my great army went over to the enemy, and are now feasting and drinking with the enemy and wasting my lands.”

“Did you perhaps leave them in the lowest room of your castle, in the seventh vault, under seven locks?”

“No, my son, and it is a good thing that I did not, because the enemy got into my castle, broke open and ransacked its secret chambers, searched its nine vaults, and fed his horses upon pearls out of my treasure hoards,” replied the princess.

“But where did you leave the Golden Girdle and the Cross on the red ribbon?” asked Relya, with flashing eyes.

“I left them with a young shepherdess in a willow cabin, where there are neither locks nor strong boxes. Go, my son, perchance you will find them there still.”

Relya would not believe that the Girdle and Cross might be safe in a willow cabin when the noble

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princess's pearls had not been safe even in the ninth vault under her castle.

But his princely blood, so proud and masterful, was roused yet more to evil in Relya's veins, and he roughly said to his mother :

“ Farewell, then, mother ! I shall find the Cross and Girdle wherever they may be, and it shall be no jesting matter for those who would refuse to let me have them ! I shall bring you back your Girdle and Cross, by the princely blood in my veins.”

As Prince Relya said this, he took the blade of the scythe, fitted it with a mighty hilt at the forge, and then hurried out into the world to find his heritage. The earth rang beneath his feet ; his hair streamed in the wind, so swiftly did he stride ; and his murderous blade shone in the sun as though it were plated with flame.

### XIII

So Relya went on without stopping. He strode on by day, and by night he did not rest ; both great and small got out of his way.

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It is far to Mount Kitesh, but Relya had no difficulty in finding out the way, because Mount Kitesh was known throughout seven kingdoms for its terrors.

On St. John's Day Relya bade farewell to his mother, and on St. Peter's Day he reached the foot of the Mountain.

When he reached the foot of the Mountain, he inquired after the willow cabin, the shepherdess Miloika, and the Golden Girdle and Cross.

"There is the cabin in the valley. Miloika we buried the first Sunday after Easter, and her children have the Girdle and Cross. As for the children, the Fairies have carried them off to Mount Kitesh," replied the villagers.

Very wroth was Relya when he heard that the Girdle and Cross had been carried off to Mount Kitesh. He was so angry that he could not make up his mind which to do first—hasten up the Mountain or find out about the castle, since that was uppermost in his desires.

"And where is the princess's castle?" shouted Relya.

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“Over there, a day’s journey from here,” answered the villagers.

“And how stands it with the castle?” asked Relya, and his hand played with his sword. “Tell me all you know about it!”

“None of us has been in the castle, because the lords of it are hard of heart. Round the castle they have placed mutes for guards and savage bloodhounds. We cannot force our way past the bloodhounds, and we do not know how to persuade the guards,” answered the villagers. “And within the castle are fine lords, drinking red wine in the halls, playing upon silver lutes, and tossing golden balls to each other over a silken carpet. In the outer hall are two hundred workmen cutting hearts out of mother-o’-pearl for targets for the lords. And when the lords make a great feast, they load their guns with precious stones and shoot at the hearts of mother-o’-pearl.”

When the villagers told him this, a mist swam before Relya’s eyes, so furious was he when he heard how wantonly the treasure in his mother’s vaults was being squandered.

For a while Relya hesitated, and then he cried :





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“ I am going up the Mountain to win the Cross and Girdle, and then I shall return to thee, O my castle.”

Thus cried Relya ; he made the sword sing through the air above his head, and then strode swiftly up into Mount Kitesh. There he found the great Dragon asleep in the deep gully. You see, the Dragon had tired himself out with belching so much fire at Primrose, and now he had gone fast asleep to gather fresh strength.

But Relya was all impatience to fight someone so as to cool his anger and to prove his strength. He was tired of seeing everybody, both great and small, get out of his way all the time, so now he rushed up to the Fiery Dragon to rouse and dare him to mortal combat.

Relya was a Doughty Hero, and the Fiery Dragon was a Terrible Monster, and so their combat must be sung in verse, beginning where Relya rushed up to the Dragon :

Childe Relya smote the Dragon on the side  
With the flat blade, to rouse him from his sleep.  
The Beast looked up, raising his grisly head,  
Beheld the hero Relya standing by.  
Up leapt the Dragon, with a rending blow  
O’erturns the cliff and widens out the gap

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To make a fitting space wherein to fight !  
Anon unto the clouds he rears him up ;  
Anon on Relya pounces from the clouds,  
And so with Relya joins in mortal fray.  
Now groans the earth and splits the solid rock.  
With tooth and flame the Dragon turns to bay,  
And thrusts at Relya with his fiery head.  
But Relya waits him with a ready sword,  
And meets the onslaught with a ready sword ;  
And with his weapon beating down the flame  
Seeks for the sword an undefended spot,  
Where he may smite the Dragon on the head.  
Deep bites the brand—so mighty was the shock  
That brand and bone no more will come apart.  
From dawn till noontide did the battle rage,  
And weaker grew the Dragon all the while,  
With brooding on the shame that galled his heart,  
Because the babe, young Primrose, had escaped.  
And stronger grew Childe Relya all the while,  
For he did battle for his heritage.  
When at high noon the sun burned overhead,  
Childe Relya swung his gleaming brand aloft  
Towards the sun, and called on Heaven for aid.  
Down fell the sword betwixt the Dragon's eyes—  
Full swiftly fell, yet lightly struck the blade,  
Yet with such force, it cleft the Beast in twain.  
Into the hollow falls the Dragon, slain,  
And as stretched him in his dying spasm,  
The monstrous limbs block up the ancient chasm.

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Thus did the doughty Relya overcome the Fiery Dragon. But his brave arms and shoulders ached terribly. So Relya said to himself: "I shall never get over the Mountain at this rate. I must consider what I had better do." And Relya went back to the foot of the Mountain, and there the hero sat down on a stone and considered how he was to get across the Mountain, and how he was to overcome the monsters, and where he might find Miloika's children and with them the Golden Girdle and Cross.

Relya was deep in thought, but all of a sudden he heard somebody weeping and sobbing near him. Relya turned, and there was a Fairy sitting on a stone, her hair all unbound, and crying her heart out.

"What ails you, pretty maiden? Why do you weep?" asked Relya.

"I weep, O hero, because I cannot get the Golden Girdle from the child on the Lake," answered the Fairy.

When Relya heard that he was overjoyed.

"Tell me, maiden, how can I get to that Lake?" asked Relya.

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“And who may you be, unknown hero?” returned the Fairy.

“I am Prince Relya, and I seek a Golden Girdle and a Cross on a red ribbon,” replied Relya.

When the Fairy heard that, she thought within her evil heart: “How lucky for me! Let Relya get the Girdle away from the Lake and on to the Mountain, and I will soon destroy Relya and keep the Girdle for myself.”

So the cunning Fairy spoke these honeyed words to Relya:

“Let us go, noble Prince! I will guide you across the Mountain. No harm will come to you, and I will show you where the children are. Why should you not have what is yours by inheritance?”

Thus sweetly did the Fairy speak, but in her heart she thought otherwise. Relya, however, was mightily pleased, and at once agreed to go with the Fairy.

So they went across the Mountain. Neither Fairies nor monsters touched Relya, because he was being guided by the young Votaress Fairy.

On the way the Fairy advised Relya and tried to fill his heart with anger.

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“ You should but see, noble Prince, how insolent these children are ! Not even to you will they give the Girdle. But you are a hero above all heroes, Relya, so do not let them put you to shame.”

Relya laughed at the idea that two children should withstand him—*him* who had cleft in twain the Fiery Dragon !

The Fairy then went on to tell him how the children had come up into the Mountain, and how they did not know how to get away from it again.

In her joy at the prospect of getting the Girdle, the Fairy talked so much that her cunning deserted her, and she chattered to Relya and boasted to him of her knowledge.

“ They are silly children, without any cunning. Yet if they knew what *we* know they would have escaped us already. There is a taper in the chapel and a censer. If they would start the fire that is not lit with hands, and then light the taper and censer, they could go with taper and censer across the whole Mountain as if it were a church. Paths would open before them and trees bow down as they passed. But for us this would be the worst thing possible,

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because all we Fairies and Goblins in Mount Kitesh would perish wherever the smoke from the taper and censer spread. But what do these silly, insolent children know?"

If the Votaress had not been so overjoyed, she would surely never have told Relya about the taper and censer, but would have kept the secret of the Votaresses.

So they came to the furrow, and there was the Holy Lake before them.

### XIV

The Prince peered cautiously from behind a tree, and the Fairy pointed out the children to him. Relya saw the little chapel on the island. Before the chapel sat a little girl, pale as a white rose. She neither sang nor crooned, but sat still with her hands clasped in her lap and her eyes raised to heaven.

On the sand beside the chapel played a little boy, baby Primrose, and round his neck hung a little Gold Cross.



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He played on the sand, built castles and pulled them down again with his tiny hands, and then laughed at his handiwork.

Relya watched, and as he watched he began to think. But the Votaress had no time to wait while the Prince finished thinking things out, so she softly prompted Relya.

“ I will call to the little girl, noble Prince, and you shall see that she will not give up the Girdle ; then do you draw your burnished sword, go up and take what is yours, and then come back to me to the Mountain, and I will guide you back down the Mountain so that my sisters shall not hurt you.”

As the Fairy said this, she secretly rejoiced, thinking how easily she would kill Relya and get the Girdle for herself, so long as Relya would bring it from the Lake. But Relya only listened with half an ear to what the Votaress was saying, for he was lost in looking at the girl.

The Fairy called to Lavender :

“ Little girl, sister, throw me the Girdle, and I will take you and your brother down the Mountain.”

When Lavender heard this, her face grew yet

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paler, and she clasped her little hands yet more tightly. She was so sad that she could scarcely speak. She would so gladly have left the Mountain ; her little heart was bursting with longing.

But all the same she would not part with her mother's Girdle.

Tears flowed down Lavender's face ; she wept softly, but through her tears she answered :

“Go away, Fairy, and do not come back again, because you will not get the Girdle.”

When Relya saw and heard this, his princely blood, his noble blood, was roused within him, but to a good purpose.

He was filled with pity for these two poor orphans in the midst of the grisly Mount Kitesh, defending themselves all alone against monsters and temptations, death and destruction. “Great Heavens !” thought he, “the princess trusted in her armed warriors and her strongholds to defend her lands, and the lands were lost ; but these babes are left alone in the world, they have fallen among Fairies and Dragons, yet neither Fairies nor Dragons can rob them of what their mother gave them.” All

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Relya's face changed as his heart went out with pity to the children. Thus changed, he turned towards the Votaress.

The Votaress looked at Relya. Why did he raise his sword? Was it to cut down those insolent children? No; Relya raised the sword aloft and threatened the wicked Fairy with it.

“Fairy, avaunt! as if you had never been! If you had not been my guide across the Mountain, I would strike your fair head from off your shoulders. I was not born a prince, nor did I forge this mighty sword that I might roam the world a spoiler of the fatherless!”

The poor Votaress was quite frightened. She started, and then fled to the hills. And Relya shouted after her:

“Go, Fairy! call your fairies and monsters! Prince Relya does not fear them!”

When the Fairy had run off to the hills, Relya crossed the furrow and went towards the children on the island.

How happy was Lavender when she saw a human being coming towards them and looking at them

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kindly! She sprang to her feet and stretched out both her arms, as a captive bird spreads its wings when you open your hand and let it go free.

Lavender was quite certain that Relya had come up only to bring them safe back from the Mountain. She ran to Primrose, took him by the hand, and both crossed over to Relya by the little bridge which they had fashioned with their own tiny hands across the reeds.

### XV

A doughty hero was Relya, and he felt strange talking to children. But the children did not feel in the least strange talking to a hero, because they thought kindly of everybody, and there was no guile in their hearts.

Primrose took hold of Relya's hand and looked at his great sword. The sword was twice as big as Primrose! Primrose reached up with his little hand; he stood on tip-toe, and yet he could scarcely touch the hilt of it. Relya looked, and never had he seen

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such tiny hands beside his own. Relya was now in a sad quandary; he forgot all about the Girdle and Cross as he thought: "What shall I say to these poor orphan babes? They are little and foolish, and they do not understand."

Just then Lavender asked Relya:

"And how shall we get out of the mountains, my lord?"

"Well, that is quite a sensible little girl," considered Relya. "Here am I, marvelling how small and foolish they are, and never thinking that, after all, we have to get out of the mountains."

Then Relya remembered what the Votaress had told him about the taper and censer.

"Listen to me, little girl! The Votaress has gone to call her sisters to help her, and I am going on to the Mountain to meet them. Please God, I shall overcome the Votaress Fairies, return to you by the Holy Lake, and lead you away from the Mountain. But if the fairies should overcome me, if I perish on the Mountain, then do you start the fire that is not lit with hands, light the taper and censer, and you will pass over the Mountain as though it were a church."

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When Lavender heard this, she was sadly grieved, and said to Prince Relya :

“ You must not do that, my lord ! What shall we poor orphans do if you perish on the Mountain ? You have only just come to be our protector, and if you were to leave us straightway and get killed what should we do ? Let us rather set to at once and start the fire, so as to light taper and censer, and do you, my lord, go forth with us over the Mountain.”

But at that Relya became very angry, and said :

“ Don't talk foolishness, you silly child ! I was not born a hero for taper and censer to lead me while yet I wear sword by my side.”

“ Not taper and censer will lead you, but God's will and commandment,” replied Lavender.

“ Don't talk foolishness, you silly child ! My sword would rust were I to be led by taper and censer.”

“ Your sword will not rust when you go a-mowing in field and meadow.”

Relya was troubled. It was not so much Lavender's words as the sweet, serious look in the little girl's eyes that troubled him. He knew well

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enough that he would scarcely overcome the fairies and monsters, and that he would most probably perish if he were to go out to fight on the Mountain.

Little Primrose flung his arms round Relya's knees and looked at him coaxingly. And Relya's princely heart beat quick in his bosom, so that he forgot about Cross and Girdle and fight and castle, and all he could think was : " Well, I have to protect and save these faithful little orphans."

So he said :

" I will not throw away my life out of sheer wilfulness. Come, children, start the fire, light taper and censer ; your little hands shall lead me."

### XVI

A few moments later, and there was a wondrous marvel to be seen on Mount Kitesh.

A wide path opened all the way down the Mountain, and on the path grew turf as soft as silk. On the right-hand side walked little Primrose, still

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in his little white shirt, and in his hand he held an ancient wax taper, burning serenely and crackling softly, as though it were talking with the sun. On the left walked Lavender, wearing the Golden Girdle and swinging a silver censer, from which rose a cloud of white smoke. Between the two children strode Relya, tall and strong. It seemed strange to him, in his strength and valour, that taper and censer should thus guide him and not his own good sword. But he smiled gently at the children. His great sword hung over his shoulder, and as he strode on he said to the sword :

“ Do not fear, my faithful friend. We shall go a-mowing in field and meadow ; we shall clear scrub and forest ; we shall hew rafters and build steadings. The sun will gild thee a thousand times while thou art winning bread for these two orphan babes.”

So they went across the Mountain as though it were a church. A thin wraith of smoke rose from the the taper, and sacred odours spread from the censer.

But woe and alas for the Votaresses on Mount Kitesh ! wherever the smoke and the odour of incense spread upon the Mountain, there the Votaresses



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perished and died. They made an end, each one as it seemed most beautiful and fitting to her.

One turned herself into a grey stone, and then hurled herself down the rocks into a chasm, where the stone broke into a thousand splinters.

The second changed into a crimson flame, and then at once went out, puff! into the air.

The third dissolved into fine coloured dust, scattering herself over rock and fern. And so each of them chose what seemed to her the most beautiful way to die.

But it really didn't matter in the least. One way or another, they all had to leave this world, and even the most beautiful ways of dying could not make up for that!

In this way all the seven Votaress Fairies perished, and that is why there are no fairies, nor dragons, nor monsters now on Mount Kitesh or anywhere else in the world.

But Relya and the children reached the valley in safety, and Lavender took them to their cottage. And only then did Relya remember why he had gone up Mount Kitesh.

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## XVII

They went into the cottage and rested a little. Lavender, who knew where was her mother's modest store cupboard, brought out a little dry cheese, and they refreshed themselves.

But now Relya was puzzled what to do about those two orphans. Ever since they had come down into the valley, Relya's mind had begun to run once more upon the castle and upon his promise to his mother that he would bring her back the Cross and Girdle.

Therefore Relya said to Lavender :

“ Listen to me, little girl : you will have to give me the Golden Girdle and Cross now, you and your brother, because they belong to me.”

“ But we belong to you too, my lord,” said Lavender, and looked at Relya quite astonished, because he had not grasped that before.

Relya laughed, and then he said :

“ But I must take the Girdle and Cross to my mother.”

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When Lavender heard that, she cried out overjoyed :

“ Oh, sir, if you have a mother, do go and bring her here to us, because we have no mother now.”

A stone would have wept to hear little Lavender speak of her mother in that poor and bare little cottage ! A stone would have wept at the thought that so lovely a child should be left all alone in the world, when she turned to Prince Relya and begged him to bring them a mother because their mother was dead.

Again Relya was filled with pity, so that he almost wept. Therefore he bade the children good-bye and went away to fetch his mother.

## XVIII

It took Relya seven days to return to his mother. She was waiting for him by the window, and when she saw him coming, lo, there was Relya coming home without sword, Cross, or Girdle. Relya never gave her time to ask questions, but called to her in a gentle voice :

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“ Make ready, mother, and come with me, that we may guard what is ours.”

So they set out together. And on the way the Princess asked Relya whether he had found the Cross and the Girdle, whether he had raised an army and had reconquered their castle and lands ?

“ I found the Girdle and Cross, mother ; but I raised no army, neither have I reconquered our lands. We shall do better without an army, mother, for you shall see what is left to us of our heritage,” said Relya.

After seven days' travel they reached the cabin where Lavender and Primrose were waiting for them.

Oh, my dear ! but there is great joy when kind hearts foregather ! The princess hugged Lavender and Primrose ; she kissed their cheeks, eyes, hands, and lips, and would scarcely let them go, so dear were they to her, those orphan children from her lost lands !

## XIX

And so they lived together in the valley, although the little cabin was rather too small for them. But

## Little Brother Primrose

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Relya had strong hands, and he built them a little house of stone. Their lives were uneventful, but there was a blessing upon them. Primrose tended the ewes and lambs, Lavender looked after the house and garden, the princess span and sewed, and Relya worked in the fields.

The people of the village got to know the wisdom of the princess and Relya's strength. Presently they remarked how well the Golden Girdle became the princess, and, although none of them had ever seen the princess before, they said :

“ She must be our noble princess.” And so they gave Relya and the princess a great piece of land in the valley, and begged Relya to be their leader in all things and the princess to be their counsellor.

God's blessing was with Relya's strength and the princess's wisdom. Their fields and meadows increased ; other villages joined them ; gardens and cottages sprang up in the villages.

Meantime the fine lords in the castle went on drinking and feasting as before. Now this had gone on far too long, and although the vaults and cellars of the castle had been the richest in seven kingdoms,

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yet after so many years of waste there began to be a lack of precious stones.

First of all the gems gave out in the treasure vaults, and then the mother-o'-pearl in the passages. Yet a little while, and there was no more bread for the servants, who had grown lazy. At last there was not even meat for the bloodhounds and guards. The faithless servants rebelled, the hounds ran away, and the guards left their posts.

But all this did not trouble the fine lords, because they had dulled their wits with drinking and feasting. But one fine day the wine gave out. *Then* they decided to hold a council! They met in the great hall and debated upon where they should get wine, because round about the castle all was desolate: the inhabitants had left, and the vines had run wild in the vineyards.

So the fine lords debated. But their vengeful and rebellious servants had cut through the rafters of the great hall, and when the lords were in the midst of their conference the roof fell in upon them. They were buried under the ruins of the great tower of the castle and all of them killed.

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When the servants heard the tower crashing and falling, they too deserted the castle.

And so the castle was left without hounds, servants, or fine lords, ruinous and deserted, and dead.

Soon the news of this spread through the land, but not a soul troubled to go and see what had happened in the dead castle. From all sides they flocked together and went to the foot of Mount Kitesh to beg Relya to be their prince, because they had heard of his strength and courage and of the wisdom of the noble princess. Wherefore the people promised with their own hands to build them a new castle, all fair and stately.

Relya accepted the people's offer, because he rightly judged that God had given him such great strength and courage, and had delivered him from his hot and cruel temper, so that he might be of use to his country.

So Relya became a prince; and the princess, who was getting old by now, yet lived to see great happiness in her old age. And when the princess and Relya, with Lavender and Primrose, entered their

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new and stately castle for the first time, the village children scattered evergreens and sweet basil on their path, men and woman pressed round the princess, seized the hem of her robe and kissed it.

But the princess, radiant with joy, remembered that but for the loyalty of Lavender and Primrose none of this would ever have come to pass. She clasped the children to her breast and said :

“ Happy the land whose treasure is not guarded by mighty armies or strong cities, but by the mothers and children in shepherds’ cots. Such a land will never perish ! ”

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Later on Prince Relya married Lavender, and never in the world was there a princess sweeter and more lovely than Princess Lavender.

Primrose grew up into a brave and handsome youth. He rode a fiery dapple grey, and he would often ride over Mount Kitesh, upon whose summit men were building a new chapel by the Holy Lake.