

Reygoch



# Reygoch

## I

**O**NCE upon a beautiful summer night the men were watching their horses in the meadow. And as they watched, they fell asleep. And as they slept, the fairies flew out of the clouds to have some sport with the horses, as is the fairies' way. Each fairy caught a horse, mounted it, and then whipped it with her golden hair, urging it round and round the dewy meadow.

Among the fairies there was one quite young and tiny, called Curlylocks, who had come down to earth from the clouds for the first time that night.

Curlylocks thought it lovely to ride through the night like a whirlwind. And it so happened that she had got hold of the most spirited horse of all—

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a Black—small, but fierce as fire. The Black galloped round and round with the other horses, but he was the swiftest of all. Soon he was all in a lather of foam.

But Curlylocks wanted to ride faster still. She bent down and pinched the Black's right ear. The horse started, reared, and then bolted straight ahead, leaving behind the rest of the horses, the meadow and all, as he flew away like the wind with Curlylocks into the wide, wide world.

Curlylocks thoroughly enjoyed her lightning ride. The Black went like the wind, by field and by river, by meadow and mountain, over dale and hill. "Good gracious! what a lot of things there are in the world!" thought Curlylocks, full of delight as she looked at all the pretty sights. But what pleased her best was when they came through a country where there were mountains all covered with glorious forests, and at the foot of the mountains two golden fields like two great gold kerchiefs, and in the midst of them two white villages, like two white doves, and a little further on a great sheet of water.



KIRIN  
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But the Black would not stop, neither there nor anywhere, but rushed on and on as if he were possessed.

So the Black carried Curlylocks far and far away till at last they came to a great plain, with a cold wind blowing over it. The Black galloped into the plain, and there was nothing there but yellow sand, neither trees nor grass, and the further they went into that great waste, the colder it grew. But how large that plain is, I cannot tell you, for the good reason that the man does not live who could cross it.

The Black ran on with Curlylocks for seven days and seven nights. The seventh day, just before sunrise, they reached the centre of the plain, and in the centre of the plain they found the ruinous walls of the terribly great city of Frosten, and there it is always bitterly cold.

As the Black raced up to the ancient gates of Frosten, Curlylocks threw her magic veil on the wall, and so caught hold of the wall. The Black galloped away from under her, and so continued his wild career up to his old age to and fro between



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the huge walls of Frosten, till at last he found the northern gate and galloped out again into the plain—God knows whither!

But Curlylocks came down from the wall and began to walk about the city, and it was cold as cold! Her magic veil, without which she could not fly among the clouds, she wound about her shoulders, for she took great care of it. And so Curlylocks walked and walked about the city of Frosten, and all the time she felt as if she must come upon something very wonderful in this city, which was so marvellous and so great. However, nothing did she see but only great crumbling walls, and nothing did she hear but now and again a stone cracking with the cold.

Suddenly, just as Curlylocks had turned the corner of the very biggest wall, she saw, fast asleep at the foot of the wall, a huge man, bigger than the biggest oak in the biggest forest. The man was dressed in a huge cloak of coarse linen, and the strap he wore for a belt was five fathoms long. His head was as big as the biggest barrel, and his beard was like a shock of corn. He was so big, that



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man, you might have thought there was a church tower fallen down beside the wall !

This giant was called Reygoch, and he lived at Frosten. All he did was to count the stones of the city of Frosten. He could never have finished counting them but for that huge head of his, as big as a barrel. But he counted and counted—he had counted for a thousand years, and had already counted thirty walls and five gates of the city.

When Curlylocks spied Reygoch, she clasped her hands and wondered. She never thought there could be such an immense creature in the world.

So Curlylocks sat down by Reygoch's ear (and Reygoch's ear was as big as the whole of Curlylocks), and called down his ear :

“Aren't you cold, daddy ?”

Reygoch woke up, laughed, and looked at Curlylocks.

“Cold ? I should think I was cold,” answered Reygoch, and his voice was as deep as distant thunder. Reygoch's big nose was all red with the cold, and his hair and beard were all thick with hoar-frost.

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“Dear me!” said Curlylocks, “you’re such a big man, and you aren’t going to build yourself a roof to keep out the cold?”

“Why should I?” said Reygoch, and laughed again. “The sun will be out presently.”

Reygoch heaved himself up so as to sit. He sat up. He clapped his left shoulder with his right hand, and his right shoulder he clapped with the left hand, so as to beat out the hoar-frost; and the hoar-frost came off each shoulder as if it were snow slipping off a roof!

“Look out! look out, daddy! you’ll smother me!” cried Curlylocks. But Reygoch could scarcely hear her, because it was a long way from Curlylocks to his ear, so big was he when he sat up.

So Reygoch lifted Curlylocks on to his shoulder, told her his name and his business, and she told him how she had come.

“And here comes the sun,” said Reygoch, and pointed for Curlylocks to see.

Curlylocks looked, and there was the sun rising, but so pale and feeble, as if there were no one for him to warm.

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“Well, you are a silly, Reygoch!” said Curlylocks—“you are really silly to live here and spend your life counting these tiresome stones of Frosten. Come along, Reygoch, and see how beautiful the world is, and find something more sensible to do.”

Now it had never occurred to Reygoch to want a finer home for himself than Frosten city, nor had he ever thought that there might be better work than his in the world. Reygoch always thought, “I was meant to count the stones of Frosten,” and had never asked for anything better.

Curlylocks, however, gave him no peace, but persuaded him to come out and see the world with her.

“I’ll take you to a lovely country,” said Curlylocks, “where there is an ancient forest, and beside the forest two golden fields.”

Curlylocks talked for a long time. And old Reygoch had never had anybody to talk to, and so he couldn’t resist persuasion.

“Well, let’s go!” said he.

Curlylocks was mightily pleased with this.

But now they had to contrive something, so that

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Reygoch could carry Curlylocks, because Reygoch himself had nothing.

So Curlylocks drew out from her bosom a little bag of pearls. It was her mother who had given Curlylocks these pearls before allowing her to go down to earth, and told her : “ If you ever should need anything, just throw down a pearl, and it will turn into whatever you want. Be very careful of those pearls, because there are so many things in the world that you will want more and more as you go on.”

Curlylocks took out a tiny seed-pearl, threw it down, and lo, before their eyes there grew a little basket, just as big as Curlylocks, and the basket had a loop attached, just big enough to fit Reygoch’s ear.

Curlylocks jumped into the basket ; and Reygoch picked up the basket and hung it on his ear like an ear-ring !

Whenever Reygoch laughed, whenever he sneezed or shook his head, Curlylocks rocked as if she were in a swing ; and she thought it a capital way of travelling.

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So Reygoch started to walk, and had already taken a ten-yard stride, when Curlylocks stopped him, and begged :

“ Couldn’t we go underground, perhaps, Reygoch dear, so that I might see what there is under the earth ? ”

“ Why not ? ” answered Reygoch ; for he could break into the earth as easy as fun, only it had never entered his head to look what might be underground.

But Curlylocks wanted to know everything about everything, and so they agreed to travel underground until they should arrive under the forest by the golden fields, and there they would come up.

When they had settled that, Reygoch began to break up the earth. He lifted up his great feet and stamped for the first time, and at that the whole of the great city of Frosten shook and a great many walls tumbled down. Reygoch raised his feet a second time and stamped again, and the whole plain quaked. Reygoch raised his feet a third time and stamped, and lo, half the world trembled, the solid earth gaped under Reygoch, and Reygoch and



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Curlylocks fell into the hole and down under the earth.

When they got there, they found the earth all honeycombed with pillars and passages on every side, and heaven alone knew where they all led to. And they could hear waters rushing and the moaning of the winds.

They followed one of the passages, and for awhile they had light from the hole through which they had fallen. But as they went on it grew darker and darker—black darkness, such as there is nowhere save in the bowels of the earth.

Reygoch tramped calmly on in the dark. With his great hands he felt his way from pillar to pillar.

But Curlylocks was frightened by the great darkness.

She clung to Reygoch's ear and cried: "It's dark, Reygoch dear!"

"Well, and why not?" returned Reygoch. "The dark didn't come to us. It's we have come to it."

Then Curlylocks got cross, because Reygoch never minded anything and she had expected great things from so huge a man.

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“I should be in a nice fix with you but for my pearls,” said Curlylocks quite angrily.

Then she threw down another pearl, and a tiny lantern grew in her hand, bright as if it were lit with gold. The darkness crept back deeper into the earth, and the light shone far through the underground passages.

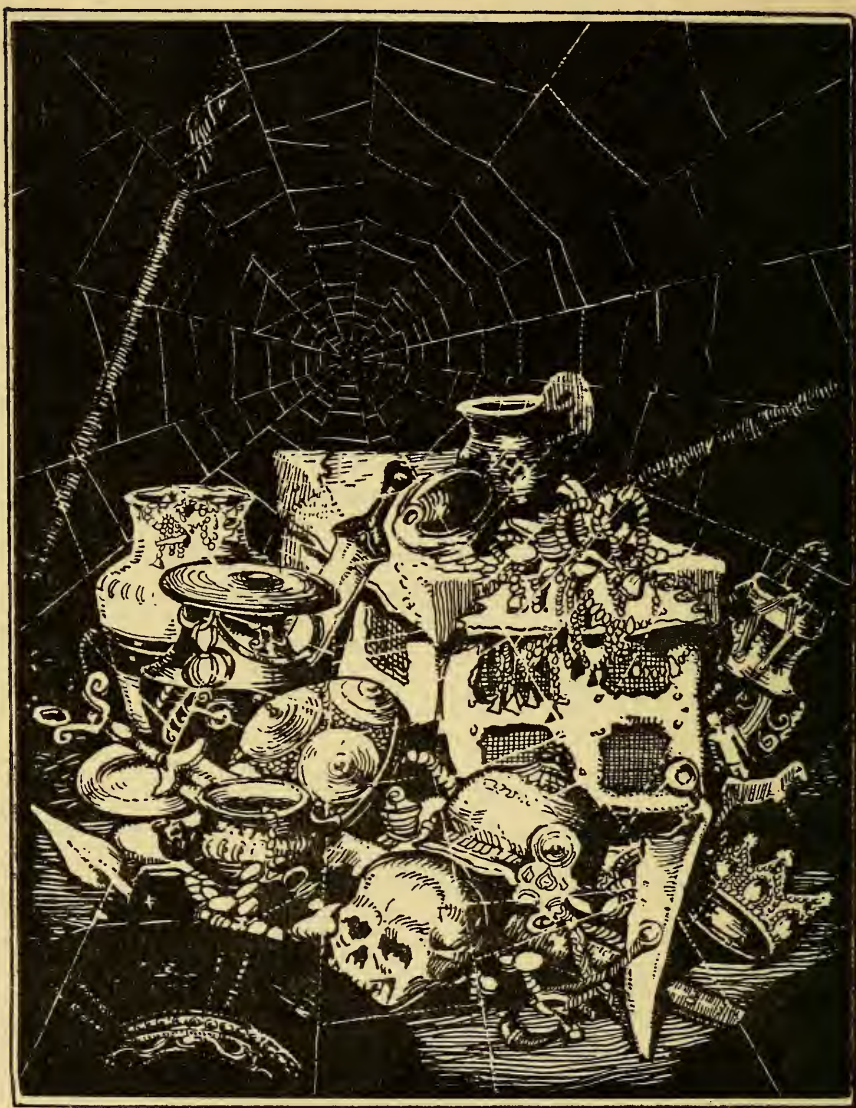
Curlylocks was delighted with her lantern, because it showed up all the marvels which had been swallowed by the earth in days of old. In one place she saw lordly castles, with doors and windows all fretted with gold and framed in red marble. In another place were warriors' weapons, slender-barrelled muskets and heavy scimitars studded with gems and precious stones. In a third place she saw long-buried treasures, golden dishes and silver goblets full of gold ducats, and the Emperor's very crown of gold three times refined. All these treasures had been swallowed up by God's will, and it is God's secret why so much treasure should lie there undisturbed.

But Curlylocks was quite dazzled with all these marvels; and instead of going straight ahead by



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the way they had settled upon, she begged Reygoch to put her down so that she might play about a little and admire all the strange things and gaze upon the wonders of God's secret.

So Reygoch set Curlylocks down, and Curlylocks took her little lantern and ran to the castles, and to the weapons, and to the treasure-hoards. And lest she might lose her little bag of pearls while she was playing, she laid it down beside a pillar.

As for Reygoch, he sat down to rest not far off.

Curlylocks began to play with the treasures ; she looked at the beautiful things and rummaged among them. With her tiny hands she scattered the golden ducats, examined the goblets chased in silver, and put upon her head the crown of gold three times refined. She played about, looked round and admired, and at last caught sight of a very slender little ivory staff propped up against a mighty pillar.

But it was just that slender staff that kept the mighty pillar from collapsing, because the pillar was already completely hollowed out by the water. And therefore God had caused that little staff to fall

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down there, and the staff held up the pillar under the earth.

But Curlylocks wondered :

“Why is that little staff just there?” And she went and picked up the staff to look at it.

But no sooner had Curlylocks taken the staff and moved it than the subterranean passages re-echoed with a terrible rumbling noise. The great pillar trembled, swayed and crashed down amid a whole mountain of falling earth, closing and blocking up the path between Reygoch and Curlylocks. They could neither see nor hear one another, nor could they reach one another. . . .

There was the poor little fairy Curlylocks caught in the bowels of the earth ! She was buried alive in that vast grave, and perhaps would never again see those golden fields for which she had set out, and all because she would not go straight on by the way they had intended, but would loiter and turn aside to the right and to the left to pry into God’s secrets !

Curlylocks wept and cried, and tried to get to Reygoch. But she found that there was no way

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through, and that her plight was hopeless; and as for the bag of pearls, which might have helped her, it was buried under the landslide.

When Curlylocks realised this she stopped crying, for she was proud, and she thought : “ There is no help for it, and I must die. Reygoch won’t come to my rescue, because his wits are too slow even to help himself, let alone to make him remember to help me. So there is nothing for it, and I must die.”

So Curlylocks prepared for death. But in case folk should ever find her in her grave she wanted them to know that she came of royal blood. So she set the crown of gold three times refined upon her head, took the ivory staff in her hand, and lay down to die. There was no one beside Curlylocks except her little lantern, burning as if it were lit with gold ; and as Curlylocks began to grow cold and stiff, so the lantern burned low and dim.

Reygoch was really an old stupid. When the pillar crashed down and there was the big landslide between him and Curlylocks he never moved, but sat still in the dark. Thus he sat for quite a long



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time, before it occurred to him to go and find out what had happened.

He felt his way in the dark to the spot where Curlylocks had been, groped about, and realised that the earth had subsided there and that the passage was indeed blocked.

“Eh, but that way is choked up now,” considered Reygoch. And nothing else could he think of, but turned round, left the mound of fallen earth and Curlylocks beyond it, and went back by the road they had travelled from Frosten city.

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Thus old Reygoch went his way, pillar by pillar. He had already gone a goodish bit; but there was all the time something worrying him. Reygoch himself couldn't imagine what it was that worried him.

He arranged the strap around his waist—perhaps it had been too tight; and then he stretched his arm—perhaps his arm had gone to sleep. Yet it was neither the one nor the other, but something else that worried. Reygoch wondered what in the

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world it could be. He wondered, and as he wondered he shook his head.

And as Reygoch shook his head, the little basket swung at his ear. And when Reygoch felt how light the basket was, and that there was no Curlylocks inside, a bitter pang shot through his heart and breast, and—simpleton though he was—he knew well enough that he was grieved because he missed Curlylocks, and he realised also that he ought to save her.

It had taken Reygoch a lot of trouble to think out all that; but once he had thought it out, he turned like the wind and flew back to the place where the landslide was, to find Curlylocks behind the heap of earth. He flew, and arrived just in time. Reygoch burrowed away with both hands, and in a little while he had burrowed a big hole, so that he could see Curlylocks lying there, the crown of fine gold on her head. She was already growing cold and rigid, with her little lantern beside her, and the flame of it as feeble as the tiniest little glow-worm.

If Reygoch had cried out in his grief the earth

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would have rocked, and the little lantern would have gone out altogether—even the little glow-worm light by the side of Curlylocks would have died away.

But Reygoch's throat was all tight with pain, so that he could not cry out. He put out his great big hand and gently picked up poor Curlylocks, who was already quite cold, and warmed her between the hollowed palms of his huge hands as you would warm a starved dicky-bird in winter. And lo! in a little while Curlylocks moved her little head, and at once the lantern burned a little brighter; and then Curlylocks moved her arm, and the lantern burned brighter still. At last Curlylocks opened her eyes, and the lantern burned as brightly as if its flame were pure gold!

Then Curlylocks jumped to her feet, caught hold of Reygoch's beard, and they both of them cried for pure joy. Reygoch's tears were as big as pears and Curlylocks' as tiny as millet-seed, but except for size they were both the same sort; and from that moment these two were mightily fond of one another.



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When they had finished their cry, Curlylocks found her pearls, and then they went on. But they touched no more of the things they saw underground, neither the sunken ships with their hoards of treasure, which had worked their way down from the bottom of the sea, nor the red coral, nor the yellow amber which twined round the underground pillars. They touched nothing, but went straight along by the way that would take them to the golden fields.

When they had gone on thus for a long time, Curlylocks asked Reygoch to hold her up; and when he did so, Curlylocks took a handful of earth from above her head.

She took the earth, looked at her hand, and there, among the soil, she found leaves and fibres.

“Here we are, daddy, under the forest beside the golden fields,” said Curlylocks. “Let’s hurry up and get out.”

So Reygoch stretched himself and began to break through the earth with his head.

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And indeed they were under the forest, just underneath a wooded glen between the two villages and the two counties. No one ever came to this glen but the herd boys and girls from both villages and both counties.

Now there was bitter strife between the two villages—strife over the threshing-floors, and the pastures, and the mills, and the timber-felling, and most of all over the staff of headmanship, which one of the villages had long claimed as belonging to it by rights, and the other would not give up. And so these two villages were at enmity with one another.

But the herd boys and girls of both villages were just simple young folk, who understood nothing about the rights of their elders, and cared less, but met every day on the boundary between the two villages and the two counties. Their flocks mingled and fed together, while the boys played games, and over their games would often be late in bringing the sheep home of an evening.

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For this the poor boys and girls would be soundly rated and scolded in both villages. But in one of the villages there was a great-grandfather and a great-grandmother who could remember all that had ever happened in either village, and they said: "Leave the children alone. A better harvest will spring from their childish games than ever from your wheat in the fields."

So the shepherds kept on coming, as before, with their sheep to the glen, and in time the parents stopped bothering about what the children did.

And so it was on the day when Reygoch broke through the earth at that very spot. The boys and girls happened to be all gathered together under the biggest oak, getting ready to go home. One was tying up his shoes, another fixing a thong to a stick, and the girls were collecting the sheep. All of a sudden they heard a dreadful thumping in the earth right underneath their feet! There was a thud, then a second, and at the third thud the earth gaped, and up there came, right in the midst of the shepherds, a fearsome large head as big as a barrel, with a beard like a shock of corn, and the

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beard still bristling with hoar-frost from Frosten city !

The boys and girls all screamed with fright and fell down in a dead faint—not so much because of the head as big as a barrel, but because of the beard, that looked for all the world like a shock of corn !

So the shepherds fainted away—all but young Lilio, who was the handsomest and cleverest among the lads of both villages and both counties.

Lilio kept his feet, and went close up to see what sort of monster it might be.

“Don’t be afraid, children,” said Lilio to the shepherds. “The Lord never created that monstrous giant for evil, else he would have killed half the world by now.”

So Lilio walked boldly up to Reygoch, and Reygoch lifted the basket with Curlylocks down from his ear and set it on the ground.

“Come—oh come quickly, boys!” cried Lilio. “There is a little girl with him, little and lovely as a star !”

The herd boys and girls got up and began to peep from behind each other at Curlylocks ; and

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those who had at first been the most frightened were now the foremost in coming up to Curlylocks, because, you see, they were always quickest in everything.

No sooner had the herd boys and girls seen dear little Curlylocks than they loved her. They helped her out of her basket, led her to where the turf was softest, and fell to admiring her lovely robes, which were light as gossamer and blue as the sky, and her hair, which was shining and soft as the morning light; but most of all they admired her fairy veil, for she would wave it just for a moment, and then rise from the grass and float in the air.

The herd boys and girls and Curlylocks danced in a ring together, and played all kinds of games. Curlylocks' little feet twinkled for pure joy, her eyes laughed, and so did her lips, because she had found companions who liked the same things as she did.

Then Curlylocks brought out her little bag of pearls to give presents and pleasure to her new friends. She threw down a pearl, and a little tree grew up in their midst, all decked with coloured



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ribbons, silk kerchiefs and red necklaces for the girls. She threw down a second pearl, and from all parts of the forest came forth haughty peacocks; they stalked and strutted, they flew up and away, shedding their glorious feathers all over the turf, so that the grass fairly sparkled with them. And the herd boys stuck the feathers in their caps and doublets. Yet another pearl did Curlylocks throw out, and from a lofty branch there dropped a golden swing with silken ropes; and when the boys and girls got on the swing, it swooped and stooped as light as a swallow, and as gently as the grand barge of the Duke of Venice.

The children shouted for joy, and Curlylocks threw out all the pearls in her bag one after another, never thinking that she ought to save them; because Curlylocks liked nothing in the world better than lovely games and pretty songs. And so she spent her pearls down to the last little seed pearl, though heaven alone knew how badly she would need them soon, both she and her new friends.

"I shall never leave you any more," cried Curlylocks merrily. And the herd boys and girls

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clapped their hands and threw up their caps for joy over her words.

Only Lilio had not joined in their games, because he was rather sad and worried that day. He stayed near Reygoch, and from there he watched Curlylocks in all her loveliness, and all the pretty magic she made there in the forest.

Meantime Reygoch had come out of his hole. Out he came and stood up among the trees of the forest, and as he stood there his head rose above the hundred-year-old forest, so terribly big was Reygoch.

Over the forest looked Reygoch, and out into the plain.

The sun had already set, and the sky was all crimson. In the plain you could see the two golden fields spread out like two gold kerchiefs, and in the midst of the fields two villages like two white doves. A little way beyond the two villages flowed the mighty River Banewater, and all along the river rose great grass-grown dykes; and on the dykes you could see herds and their keepers moving.

“Well, well!” said Reygoch, “and to think that



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I have spent a thousand years in Frosten city, in that desert, when there is so much beauty in the world!" And Reygoch was so delighted with looking into the plain that he just stood there with his great head as big as a barrel turning from right to left, like a huge scarecrow nodding above the tree-tops.

Presently Lilio called to him :

" Sit down, daddy, for fear the elders of the villages should see you."

Reygoch sat down, and the two started talking, and Lilio told Reygoch why he was so sad that day.

" A very wicked thing is going to happen to-day," said Lilio. " I overheard the elders of our village talking last night, and this is what they said : ' Let us pierce the dyke along the River Banewater. The river will widen the hole, the dyke will fall, and the water will flood the enemy village ; it will drown men and women, flood the graveyard and the fields, till the water will be level above them, and nothing but a lake to show where the enemy village has been. But our fields are higher, and our village lies on a height, and so no harm will come

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to us.' And then they really went out with a great ram to pierce the dyke secretly and at dead of night. But, daddy," continued Lilio, "I know that our fields are not so high, and I know that the water will overflow them too, and before the night is over there will be a lake where our two villages used to be. And that is why I am so sad."

They were still talking when a terrible noise and clamour arose from the plain.

"There!" cried Lilio, "the dreadful thing has happened!"

Reygoch drew himself up, picked up Lilio, and the two looked out over the plain. It was a sad sight to see! The dyke was crumbling, and the mighty Black Banewater rolling in two arms across the beautiful fields. One arm rolled towards the one village, and the second arm towards the other village. Animals were drowning, the golden fields disappeared below the flood. Above the graves the crosses were afloat, and both villages rang with cries and shouting. For in both villages the elders had gone out to the threshing-floors with cymbals, drums and fifes, and there they were drumming and

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piping away each to spite the other village, so crazed were they with malice, while over and above that din the village dogs howled dismally, and the women and children wept and wailed.

“Daddy,” cried Lilio, “why have I not your hands to stop the water?”

Terrified and bewildered by the dreadful clamour in the plain, the herd boys and girls crowded round Reygoch and Lilio.

When Curlylocks heard what was the matter she called out quick and sprightly, as befits a little fairy :

“Come on, Reygoch—come on and stop the water!”

“Yes, yes, let’s go!” cried the herd boys of both villages and both counties, as they wept and sobbed without stopping. “Come on, Reygoch, and take us along too!”

Reygoch stooped, gathered up Lilio and Curlylocks (who was still carrying her lantern) in his right hand, and all the rest of the herd boys and girls in his left, and then Reygoch raced with ten-fathom strides through the forest clearing and down

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into the plain. Behind him ran the sheep, bleating with terror. And so they reached the plain.

Through fog and twilight ran Reygoch with the children in his arms and the terrified flocks at his heels in frantic flight—all running towards the dyke. And out to meet them flowed the Black Banewater, killing and drowning as it flowed. It is terribly strong, is that water. Stronger than Reygoch? Who knows? Will it sweep away Reygoch, too? Will it drown those poor herd boys and girls also, and must the dear little Fairy Curlylocks die—and she as lovely as a star?

So Reygoch ran on across the meadow, which was still dry, and came all breathless to the dyke, where there was a great breach, through which the river was pouring with frightful force.

“Stop it up, Reygoch—stop it up!” wailed the boys and girls.

Not far from the dyke there was a little mound in the plain.

“Put us on that mound,” cried Curlylocks briskly.

Reygoch set down Lilio and Curlylocks and the

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herd boys and girls on the hillock, and the sheep and lambs crowded round them. Already the hillock was just an island in the middle of the water.

But Reygoch took one mighty stride into the water and then lay down facing the dyke, stopping up the breach with his enormous chest. For a little while the water ceased to flow ; but it was so terribly strong that nothing on earth could stop it. The water pressed forward ; it eddied round Reygoch's shoulders ; it broke through under him, over him, about him—everywhere—and rolled on again over the plain. Reygoch stretched out both arms and piled up the earth in great handfuls ; but as fast as he piled it up, the water carried it away.

And in the plain the water kept on rising higher and higher ; fields, villages, cattle, threshing-floors, not one of them could be seen any more. Of both villages, the roofs and church steeples were all that showed above the flood.

Even around the hillock where the herd boys and girls were standing with Lilio and Curlylocks the flood was rising higher and higher. The poor young things were weeping and crying, some for



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their mothers, others for their brothers and sisters, and some for their homes and gardens; because they saw that both villages had perished, and not a soul saved—and the water rising about them, too!

So they crowded up higher and higher upon the hillock; they huddled together around Lilio and Curlylocks, who were standing side by side in the midst of their friends.

Lilio stood still and white as marble; but Curlylocks' eyes shone, and she held up her lantern towards Reygoch to give him light for his work. Curlylocks' veil rose and fluttered in the night wind and hovered above the water, as though the little fairy were about to fly away and vanish from among all these terrors.

"Curlylocks! Curlylocks! don't go! Don't leave us!" wailed the herd boys, to whom it seemed as if there were an angel with them while they could look upon Curlylocks.

"I'm not going—I'm not going away!" cried Curlylocks. But her veil fluttered, as if it would carry her away of its own accord, over the water and up into the clouds.

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Suddenly they heard a scream. The water had risen and caught one of the girls by the hem of her skirt and was washing her away. Lilio stooped just in time, seized the girl, and pulled her back on to the hillock.

“We must tie ourselves together,” cried the herd boys; “we must be tied each to the other, or we shall perish.”

“Here, children—here!” cried Curlylocks, who had a kind and pitiful heart.

Quickly she stripped her magic veil off her shoulders and gave it to the herd girls. They tore the veil into strips, knotted the strips into long ropes, and bound themselves together, each to other, round Lilio and Curlylocks. And round the shepherds bleated the poor sheep in terror of being drowned.

But Curlylocks was now among these poor castaways, no better off than the rest of them. Her pearls she had wasted on toys, and her magic veil she had given away and torn up out of the goodness of her heart, and now she could no longer fly, nor save herself out of this misery.

But Lilio loved Curlylocks better than anything



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else in the world, and when the water was already up to his feet he called :

“ Don’t be afraid, Curlylocks ! I will save you and hold you up ! ” And he held up Curlylocks in his arms.

With one hand Curlylocks clung round Lilio’s neck, and with the other she held up her little lantern aloft towards Reygoch.

And Reygoch, lying on his chest in the water, was all the time steadily fighting the flood. Right and left of Reygoch rose the ruins of the dyke like two great horns. Reygoch’s beard was touzled, his shoulders were bleeding. Yet he could not stop the Banewater, and the flood round the hillock was rising and rising to drown the poor remnant there. And now it was night—yea, midnight.

All of a sudden a thought flashed through Curlylocks, and through all the sobbing and crying she laughed aloud as she called to Reygoch :

“ Reygoch, you old simpleton ! why don’t you *sit* between these two horns of the dyke ? Why don’t you dam the flood with your shoulders ? ”

The herd boys and girls stopped wailing at

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once. So dumbfounded were they at the idea that not one of them had thought of that before !

“ Uhuhu ! ” was all you could hear, and that was Reygoch laughing. And when Reygoch laughs, mind you, it's no joke ! All the water round him boiled and bubbled as he shook with laughter over his own stupidity !

Then Reygoch stood up, faced about, and—in a twinkling—he sat down between those two horns !

And then happened the most wonderful thing of all ! For the Black Banewater stood as though you had rolled a wall into the breach ! It stood, and could not rise above Reygoch's shoulders, but followed its usual course, as before, the whole current behind Reygoch's back. And surely that was a most marvellous rescue !

The boys and girls were saved from the worst of the danger ; and Reygoch, sitting comfortably, took up earth in handfuls and all slow-and-surely rebuilt the dyke under himself and on either hand. He began in the middle of the night, and when the dawn broke, the job was finished. And just as the sun rose, Reygoch got up from the dyke with

## Reygoch

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his work done, and started combing his beard, which was all caked with mud, twigs, and little fishes.

But the poor boys and girls were not yet done with their troubles ; for where were they to go, and how were they to get there ? There they stood on the top of the hillock. All around them was a waste of water. Nothing was to be seen of the two villages but just a few roofs—and not a soul alive in either. To be sure, the villagers might have saved themselves if they had taken refuge in their attics. But in both villages everybody had gone to the threshing-floor with cymbals and fifes to make merry, so that each could watch the destruction of the other. And when the water was up to their waists, they were still clanging their cymbals ; and when it was up to their necks, they still blew their fifes for gratified spite. And so they were drowned, one and all, with their fifes and cymbals—and serve them right for their malice and uncharitableness !

So the poor children were left without a soul to cherish or protect them, all houseless and homeless.

“ We’re not sparrows, to live on the house-tops,” said the boys sadly, as they saw only the

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roofs sticking out of the water, “and we’re not foxes, to live in burrows in the hills. If someone could clear our villages of the water, we might make shift to get along somehow, but as it is, we might as well jump into the water with our flocks and be drowned like the rest, for we have nowhere and no one to turn to.”

That was a sad plight indeed, and Reygoch himself was dreadfully sorry for them. But here was an evil he could in no wise remedy. He looked out over the water and said: “There’s too much water here for me to bale out or to drink up so as to clear your villages. Eh, children, what shall I do for you?”

But then up and spoke Lilio, that was the wisest lad in these parts:

“Reygoch, daddy, if *you* cannot drink so much water, *the Earth can*. Break a hole in the ground, daddy, and drain off the water into the earth.”

Dearie me! and wasn’t that great wisdom in a lad no bigger than Reygoch’s finger?

Forthwith Reygoch stamped on the ground and broke a hole; and the Earth, like a thirsty

## Reygoch

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dragon, began to drink and to drink, and swallow, and suck down into herself all that mighty water from off the whole plain. Before long the Earth had gulped down all the water; villages, fields, and meadows reappeared, ravaged and mud-covered, to be sure, but with everything in its right place.

The young castaways cheered up at the sight, but none was so glad as Curlylocks. She clapped her hands and cried :

“ Oh, won't it be lovely when the fields all grow golden again and the meadows green ! ”

But hereupon the herd boys and girls were all downcast once more, and Lilio said :

“ Who will show us how to till the ground now that not one of our parents is left alive ? ”

And indeed, far and wide, there was not a soul alive older than that company of helpless young things in the midst of the ravaged plain, and none with them but Reygoch, who was so big and clumsy and simple that he could not turn his head inside one of their houses, nor did he know anything about ploughing or husbandry.

So they were all in the dumps once more, and



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most of all Reygoch, who was so fond of pretty Curlylocks, and now he could do nothing for her nor her friends !

And, worst of all, Reygoch was getting horribly homesick for his desolate city of Frosten. This night he had swallowed mud enough to last him a thousand years, and seen more than enough of trouble. And so he was just dying to be back in his vast, empty city, where he had counted the stones in peace for so many hundred years.

So the herd boys were very crestfallen, and Lilio was crestfallen, and Reygoch the most crestfallen of all. And really it was sad to look upon all these poor boys and girls, doomed to perish without their parents and wither like a flower cut off from its root.

Only Curlylocks looked gaily about her, right and left, for nothing could damp her good spirits.

Suddenly Curlylocks cried out :

“ Look—oh look ! What are those people ? Oh dear, but they must have seen sights and wonders ! ”

All looked towards the village, and there, at one of the windows, appeared the heads of an aged

## Reygoch

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couple—an old man and an old woman. They waved their kerchiefs, they called the young people by name, and laughed till their wrinkled faces all shone with joy. They were great-grandfather and great-grandmother, who had been the only sensible people in the two villages, and had saved themselves by taking refuge in the attic !

Oh dear ! If the children had seen the sun at his rising and the morning star at that attic window, they would not have shouted so for joy. The very heavens rang again as they called out :

“Granny ! Grandad !”

They raced to the village like young whippets, Curlylocks in front, with her golden hair streaming in the wind, and after them the ewes and lambs. They never stopped till they reached the village, and there grandfather and grandmother were waiting for them at the gate. They welcomed them, hugged them, and none of them could find words to thank God enough for His mercy in giving grandad and grandma so much wisdom as to make them take refuge in the attic ! And that was really a very good thing, because these were only quite simple

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villages, where there were no books nor written records; and who would have reminded the herd boys and girls of the consequences of wickedness if grandad and grandma had not been spared?

When they had done hugging each other, they remembered Reygoch. They looked round the plain, but there was no Reygoch. He was gone—gone all of a sudden, the dear huge thing—gone like a mouse down its hole.

And Reygoch had indeed gone like a mouse down its hole. For when grandpa and grandma appeared at the attic window, Reygoch got a fright such as he had never yet had in his life. He was terrified at the sight of their furrowed, wrinkled, withered old faces.

“Oh dear! oh dear! what a lot of trouble these old people must have been through in these parts to have come to look like that!” thought Reygoch; and in his terror he that very instant jumped down into the hole through which the Black Banewater had sunk down, and so ran away back to his desolate Frosten city.

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## Reygoch

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All went well in the village. Grandad and Grandma taught the young folk, and the young folk ploughed and sowed. Upon the grandparents' advice they built just one village, one threshing-floor, one church, and one graveyard, so that there should be no more jealousy nor trouble.

All went well; but the best of all was that in the heart of the village stood a beautiful tower of mountain marble, and on the top of it they had made a garden, where blossomed oranges and wild olive. There lived Curlylocks, the lovely fairy, and looked down upon the land that had been so dear to her from the moment when she first came to earth.

And of an evening, when the field work was done, Lilio would lead the herd boys and girls to the tower, and they would sing songs and dance in a ring in the garden with Curlylocks, always lovely, gentle, and joyous.

But under the earth Reygoch once more fell in with the Black Banewater as it roared and burbled underneath, while he wrestled with it till he forced it deeper and deeper into the earth, and

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right down to the bottom of the Pit, so that it might never again serve the spite and envy of man. And then Reygoch went on to Frosten city. There he is sitting to this very day, counting the stones and praying the Lord never again to tempt him away from that vast and desolate spot, which is the very place for one so big and so simple.

