The Battle of the Birds
by Andrew Lang

There was to be a great battle between all the creatures of the earth and the birds of the air. News of it went abroad, and the son of the king of Tethertown said that when the battle was fought he would be there to see it, and would bring back word who was to be king. But in spite of that, he was almost too late, and every fight had been fought save the last, which was between a snake and a great black raven. Both struck hard, but in the end the snake proved the stronger, and would have twisted himself round the neck of the raven till he died had not the king's son drawn his sword, and cut off the head of the snake at a single blow. And when the raven beheld that his enemy was dead, he was grateful, and said:

'For thy kindness to me this day, I will show thee a sight. So come up now on the root of my two wings.' The king's son did as he was bid, and before the raven stopped flying, they had passed over seven bens and seven glens and seven mountain moors.

'Do you see that house yonder?' said the raven at last. 'Go straight for it, for a sister of mine dwells there, and she will make you right welcome. And if she asks, "Wert thou at the battle of the birds?" answer that thou wert, and if she asks, "Didst thou see my likeness?" answer that thou sawest it, but be sure thou meetest me in the morning at this place.'

The king's son followed what the raven told him and that night he had meat of each meat, and drink of each drink, warm water for his feet, and a soft bed to lie in.

Thus it happened the next day, and the next, but on the fourth meeting, instead of meeting the raven, in his place the king's son found waiting for him the handsomest youth that ever was seen, with a bundle in his hand.

'Is there a raven hereabouts?' asked the king's son, and the youth answered:

'I am that raven, and I was delivered by thee from the spells that bound me, and in reward thou wilt get this bundle. Go back by the road thou camest, and lie as before, a night in each house, but be careful not to unloose the bundle till thou art in the place wherein thou wouldst most wish to dwell.'

Then the king's son set out, and thus it happened as it had happened before, till he entered a thick wood near his father's house. He had walked a long way and suddenly the bundle seemed to grow heavier; first he put it down under a tree, and next he thought he would look at it.

The string was easy to untie, and the king's son soon unfastened the bundle. What was it he saw there? Why, a great castle with an orchard all about it, and in the orchard fruit and flowers and birds of very kind. It was all ready for him to dwell in, but instead of being in the midst of the forest, he did wish he had left the bundle unloosed till he had reached the green valley close to his father's palace.

Well, it was no use wishing, and with a sigh he glanced up, and beheld a huge giant coming towards him.

'Bad is the place where thou hast built thy house, king's son,' said the giant.

'True; it is not here that I wish to be,' answered the king's son.

'What reward wilt thou give me if I put it back in the bundle?' asked the giant.

'What reward dost thou ask?' answered the king's son.

'The first boy thou hast when he is seven years old,' said the giant.

'If I have a boy thou shalt get him,' answered the king's son, and as he spoke the castle and the orchard were tied up in the bundle again.

'Now take thy road, and I will take mine,' said the giant. 'And if thou forgettest thy promise, I will remember it.'

Light of heart the king's son went on his road, till he came to the green valley near his father's palace. Slowly he unloosed the bundle, fearing lest he should find nothing but a heap of stones or rags. But no! all was as it had been before, and as he opened the castle door there stood within the most beautiful maiden that ever was seen.

'Enter, king's son,' said she, 'all is ready, and we will be married at once,' and so they were.

The maiden proved a good wife, and the king's son, now himself a king, was so happy that he forgot all about the giant. Seven years and a day had gone by, when one morning, while standing on the ramparts, he beheld the giant striding towards the castle. Then he remembered his promise, and remembered, too, that he had told the queen nothing about it. Now he must tell her, and perhaps she might help him in his trouble.

The queen listened in silence to his tale, and after he had finished, she only said:

'Leave thou the matter between me and the giant,' and as she spoke, the giant entered the hall and stood before them.

'Bring out your son,' cried he to the king, 'as you promised me seven years and a day since.'

The king glanced at his wife, who nodded, so he answered:

'Let his mother first put him in order,' and the queen left the hall, and took the cook's son and dressed him in the prince's clothes, and led him up to the giant, who held his hand, and together they went out along the road. They had not walked far when the giant stopped and stretched out a stick to the boy.

‘If your father had that stick, what would he do with it?’ asked he.

‘If my father had that stick, he would beat the dogs and cats that steal the king’s meat,’ replied the boy.

‘Thou art the cook’s son!’ cried the giant. ‘Go home to thy mother’; and turning his back he strode straight to the castle.

‘If you seek to trick me this time, the highest stone will soon be the lowest,’ said he, and the king and queen trembled, but they could not bear to give up their boy.

‘The butler’s son is the same age as ours,’ whispered the queen; ‘he will not know the difference,’ and she took the child and dressed him in the prince’s clothes, and the giant let him away along the road. Before they had gone far he stopped, and held out a stick.

‘If thy father had that rod, what would he do with it?’ asked the giant.

‘He would beat the dogs and cats that break the king’s glasses,’ answered the boy.

‘Thou art the son of the butler!’ cried the giant. ‘Go home to thy mother’; and turning round he strode back angrily to the castle.

‘Bring out thy son at once,’ roared he, ‘or the stone that is highest will be lowest,’ and this time the real prince was brought.

But though his parents wept bitterly and fancied the child was suffering all kinds of dreadful things, the giant treated him like his own son, though he never allowed him to see his daughters. The boy grew to be a big boy, and one day the giant told him that he would have to amuse himself alone for many hours, as he had a journey to make. So the boy wandered to the top of the castle, where he had never been before. There he paused, for the sound of music broke upon his ears, and opening a door near him, he beheld a girl sitting by the window, holding a harp.

‘Haste and begone, I see the giant close at hand,’ she whispered hurriedly, ‘but when he is asleep, return hither, for I would speak with thee.’ And the prince did as he was bid, and when midnight struck he crept back to the top of the castle.

‘To-morrow,’ said the girl, who was the giant’s daughter, ‘to- morrow thou wilt get the choice of my two sisters to marry, but thou must answer that thou wilt not take either, but only me. This will anger him greatly, for he wishes to betroth me to the son of the king of the Green City, whom I like not at all.’

Then they parted, and on the morrow, as the girl had said, the giant called his three daughters to him, and likewise the young prince to whom he spoke.

‘Now, O son of the king of Tethertown, the time has come for us to part. Choose one of my two elder daughters to wife, and thou shalt take her to your father’s house the day after the wedding.’

‘Give me the youngest instead,’ replied the youth, and the giant’s face darkened as he heard him.

‘Three things must thou do first,’ said he.

‘Say on, I will do them,’ replied the prince, and the giant left the house, and bade him follow to the byre, where the cows were kept.

‘For a hundred years no man has swept this byre,’ said the giant, ‘but if by nightfall, when I reach home, thou has not cleaned it so that a golden apple can roll through it from end to end, thy blood shall pay for it.’

All day long the youth toiled, but he might as well have tried to empty the ocean. At length, when he was so tired he could hardly move, the giant’s youngest daughter stood in the doorway.

‘Lay down thy weariness,’ said she, and the king’s son, thinking he could only die once, sank on the floor at her bidding, and fell sound asleep. When he woke the girl had disappeared, and the byre was so clean that a golden apple could roll from end to end of it. He jumped up in surprise, and at that moment in came the giant.

‘Hast thou cleaned the byre, king’s son?’ asked he.

‘I have cleaned it,’ answered he.

‘Well, since thou wert so active to-day, to-morrow thou wilt thatch this byre with a feather from every different bird, or else thy blood shall pay for it,’ and he went out.

Before the sun was up, the youth took his bow and his quiver and set off to kill the birds. Off to the moor he went, but never a bird was to be seen that day. At last he got so tired with running to and fro that he gave up heart.

‘There is but one death I can die,’ thought he. Then at midday came the giant’s daughter.

‘Thou art tired, king’s son?’ asked she.

‘I am,’ answered he; ‘all these hours have I wandered, and there fell but these two blackbirds, both of one colour.’

‘Lay down thy weariness on the grass,’ said she, and he did as she bade him, and fell fast asleep.

When he woke the girl had disappeared, and he got up, and returned to the byre. As he drew near, he rubbed his eyes hard, thinking he was dreaming, for there it was, beautifully thatched, just as the giant had wished. At the door of the house he met the giant.

‘Hast thou thatched the byre, king’s son?’

‘I have thatched it.’

‘Well, since thou hast been so active to-day, I have something else for thee! Beside the loch thou seest over yonder there grows a fir tree. On the top of the fir tree is a magpie’s nest, and in the nest are five eggs. Thou wilt bring me those eggs for breakfast, and if one is cracked or broken, thy blood shall pay for it.’

Before it was light next day, the king’s son jumped out of bed and ran down to the loch. The tree was not hard to find, for the rising sun shone red on the trunk, which was five hundred feet from the ground to its first branch. Time after time he walked round it, trying to find some knots, however small, where he could put his feet, but the bark was quite smooth, and he soon saw that if he was to reach the top at all, it must be by climbing up with his knees like a sailor. But then he was a king’s son and not a sailor, which made all the difference.

However, it was no use standing there staring at the fir, at least he must try to do his best, and try he did till his hands and knees were sore, for as soon as he had struggled up a few feet, he slid back again. Once he climbed a little higher than before, and hope rose in his heart, then down he came with such force that his hands and knees smarted worse than ever.

‘This is no time for stopping,’ said the voice of the giant’s daughter, as he leant against the trunk to recover his breath.

‘Alas! I am no sooner up than down,’ answered he.

‘Try once more,’ said she, and she laid a finger against the tree and bade him put his foot on it. Then she placed another finger a little higher up, and so on till he reached the top, where the magpie had built her nest.

‘Make haste now with the nest,’ she cried, ‘for my father’s breath is burning my back,’ and down he scrambled as fast as he could, but the girl’s little finger had caught in a branch at the top, and she was obliged to leave it there. But she was too busy to pay heed to this, for the sun was getting high over the hills.

‘Listen to me,’ she said. ‘This night my two sisters and I will be dressed in the same garments, and you will not know me. But when my father says ‘Go to thy wife, king’s son,’ come to the one whose right hand has no little finger.’

So he went and gave the eggs to the giant, who nodded his head.

‘Make ready for thy marriage,’ cried he, ‘for the wedding shall take place this very night, and I will summon thy bride to greet thee.’ Then his three daughters were sent for, and they all entered dressed in green silk of the same fashion, and with golden circlets round their heads. The king’s son looked from one to another. Which was the youngest? Suddenly his eyes fell on the hand of the middle one, and there was no little finger.

‘Thou hast aimed well this time too,’ said the giant, as the king’s son laid his hand on her shoulder, ‘but perhaps we may meet some other way’; and though he pretended to laugh, the bride saw a gleam in his eye which warned her of danger.

The wedding took place that very night, and the hall was filled with giants and gentlemen, and they danced till the house shook from top to bottom. At last everyone grew tired, and the guests went away, and the king's son and his bride were left alone.

'If we stay here till dawn my father will kill thee,' she whispered, 'but thou art my husband and I will save thee, as I did before,' and she cut an apple into nine pieces, and put two pieces at the head of the bed, and two pieces at the foot, and two pieces at the door of the kitchen, and two at the big door, and one outside the house. And when this was done, and she heard the giant snoring, she and the king's son crept out softly and stole across to the stable, where she led out the blue-grey mare and jumped on its back, and her husband mounted behind her. Not long after, the giant awoke.

'Are you asleep?' asked he.

'Not yet,' answered the apple at the head of the bed, and the giant turned over, and soon was snoring as loudly as before. By and bye he called again.

'Are you asleep?'

'Not yet,' said the apple at the foot of the bed, and the giant was satisfied. After a while, he called a third time, 'Are you asleep?'

'Not yet,' replied the apple in the kitchen, but when in a few minutes, he put the question for the fourth time and received an answer from the apple outside the house door, he guessed what had happened, and ran to the room to look for himself.

The bed was cold and empty!

'My father's breath is burning my back,' cried the girl, 'put thy hand into the ear of the mare, and whatever thou findest there, throw it behind thee.' And in the mare's ear there was a twig of sloe tree, and as he threw it behind him there sprung up twenty miles of thornwood so thick that scarce a weasel could go through it. And the giant, who was striding headlong forwards, got caught in it, and it pulled his hair and beard.

'This is one of my daughter's tricks,' he said to himself, 'but if I had my big axe and my wood-knife, I would not be long making a way through this,' and off he went home and brought back the axe and the wood-knife.

It took him but a short time to cut a road through the blackthorn, and then he laid the axe and the knife under a tree.

'I will leave them there till I return,' he murmured to himself, but a hoodie crow, which was sitting on a branch above, heard him.

'If thou leavest them,' said the hoodie, 'we will steal them.'

‘You will,’ answered the giant, ‘and I must take them home.’ So he took them home, and started afresh on his journey.

‘My father’s breath is burning my back,’ cried the girl at midday. ‘Put thy finger in the mare’s ear and throw behind thee whatever thou findest in it,’ and the king’s son found a splinter of grey stone, and threw it behind him, and in a twinkling twenty miles of solid rock lay between them and the giant.

‘My daughter’s tricks are the hardest things that ever met me,’ said the giant, ‘but if I had my lever and my crowbar, I would not be long in making my way through this rock also,’ but as he had got them, he had to go home and fetch them. Then it took him but a short time to hew his way through the rock.

‘I will leave the tools here,’ he murmured aloud when he had finished.

‘If thou leavest them, we will steal them,’ said a hoodie who was perched on a stone above him, and the giant answered:

‘Steal them if thou wilt; there is no time to go back.’

‘My father’s breath is burning my back,’ cried the girl; ‘look in the mare’s ear, king’s son, or we are lost,’ and he looked, and found a tiny bladder full of water, which he threw behind him, and it became a great lock. And the giant, who was striding on so fast, could not stop himself, and he walked right into the middle and was drowned.

The blue-grey mare galloped on like the wind, and the next day the king’s son came in sight of his father’s house.

‘Get down and go in,’ said the bride, ‘and tell them that thou hast married me. But take heed that neither man nor beast kiss thee, for then thou wilt cease to remember me at all.’

‘I will do thy bidding,’ answered he, and left her at the gate. All who met him bade him welcome, and he charged his father and mother not to kiss him, but as he greeted them his old greyhound leapt on his neck, and kissed him on the mouth. And after that he did not remember the giant’s daughter.

All that day she sat on a well which was near the gate, waiting, waiting, but the king’s son never came. In the darkness she climbed up into an oak tree that shadowed the well, and there she lay all night, waiting, waiting.

On the morrow, at midday, the wife of a shoemaker who dwelt near the well went to draw water for her husband to drink, and she saw the shadow of the girl in the tree, and thought it was her own shadow.

‘How handsome I am, to be sure,’ said she, gazing into the well, and as she stopped to behold herself better, the jug struck against the stones and broke in pieces, and she was forced to return to her husband without the water, and this angered him.

‘Thou hast turned crazy,’ said he in wrath. ‘Go thou, my daughter, and fetch me a drink,’ and the girl went, and the same thing befell her as had befallen her mother.

‘Where is the water?’ asked the shoemaker, when she came back, and as she held nothing save the handle of the jug he went to the well himself. He too saw the reflection of the woman in the tree, but looked up to discover whence it came, and there above him sat the most beautiful woman in the world.

‘Come down,’ he said, ‘for a while thou canst stay in my house,’ and glad enough the girl was to come.

Now the king of the country was about to marry, and the young men about the court thronged the shoemaker’s shop to buy fine shoes to wear at the wedding.

‘Thou hast a pretty daughter,’ said they when they beheld the girl sitting at work.

‘Pretty she is,’ answered the shoemaker, ‘but no daughter of mine.’

‘I would give a hundred pounds to marry her,’ said one.

‘And I,’ ‘And I,’ cried the others.

‘That is no business of mine,’ answered the shoemaker, and the young men bade him ask her if she would choose one of them for a husband, and to tell them on the morrow. Then the shoemaker asked her, and the girl said that she would marry the one who would bring his purse with him. So the shoemaker hurried to the youth who had first spoken, and he came back, and after giving the shoemaker a hundred pounds for his news, he sought the girl, who was waiting for him.

‘Is it thou?’ inquired she. ‘I am thirsty, give me a drink from the well that is yonder.’ And he poured out the water, but he could not move from the place where he was; and there he stayed till many hours had passed by.

‘Take away that foolish boy,’ cried the girl to the shoemaker at last, ‘I am tired of him,’ and then suddenly he was able to walk, and betook himself to his home, but he did not tell the others what had happened to him.

Next day there arrived one of the other young men, and in the evening, when the shoemaker had gone out and they were alone, she said to him, ‘See if the latch is on the door.’ The young man hastened to do her bidding, but as soon as he touched the latch, his fingers stuck to it, and there he had to stay for many hours, till the shoemaker came back, and the girl let him go. Hanging his head, he went home, but he told no one what had befallen him.

Then was the turn of the third man, and his foot remained fastened to the floor, till the girl unloosed it. And thankfully, he ran off, and was not seen looking behind him.

‘Take the purse of gold,’ said the girl to the shoemaker, ‘I have no need of it, and it will better thee.’ And the shoemaker took it and told the girl he must carry the shoes for the wedding up to the castle.

‘I would fain get a sight of the king’s son before he marries,’ sighed she.

‘Come with me, then,’ answered he; ‘the servants are all my friends, and they will let you stand in the passage down which the king’s son will pass, and all the company too.’

Up they went to the castle, and when the young men saw the girl standing there, they led her into the hall where the banquet was laid out and poured her out some wine. She was just raising the glass to drink when a flame went up out of it, and out of the flame sprang two pigeons, one of gold and one of silver. They flew round and round the head of the girl, when three grains of barley fell on the floor, and the silver pigeon dived down, and swallowed them.

‘If thou hadst remembered how I cleaned the byre, thou wouldst have given me my share,’ cooed the golden pigeon, and as he spoke three more grains fell, and the silver pigeon ate them as before.

‘If thou hadst remembered how I thatched the byre, thou wouldst have given me my share,’ cooed the golden pigeon again; and as he spoke three more grains fell, and for the third time they were eaten by the silver pigeon.

‘If thou hadst remembered how I got the magpie’s nest, thou wouldst have given me my share,’ cooed the golden pigeon.

Then the king’s son understood that they had come to remind him of what he had forgotten, and his lost memory came back, and he knew his wife, and kissed her. But as the preparations had been made, it seemed a pity to waste them, so they were married a second time, and sat down to the wedding feast.

The Mermaid Wife

by W.W. Gibbings

Excerpt from *Folk-Lore and Legends: Scotland*

A story is told of an inhabitant of Unst, who, in walking on the sandy margin of a voe, saw a number of mermen and mermaids dancing by moonlight, and several seal-skins strewed beside them on the ground. At his approach they immediately fled to secure their garbs, and, taking upon themselves the form of seals, plunged immediately into the sea. But as the Shetlander perceived that one skin lay close to his feet, he snatched it up, bore it swiftly away, and placed it in concealment.

On returning to the shore he met the fairest damsel that was ever gazed upon by mortal eyes, lamenting the robbery, by which she had become an exile from her submarine friends, and a tenant of the upper world. Vainly she implored the restitution of her property; the man had drunk deeply of love, and was inexorable; but he offered her protection beneath his roof as his betrothed spouse. The merlady, perceiving that she must become an inhabitant of the earth, found that she could not do better than accept of the offer. This strange attachment subsisted for many years, and the couple had several children.

The Shetlander's love for his merwife was unbounded, but his affection was coldly returned. The lady would often steal alone to the desert strand, and, on a signal being given, a large seal would make his appearance, with whom she would hold, in an unknown tongue, an anxious conference. Years had thus glided away, when it happened that one of the children, in the course of his play, found concealed beneath a stack of corn a seal's skin; and, delighted with the prize, he ran with it to his mother.

Her eyes glistened with rapture—she gazed upon it as her own—as the means by which she could pass through the ocean that led to her native home. She burst forth into an ecstasy of joy, which was only moderated when she beheld her children, whom she was now about to leave; and, after hastily embracing them, she fled with all speed towards the sea-side.

The husband immediately returned, learned the discovery that had taken place, ran to overtake his wife, but only arrived in time to see her transformation of shape completed—to see her, in the form of a seal, bound from the ledge of a rock into the sea. The large animal of the same kind with whom she had held a secret converse soon appeared, and evidently congratulated her, in the most tender manner, on her escape. But before she dived to unknown depths, she cast a parting glance at the wretched Shetlander, whose despairing looks excited in her breast a few transient feelings of commiseration.

"Farewell!" said she to him, "and may all good attend you. I loved you very well when I resided upon earth, but I always loved my first husband much better."

The Gillie Dhu

by Frances Jenkins Olcott

Excerpt from *The Book of Elves and Fairies*

From Scotland:

Once upon a time a little girl, named Jessie, was wandering in the wood, and lost her way. It was Summer time, and the air was warm. She wandered on and on, trying to find her way home, but she could not find the path out of the wood. Twilight came, and weary and footsore she sat down under a fir tree, and began to cry.

"Why are you crying, little girl?" said a voice behind her.

Jessie looked around, and saw a pretty little man dressed in moss and green leaves. His eyes were dark as dark, and his hair was black as black, and his mouth was large and showed a hundred white teeth as small as seed pearls. He was smiling merrily, and his cream-yellow cheeks were dimpled, and his eyes soft and kindly. Indeed, he seemed so friendly that Jessie quite forgot to be afraid.

"Why are you crying, little girl?" he asked again. "Your tear-drops are falling like dew on the blue flowers at your feet!"

"I've lost my way," sobbed Jessie, "and the night is coming on."

"Do not cry, little girl," said he gently. "I will lead you through the wood. I know every path—the rabbit's path, the hare's path, the fox's path, the goat's path, the path of the deer, and the path of men."

"Oh, thank you! Thank you!" exclaimed Jessie, as she looked the tiny man up and down, and wondered to see his strange clothes.

"Where do you dwell, little girl?" asked he.

So Jessie told him, and he said: "You have been walking every way but the right way. Follow me, and you'll reach home before the stars come out to peep at us through the trees."

Then he turned around, and began to trip lightly in front of her, and she followed on. He went so fast that she feared she might lose sight of him, but he turned around again and again and smiled and beckoned. And when he saw that she was still far behind, he danced and twirled about until she came up. Then he scampered on as before.

At length Jessie reached the edge of the wood, and, oh, joy! there was her father's house beside the blue lake. Then the little man, smiling, bade her good-bye.

"Have I not led you well?" said he. "Do not forget me. I am the Gillie Dhu from Fairyland. I love little girls and boys. If you are ever lost in the wood again, I will come and help you! Good-bye, little girl! Good-bye!"

And laughing merrily, he trotted away, and was soon lost to sight among the trees.

The Smith and the Fairies

by Frances Jenkins Olcott

Excerpt from *The Book of Elves and Fairies*

From Scotland:

Years ago there lived in Scotland an honest, hard-working smith. He had only one child, a boy, fourteen years of age, cheerful, strong, and healthy.

Suddenly the boy fell ill. He took to his bed, and moped away whole days. No one could tell what was the matter with him. Although he had a tremendous appetite, he wasted away, getting thin, yellow, and old.

At last one morning, while the smith was standing idly at his forge, with no heart for work, he was surprised to see a Wise-man, who lived at some distance, enter his shop. The smith hastened to tell him about his son, and to ask his advice.

The Wise-man listened gravely, then said: "The boy has been carried away by the Little People, and they have left a Changeling in his place."

"Alas! And what am I to do?" asked the smith. "How am I ever to see my own son again?"

"I will tell you how," answered the Wise-man. "But first, to make sure that it is not your own son you have, gather together all the egg-shells you can get. Go into the room where the boy is, and spread them out carefully before him. Then pour water in them, and carry them carefully in your hands, two by two. Carry them as though they were very heavy, and arrange them around the fireplace."

The smith, accordingly, collected as many egg-shells as he could find. He went into the room, and did as the Wise-man had said.

He had not been long at work, before there came from the bed where the boy lay, a great shout of laughter, and the boy cried out:—

"I am now eight hundred years old, and I have never seen the like of that before!"

The smith hurried back, and told this to the Wise-man.

"Did I not assure you," said the Wise-man, "that it is not your son whom you have? Your son is in a Fairy Mound not far from here. Get rid as soon as possible of this Changeling, and I think I may promise you your son again.

"You must light a very great and bright fire before the bed on which this stranger is lying. He will ask you why you are doing so. Answer him at once: 'You shall see presently when I lay you upon it.' If you do this, the Changeling will become frightened and fly through the roof."

The smith again followed the Wise-man's advice; kindled a blazing fire, and answered as he had been told to do.

And, just as he was going to seize the Changeling and fling him on the fire, the thing gave an awful yell, and sprang through the roof.

The smith, overjoyed, returned to the Wise-man, and told this to him.

"On Midsummer Night," said the Wise-man, "the Fairy Mound, where your boy is kept, will open. You must provide yourself with a dirk and a crowing cock. Go to the Mound. You will hear singing and dancing and much merriment going on. At twelve o'clock a door in the Mound will open. Advance boldly. Enter this door, but first stick the dirk in the ground before it, to prevent the Mound from closing. You will find yourself in a spacious apartment, beautifully clean; and there working at a forge, you will see your son. The Fairies will then question you, and you must answer that you have come for your son, and will not go without him. Do this, and see what happens!"

Midsummer Night came, and the smith provided himself with a dirk and a crowing cock. He went to the Fairy Mound, and all happened as the Wise-man had said.

The Fairies came crowding around him, buzzing and pinching his legs; and when he said that he had come for his son, and would not go away without him, they all gave a loud laugh.

At the same minute the cock, that was dozing in the smith's arms, woke up. It leaped to his shoulder, and, clapping its wings, crowed loud and long.

At that the Fairies were furious. They seized the smith and his son and threw them out of the Mound, and pulled up the dirk and flung it after them. And in an instant all was dark.

For a year and a day the boy never spoke, nor would he do a turn of work. At last one morning as he was watching his father finish a sword, he exclaimed:—

"That's not the way to do it!"

And taking the tools from his father's hands, he set to work, and soon fashioned a glittering sharp sword, the like of which had never been seen before.

From that day on, the boy helped his father, and showed him how to make Fairy swords, and in a few years they both became rich and famous. And they always lived together contentedly and happily.