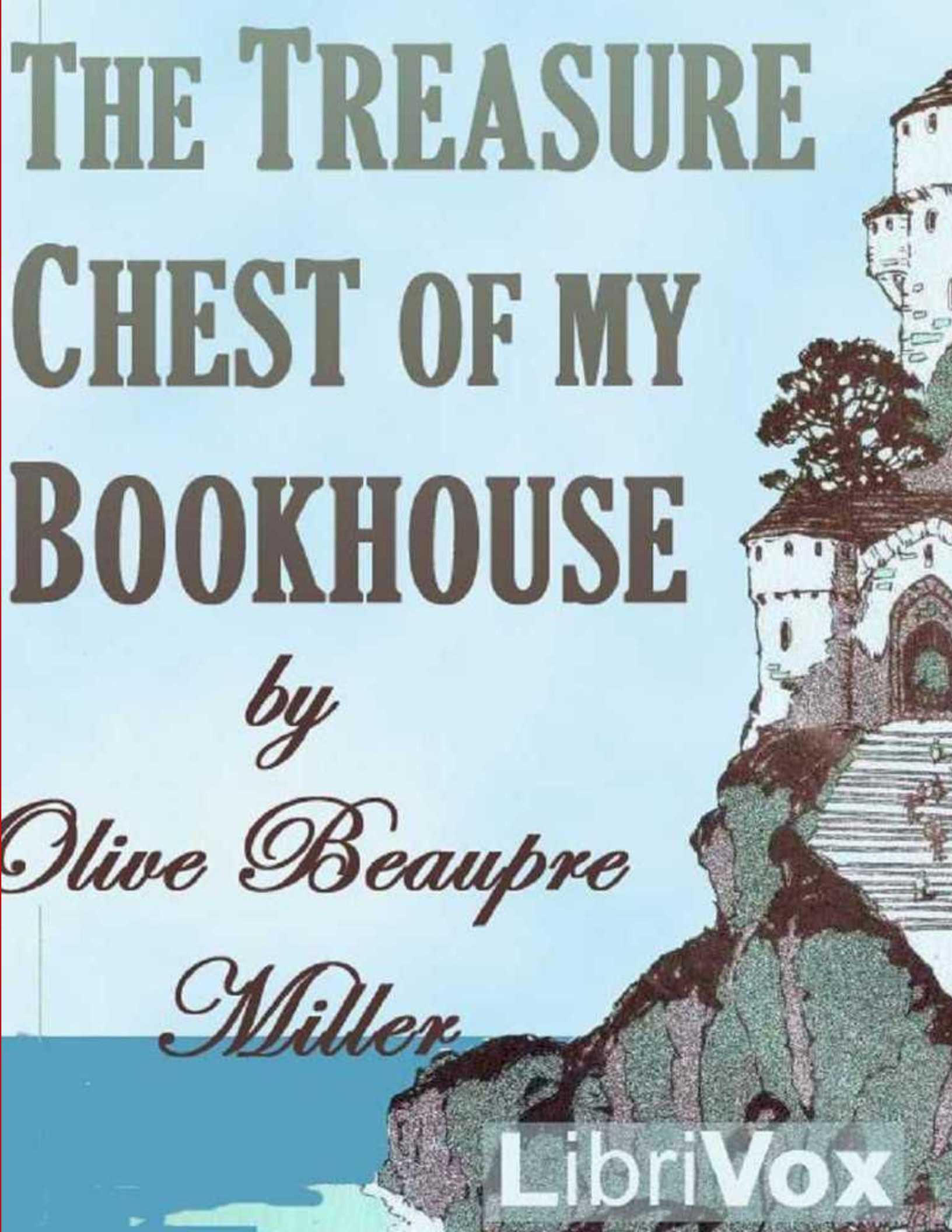
The Treasure Chest of my Bookhouse

by

Olive Beaupre Miller



The Treasure Chest of My Bookhouse O.B. Miller

Full of delightful fairy tales, charming poems and engaging stories, this is the fourth volume of the "My Bookhouse" series for little ones. Originally published in the 1920's as a six volume set, these books, edited by Olive Beaupre Miller, contained the best in children's literature, stories, poems and nursery rhymes. They progressed in difficulty through the different volumes. (Summary by Maria Therese)

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The Treasure Chest of My Bookhouse O.B. Miller

MY BOOKHOUSE

THE TREASURE CHEST


FROM THE BOOKS OF
1913 8 hermanwood
Evanston Ill

MY BOOK HOUSE
THE TREASURE CHEST

THE TREASURE CHEST

Here's a heigh and a ho! for the treasure chest,
And a ho! for the pure, pure gold,
And a ho, heigh-ho! for the precious things,
And the secret gems untold!

Here's a heigh and a ho! for the purpose strong,
And the bold stout hearts that roam,
And sail the Seven Seas of Life,
To bring such treasures home!

THE TREASURE CHEST of MY BOOKHOUSE

Edited by

Olive Beaupré Miller

CHICAGO
The BOOKHOUSE for CHILDREN
PUBLISHERS

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C O N T E N T S

*From *Collected Poems.* Reprinted by permission of Frederick A. Stokes Company.

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND*

Howard Pyle

BUT it is not always the lucky one that carries away the plums; sometimes he only shakes the tree, and the wise man pockets the fruit.

Once upon a long, long time ago, and in a country far, far away, there lived two men in the same town and both were named Selim; one was Selim the Baker, and one was Selim the Fisherman.

Selim the Baker was well off in the world, but Selim the Fisherman was only so-so. Selim the Baker always had plenty to eat and a warm corner in cold weather, but many and many a time Selim the Fisherman's stomach went empty and his teeth went chattering.

Once it happened that for time after time Selim the Fisherman caught nothing but bad luck in his nets, and not so much as a single sprat, and he was very hungry. "Come," said he to himself, "those who have some should surely give to those who have none," and so he went to Selim the Baker. "Let me have a loaf of bread," said he, "and I will pay you for it to-morrow."

"Very well," said Selim the Baker; "I will let you have a loaf if you will give me all that you catch in your nets to-morrow."

"So be it," said Selim the Fisherman, for need drives one to hard bargains sometimes; and therewith he got his loaf of bread.

So the next day Selim the Fisherman fished and fished and fished and fished, and still he caught no more than the day before; until just at sunset he cast his net for the last time for the day, and, lo and behold! there was something heavy in it. So he dragged it ashore, and what should it be but a leaden box, sealed as tight as wax, and covered with all manner of strange letters and figures. "Here," said he, "is something to pay for my bread of yesterday, at any rate;" and as he was an honest man, off he marched with it to Selim the Baker.

*Taken from *Twilight Land*. Used by permission of the publishers, Harper & Brothers.

They opened the box in the baker's shop, and within they found two rolls of yellow linen. In each of the rolls of linen was another little leaden box; in one was a finger-ring of gold set with a red stone, in the other was a finger-ring of iron set with nothing at all.

That was all the box held; nevertheless, that was the greatest catch that ever any fisherman made in the world; for, though Selim the one or Selim the other knew no more of the matter than the cat under the stove, the gold ring was the Ring of Luck and the iron ring was the Ring of Wisdom.

Inside the gold ring were carved these letters: "Whosoever wears me, shall have that which all men seek—for so it is with good-luck in this world."

Inside of the iron ring were written these words: "Whosoever wears me, shall have that which few men care for—and that is the way it is with wisdom in our town."

"Well," said Selim the Baker, and he slipped the gold ring of good-luck on his finger, "I have driven a good bargain, and you have paid for your loaf of bread."

"But what will you do with the other ring?" said Selim the Fisherman.

"Oh, you may have that," said Selim the Baker.

Well, that evening, as Selim the Baker sat in front of his shop in the twilight smoking a pipe of tobacco, the ring he wore began to work. Up came a little old man with a white beard, and he was dressed all in gray from top to toe, and he wore a black velvet cap, and he carried a long staff in his hand. He stopped in front of Selim the Baker, and stood looking at him a long, long time. At last—"Is your name Selim?" said he.

"Yes," said Selim the Baker, "it is."

"And do you wear a gold ring with a red stone on your finger?"

"Yes," said Selim, "I do."

"Then come with me," said the little old man, "and I will show you the wonder of the world."

"Well," said Selim the Baker, "that will be worth the seeing, at any rate." So he emptied out his pipe of tobacco, and put on his hat and followed the way the old man led.

Up one street they went, and down another, and here and there through alleys and byways where Selim had never been before. At last they came to where a high wall ran along the narrow street, with a garden behind it, and by-and-by to an iron gate. The old man rapped upon the gate three times with his knuckles, and cried in a loud voice, "Open to Selim, who wears the Ring of Luck!" Then instantly the gate swung open, and Selim the Baker followed the old man into the garden.

Bang! shut the gate behind him, and there he was.

There he was! And such a place he had never seen before. Such fruit! such flowers! such fountains! such summer-houses!

"This is nothing," said the old man; "this is only the beginning of wonder. Come with me."

He led the way down a long pathway between the trees, and Selim followed. By-and-by, far away, they saw the light of torches; and when they came to what they saw, lo and behold! there was the sea-shore, and a boat with four-and-twenty oarsmen, each dressed in cloth of gold and silver more splendidly than a prince. And there were four-and-twenty black slaves, carrying each a torch of spice-wood, so that all the air was filled with sweet smells. The old man led the way, and Selim, following, entered the boat; and there was a seat for him made soft with satin cushions embroidered with gold and precious stones and stuffed with down, and Selim wondered whether he was not dreaming.

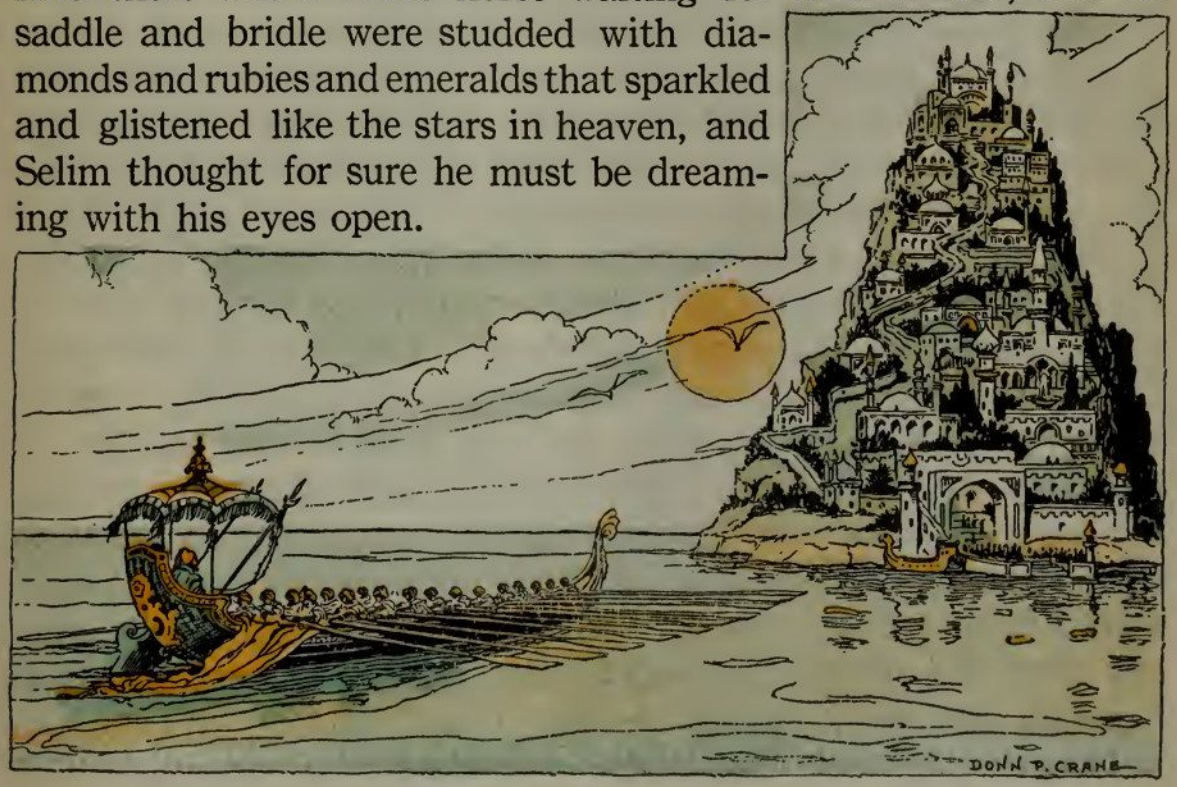
The oarsmen pushed off from the shore and away they rowed. On they rowed and on they rowed for all that livelong night.

At last morning broke, and then as the sun rose, Selim saw such a sight as never mortal eyes beheld before or since. It was the wonder of wonders—a great city built on an island. The island was all one mountain; and on it, one above another and another above that again, stood palaces that glistened like snow, and orchards of fruits, and gardens of flowers and green trees.

And as the boat came nearer and nearer to the city, Selim could see that all around on the house-tops and down to the water's edge were crowds and crowds of people. All were looking out towards the sea, and when they saw the boat and Selim in it, a great shout went up like the roaring of rushing waters.

"It is the King! It is the King! It is Selim the King!"

Then the boat landed, and there stood dozens and scores of great princes and nobles to welcome Selim when he came ashore. And there was a white horse waiting for him to ride, and its saddle and bridle were studded with diamonds and rubies and emeralds that sparkled and glistened like the stars in heaven, and Selim thought for sure he must be dreaming with his eyes open.



But he was not dreaming, for it was all as true as that eggs are eggs. So up the hill he rode, and to the grandest and most splendid of all the splendid palaces, the princes and noblemen with him, and the crowd shouting as though to split their throats.

And what a palace it was!—as white as snow and painted all inside with gold and blue. All around it were gardens blooming with fruit and flowers, and the like of it mortal man never saw in the world before.

There they made a king of Selim, and put a golden crown on his head; and that is what the Ring of Good Luck can do for a baker.

But wait a bit! There was something queer about it all, and that is now to be told.

All that day was feasting and drinking and merry-making, and the twinging and twanging of music, and dancing of beautiful dancing-girls, and such things as Selim had never heard tell of in all his life before. And when night came they lit thousands and thousands of candles of perfumed wax; so that it was a hard matter to say when night began and day ended, only that the one smelled sweeter than the other.

But at last it came midnight, and then suddenly, in an instant, all the lights went out and everything was dark as pitch—not a spark, not a glimmer anywhere. And, just as suddenly, all the sound of music and dancing and merry-making ceased, and everybody began to wail and cry until it was enough to wring one's heart to hear. Then, in the midst of all the wailing and crying, a door was flung open, and in came six tall and terrible black men, dressed all in black from top to toe, carrying each a flaming torch; and by the light of the torches King Selim saw that all—princes, noblemen, dancing-girls—all lay on their faces on the floor.

The six men took King Selim—who shuddered and shook with

THE TREASURE CHEST

fear—by the arms, and marched him through dark, gloomy entries and passageways, until they came at last to the very heart of the palace.

There was a great high-vaulted room all of black marble, and in the middle of it was a pedestal with seven steps, all of black marble; and on the pedestal stood a stone statue of a woman looking as natural as life, only that her eyes were shut. The statue was dressed like a queen; she wore a golden crown on her head; and upon her body hung golden robes, set with diamonds and emeralds and rubies and sapphires and pearls and all sorts of precious stones. As for the face of the statue, white paper and black ink could not tell you how beautiful it was. When Selim looked at it, it made his heart stand still in his breast.

The six men brought Selim up in front of the statue, and then a voice came as though from the vaulted roof: "Selim! Selim! Selim!" it said, "what art thou doing? To-day is feasting and drinking and merry-making, but beware of to-morrow!"

As soon as these words were ended the six black men marched King Selim back whence they had brought him; there they left him and passed out one by one as they had first come in, and the door shut to behind them.

Then in an instant the lights flashed out again, the music began to play and the people began to talk and laugh, and King Selim thought that maybe all that had just passed was only a bit of an ugly dream after all.

So that is the way King Selim the Baker began to reign, and that is the way he continued to reign. All day was feasting and drinking and making merry and music and laughing and talking. But every night at midnight the same thing happened, the lights went out, all the people began wailing and crying, and the six tall, terrible black men came with fantastic torches and marched King Selim away to the beautiful statue. And

every night the same voice said—"Selim! Selim! Selim! What art thou doing? To-day is feasting and drinking and merry-making; but beware of to-morrow!"

So things went on for a twelvemonth, and at last came the end of the year. That day and night the merry-making was merrier and wilder and madder than it had ever been before, but the great clock in the tower went on—tick, tock! tick, tock!—and by and by it came midnight. Then, as it always happened before, the lights went out, and all was as black as ink. But this time there was no wailing and crying out, but everything was silent as death; the door opened slowly, and in came, not six black men as before, but nine men as silent as death, dressed all in flaming red, and the torches they carried burned as red as blood. They took King Selim by the arms, just as the six men had done, and marched him through the same entries and passageways, and so came at last to the same vaulted room. There stood the statue, but now it was turned to flesh and blood, and the eyes were open and looking straight at Selim the Baker.

"Art thou Selim?" said she; and she pointed her finger straight at him.

"Yes, I am Selim," said he.

"And dost thou wear the gold ring with the red stone?"

"Yes," said he; "I have it on my finger."

"And dost thou wear the iron ring?"

"No," said he; "I gave that to Selim the Fisherman."

The words had hardly left his lips when the statue gave a great cry and clapped her hands together. In an instant an echoing cry sounded all over the town—a shriek fit to split the ears.

The next moment there came another sound—a sound like thunder—above and below and everywhere. The earth began to shake and to rock, and the houses began to topple and fall, and the people began to scream and to yell and to shout, and the

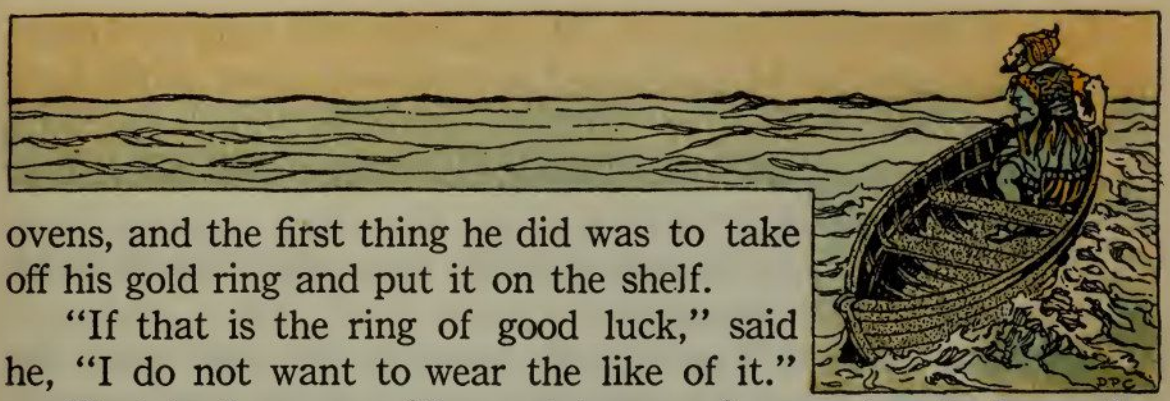
waters of the sea began to lash and to roar, and the wind began to bellow and howl. Then it was a good thing for King Selim that he wore Luck's Ring; for, though all the beautiful snow-white palace about him and above him began to crumble to pieces like slaked lime, the sticks and the stones and the beams to fall this side of him and that, he crawled out from under it without a scratch or a bruise, like a rat out of a cellar.

That is what Luck's Ring did for him.

But his troubles were not over yet; for, just as he came out from under all the ruin, the island began to sink down into the water, carrying everything along with it—that is, everything but him and one thing else. That one other thing was an empty boat, and King Selim climbed into it, and nothing else saved him from drowning. It was Luck's Ring that did that for him also.

The boat floated on and on until it came to another island that was just like the island he had left, only that there was neither tree nor blade of grass nor hide nor hair nor living thing of any kind. Nevertheless, it was an island just like the other; a high mountain and nothing else. There Selim the Baker went ashore, and there he would have starved to death only for Luck's Ring; for one day a boat came sailing by, and when poor Selim shouted, those aboard heard him and came and took him off. How they all stared to see his golden crown—for he still wore it—and his robes of silk and satin and the gold and jewels!

Before they would consent to carry him away, they made him give up all the fine things he had. Then they took him home again to the town whence he had first come, just as poor as when he had started. Back he went to his bake-shop and his



ovens, and the first thing he did was to take off his gold ring and put it on the shelf.

"If that is the ring of good luck," said he, "I do not want to wear the like of it."

That is the way with mortal man; for one has to have the Ring of Wisdom as well, to turn the Ring of Luck to good account.

And now for Selim the Fisherman.

Well, thus it happened to him. For a while he carried the iron ring around in his pocket—just as so many of us do—without thinking to put it on. But one day he slipped it on his finger and that is what we do not all of us do. After that he never took it off again, and the world went smoothly with him. He was not rich, but then he was not poor; he was not merry, neither was he sad. He always had enough and was thankful for it, for I never yet knew wisdom to go begging or crying.

So he went his way and he fished his fish, and twelve months and a week or more passed by. Then one day he went past the baker shop and there sat Selim the Baker smoking his pipe.

"So, friend," said Selim the Fisherman, "you are back again in the old place, I see."

"Yes," said the other Selim, "awhile ago I was a king, and now I am nothing but a baker again. As for that gold ring with the red stone—they may say it is Luck's Ring if they choose, but when next I wear it may I be hanged."

Thereupon he told Selim the Fisherman the story of what had happened to him with all its ins and outs, just as I have told it to you.

"Well!" said Selim the Fisherman, "I should like to have

a sight of that island myself. If you want the ring no longer, just let me have it; for maybe if I wear it something of the kind will happen to me."

"You may have it," said Selim the Baker. "Yonder it is, and you are welcome to it."

So Selim the Fisherman put on the ring, and then went his way about his own business.

That night, as he came home carrying his nets over his shoulder, whom should he meet but the little old man in gray, with the white beard and the black cap on his head and the long staff in his hand.

"Is your name Selim?" said the little man, just as he had done to Selim the Baker.

"Yes," said Selim, "it is."

"And do you wear a gold ring with a red stone?" said the little old man, just as he had said before.

"Yes," said Selim, "I do."

"Then come with me," said the little old man, "and I will show you the wonder of the world."

Selim the Fisherman remembered all that Selim the Baker had told him, and he took no two thoughts as to what to do. Down he tumbled his nets, and away he went after the other as fast as his legs could carry him. Here they went and there they went, up crooked streets and lanes and down by-ways and alley-ways, until at last they came to the same garden to which Selim the Baker had been brought. Then the old man knocked at the gate three times and cried out in a loud voice, "Open! Open! Open to Selim who wears the Ring of Luck!"

Then the gate opened, and in they went. Fine as it all was, Selim the Fisherman cared to look neither to the right nor to the left, but straight after the old man he went, until at last they came to the seaside and the boat and the four-and-twenty

oarsmen dressed like princes and the black slaves with the perfumed torches. Here the old man entered the boat and Selim after him, and away they sailed.

To make a long story short, everything happened to Selim the Fisherman just as it had happened to Selim the Baker. At dawn of day they came to the island and the city built on the mountain. And the palaces were just as white and beautiful, and the gardens and orchards just as fresh and blooming as though they had not all tumbled down and sunk under the water a week before, almost carrying poor Selim the Baker with them. There were the people dressed in silks and satins and jewels, just as Selim the Baker had found them, and they shouted and hurrahed for Selim the Fisherman just as they had shouted and hurrahed for the other. There were the princes and the nobles and the white horse, and Selim the Fisherman got on his back and rode up to the dazzling snow-white palace, and they put a crown on his head and made a king of him, just as they had made a king of Selim the Baker.

That night, at midnight, it happened, just as it had happened before. Suddenly, as the hour struck, the lights all went out, and there was a moaning and a crying enough to make the heart curdle. Then the door flew open, and in came the six terrible black men with torches. They led Selim the Fisherman through damp and dismal entries and passage-ways until they came to the vaulted room of black marble, and there stood the beautiful statue on its black pedestal. Then came the voice from above—"Selim! Selim! Selim! what art thou doing? To-day is feasting and drinking and merry-making, but beware of to-morrow!"

But Selim the Fisherman did not stand still and listen, as Selim the Baker had done. He called out, "I hear the words! I am listening! I will beware to-day for the sake of to-morrow!"

I do not know what I should have done had I been king of

that island and had I known that in a twelve-month it would all come tumbling down about my ears and sink into the sea, and maybe carry me along with it. This is what Selim the Fisherman did (but then he wore the iron Ring of Wisdom on his finger, and I never had that upon mine).

First of all, he called the wisest men of the island to him, and found from them just where the other desert island lay upon which the boat with Selim the Baker in it had drifted.

Then, when he had learned where it was to be found, he sent armies and armies of men and built on that island palaces and houses, and planted there orchards and gardens, just like the palaces and the orchards and the gardens about him—only a great deal finer. Then he sent fleets and fleets of ships, and carried everything away from the island where he lived to that other island—all the men and the women and the children, all the flocks and herds and every living thing, all the fowls and the birds and everything that wore feathers, all the gold and the silver and the jewels and the silks and the satins, and whatever was of any good or of any use, and when all these things were done, there were still two days left till the end of the year.

Upon the first of these two days he sent over the beautiful statue and had it set up in the very midst of the splendid new palace he had built.

Upon the second day he went over himself, leaving behind him nothing but the dead mountain and the rocks and the empty houses.

So came the end of the twelve months.

So came midnight.

Out went all the lights in the new palace, and everything was as silent as death and as black as ink. The door opened, and in came the nine men in red, with torches burning as red as blood. They took Selim the Fisherman by the arms and led him

to the beautiful statue, and there she was with her eyes open.

"Are you Selim?" said she.

"Yes, I am Selim," said he.

"And do you wear the iron Ring of Wisdom?" said she.

"Yes, I do," said he, and so he did.

There was no roaring and thundering, there was no shaking and quaking, there was no toppling and tumbling, there was no splashing and dashing, for this island was solid rock, and was not all enchantment and hollow inside and underneath like the other which he had left behind.

The beautiful statue smiled until the place lit up as though the sun shone. Down she came from the pedestal where she stood and kissed Selim the Fisherman on the lips.

Then instantly the lights blazed everywhere, and the people shouted and cheered, and the music played. But neither Selim the Fisherman nor the beautiful statue saw or heard anything.

"I have done all this for you!" said Selim the Fisherman.

"And I have been waiting for you a thousand years!" said the beautiful statue—only she was not a statue any longer.

After that they were married, and Selim the Fisherman and the enchanted statue became king and queen in real earnest.

I think Selim the Fisherman sent for Selim the Baker and made him rich and happy—I hope he did—I am sure he did.

So, after all, it is not always the lucky one who gathers the plums when wisdom is by to pick up what the other shakes down.