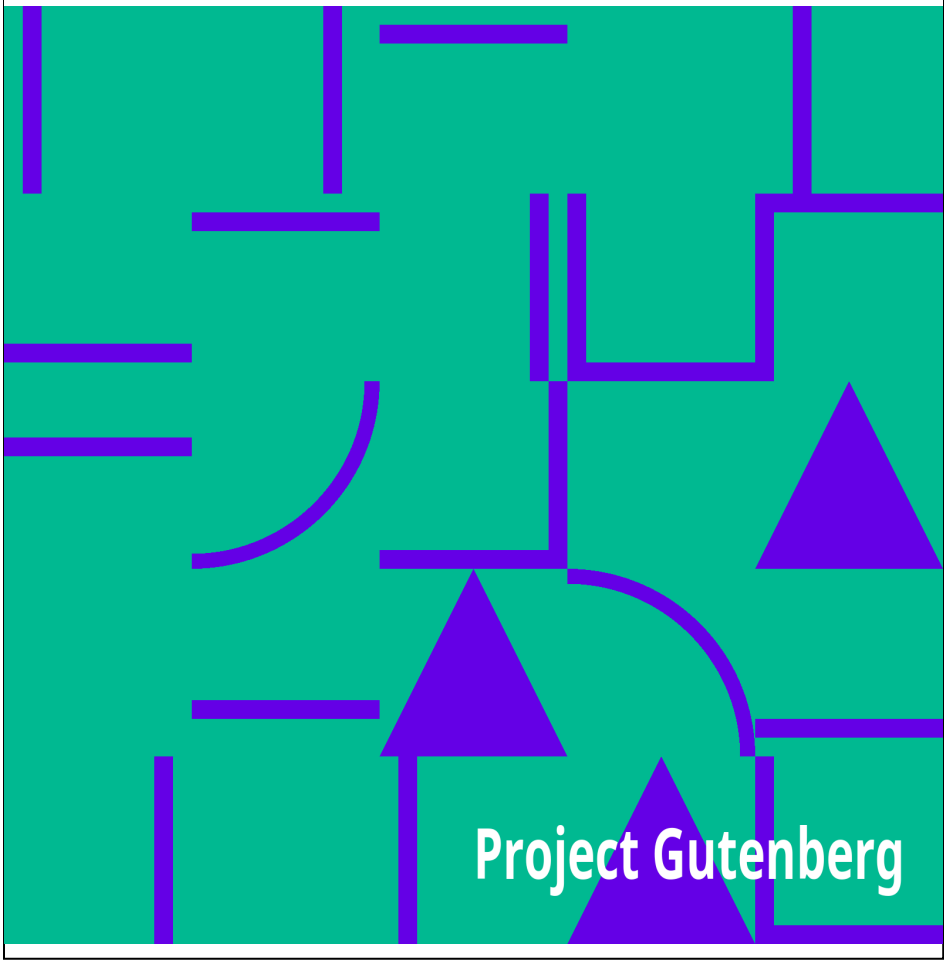
The Greylock: A Fairy Tale

Georg Ebers



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THE GREYLOCK

By Georg Ebers

A FAIRY TALE.

Once upon a time there was a country, more beautiful than all other lands and the castle of the Duke, its ruler, lay beside a lake that was bluer than the deepest indigo. A long time ago the Knight Wendelin and his squire George chanced upon this lake, but they found nothing save waste fields and bleak rocks around it, yet the shores must formerly have borne a different aspect, for there were shattered columns and broken-nosed statues lying on the ground. Against the hillside there were remains of ancient walls that once, undoubtedly, had supported terraces of vines, but the rains had long washed the soil from the rocks, and among the caves and crannies of the fallen stonework, and ruined cellars, foxes, bats, and other animals had found a home.

The knight was no antiquary, but as he looked about him his curiosity was excited: "What can have happened here?" he said, and his squire wondered also, and followed his master. The latter led his horse to the edge of the water to let him drink, for though he had seen many watercourses in the land, he had found nothing in them save stones, and boulders, and sand.

"What if this lake should be salt, like the Dead Sea in the Holy Land?" the knight asked, and the squire answered:

"Ugh, that would be a thousand pities!" As the former raised his hand to his mouth to taste the water, wishing indeed that it were wine, he suddenly heard a strange noise. It was mournful and complaining, but very soft and sweet. It seemed to be the voice of an unhappy woman, and this pleased the knight, for he had ridden forth in search of adventures. He had already been successful in several encounters, and from George's saddle hung the tail-tips of seven dragons which his master had killed. But a woman with a musical, appealing voice, in great danger, offered a rare opportunity to a knight. Wendelin had not yet had any such experience. The squire saw his master's eyes sparkle with pleasure, and scratched his head thinking: "Distress brings tears to most peoples' eyes, but there is no knowing what will delight a knight like him!"

The waters of the lake proved to be not salt, but wonderfully sweet.

When Wendelin reached the grotto from which the complaining notes came, he found a beautiful young woman, more lovely than any one the grey- haired George had ever seen. She was pale, but her lips shone moist and red like the pulp of strawberries, her eyes were as clear and blue as the sky over the Holy Land, and her hair glistened as if it had been spun of the sunbeams. The knight's heart beat fast at the sight of her loveliness; he could not speak, but he noticed that her hands and feet were bound with chains, and that her beautiful hair was entwined about a circle of emeralds that hung by a chain from the ceiling. She marked neither the knight nor the squire, who stood shading his eyes with his hand in order to see her the better.

Hot rage took possession of the heart of Wendelin when he saw the tears rain down from the lady's large eyes onto her gown, which was already as wet as if she had just been drawn from the lake.

When the knight noticed this, an overwhelming pity chased the anger from his heart, and George, who was a soft-hearted man, sobbed aloud at her pitiful appearance. The voice of the knight, too, was unsteady as he called to the fair prisoner that he was a German, Wendelin by name, and that he had set out on a knightly quest to kill dragons, and to draw his sword for all who were oppressed. He had already conquered in many combats, and nothing would please him better than to fight for her.

At this she ceased to weep, but she shook her head gently—her hair being chained impeded her motion,—and answered sadly. "My enemy is too powerful. You are young and beautiful, and the darling, perhaps, of a loving mother at home, I cannot bear that you should suffer the same fate as the others. Behold that nut-tree over there! What seem to be white gourds hanging on its naked branches are their skulls! Go your way quickly, for the evil spirit that keeps me prisoner, and will not release me until I have sworn an oath to become his wife, will soon return. His name is Misdral, he is very fierce and mighty, and lives among the waste rocks over there on the north shore of the lake. You have my thanks for your good intention, and now proceed on your journey." The knight, however, did not follow her advice, but approached the beautiful woman without more words, and caught hold of her hair to unbind it from the ring. No sooner had he touched the emeralds than two brown snakes came hissing towards him.

"Oho!" exclaimed Sir Wendelin. With one hand he caught their two necks together in his powerful grip, with the other he grasped their tails, tore them in two, and threw them out onto the cliffs above the lake.

When the imprisoned lady saw this, she heaved a deep sigh of relief and spoke: "Now I believe that you will be able to liberate me. Draw this ring from my finger!"

The knight obeyed and as he touched the lady's fingers, which were slender and pointed, he felt his heart warm within him, and he would gladly have kissed her. But he only withdrew the ring. As he forced it onto the end of his own little finger the lady said to him: "Whenever you turn it round you will be changed to a falcon; for you must know....But woe to us! There, where the water is lashed into foam, is the monster swimming towards us!"

She had hardly finished before a hideous creature drew itself out of the lake. It looked as if it were covered with mouldering pumice-stone. Two toads peeped from the cavities of the eyes, brown eel-grass hung dripping and disordered over its neck and forehead, and in place of teeth there were long iron spikes in its jaws which protruded and crossed one another over its lips.

"A fine wooer, indeed!" thought the squire. "If the stone-clad fellow should not possess a vulnerable spot somewhere on his body I shall certainly lose my position!"

Similar thoughts passed through the knight's mind, and consequently he did not attack it with his sword, but lifting a huge piece of granite from the ground he hurled it at the monster's head. The creature only sneezed, and passed its hand over its eyes as if to brush away a fly. Then it looked round and, perceiving the knight, bellowed aloud, and changed itself into a dragon spouting fire. Herr Wendelin rejoiced at this, for his favourite pastime was to kill that sort of beast. He had no sooner, however, plunged his good sword into a soft part of the monster, and seen the blood flow from the wound, than his opponent changed itself into a griffin, and raising itself from the ground swooped upon him. His defence now became more difficult, as the evil spirit continued to attack him in ever changing forms, but Sir Wendelin was no coward, and knew well how to use his arm and sword. At length, however, the knight began to feel that his strength was deserting him; his sword seemed to grow heavier and heavier in his hand, and his legs felt as if an hundredweight had been attached to them. His squire, noting his fatigue, grew faint, and began to think the best thing for him would be to ride off, for the fight

was likely to end badly for his master. The knight's knees were trembling under him, and as the monster, in the form of a unicorn, charged against his shield he fell to the ground.

The creature shrank suddenly together and in the guise of a black, agile rat shot towards him.

Sir Wendelin felt that he was losing consciousness, he heard faintly a voice from the grotto where the lady was imprisoned calling to him: "The ring, remember the ring!"

He was just able to turn with his thumb the ring on his little finger. Immediately he felt himself lighter and freer than he had ever felt before, and his heart seemed to harden to a steel spring, while a gay and reckless mood came over him. A wild desire to fly took possession of him at the same time, and it seemed as if he were only fourteen years old once more. Some strange force impelled him aloft into the air, to which he yielded, spreading the two large wings, that he suddenly found himself in possession of, as naturally as if he had used them all his life. He soon felt the feathers on his back stroked by the clouds, and yet he saw everything below him on the earth more distinctly than ever before. Even the smallest things appeared perfectly clear to his sharpened eyes, and yet he seemed to see them as if reflected in a brilliant mirror. He could distinguish even the hairs on the rat and suddenly another impulse came over him—the impulse to stoop down and catch the long-tailed vermin in his beak and claws. Wendelin had been changed into a falcon, and the rat struggled in vain to escape his powerful attack.

The prisoner had followed the combat first with anxiety, then with joy. While the falcon held the rat in his claws and struck him with his beak again and again, she called the squire to her, and bade him free her from her chains. This was no distasteful task for George, indeed it gave him so much pleasure that he was in no hurry to finish.

When at last all her bonds were loosened, she stood very erect, and lifted her arms, and each moment seemed to make her more lovely and more beautiful. Then she grasped the circle of emeralds, about which the

enchanter had wound her golden hair, and waving it high in the air, cried: "Falcon, return to the shape you were before. Misdral, hear thy sentence!"

Wendelin assumed immediately his knightly guise, which seemed very clumsy to him after having been a falcon. The rat lengthened itself and expanded until it was once more the giant covered with pumicestone; it walked no longer erect, however, but crawled along the ground at the feet of the beautiful woman, whimpering and howling like a whipped cur. She then said to it: "At last I possess the emerald circlet, in which resides your power over me. I can destroy you, but my name is Clementine and so I will grant you mercy. I will only banish you to your rocks. There you shall remain until the last hour of the last day. Papaluka, Papaluka,—Emerald, perform thy duty!"

The giant of pumice-stone immediately glowed like molten iron. Once he raised his clenched fist towards Wendelin, and then plunged into the lake where the hissing and foaming waters closed over him. The lady and the knight were left alone together. When she asked him what reward he desired, he could only answer that he wished to have her for his wife, and to take her to his home in Germany; but she blushed and answered sadly: "I may not leave this country, and it is not permitted to me to become the wife of any mortal man. But I know how heroes should be rewarded, and I offer you my lips to kiss."

He knelt down before her and she took his head between her slim hands and pressed her mouth against his.

George, the squire, saw this, sighed deeply, and wondered: "Why was my father only a miller? What favours are granted to a knight like that! But I hope the kiss won't be the end of it all; for, unless she is a miserly fairy, there ought to be much more substantial pay for his services in store for him."

But Clementine bestowed even a richer reward than he had expected upon her rescuer. When she discovered that a lock of the brown hair on Wendelin's left temple had turned grey during the conflict with the evil

monster, she said to him: 'All this land shall belong to you henceforth, and because you have grown grey in your courageous fight with evil, you shall be known from this time forward as Duke Greylock. Every prince, yea, even the Emperor himself, will recognize the title which I confer upon you as my saviour, and when the race, of which you are to be the progenitor, is blessed with offspring, I will stand godmother to every first-born. All the sons of your house from first to last, whether they be dark or fair, or brown, shall bear the grey lock. It will be a sign unto your posterity that much good fortune awaits them. My authority, however, is limited, and if at any time a higher power should hinder me from exerting my influence in behalf of one of your grandsons, then will the grey lock be missing from his head, and it will depend altogether on himself how his life unfolds itself. One thing more. Give me back my ring and take instead this mirror, which will always show to you and yours whatever you hold most dear, even when you are far away from it."

"Then it will ever be granted to me to bring your face before my eyes, oh! lovely lady!" the knight exclaimed.

The fairy laughed and answered: "No, Duke Greylock—the mirror can only reflect the forms of mortals. I know a wife awaiting you, whom you will rather see than any picture in the glass, even were it that of a fairy. Receive my thanks once more! you are duke, enter now into your dukedom!"

With these words she disappeared. A gentle rustling and tinkling was heard through the air, the waste ground covered itself with fresh green, the dry river beds filled with clear running water, and on their banks appeared blooming meadows, shady groves and forests. The broken walls against the hillsides fitted themselves together, rose higher and supported once more the terraces covered with vine stocks and fruit-trees. Villages and cities grew into form and lay cradled in the landscape. Beautiful gardens bloomed forth, full of gay flowers, olive- trees, orange-trees, citron, and fig, and pomegranate-trees, each covered with its golden fruit of many-seeded apples. In the neighbourhood of the grotto in which the fairy had been imprisoned a park of incomparable beauty grew into view, where brooks whispered and fountains played, and shady

pergolas appeared, formed of gold and silver trellises, over which a thousand luxuriant creepers clambered, holding by their little tendril hands.

The fallen columns stood up again, the mutilated marble statues found new noses and arms, and in the background of all this growing magnificence the young duke perceived-at first dimly, as if obscured by mists, then more distinctly-the outline of a palace with loggia, balconies, columned halls, and statues in bronze and marble around the cornice of its flat roof.

George, the squire, gazed in openmouthed wonder, and his mouth remained open until he entered the fore-court of the palace. Then he only closed it to give his jaws a little rest before their future labours began, for such a good smell from the kitchen greeted him that he ordered the willing cook to satisfy immediately the demands of his appetite, as his hunger was greater than his curiosity.

Sir Wendelin continued his way through the passages, chambers, halls, and courts. Everywhere servants, guards, and heyducks swarmed, and from the stables he heard the stamping of many horses, and the jingle of their halter chains as they rattled them against their well-filled mangers. Choruses of trumpeters played inspiriting fanfares, and from the assembled people in the forecourt a thousand voices shouted again and again: "Hail to his Grace Duke Greylock, Wendelin the First! Long may he live!"

The knight bowed graciously to his good people, and when the Chancellor stepped forward, and after a deep reverence set forth in a carefully prepared speech the great services which the duke had rendered to the country, Wendelin listened with polite attention, though he himself was quite ignorant of what the old man was talking about.

Sir Wendelin had lived through so many adventures that it pleased him now to sit peacefully on his throne, and he did his best to be worthy of the honours which the fairy had conferred upon him. After he had learned the duties of a ruler from A to Z, he returned to Germany to woo

his cousin Walpurga. He led her back to his palace, and for many years they governed the beautiful land together. All of the five sons which his wife bore to him, came into the world with the grey lock. They all grew to be brave men and loyal subjects of their father, whom they served faithfully in war, holding fraternally together and greatly enlarging the boundaries of his dukedom by their prowess.

A long time passed and generation after generation of the descendants of the worthy Sir Wendelin followed one another. The first-born son always bore the name of the progenitor of the family, and the fairy Clementine always appeared at the baptism. No one ever saw her; but a gentle tinkling through the palace betrayed her presence, and when that ceased, the grey lock on the infant's temple was always found to have twisted itself into a curl.

At the end of five hundred years, Wendelin XV. was carried to his grave. No Greylock had ever possessed a more luxuriant grey curl than his, and yet he had died young. The wise men of the land said that even to the most favoured only a fixed measure of happiness and good luck was granted, and that Wendelin XV. had enjoyed his full share in the space of thirty years.

Certain it is that from childhood everything had prospered with this duke. His people had expected great things of him when he was only crown prince, and he did not disappoint them when he came to the throne. Every one had loved him. Under his leadership the army had marched from one victory to another. While he held the sceptre one abundant harvest followed another, and he had married the most beautiful and most virtuous daughter of the mightiest prince in the kingdom.

In the midst of a hot conflict, and at the moment that his own army sent up a shout of victory, he met his death. Everything that the heart of man could desire had been accorded to him, except the one joy of possessing a son and heir. But he had left the world in the hope that that wish, too, would be fulfilled.

Black banners floated from the battlements of the castle, the columns at its entrance were wreathed in crape, the gold state-coaches were painted black, and the manes and tails of the duke's horses bound with ribbons of the same sombre hue. The master of the hunt had the gaily-colored birds in the park dyed, the schoolmaster had the copy-books of the boys covered with black, the merry minstrels in the land sang only sad strains, and every subject wore mourning. When the ruby-red nose of the guardian of the Court cellar gradually changed to a bluish tint during this time, the Court marshal thought it only natural. Even the babies were swaddled in black bands. And besides all this outward show, the hearts too were sad, and saddest of all was that of the young widowed duchess. She also had laid aside all bright colours, and went about in deepest mourning, only her eyes, despite the Court orders in regard to sombre hues, were bright red from weeping.

She would have wished to die that she might not be separated from her husband, save for a sweet, all-powerful hope which held her to this world; and the prospect of holy duties, like faint rays of sunshine, threw their light over her future, which would otherwise have seemed as dark as the habits of the Court about her.

Thus five long months passed. On the first morning of the sixth month cannon thundered from the citadel of the capital. One salvo followed another, making the air tremble, but the firing did not waken the citizens, for not one of them had closed an eye the foregoing night, which, according to the oldest inhabitants, had been unprecedented. From the rocky district on the north shore of the lake, where Misdral lived, a fearful thunder-storm had arisen, and spread over the city and ducal palace. There was a rolling and rumbling of thunder and howling of wind, such as might have heralded the Day of judgment. The lightning had not, as usual, rent the darkness with long, jagged flashes, but had fallen to the ground as great fiery balls which, however, had set nothing aflame. The watchmen on the towers asserted that above the black clouds a silver- white mist had floated, like a stream of milk over dark wool, and that in the midst of the rumbling and crashing of the thunder they had heard the sweet tones of harps. Many of the burghers said that

they too had heard it, and the ducal Maker of Musical Instruments declared that the notes sounded as if they had come from a fine harpsichord—though not from one of the best—which some one had played between heaven and earth.

As soon as the firing of cannon began, all the people ran into the streets, and the street-cleaners, who were sweeping up the tiles and broken bits of slate that the storm had torn from the roofs, leaned on their brooms and listened. The Constable was using a great deal of powder; the time seemed long to the men and women who were counting the number of reports, and there seemed no end to the noise. Sixty guns meant a princess, one hundred and one meant a prince. When the sixty- first was heard, there was great rejoicing, for then they knew that the duchess had borne a son; when, however, another shot followed the one hundred and first, a clever advocate suggested that perhaps there were two princesses. When one hundred and sixty-one guns had been fired, they said it might be a boy and a girl; when the one hundred and eightieth came, the schoolmaster, whose wife had presented him with seven daughters, exclaimed: "Perhaps there are triplets, 'feminini generis!" But this supposition was confuted by the next shot. When the firing ceased after the two hundred and second gun, the people knew that their beloved duchess was the mother of twin boys.

The city went crazy with joy. Flags bearing the national colours were hoisted in place of the mourning banners. In the show-windows of the drapers' shops red, blue, and yellow stuffs were exhibited once more, and the courtiers smoothed the wrinkles out of their brows, and practised their smiles again.

Every one was delighted, with the exception of the Astrologer, and a few old women and wise men, who drew long faces, and said that children born in such a night had undoubtedly come into the world under inauspicious signs. In the ducal palace itself the joy was not unclouded, and it was precisely the most faithful and devoted of the servants who seemed most depressed, and who held long conferences together.

Both of the boys were well formed and healthy, but the second-born lacked the grey curl which heretofore had never failed to mark each new-born Greylock.

Pepe, the Major-domo, who was a direct descendant of George, the squire, and who knew the history of the ducal family better than any one else, for he had learned it from his grandfather, was so dejected that one would have imagined a great misfortune had befallen him, and in the evenings, when he sat over his wine in company with the Keeper of the Cellar, the Keeper of the Plate and the Decker of the Table, he could not resist giving expression to his presentiments. His conviction that Bad Luck had knocked at the door of the hitherto fortunate Greylocks was finally shared by his companions.

That an unhappy future awaited the second boy was the firm belief, not only of the servants, but of the whole Court. The unlucky horoscope cast by the Astrologer was known to all, the wise men of the land confirmed it by their predictions, and soon it was proved that even the fairy Clementine was powerless to avert the misfortune that threatened the youngest prince. On the day of the baptism, neither the gentle tinkling sound, nor the sweet perfume, which had heretofore announced her presence, were perceptible. That she had not deserted the ducal house altogether was shown by the fact that the lock on the temple of the first-born twined itself into a perfect curl. The lock on the left temple of the second son remained brown, and not a sign of grey could be discovered even with a magnifying glass. The heart of the young mother was filled with alarm, and she called the old nurse who had taken care of her dead husband when he was a baby, to ask her what had happened at his baptism, and the old woman burst into tears, and ended by betraying the gloomy forecasts of the Astrologer and wise men. That a Greylock should go through life without the white curl was unheard of, was awful! And the old nurse called the poor little creature, "an ill-starred child, a dear pitiable princeling."

Then the mother recalled her last dream, in which she had seen a dragon attack her youngest boy. A great fear possessed her heart, and she bade them bring the child to her. When they laid him naked before her, she

stroked the little round body, the straight back, and well-shaped legs with her weak hands, and felt comforted. He was a beautifully-formed, well-developed child, her child, her very own, and nothing was lacking save the grey lock. She never wearied of looking at him; at last she leaned over him and whispered: "You sweet little darling, you are just as good, and just as much of a Greylock as your brother. He will be duke, but that is no great piece of luck, and we will not begrudge it to him. His subjects will some day give him enough anxiety. He must grow to be a mighty man for their sakes, and I doubt not that his nurse gives him better nourishment to that end than I could who am only a weak woman. But you, you poor, dear, little ill-omened mite, I shall nourish you myself, and if your life is unhappy it shall not be because I have not done my best."

When the Chief Priest came to her, to ask her what name she had chosen for the second boy—the first, of course, was to be Wendelin XVI—she remembered her dream, and answered quickly: "Let him be named George, for it was he who killed the dragon."

The old man understood her meaning, and answered earnestly: "That is a good name for him."

Time passed, and both of the princes flourished. George was nourished by his own mother, Wendelin by a hired nurse. They learned to babble and coo, then to walk and talk, for in this respect the sons of dukes with grey locks are just like other boys. And yet no two children are alike, and if any schoolmaster tried to write an exhaustive treatise on the subject of education, it would have to contain as many chapters as there are boys and girls in the world, and it would not be one of the thinnest books ever published.

The ducal twins from the beginning exhibited great differences. Wendelin's hair was straight and, save for the grey lock, which hung over his left temple like a mark of interrogation, jet black; George, on the contrary, had curly brown hair. Their size remained equal until their seventh year, when the younger brother began to outstrip the older. They loved one another very fondly, but the amusements that pleased one

failed to attract the other; even their eyes seemed to have been made on different patterns, for many things that seemed white to George appeared black to his brother.

Both received equal care and were never left alone. The older brother found this but natural, and he liked to lie still, and be fanned, or have the flies brushed away from him, and to have some one read fairy stories, which he loved, aloud to him until he dozed off to sleep. It was astonishing how long and how soundly he could sleep. The courtiers said that he was laying up a store of strength, to meet the demands that would be made upon him when he came to the throne.

Even before he could speak plainly, he had learned to let others wait upon him, and would never lift his little finger to do anything for himself. His passive face and large melancholy eyes were wonderfully beautiful, and inspired even his mother with a feeling of awe and respect. She never had cause to feel anxious about him, for there was no better, nor more obedient child in the whole land.

The ill-omened boy, George, was the exact opposite of his brother. He, on the contrary, had to be watched and tended, for his veins seemed to run quicksilver. One would have been justified in saying that he went out to meet the misfortune which was so surely awaiting him. Whenever it was possible he gave his nurses and attendants the slip. He planned dangerous games, and incited the children of the castle servants and gardeners to carry out the mischief which he had contrived.

But his favorite pastime was building. Sometimes he would erect houses of red stone, often he would dig great caves of many chambers and halls in the sand. At this work he was much more energetic than his humbler playfellows, and he would be dirty and dripping with perspiration when he returned to the castle. The courtiers would shake their heads over him in disapprobation, and then look approvingly at Wendelin, who was a true royal child and never got his white hands dirty.

There was no doubt but that George was cast in a less aristocratic mould than his brother. When Wendelin complained of the heat, George would spring into the lake for a swim, and when Wendelin was freezing, George would praise the fresh bracing air. The duchess often sighed for a thousand eyes that she might the better look after him, and she constantly had to scold and reprove him, whereas her other son never heard anything but soft words from her. But then George would fly into her arms in a most unprincely manner, and she would kiss him and hug him, as if she never wanted to let him go, while her caresses of her elder son were restricted to a kiss on his forehead, or to stroking his hair. George was by no means so beautiful as his brother; he had only a fresh boyish face, but his eyes were exceptionally deep and truthful, and his mother always found in them a perfect reflection of what was in her own heart.

The two boys were as happy as is every child who grows up in the sunshine of its mother's love, but the lords and ladies about the Court, and the castle-servants felt that misfortune had already begun to dog the footsteps of the younger prince. How constantly he was in disgrace with the duchess! And the accidents that had already happened in the eleven years of his life were too numerous to count. While bathing he had ventured too far out into the lake and had been nearly drowned; once, while riding in the ring, he had been thrown over the barriers by an unmanageable horse; indeed the Court-physician was certain to be called from his night's rest at least once a month, to bind up bloody wounds in the young prince's bead, or bruises on his body.

No one, save the Seneschal of the Royal Household, and the Master of Ceremonies bore the unruly boy any malice, but every one pitied him as an ill-starred child. With what relentlessness his evil destiny pursued him was first made clear when a stone house, which he, together with some other boys, had built, fell down on top of him. When they drew him out from under the blocks and stones he was unconscious, and the Major-domo, who had been attracted by the cries of George's companions, carried him into the prince's room, laid him on the bed, and watched by him until the physician was called.

The old nurse, Nonna, aided the Majordomo, and these two faithful souls confided their anxiety to one another. They recalled the unlucky signs that had accompanied his entrance into the world, and Pepe expressed his fear that the unfortunate child would not come to life again.

"'Tis very sad," he continued, "but I doubt not it would be better for the ducal family if Heaven were now to remove him, for an early death is, after all, preferable to a long life of vexation and misery."

The boy heard this conversation word for word, for, although he could move neither hand nor foot, and kept his eyes closed, his hearing and understanding were wide awake.

Old Nonna had shed many tears during good Pepe's speech, and he was trying to comfort her when George suddenly sat up, rubbed his eyes with the back of his hands, stretched himself, and then, agile as a brook trout, sprang out of bed.

The two old people screamed in their astonishment, then laughed louder in their joy; but the Court physician, who was just entering the room, looked very much disgusted and disappointed, for he saw the beautiful prospect of saving the life of one of the royal children dissolve before his very eyes.

At the time of this accident the Duchess was away from home. On her return she forced herself to reprove George for his recklessness before she yielded fully to her motherly affection. When George threw his arms around her neck and asked her if it were really true that he was an ill-starred child, and would never have anything but bad luck as long as he lived, she nearly burst into tears. But she restrained herself, called Pepe and Nouna a couple of old geese, and the "signs," which they had talked about, stupid nonsense. Then she left the room hurriedly and George thought that he heard her crying outside. He had gathered from her tone that she was not convinced of what she was saying, and was only trying to quiet his fears, and from that hour he, too, regarded himself as a child destined to adversity. This was indeed unfortunate, yet it had its compensation, for each morning he anticipated an unhappy day, and

when in the evening he looked back on nothing but pleasure and sunshine, he went to bed with a heart full of gratitude for the good which he had enjoyed but which did not rightfully belong to him. From this time his mother had him more carefully guarded than before, she herself even followed him about anxiously, like a hen who has hatched a duckling, and forbade him to build any more stone-houses.

The noble Duchess was just then weighed down with other cares. One of her neighbors, a king, who had often been defeated in battle by her husband and her husband's father, thought it an excellent opportunity, while the duchy of the Greylocks was ruled only by a woman and her Councillors, to invade the land, and win back some of the provinces which he had formerly lost. Moustache, her Field-marshal, had led forth the army, and a battle was now imminent, which like all other battles, must end either in victory or defeat.

One day a messenger came from the camp, bringing a letter from the brave marshal, who demanded more troops, saying that the enemy far out-numbered him. Then the Prime Minister called the Great Council together, from which, of course, the Duchess could not be absent, and during the time that she presided over the Councillors' meeting, she lost sight of George for the first time for many weeks.

The naughty boy was delighted. He slipped out of the castle, whence his older brother would not move, on account of the bad weather, went down to the shore of the lake, and finding that it was unusually rough, he, together with the son of the head-gondolier, sprang into a small boat, and drove it with powerful strokes out among the waves. The wind lifted the brown curls of the boy, and whenever a large wave bore the skiff aloft on its crest, he shouted with joy. Hitherto he had only been allowed to go on the lake in a well manned, safe boat, and then the sailors were under orders to keep to the southern half of the lake. Consequently an excursion on the water had seemed but a mild amusement; but to be his own master, and to fight thus untrammelled against the winds and waves was pleasure such as he had never before experienced.

He had never yet visited the northern part of the lake, there where it was so dark, and mysterious, and where—as old Nonna used to relate—evil spirits dwelt, and a giant covered with pumice-stone was compelled by a curse to live. Perhaps, if he could only get to the other shore, he might see a ghost! That was a tempting prospect! So he turned the bow of the boat towards the north, and bidding his companion to row hard, did the same himself.

As they got further north, the waves increased in size, a storm arose and blew fiercely in their faces; but the rougher the lake became, the gayer and more boisterous grew George's mood.

His companion began to be afraid, and begged that they might return, but George, though it was not his custom, made his princely authority felt, and sternly commanded the boy to do as he was bid.

All at once it became dark around them, and it seemed as if a powerful sea-horse must have got under the skiff and lifted it with his back, for George was hurled into the air. Then he felt himself caught by a rushing whirlpool which sucked him in its circles to the bottom. He lost breath and consciousness. When he came to himself again, he found himself in a closed cave, amidst strange forms of grey-brown, dripping stalactites. Above the arches of the roof he heard a loud, grunting laugh, and a voice, that sounded like the hoarse howl of a dog, cried several times: "Here we have the Wendelin brood! At last I have the Greylock!"

Then George remembered all that he had overheard Pepe and Nonna relate, and all that he had coaxed out of them by his questions. He had fallen into the hands of the evil spirit, Misdral, and now the real misfortune, which had threatened him ever since his birth, was to begin. He was freezing cold, and very hungry, and as he thought of the beautiful gardens at home, of the well-spread table in his father's castle, at which he used to sit so comfortably in his high-backed chair, and of the well-fed lackeys, he felt quite faint.

He also realized what terrible anxiety his absence would cause his mother. He could see her running about, weeping, with her hair in disorder, seeking him every where.

When he was smaller she had often taken him into her bed and played "Little Red Riding Hood" with him, and he said to himself that for that and many succeeding nights she would find no rest on her silken cushions, but would wet them with her tears. These recollections brought him to the verge of weeping, but the next instant he stamped his foot angrily, in rage against his weakness.

He was only thirteen years old, but he was a true Greylock, and fear and cowardice were as unknown to him as to his ancestor, Wendelin I. So when he heard the voice of the wicked Misdral again, and listened to the curses which it heaped upon his family, George's anger grew so hot that he picked up a stone, as the first Wendelin had done five hundred years before, to hurl it in the monster's wrinkled face. But Misdral did not show himself, and George had to give up the expectation of seeing him, for he gathered from the conversation between the two spirits that, owing to an oath which he had given to the fairy, Misdral dared not lay hands on a Wendelin, and that, therefore, he had planned to starve him (George) to death. This prospect seemed all the more dreadful to the boy because of his hunger at that moment.

The cave was lighted by a hole in the roof of rocks, and as George could cry no more, and had raged enough against himself and the wicked Misdral, there was nothing further for him to do but to look about his prison, and examine the stalactites which surrounded him on all sides. One of them looked like a pulpit, a second like a camel, a third made him laugh, for it had a face with a bottle-nose, like that of the chief wine cooper at the castle. On one of the columns he thought he discerned the figure of a weeping woman, and this made his eyes fill with tears again. But he did not mean to cry any more, so he turned his attention to the ceiling. Some of the stalactites that hung from it looked like great icicles, and some of them looked like damp, grey clothes hung out to dry. This recalled the appearance of the wash hanging in the garden behind the palace—a long stocking, or an unusually large shirt descending below the

rest of the clothes—and he remembered how, in the fall, after the harvest, the clothes-lines used to be tied to the plum-trees, and the ends decorated with branches still bearing the blue, juicy fruit, and then his hunger became so ravenous that he buckled his belt tighter round his waist and groaned aloud.

Night fell. The cave grew dark, and he tried to sleep, but could not, although the drops of water splashed soothingly, and monotonously from the roof into the pools below.

The later it grew, the more he was tormented by his hunger, and the flapping of the bats, which he could not see in the dark. He longed for it to be morning, and more than once, in his great need, he lifted his hands and prayed for deliverance, and yet more passionately for a piece of bread, and the coming of day. Then he sat lost in thought, and bit his nails, for the sake of having something to chew. He was aroused by a splash in one of the puddles on the Hoor. It must be a fish! He sat up to listen, and it seemed as if some one called to him gently. He pricked up his ears sharply, and then!—no, he had not deceived himself, for the friendly words came distinctly from below: "George, my poor boy, are you awake?"

How they comforted him, and how quickly he sprang up in answer to the question! At last he was saved. That was as certain to him as that twice two makes four, although it might have been otherwise.

Over the pool, from which the small voice had sounded, appeared now a dim light, a beautiful goldfish lifted its head out of the water, opened its round mouth, and said, in a scarcely audible tone,—for a real fish finds it difficult to speak, because it has no lungs,—that George's godmother, the fairy Clementine, had sent it. Its mistress was by no means pleased with George's disobedience; but, as he was otherwise a good boy, and she was pledged to aid the Greylocks, she would help him out of his difficulty this time.

The boy cried: "Take me home take me home, take me to my mother!"

"That would indeed be the simplest thing to do," replied the fish, "and it lies in our power to fulfil your wish; but, if my mistress frees you from the power of the wicked Misdral, she must promise him in exchange that another ill shall befall your house. Your army is in the field, and if you return to your family, then will the giant help your enemies; they will defeat you, will capture your capital, and possibly something evil might befall your mother."

George sprang up and waved his hand in negation. Then his curly head fell, and he said sadly, but decisively: "I will stay here and starve."

The fish in his delight slapped the water with his tail until it splashed high, and continued, although his first speech had already made him hoarse:

"No, no; it need not be so bad as that. If you are willing to go into the world as a poor boy, and never to tell any one that you are a prince, nor what your name is, nor whence you come, then no enemy will be able to do your army or the lady duchess any harm."

"And shall I never see my mother and Wendelin again?" George asked, and the tears poured down over his cheeks like the water over the stalactites.

"Oh yes!" the fish replied, "if you are courageous, and do something good and great, then you may return to your home."

"Something good and great," George repeated, "that will be very difficult; and, if I should succeed in doing something that I thought good and great, how could I know whether the fairy considered it so?" "Whenever the grey lock grows on your head, you may declare yourself to be the son of a duke and go home;" the fish whispered. "Follow me. I will light the way for you. It is lucky that you have run about so much and are so thin, otherwise you might stick fast on the way. Now pay attention. This pool drains itself, through a passage under the mountain, into the lake. I shall swim in front of you until we come to the big basin into which the springs of these mountains empty their waters. After that I must keep to the right, in order to get back into the lake, but you must take the left

passage, and let the current carry you along for an hour, when it will join the head of the great Vitale river, and flow out into the open air. Continue with the stream until it turns towards the east, then you must climb over the mountains, and keep ever northwards. Hold your hand under my mouth that I may give you money for your journey."

George did as he was bid, and the fish poured forty shining groschen into his hand. Each one of them would pay for a day's nourishment and a night's lodging.

The fish then dived under, George plunged after it into the pool, and followed the shimmering light that emanated from his scaly guide. Sometimes the rocky passages, through which he crawled on his stomach in shallow water, became so small that he bumped his head, and had to press his shoulders together in order to pass, and often he thought that he would stick fast among the rocks, like a hatchet in a block of wood. He always managed to free himself, however, and finally reached the big basin, where a crowd of maidens with green hair and scaly tails were sporting, and they invited him to come and play tag with them. But the fish advised him not to stop with the idle hussies, and then parted from him.

George was alone once more, and he let himself be borne along on the rushing subterranean stream. At length it poured out into the open air, as the Vitale river, and the boy fell with it over a wall of rock into a large pool surrounded by thick greenery. There was a great splash, the trout were frightened to death, a dog began to bark, and a shepherd, who was sitting on the bank, sprang up, for the coloured bundle that had just shot over the falls, now arose from the water and bore the form of a pretty boy of thirteen years.

This apparition soon stood before him, puffing, and dripping, and regarding, with greedy eyes, the bread and cheese which the old man was eating. The shepherd was very, very old, and deaf, but he understood the language of the boy's eyes, and as he had just milked the goats, he held

out a cup of the milk to him with a friendly gesture, and broke off a piece of bread for him. Then he invited George to sit down beside him in the sun, which had been up for an hour.

The prince had never before eaten such a meal, but as he sat there in the sun, munching the bread, and drinking goats' milk, he would have thought any one a fool who called him an ill-fated child.

After he had satisfied his hunger, he thanked the shepherd, and offered him one of the groschen which the fish had given him, but the old man refused it.

George insisted, for it hurt his pride to take anything as a gift from a man clad in rags, but the shepherd still declined, and added, after he had noticed the fine clothes of the little prince, which the water had not entirely spoiled: "What the poor man gives gladly, no gold can repay. Keep your groschen."

George blushed scarlet, put his money in his pocket, and replied: "Then may God reward you." The words sprang naturally and easily to his lips, and yet they were the very ones that the beggars in the duchy of the Greylocks always used.

He ran along by the side of the stream quite fast, in order to dry his clothes, until it was noon, and many thoughts passed through his mind, but so rapidly that he could hardly remember whether they were gay or sad. When at last he sat down to rest under a flowering elder bush, he thought of his mother, and of the great sorrow that he was causing her, of his brother, and Norma, and old Pepe, and his heart failed him, and he wept. He might never see them again, for how could he ever accomplish anything that was good and great, and yet the fish had demanded it of him! For three days he continued to be very dejected, and whenever he passed boys at play, or boys and maidens dancing and singing under the trees, he would say to himself: "You are happy, for you were not born under an evil star as I was."

The first night he slept in a mill, the second in an inn, the third in a smithy. just as he was leaving in the early morning a horseman rode rapidly past, and called out to the smith, who was standing in front of the shop: "The battle is lost. The King is flying. The Greylocks are marching on the capital."

George laughed aloud, and the messenger hearing him, made a cut at him with his riding-whip, but missed him, and the boy ran away. George felt as if some one had removed the burden that had been weighing him down during his wanderings, and he reflected that, if he had remained a prince, and had been at that moment comfortably at home, instead of wandering until he was footsore along the highways, Moustache, the Field-marshal, would have lost the battle.

It was still early when he reached the spot where the river turned to the east. From this point he was to go northwards. He found a path that led from the bank of the river, through the woods, across the mountain chain. The dew still hung on the grass, and above in the oaks and beeches, it seemed as if all the birds were holding high festival, there was such a fluttering, and calling, and chirping, and trilling, and singing, while the woodpecker beat time. The sunshine played among the branches, and fell through onto the flowery earth, where it lay among the shadows of the leaves like so many round pieces of gold. Although George was climbing the mountain, his breath came freely, and all at once, without any reason, he burst into song. He sang a song at the top of his voice, there in the woods, that he had learned from the gardeners. At noon he thought he had reached the top of the mountain, but behind again a yet higher peak arose, and so, after he had eaten the bread and butter which the blacksmith's wife had given him, he continued his way and, as the sun was setting, attained the summit of the second mountain, which was the highest far and near.

Once more he beheld the river which, sparkling and bright, wound through the green plain like a silver snake. Smaller hills covered with forests fell away on all sides and the tops of the trees caught the radiance of the sinking sun. Over the snow-fields of the further mountain-ranges, a rosy shimmer spread that made him think of the peach blossoms at

home; a purple mist obscured the rocky peaks behind him and there, far away to the south, was a tiny speck of blue. That might be his own dear lake, which he was never to see again. It was all so wonderfully beautiful and his heart filled to overflowing with memories and hopes. Neither to the right nor to the left, whither he turned his eyes, were there any boundaries to be seen. How wide, how immeasurably wide was the world which, in the future, was to be his home, in the place of the small walled garden of the castle. Two eagles were floating round in circles under the softly-glowing fleecy clouds, and George said to himself that he was as free and untrammelled on the earth as they were in the air; suddenly a feeling of delight in his liberty overcame him, he snatched his cap from his head and, waving it aloft, tore down the mountain, as if he were running for a wager. That night he found hospitable housing in the cell of a hermit.

After this he derived much pleasure from his wanderings. He was a child born to bad luck—no denial could change that—nevertheless a child destined to good fortune could hardly have been more contented than he. On the thirtieth day of his journeying he met with a travelling companion in the lower countries, which he had reached some time before. This was a stone-mason's son, who was much older than George, but who accepted the gay young vagabond as his comrade. The youth was returning home after his wanderings as a journeyman and, as he soon discovered that George was a clever, trustworthy boy with all his wits about him, he persuaded him to offer himself as apprentice to the stone-mason, who was an excellent master in his business. His name was Kraft, and he gladly received his son's companion as apprentice, George having spent his last groschen that very day, and thus the little prince was turned into a stone-mason's apprentice.

In the castle of the Greylocks, meanwhile, there was sorrow and lamentation. The boy who had ventured onto the lake with George, managed to save his life and returned home the following morning, and to repeated questionings he had only the one answer to make—that he had seen the prince drown before his very eyes. With this information the Court had to content itself; but not the duchess, for a king will give

up his throne sooner than a mother the hope of seeing her child again. She possessed indeed one means by which she could know beyond doubt whether her darling were alive or dead, namely the magic mirror which the fairy had given to the first Wendelin, and in which, ever since, the Greylocks had been able to see what they held most dear. In this glass she had seen her husband fall from his horse and die. Once again she took it out of the ivory casket in which it was kept; but so long as George sat imprisoned in the cave of the evil spirit, nothing was to be seen on its smooth surface. That was ominous, yet she ceased not to hope, and thought: "If he were dead, I should see his corpse." She sat the whole night staring in the mirror. In the morning a messenger from the army of the Greylocks arrived, bringing word that the enemy was pressing upon them and that a battle would have to be fought before the fresh troops, which Moustache, the field-marshal, had asked for, could arrive.

The issue was doubtful, and the duchess would better have everything ready for her flight and that of the princes, and, in case of the worst, to carry with her the crown jewels, the royal seal and a store of gold.

The chancellor ordered all of these things to be packed in chests and warned the servants not to forget to add his dressing-gown. Then he begged the noble widow to look into the glass and to let him know as soon as there was any reflection of the battle.

Presently she saw the two armies fall upon each other, but her longing to see her son overcame her immediately, and behold, there in the glass he appeared, seated by the side of an old ragged shepherd and eating bread and cheese, his clothes were soaked and there was no possibility of his changing them. This worried her and she at once pictured him with a cold or lying helpless in the open air, stricken down by fever or inflammation of the lungs. Henceforth she thought no more about the decisive battle, and forgot all else during the hours that she sat and followed George's movements. Then she sent for huntsmen, for messengers and for all the professors who studied geography, botany, or geology, and bade them look into the mirror, and asked them if they knew where those mountains were, of which they saw the reflection. The smooth surface showed only the immediate surroundings of the boy, and

no one could tell what the district was where George wandered. Thereupon she sent messengers towards all points of the compass to seek him.

Thus half the day passed, and when the chancellor came again in the afternoon to inquire after the fortunes of the battle, the duchess was frightened, for she had entirely forgotten the conflict.

She therefore commanded the mirror to show her again the army and Moustache, the field-marshal, who was a cousin of her late husband. She beheld with dismay that the ranks of her soldiers were wavering. The chancellor saw it, too; he put his hand to his narrow forehead and cried:

"Everything is lost! My office, your Highness, and the land! I must to the treasury, to the stables! The enemy—flight—our brave soldiers—I pray your Highness to keep a watch over the battle! More important duties. . . ."

He withdrew, and when half an hour later he returned, very red in the face from all the orders that he had given, and looked over the duchess' shoulder, unperceived into the mirror, he started back and cried out angrily, as no true courtier ought ever to allow himself to do in the presence of his sovereign: "By the blood of my ancestors! A boy climbing a mountain. And there is such dire need to know . . ."

The duchess sighed and called the battle once more into view. During the time that she had been watching her son, things had taken a better turn. This pleased her greatly, and the chancellor exclaimed: "Did I not prophesy this to your Highness. The circumstances were such that the victory was bound to be ours. Brave Moustache! I had such confidence in him that I saw the caravans bearing the treasure depart, without a pang of uneasiness. Will your Highness be good enough to have them recalled."

After this the duchess had no further opportunity to see the reflection of her boy until the battle was decided and the victory theirs beyond a doubt; then she could use the mirror to gratify the desire of her heart.

When George walked along dejectedly, she thought: "Is that my heedless boy?" and when he looked about him gaily once more to see what mischief he could get into, she rejoiced, yet it troubled her, too, to have him appear so free from all grief, she feared that he might have entirely forgotten her.

All the expeditions that she sent in search of him were fruitless; but she knew from the glass that he had become apprentice to a stone-mason and had hard work to do. This made her very sad. He was indeed a child born to misfortune, and when she saw him eat out of the same bowl with his companions, food so coarse, that her very dogs would have despised it, she felt that the misery into which he had fallen was too deep, too awful. Yet, strange to relate, he always seemed gay, despite these ills, whereas Wendelin, the heir to the throne, grew more peevish every day.

The duchy of this fortunate youth had been enlarged by the late successful war, and the assembly of the states of the empire was debating whether it should not be made a kingdom. He possessed everything that it was in the power of man to desire, and yet, with each new month, he seemed to become more unhappy and dejected.

When the heir to the throne drove out in his gilt coach and the duchess heard of the enthusiasm exhibited by the people, or saw him sitting at a feast of pheasants, smacking his lips and drawing the asparagus between his teeth, she reflected on his brother's hard lot and could not help feeling angry with her fortunate son for possessing all the gifts that Destiny refused to her poor outcast George.

Once when the duchess looked in the mirror, she saw George who had carefully taken a clock to pieces, trying to put it together again. A moment later the chancellor and the master of ceremonies came up behind her in order to look into the glass also. No sooner had they done so than they set up a loud outcry, and behaved as if the enemy had invaded the land again.

"The poor, miserable, pitiable, ill-starred princeling!" one of them exclaimed. "A Greylock, it is unheard of, abominable, sacrilegious," the other moaned. They had indeed beheld a dreadful sight, for they had seen the son of Wendelin XV. beaten over the back by a common workman with a stick. The duchess had to witness many similar outrages later when she saw George in the school to which the stone-mason sent his promising apprentice. Alas! how long the poor child had to bend over his drawing- board and his slate doing dreadful sums, whereas Wendelin only studied two hours a day under a considerate tutor who gently coaxed him along the paths of learning. Everything that seemed difficult was carefully removed from his way, and everything that was unpalatable was coated with sugar before being presented to him. Thus even in school the fortunate child trod a path strewn with roses without thorns, and if he yawned now and then in his tutor's face, the latter could flatter himself that the young prince yawned much more frequently over what other people considered pleasures and amusements.

When he attained his sixteenth birthday, he was declared to be of age, for princes mature earlier than other men. Soon afterwards he was crowned, not duke, but king, and it was remarked that he held his lace handkerchief oftener than ever to his mouth.

The state prospered under his government; for his mother and councillors knew how to choose men who understood their work and did it well. These men acted as privy council to the king. One of them was put in charge of the army, a second of the Executive, a third of the customs and taxes, a fourth of the schools, a fifth exercised the king's right of pardon, a sixth, who bore the title the Chancellor of the Council, was obliged to do the king's thinking. To this experienced man was also confided the responsibility of choosing a wife for the young king. He acquitted himself wonderfully well of this duty, for the princess whom Wendelin XVI. espoused on his twentieth birthday, was the daughter of a powerful king, and so beautiful that it seemed as if the good God must have made a new mould in which to form her. No more regular features were to be seen in any collection of wax figures; the princess also possessed the art of keeping her face perfectly unmoved. If anything

comic occurred, she smiled slightly, and where others would have wept, and thus distorted their features, she only let her eyelids fall. She was moreover very virtuous and, though but seventeen, was already called "learned." She never said anything silly, and also, no doubt out of modesty, refrained from expressing her wise thoughts. Wendelin approved of her silence, for he did not like to talk; but his mother resented it. She would have liked to pour her heart out to her daughter-in-law, and to make her son's wife her friend and confidante. But such a relationship was impossible; for, when she tried to share with her daughter the emotions which crowded upon her, they rolled off the queen like water off the breast of a swan.

The people adored the royal pair. They were both so beautiful, and looked so noble and princely as they leaned back in the corners of their gilt coach during their drives and gazed into vacancy, as if their interests were above those of ordinary mortals.

Years passed, and the choice of the Chancellor of the Council did not turn out to be so fortunate as had at first appeared, for the queen gave her husband no heir, and the house of Greylock was threatened with the danger of dying out with Wendelin XVI. This troubled the duchess indeed, but not so much as one would have supposed, for she knew that yet another Greylock lived, and the mother's heart ceased not to hope that he would return one day, and hand down the name of her husband.

She therefore persisted in sending messengers to those lands where, to judge by the costume of the people, the appearance of the country and buildings, as shown in the magic mirror, George was most likely to be found.

Once she allowed her daughter-in-law to look into the smooth glass with her; but never again, for it happened that the queen chanced upon a time when George, poorly dressed, and with great beads of perspiration on his forehead, sat hard at work over his drawing in a miserable room under the roof; her delicate nostrils sniffed the air disdainfully, as if afraid that

they might be insulted by any odour of poverty, and she said coldly: "And you wish me to believe that person is a brother of my highbred husband? Impossible!"

After this the duchess permitted no one save old Nonna to look into the glass; she, however, spent many hours each clay in following the miserable experiences of her unfortunate child. Sometimes indeed it seemed to her as if a little happiness were mixed with the misery of his existence, and it also struck her that her little imp of a George was gradually growing to be a tall, distinguished-looking man with a noble forehead and flashing eyes, whereas Wendelin, despite his beauty and his grey lock, had become fat and red in the face, and looked like a common farmer.

Great was her solicitude for him, and her heart bled when she saw him suffer, which was not seldom; but then, on the other hand, she often had to laugh with him and be merry, when he gave himself up to the strange illusion of being happy. And had she ever seen a face so beaming as his was when one day, in a splendid hall, a stately grey-haired man in a long gown embraced him and laid a laurel wreath on the design for a building, at which she had seen George work. And then he seemed to have gone to another country, and to be living in the midst of the direst poverty, yet somehow the world must have been turned upside down, for he was as lighthearted and gay as if Dame Fortune had poured the entire contents of her cornucopia over him.

He lived in a little white-washed room, which was not even floored, but only paved with common tiles. In the evening he ate nothing save a piece of bread, with some goat-cheese and figs, and quenched his thirst with a draught of muddy wine which he diluted with water. A squalid old woman brought him this wretched supper, and it cut the duchess to the heart to see him hunt about for coppers enough to pay for it. One day he seemed to have exhausted his store, for he turned his purse upside down and shook it, but not the smallest coin fell out.

This grieved her sorely, and she wept bitterly, thinking of the ease of her other son, and resenting the injustice with which blind and cruel Fortune had bestowed her gifts.

When she had dried her eyes sufficiently to be able to see the picture in the mirror once more, she beheld a long low house by the side of which there was a large space roofed over with lattice work. This was covered by a luxuriant growth of fig-branches and grape-vine. The moon shed its silver radiance over the leaves and stems, while beneath it a fire cast its golden and purple lights on the house, the trellis roof, and the gay folk supping under it.

Young men in strange garb sat at the small tables. Their faces were wonderfully animated and gay. Before each one stood a long-necked bottle wound with straw, cups were filled, emptied, waved aloft or clinked. With every moment the eyes of the drinkers grew brighter, their gestures freer and more lively; finally one of them sprang up on a table, he was the handsomest of them all,—her own George, and he looked as if he were in Paradise instead of on this earth, and had been blessed by a sight of God and his Heavenly host. He spoke and spoke, while the others listened without moving until he raised a large goblet and took such a long draught that the duchess was frightened. Then what a wild shout the others sent up! They jumped to their feet, as if possessed, and one of them tossed his cup through the lattice work and vines overhead.

When George got down again, young and old surrounded him, a few of them embraced him, and then the whole gay company began to sing. Later the duchess saw her son whirling madly in the dance with a girl dressed in many colours, who, though beautiful, was undoubtedly only the daughter of a swineherd, for she was barefoot, and kiss her red lips—which indeed no Greylock ought to have done, yet his mother did not begrudge him the amusement.

It looked as if that were happiness, but true happiness it could not be, for such was not granted to a child born to misfortune. Yet what else could it be? At any rate, he had the appearance of being the most blessed of mortals.

He was in Italy; of that she became more and more assured, and yet none of her messengers could find him. A year later, however, her son began to busy himself with matters that would certainly give some clue to her more recent envoys.

George had left his poverty-stricken room and dwelt now in a handsome vaulted chamber. Each day dressed in a fine robe and with a roll of parchment in his hand, he superintended a great number of builders. Often she saw him standing on such high scaffolding that he seemed to be perched between heaven and earth, and she would be overcome by giddiness, though he seemed proof against it.

Once in a while a tall princely-looking man, with a beautiful young woman and a train of courtiers and servants, came to inspect the building. George would be sent for to show the gentleman and the young woman, who seemed to be his daughter, the plans, and they had long conversations together. At these interviews George was not at all servile; and his gestures were so manly and graceful, his eyes shone so frankly, yet so sweetly and modestly, that his mother yearned to draw him to her heart and kiss him; but that, alas! could not be, and little by little it dawned upon her that he longed for other lips than hers, for the glances that he bestowed upon the maiden bespoke his admiration, which, the duchess noticed, did not seem to displease her.

Once, during an interview with George, she dropped a rose, and when he picked it up, she must have allowed him to keep it, for she gave no sign of disapproval when he kissed it and hid it inside the breast of his doublet. The large architectural drawing had screened this little comedy from curious eyes.

One evening, in the moonlight, the duchess saw him climb a garden wall, with a lute in his hand, then the sky became overcast, and she could distinguish him no more; she could only see a lighted window where a beautiful girl was standing. The maiden charmed her beyond measure, and she grew hot and cold with the pleasurable anticipation that George

might win her for his wife some day and bring her home. But then she reflected that he was a child born to ill-luck, and as such would never be blessed with the love of so exquisite a creature.

What she saw in the next few weeks confirmed this opinion. His manner was usually decisive, abrupt and self-reliant, but now he seemed to her like a clock that points to one hour while it strikes another. At the works he gave his orders as firmly and decidedly as ever; but as soon as he was alone, he looked like a criminal sentenced to death, and either sat bowed down and miserable or else paced up and down the floor restlessly, gesticulating wildly. Often when he beat his forehead with the palm of his hand or struck his breast with his fist, his mother was frightened.

Once, after a garden party, where he had been fortunate enough to walk alone for a full hour under a shady pergola with the daughter of the gentleman who owned the building in progress, and to kiss her hand many times, he burst into tears as soon as he was in his own room, and behaved so wildly that his mother feared for his reason and wept bitterly also. just at this time she ought to have felt nothing but joy, joy, heart-felt and unadulterated, for it appeared that the chief of the councillors had in truth been more far-sighted, than other people and had not made a mistake in his choice of a queen, for she had just borne a son, and, moreover, one that was a true Greylock. His grey lock was indeed somewhat thin and lacked the firm curl of the former ones; but every one who was not colour-blind must acknowledge that it was grey.

The duchess would have liked to rejoice sincerely in her grandchild, but her affections were divided, and even when she held it in her arms, she yearned for the magic glass and a sight of her unlucky son.

Wendelin XVI., who had long been satiated with the pleasures which his position offered him, finding them all flat and insipid, experienced for the first time in twelve years a sensation of delight, like any one else, when he heard the faint cry of the infant and learned the good news that his child was a son. Hitherto his greatest satisfaction had been to hear the clock strike five when he had imagined that it was only four.

The child, however, was something entirely new, and his heart, which usually beat as slowly as a clock that is running down, quickened its pulsations whenever he thought of his son. During the first weeks of its life he sat for hours at a time beside the gilt cradle, staring thoughtfully through his eye-glass at the future Wendelin XVII. Soon this occupation ceased to interest him, and he drifted along once more on the sluggish waves of his former existence, from minute to minute, from hour to hour.

The queen, his companion on this placid journey, had grown to be like him in many ways. The two yawned as other people breathe. They knew no desires, for as everything they possessed was always the best that could be had, to-morrow could give them nothing better than to-day. Their life was like a long poplar alley through which they wandered lazily side by side.

Pepe, the major-domo, after Wendelin came to the throne, was made body- servant to the king; he, above all others, was inclined to regard his master, born under a lucky star and possessing everything that one could desire, as a person favoured by Fortune; yet, after he had listened to his sighs and murmurs through many a quiet night, he reflected: "I am better off in my own shoes."

Pepe kept his own counsel and confided to no one save old Nonna what he knew. She, too, had learned to be discreet and consequently did not repeat his confidences even to the duchess, who had enough to bear without that additional burden.

How pale her darling seemed to her when she saw him in the glass! Yet, even on the worst days, he was busy at his place in the piazza, where the cathedral, which he had been building for three years, was nearing completion. The greatest energy at that moment was being expended on the dome, which rose proudly over the crossing of the nave and transepts. Whenever Nonna looked over the duchess' shoulder to get a glimpse of George, he was always seen there so long as the sun was in the heavens. Many times the hearts of the two women stood still when they saw him climb to the highest point of the scaffolding in order to direct

the work from there. Fate had only to make his foot slip one little inch or decree that a wasp should sting him on the finger to put an end to his existence. The poor mother was doubly anxious because he seemed so unconscious of the risk he ran up there and looked about him even more boldly and self-reliantly than usual.

The dome was already perfectly round. Why wasn't it finished, and why must he go on climbing again and again that frightful scaffolding?

"Nonna, Nonna, you must look, I can stand it no longer," she cried one day after she had been regarding the glass for a long time. "Hold me—he is going to jump. Nonna, is he safe? I can no longer see." And the glass shook in her hand.

"Oh!" the old woman answered, heaving a sigh of relief, "there he stands as solidly and firmly as the statue of Wendelin I. in the market-place. See. . . ."

"Yes, yes, there he is," the duchess cried and fell on her knees to thank Heaven.

The nurse continued to look in the glass. Suddenly she shrieked aloud and her mistress sank together and covered her face with her hands. "Has he fallen? Is he dead?" she groaned.

But Nonna, despite her gout, sprang up and ran to her mistress with the mirror in her hand and stammering, half laughing and half crying, like one drunk yet possessed of his senses: "George, our George, look. Our prince has the grey lock. Here, before my very eyes I saw it grow."

The duchess jumped up, cast one glance into the glass, saw the grey lock distinctly, and then forgetting that she was a princess and Nonna but a humble servant, threw her arms about her and kissed her on the mouth, above which grew so luxuriant a moustache that many a page would gladly have exchanged his young upper lip for her older one. Then the duchess reached once more for the mirror to assure herself that her eyes

had not been deceived, but her fingers trembled so with excitement that the glass slipped from her hand and fell to the floor where it broke in a thousand pieces.

What a fright it gave them! Fortunately Nonna, after a lifetime spent in the care of babies, had laid aside what we call nerves, else she had certainly fallen in a swoon like her mistress; she was consequently able to support the duchess and soothe her with gentle words.

In the meanwhile the young architect from the staging inspected the stone which crowned the dome and found that it had been well set. But he had no suspicion that the grey lock had grown on his head. Older architects came and absorbed his attention. They pressed his hand, praised him and said that he had just finished a marvellous work of art. They examined, with him, the interior of the cathedral, and then appeared the prince for whom George had built the church, and to him the architects explained how solid and well proportioned was the dome which had been finished a few hours before. The noble prince listened with comprehension; after he was satisfied he drew George to his breast and said: "I thank, you my friend. Despite your youth I entrusted you with a great undertaking and you have more than fulfilled my most sanguine expectations. At my age we count it gain not to be disappointed, and the day when our expectations are not only fulfilled, but surpassed we number among our festivals. Your work will be an ornament to the city and state, and will insure you undying fame. Take this from a man who wishes you well."

The prince took the golden chain from his own neck, hung it about George's, and continued:

"Art is easy, some say; others, that it is difficult. Both are right. It must be delightful and ennobling to design such a work but the carrying out must be laborious and attended with many perplexities. I can see that you have found it so, for only yesterday I remarked with pleasure the youthful glint of your brown hair and today,—no doubt while you were superintending the laying of the dome's crown,—a lock of hair above your left temple has turned grey, Master Peregrinus."

George reeled at this sudden and unexpected fulfilment of the dearest wish of his soul. He had gone out into the world under this name of Peregrinus and had never betrayed the fact that he was a prince's son. For several years his heart had been overflowing with love for the daughter of the prince and he had known that she reciprocated his affection sincerely, yet for the sake of his own family he had battled bravely with his passion and had borne his heartache and longing in silence.

Proofs had not been wanting to show hint how devoted the prince was to him, and if he had been able to say to his patron, "I am a Greylock," no doubt his lord would gladly have accorded his daughter's hand to him. George had repeated this to himself a thousand times, but he had remained firm, had kept his counsel and had not ceased to hope that by righteous energy and industry he might accomplish the "great and good task" which had been required of him in Misdral's cave. When his grey lock grew, the fairy Clementine's fish had said to him, then would he know that he had achieved something great and good, and that he might bear once more the name of his proud race and return home without exposing his family to any danger. He had reached the goal, the task was completed, he might call himself a Greylock once more, for the curl which was the pride of his race now adorned his head too.

"The prince watched him turn very red then very pale and finally said inquiringly "Well, my Peregrinus?" The architect fell upon his knee, kissed the prince's hand and cried:

"I am not Peregrinus. Henceforth I am a Greylock, I am George, the second son of the Duke Wendelin, of whom you have heard, and I must confess to you, my noble lord, that I love your daughter Speranza, and I would not exchange places with any god if you would but give us your blessing."

"A Greylock!" the prince exclaimed. "Truly, truly this day should not be reckoned among the feast-days but should be regarded as the best day in all the year. Come to my arms, my dear, my worthy son!"

An hour later the architect held the princess in his arms. What a wedding they had! George did not return immediately to his own home. He wrote to his mother that he was alive and well and intended to visit her in company with his young bride as soon as he had finished a great work with which he was occupied. He sent with the letter a portrait of his wife and when the duchess saw it and read the letter she grew ten years younger from pure delight, and old Nonna at least five. When Wendelin XVI. was informed that his brother still lived, he smiled and the queen followed his example, but as soon as they were alone she cried: "The land of the Greylocks will be smaller than ever now and even before it was not so great as my father's."

When Speranza presented her husband with a son the duchess and her faithful attendant Nonna went to Italy, and the meeting between mother and son was beyond all measure joyful. Two months she spent with her dear children and then she returned home, George and his wife having promised to visit her the following year in the capital of the Greylocks.

The cathedral was finished. There was no finer building under the sun and artists and connoisseurs flocked from all parts of the world to see it. George received the commendations of the most critical and his name was ranked among those of the greatest architects.

Proud of his work, yet ever modest, he together with his wife and child returned to his home.

He found great rejoicings in progress when he crossed the frontiers, for Moustache, the field-marshal, had just conquered another enemy, and by the conditions of the treaty of peace another province came into the possession of the Greylocks, making their kingdom then as large as that of the queen's father.

When George entered the capital he found flags flying, heard bells pealing, the explosions of mortars and firing of cannon, sometimes one shot after another, sometimes a deafening salvo of many guns together, and a thousand voices shouting "Hurrah, hurrah! Long live Wendelin the Lucky!"

The Assembly of States had decided the day before that the king by whom the land had been so wonderfully extended, and whose government had been so prosperous that not even a shadow of misfortune had fallen across it, should be called: "Wendelin the Lucky."

This title of honour was to be seen on all the flags, triumphal arches, transparencies, and even on the ginger-bread cakes in the cook-shops.

George and his lovely wife rejoiced with the other jubilant people, but they were happiest when they were alone with his mother.

Wendelin XVI. received his brother and his brother's wife in the great reception room, and even went further forward to meet him than the point prescribed by the master of ceremonies; the queen made good this violation of etiquette by remaining herself well within the boundaries laid down. After the feast Wendelin went with his brother onto the balcony, and as he stood opposite to George and looked at him more closely he let his languid eyelids droop, for it seemed to him that his brother was a man of iron, and he suddenly felt as if his own backbone were made of dough.

In the evening the lake was beautifully illuminated, and the day was to end with a boating party on the water enlivened with music and fireworks.

In the first boat, on cushions of velvet and ermine, sat Wendelin XVI. and his queen, in the second George and his beloved wife. His mother could not bear to be separated from these two, or to miss for even an hour the happiness of having them with her.

The weather for the festivals was as perfect as they could have wished. The full moon shone more brilliantly than usual, as if to congratulate the king on his new title, the bells pealed forth their chimes again, a chorus of maidens and boys in skiffs followed the state gondola of the royal pair, singing the new song which had just been composed in their honour, and which consisted of twenty-four stanzas, each one ending with the lines:

"The luck and glory let us sing Of lucky Wendelin, our king!"

By his side sat his wife, who continued her complaints against the newly-found brother, and urged her husband to make investigations as to whether or not this architect were a true Greylock, "To be sure, both he and his son have the grey lock," she said, "but then they both have light hair, and the barber's craft has made great strides lately; and certainly that fat-cheeked baby looks as if it belonged in the cradle of a peasant rather than in that of a prince." Wendelin XVI did not listen to what she said; his heart was very heavy, and every time one of the bells rang out above the others, or the chorus sang, "lucky Wendelin, our king," particularly distinctly and enthusiastically, he felt as if he were being jeered at and ridiculed. He longed to cry aloud in his shame and pain, and to fly for comfort to his sympathetic mother and strong brother in the other boat. When he stared into the water it seemed as if the fish made fun of him, and if he looked at the sky he imagined the moon made a mocking grimace at him, and looked down scornfully at the wretched man whom they called "fortunate." He knew not where to gaze, he withdrew within himself, and tried to shut his ears, while he wished to Heaven that he could change places with the active sailor opposite who was setting the purple sail with his brawny arms.

A light breeze wafted the royal gondola towards the island where the fireworks were to be displayed. The second boat followed at a short distance. George held his mother's hand and his wife's in his own, few words were spoken, but their very silence betrayed the great treasure of their love and happiness, and spoke more plainly than long discourses how dear these three persons were to one another.

The royal gondola floated quietly past the cliff that separated the southern from the northern part of the lake; no sooner had the second boat approached it, however, than an unexpected and fearful gust of wind blew suddenly from the clefts of the rocks and struck the boat, and before the sailors had time to lower the sail threw it onto its beam ends. George sprang forward instantly to help the sailors right her, but a second gust tore away the flapping sail, and capsized the gondola, which was caught and carried to the bottom by a rushing eddy. Both of the women rose from the waves at George's side. He grasped his mother, and

struggled bravely against the wind and current until he laid her on the beach at the foot of the cliff. Then he swam back as rapidly as he could to the place of the accident. His mother was safe, but his wife, his beloved, his all? To rescue her, or to drown with her was his sole idea.

At that moment he perceived a long golden streak rising and falling with the waves. It was a lock of her hair, her wonderful silken hair. With mighty strokes he sped towards it, reached it, grasped it, then his trembling hands felt her body and lifted her up. She breathed, she lived, and it depended on him to save her from the evil spirit, from death. With one arm he held her to him, with the other he parted the waters; but the lake seemed to turn to a mighty torrent that bore down upon him with its heavy waves. He struggled, he fought with panting breast, yet in vain, always in vain. He felt that his strength was being exhausted. If no one came to his aid, he was lost; he raised his head to look for help.

He saw his brother's gondola sailing as peacefully and undisturbed from storm or accident as a swan in the moonlight, and the bitter thought passed through his mind, that Wendelin was the lucky one, and that he had been born to misfortune.

His arm was struggling with the tide once more, and this time more successfully. Then Speranza opened her eyes, recognized him, and, kissing him on the forehead, murmured: "My own love, how good you are!"

From the cliff the duchess called to him: "George, my best, my only son!" His heart warmed within him, all his bitterness disappeared, and the waves seemed to rock him and the burden in his arms as in a cradle. The picture of his mother floated before his vision, that of his child, and of his beautiful work, the great indestructible cathedral, which he had erected to the honour of God. He reflected what sweet joy each new spring had brought him, how he had been blessed in his work, what exquisite delight he derived from all that was beautiful in the world. No, no, no. Of all the men on this earth, he, the child destined to misfortune, was the happiest. Overwhelmed by a feeling of gratitude, he returned his wife's kiss. Saved! She was saved! He felt firm ground beneath his feet;

he lifted her on high; but, just as he laid her in the strong arms that reached down from the cliff to receive her, a high wave caught him and dragged him back into the deep, and the waters closed over him.

The next morning a fisherman found his body. George's wife and mother were saved. The wise men of the land said that the ill-starred child had perished, as they had foreseen, and the people echoed their words.

In the mausoleum of the Greylocks only two places remained empty, and these had to be kept for Wendelin the Lucky and his queen, consequently the ill-omened son might not even rest in the grave of his fathers, and George was buried on a green hillside, whence there was a beautiful view of the lake and distant landscape.

King Wendelin the Lucky and his wife lived to a good old age. After the king became childish, he ceased to groan and whimper in the night, as he had formerly done. When he died, he was interred next to Queen Isabella, in the coldest corner of the marble mausoleum, and no ray of sun ever rested on his stone sarcophagus. His son, Wendelin XVII., visited his father's grave once a year, on All Saints' Day, and laid a dry wreath of immortelles on the lid of the coffin.

George's resting-place was surrounded by bushes and flowers. His mother and wife and child visited it and cared for it. When the spring came, nightingales, redbreasts, finches and thrushes without number sang their merry notes above the head of the unfortunate one who lay there. His son George grew to be the pride of his mother, and became a noble prince in beautiful Italy. Centuries have passed since then, yet to-day enthusiastic artists still make pilgrimages to the hillside where the sun shines so brightly, to lay wreaths on the grave of the great architect George Peregrinus of the princely house of the Greylocks.

They at least do not regard him who lies there as one born to misfortune.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

At my age we count it gain not to be disappointed
Had laid aside what we call nerves
Like a clock that points to one hour while it strikes another
To-morrow could give them nothing better than to-day

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE GREYLOCK: A FAIRY TALE ***

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