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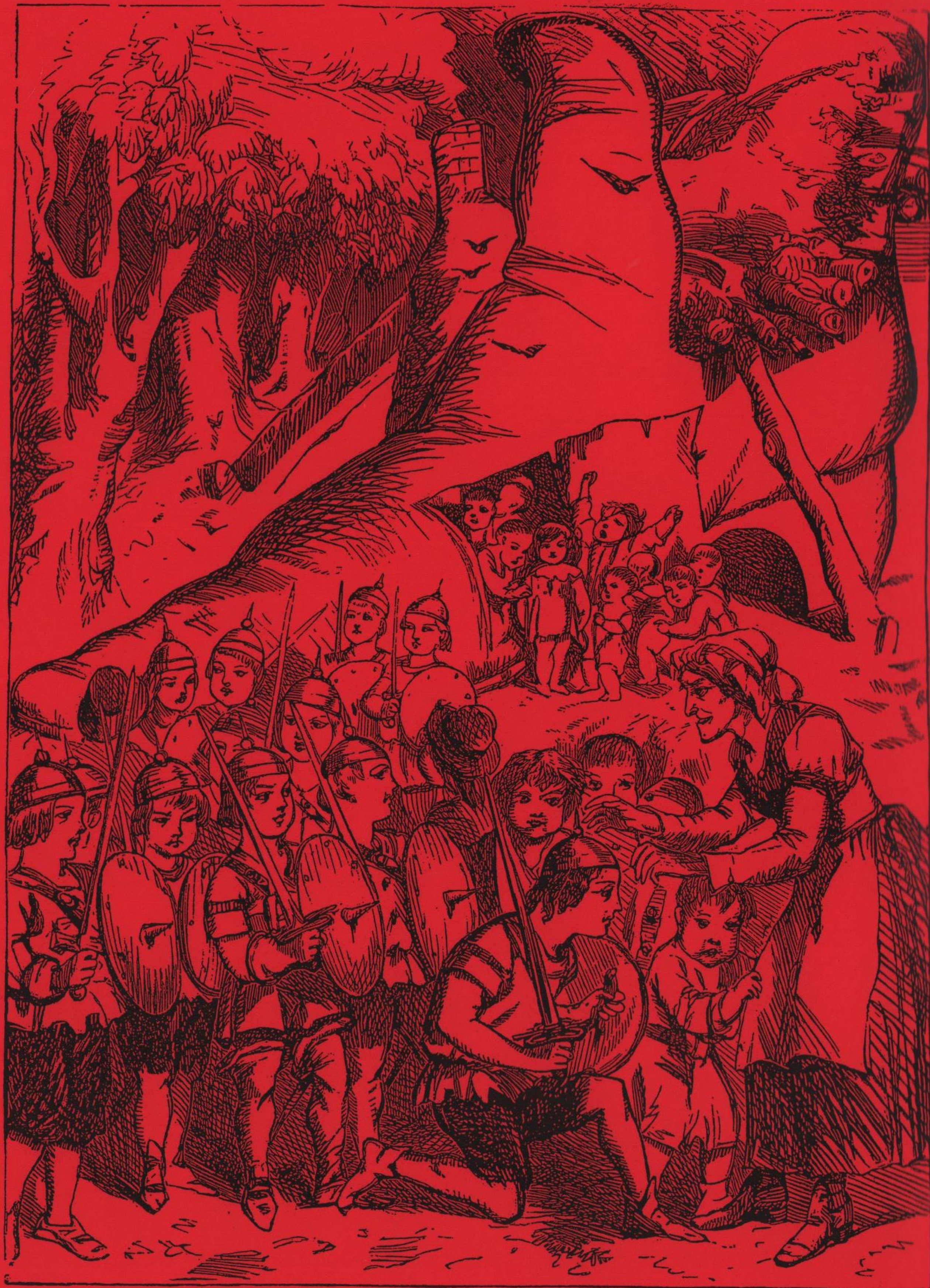
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THE
OLD
WOMAN
WHO LIVED
IN A
SHOE



1856

EDITION



THE OLD WOMAN BLESSING HER CHILDREN.

THE HISTORY OF THE LITTLE OLD WOMAN WHO LIVED IN A SHOE.

A LONG time ago, there lived in a valley at the foot of a lofty mountain, A Little Old Woman. Her house was close to the edge of a deep, blue lake, and not far from the borders of a great forest. A very strange house it was, too, for it was no other than an immense Shoe! Perhaps you will wonder greatly that a Little Old Lady should select such an abode. But it is quite true for all that. And perhaps you will wonder still more when you learn, that this Little Old Woman found the Shoe not only large enough to live in herself, but also for a very large family besides. So many children had she, in fact, that, in the words of the old nursery ballad, "she did not know what to do" with them.

Though they dwelt in such a strange house, they were by no means sad or unhappy. The Little Old Woman was very fond of her children, and they only thought of the best way to please her. The elder and stronger worked in the woods and fields, and the younger ones played



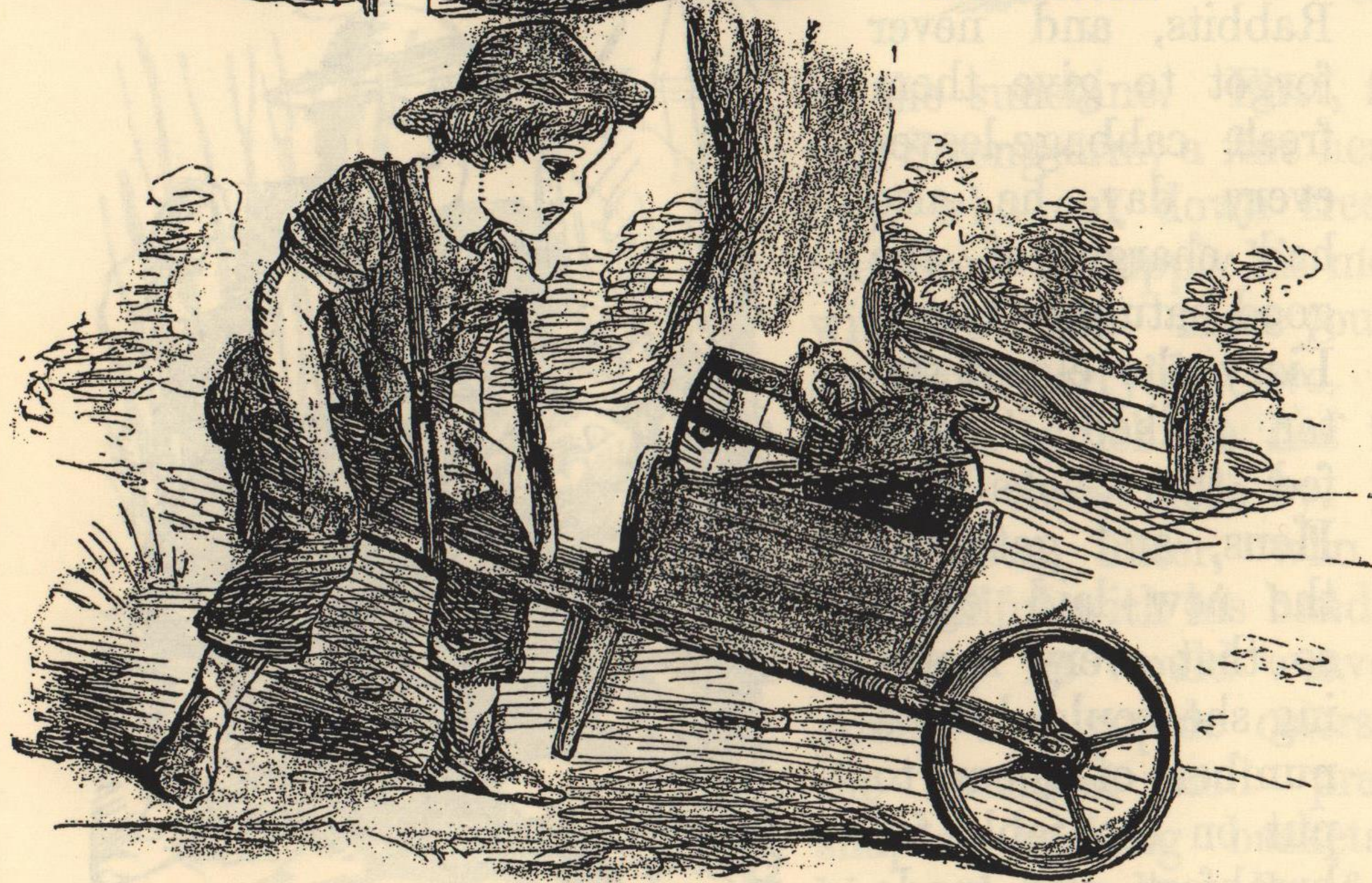
in the sunshine. First, there was Strong-arm, a fine healthy boy, who cut down trees in the forest to supply his mother with fire-wood. Here you may see him carrying two great bundles, which he has felled from the forest close by. Then there was Peter, who was very skilful with his hands and fingers; he would weave the young and supple osiers into the strangest and prettiest shapes—making baskets for his mother and cradles for his little brothers and sisters.

Mark was the chief gardener, and, helped by his brothers and sisters, watched the growth of the vegetables and flowers in the garden. Simon tended the Sheep; which he would take to the fine meadows to nibble the grass, and at evening carefully bring them home to their nice little shed that Strong-arm had built; Tom had care of the Rabbits, and never forgot to give them fresh cabbage-leaves every day, he also had charge of the good-natured Cow; Lizzy, the eldest sister, milked it, and fed the Cocks and Hens, and gathered the new-laid eggs, so that every morning she could have a number of them to put on the table for breakfast, and made





the butter and the fine large cheeses. She also knew how to make bread, as also very light pies, puddings and custards, and would often bake nice cakes for her good brothers, which they had as a reward when they did their work well. It was Harry's task to bring from the bubbling and sparkling well, sweet water for his mother, and brothers and sisters.



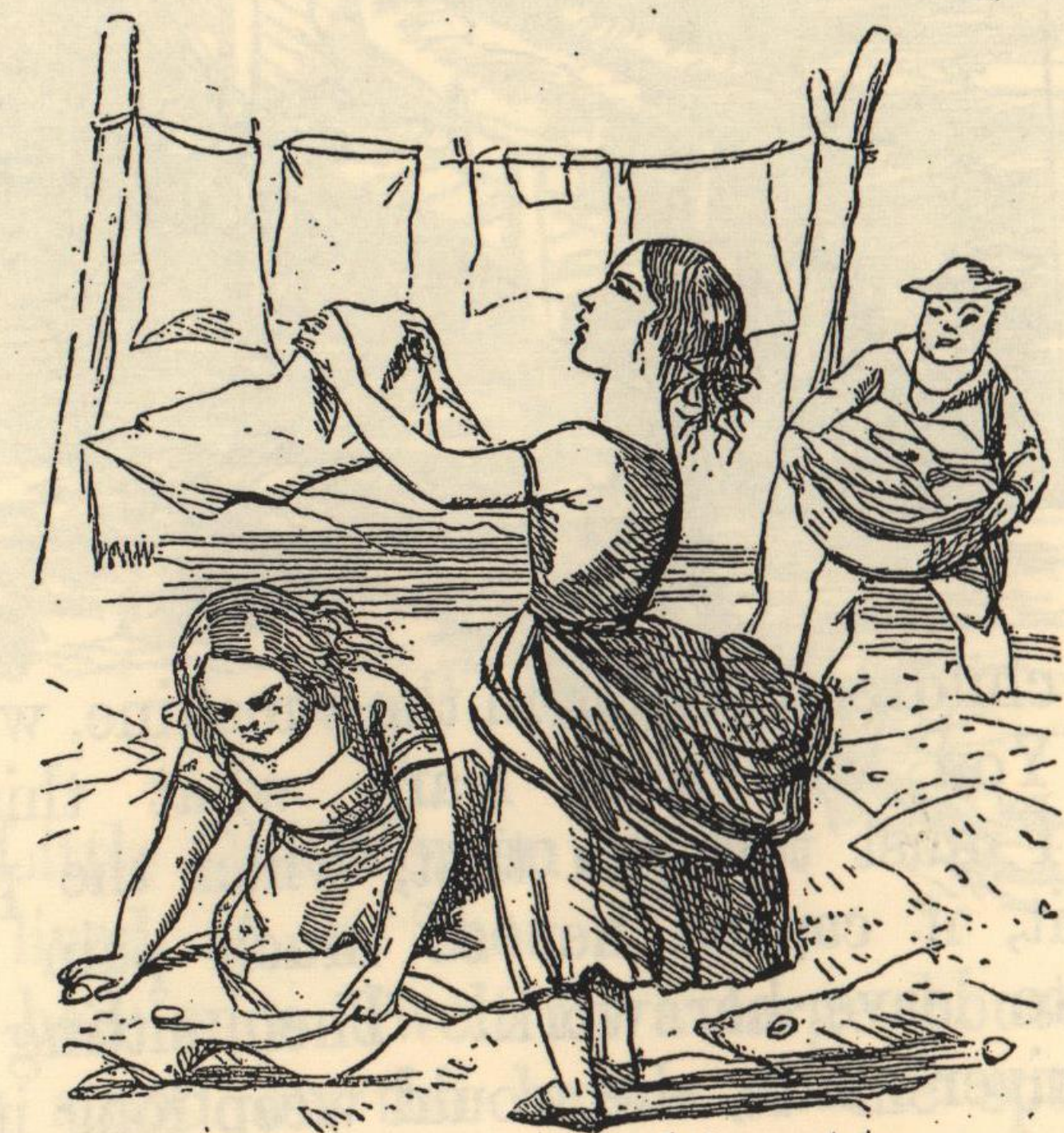
It was Jenny's duty to teach the younger children to read, and this she did with great patience and care—the youngest ones she taught by showing them nice picture books. The Old Woman was very industrious herself, and desired that all her children should be so likewise, for she knew that to be clever and useful when we grow up, we must begin to learn when we are young. I must not forget to mention the great dog Grim, who watched the house, and kept off danger in the night by his loud barking. He always took his station by the Shoe, and guarded well the family in the darkness. A brave fellow he was, as



was once shown, when a large, savage Wolf came out of the forest, and seized one of the little children by the frock. Grim ran at the hungry animal, and, not at all daunted, caught him by the throat, rolling him over on the ground. Strong-arm was near, and, rushing upon the Wolf with his hatchet, at one blow, killed it. After this, he hung up the skin on a tree, as a warning to all other hungry Wolves who might come prowling that way!

In the morning, when Strong-arm had gone into the forest, and when Mark was working in the garden, and while Simon and Peter were making baskets or tending the Sheep, this Little Old Lady would go forth to the brook, with all her younger children, to wash the clothes. The girls would go into the water and help their mother to wash, whilst Willie and Charley would lay out the clothes to dry; when this was done, they were carefully folded and carried home in baskets by the boys; thus everything was done in a neat and orderly manner.

Now, it was in this way the Old Lady spent her time, and in this way she ruled and taught her children. It is certain she would have been as happy as her youngest





children playing in the sunshine, were it not for one sad event. You will soon learn what this event was; meanwhile, I must tell you that, when the poor Old Lady thought of it, it caused her so much pain that she would be forced to leave her work. Then, sitting on the green bank by the river's side, she would weep long in great grief.



This Little Old Woman had not always lived in a Shoe. No; she and her family had once dwelt in a large house with great windows, that stood on the banks of the sparkling lake. It was a charming house; the front and sides



all grown over with creeping plants and ivy, and it had a fine roof of bright-red tiles. Very happy were they in those days. Alas! ill-fortune came upon them at a moment when they least expected it.

It was an event that caused all the poor Little Old Lady's grief, for it was nothing else than the loss of her husband, whom she loved so much and had not now seen for so many years. He was, like his son Strong-arm, a wood-cutter. One day, as was his custom, he went into the forest to fell trees. Now, there lived in a huge castle beyond the forest, a fierce Giant, whose name was Gorgoras. He was as tall as the highest trees in the forest, his arms



and legs as large as any of their branches, while his body was thicker than the trunk of any tree in the wood. His face was almost covered with black hair, and his great eyes were like red-hot coals. One day, this cruel Giant came out from his castle, and, being in a bad temper, he, with many blows of his club, dashed the house of the poor Little Old Woman into ruins! It was a very lucky thing that she and all her children were out in the fields at the time. After this, the Giant went into the forest, and, seeing the Father at work, he, in a voice which sounded like thunder among the trees, asked him what he did there? The poor man was dumb with terror, and his knees shook and trembled. The Giant said he wanted a man to cut wood



for the fires in his castle, and, upon this, he seized the wood-cutter by the waist and bore him off. When the Little Old Woman came home, she found her house in ruins, and her husband was nowhere to be seen! She knew at once that it was the work of the wicked Giant, and became alarmed for her husband, as she was certain



that if he were seen by the Giant he would either kill him or carry him to the deep dungeons in his castle. Night came on, and her husband did not return, so she and her family went in search of him. When they came to that part of the wood where the Giant had met their father, they saw an immense Shoe. They spent a long time weeping

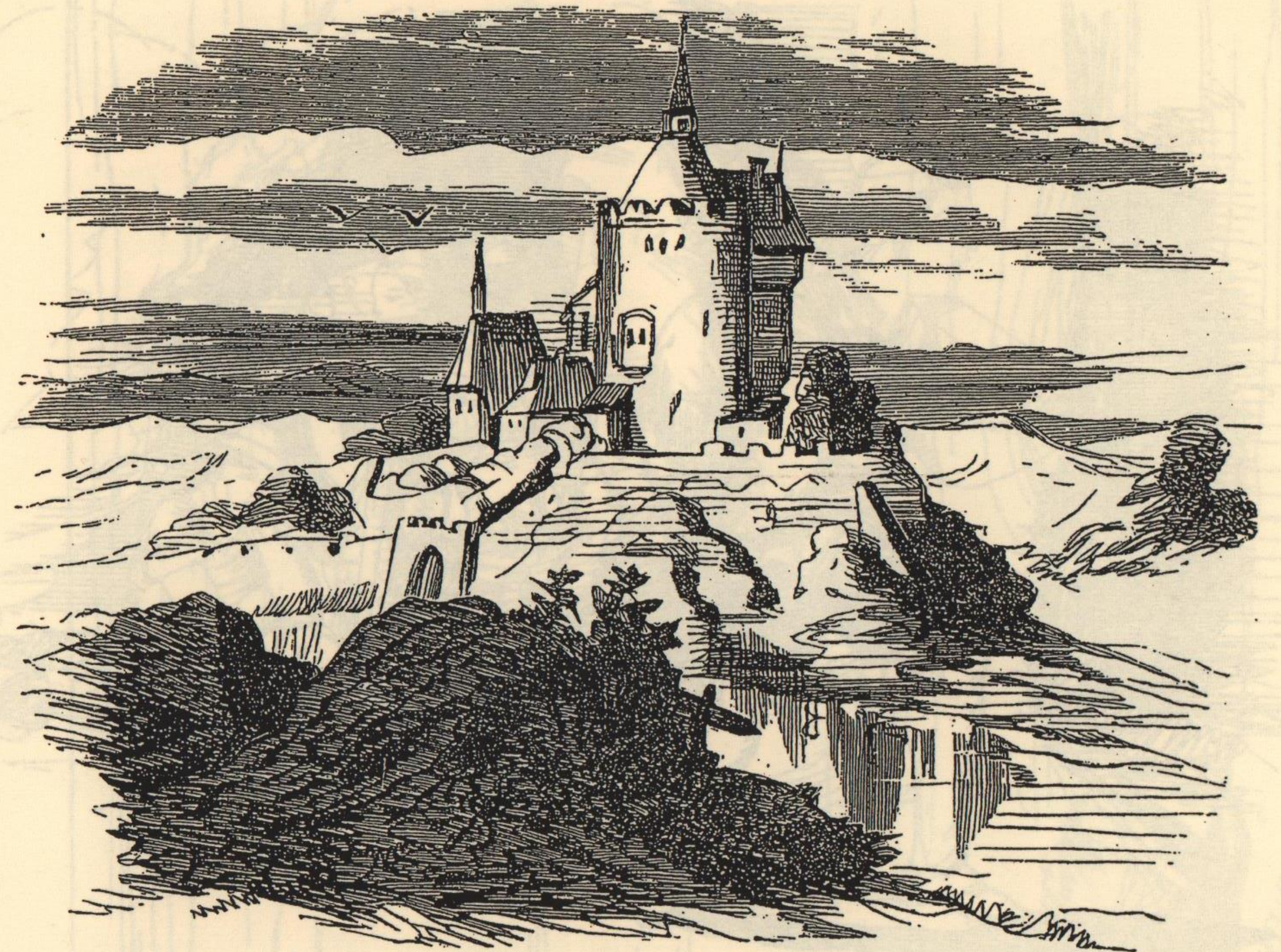
and crying out for their father, meeting with no reply but the sighing of the wind among the branches of the forest trees. Then the Old Lady thought she and her children would drag the Shoe out of the wood and take shelter in it, till they should be able to build a fresh house. They fixed it firmly in the ground, propped it up with stout beams of timber, covered the top with a trap-door to keep out rain and wind, and, as it was very high, Peter and Strong-arm cut a piece out of the side to make an entrance. In this Shoe they lived for many a year, finding it suit them so well that they gave up the idea of building a fresh house. Yet the Little Old Lady never forgot her husband and his sad fate. Often would she sigh, and many hours would she spend thinking of the best way to release him from the bondage of the Giant; but no plan could she form for his rescue. Strong-arm had seen how wretched his mother was, and he was filled with sorrow as he watched her weeping and moaning on the river's bank. When he learned it was for his father she mourned, he was fired with the desire to release him at any cost, so he spoke to his brothers, who determined that he and the eleven next eldest should go forth to conquer the Giant. His mother knew the



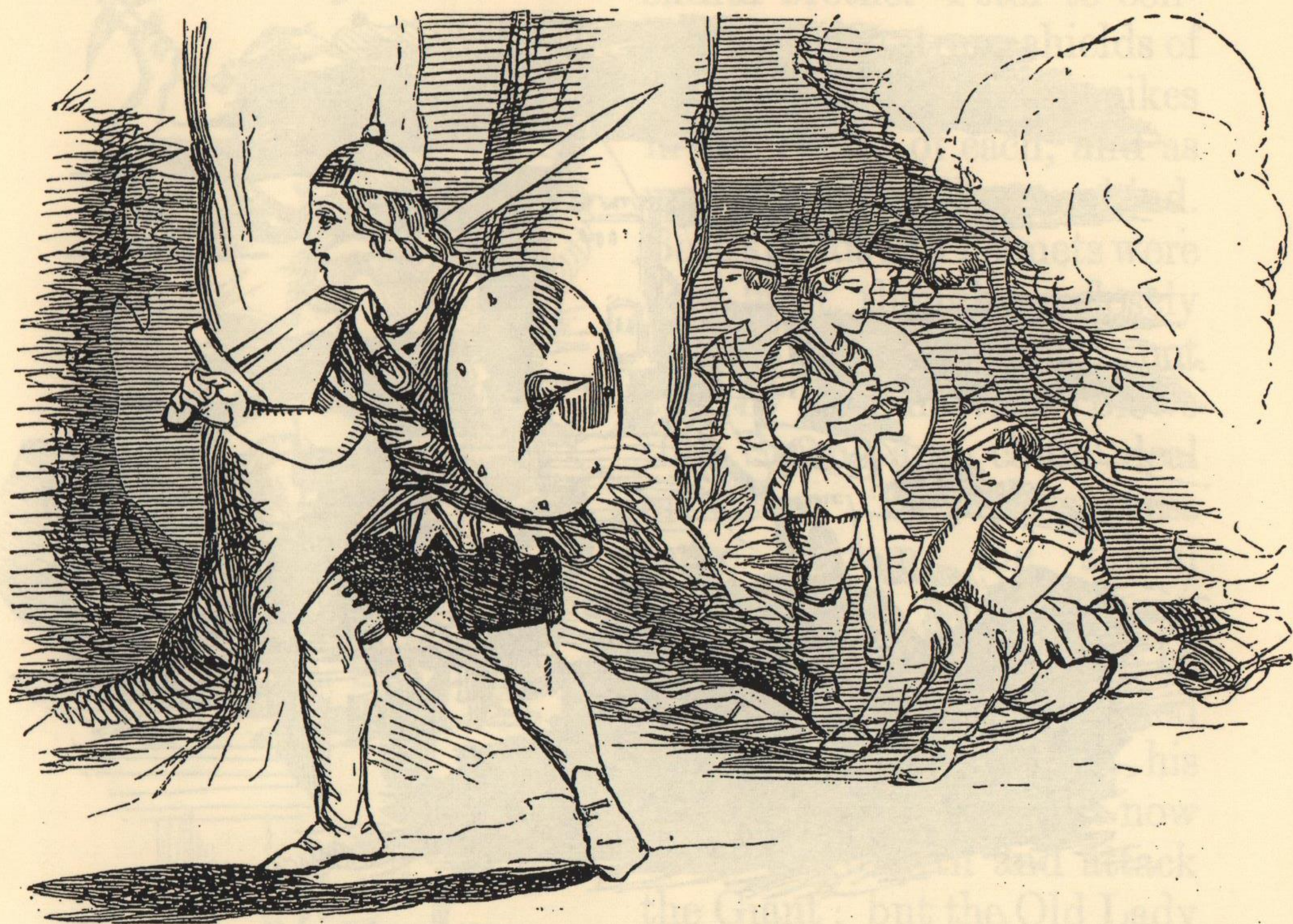
Giant's strength, and would not hear of his making the attempt. She was sure he would be killed if he dared to approach the Giant's castle. But the heart of Strong-arm knew no fear, and he was ready to meet any danger. He bought a dozen sharp swords, keeping for his own use an immense blade, such as in his powerful hands would deal



a terrible blow! He told his skilful brother Peter to construct twelve strong shields of wicker-work with iron spikes in the centre of each, and as many helmets of the same kind. Both shields and helmets were very light, though so closely woven that they were not cut by the heaviest blows that Strong-arm could deal on them. To make success more certain, the skilful Peter made twelve cross-bows, and for each one he added a hundred iron-headed arrows. Strong-arm and his eleven brothers were now ready to go forth and attack the Giant; but the Old Lady was full of fear. Her eldest son would hear of no delay, so they put on their helmets, with their swords and shields. Then Strong-arm had them all stand in order like well-trained soldiers, and going one at a time to their mother, she gave each son her blessing, and then fell upon her knees and prayed for their success as they went forth.

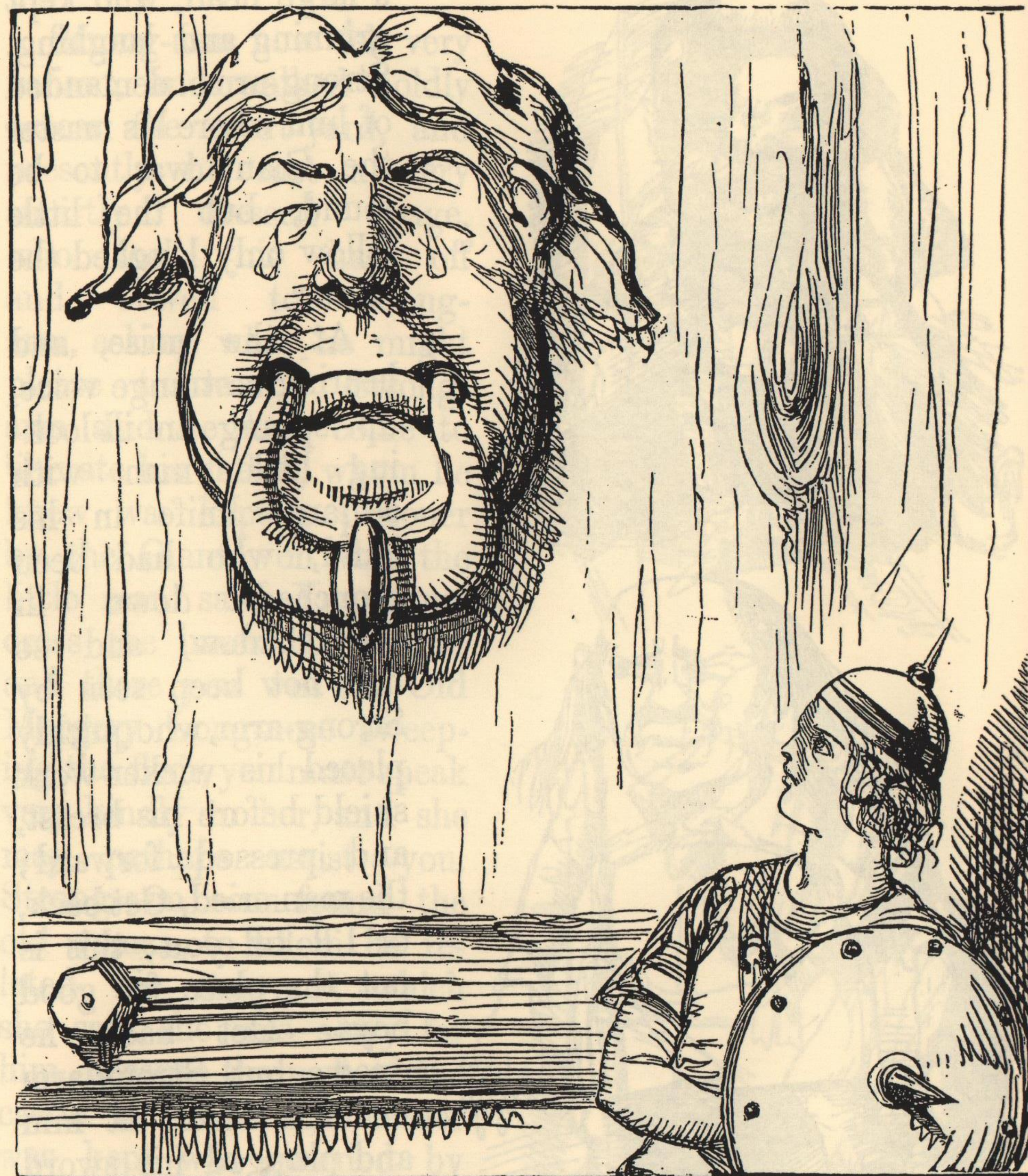


Strong-arm now gave the order to advance, and they started for the forest. They marched along with bold hearts, for it was a long way off, and the road through the forest was difficult to find, but they neither cared for difficulties nor trouble, so long as they had the chance of restoring their kind father to liberty; their cause was good, Strong-arm said, and that **RIGHT OVER MIGHT** should be their motto. When night came on, they were yet a great distance from the castle, so they collected some wood and made a fire, which they all sat round, and had some supper, which their good mother had provided them with before starting. After supper Strong-arm related histories to them, showing how those who fought for the true and just always con-



quered the wicked at last, and told them that to be great men they must be good men; then they all prayed that they might get their father out of the hands of the wicked Giant, after which they lay down to sleep, two always being left to watch. As soon as the sun rose they all washed in a clear stream that was near, then Strong-arm served out to each a nice biscuit, this with a drink of spring water was their breakfast, which they enjoyed very much. All being ready the order was given to march, and they soon came in sight of the Giant's castle. Around the castle was a deep ditch, and before the massive gate there was a narrow bridge.

Strong-arm, leaving his eleven brothers in a little wood close by the bridge, where they might remain safe yet within call if he should want them, boldly strode up to the entrance.



He seized the knocker, which was so heavy that it required the strength of both his hands to lift it. Then he sounded such a peal on the door that it fairly shook the walls of the castle; the door was opened by a funny little boy with



a large head, who kept grinning and laughing. Strong-arm demanded of him where his master the Giant was to be found, but the little fellow only laughed the louder.

At the noise, and hearing a strange voice, up sprang an ill-looking little man with a large knife in his hand, who had been crouched down in the shadow, and so had not been seen by Strong-arm, who quickly placed his wicker-work shield before his breast, and pressed forward; the man cried, Get back, or I'll kill you; this is not the place for good boys — Get back, he cried; but Strong-arm made a thrust at him and plunged his sword deep into the little man's side, who crept quickly into his dark corner again.



Strong-arm now felt very valiant, and walked boldly across the court-yard, and presently he met a very smartly dressed page, who took his hat off and bowed to Strong-arm, asking what he might please to want. Strong-arm said he had come to liberate his father, whom he knew was kept a prisoner by the Giant; on this the little man said, You must cross the inner court-yard, and there you will see Old Margery Long-nose sweeping the floor, you must speak very kindly to her, and she may perhaps assist you. Strong-arm soon found the old woman, to whom he related his story, at which she said she was sorry for him, because the part of the castle in which his father was kept was guarded by a large Dragon, and unless he could kill it, he never could get his father's liberty. Strong-arm, nothing daunted,





followed the old woman's direction, and soon found himself in the presence of the monster, who was fast asleep, so Strong-arm made short work of it by sending his sword right through its heart, at which it jumped up, uttering a loud scream, and made as if it would spring forward and seize Strong-arm, but the good sword had done its work, and the monster fell heavily on the ground dead.



Now, whilst all this was going on, the Giant, who had been drinking much wine, was fast asleep in a remote part of the castle. Strong-arm had no sooner finished the Dragon, than up strutted the funny little boy who first opened the door, grinning and laughing as before, and said Your servant, sir, I know who and what you want, at the same time leading Strong-arm round to another part of the court-yard, where he saw his poor





Father, who immediately sprung to his feet and embraced his son. He said he was a dear, good, and dutiful boy to encounter so much danger for him; but alas! how was he to escape, for he was chained to the door. Then Strong-arm called up his brothers, and when they had embraced their Father, they soon broke the chain and set him free; so they all started off in the greatest joy for home.



I must return to the Little Old Woman. She, after her sons had gone away, gave way to the most bitter grief for having let them go to share the same cruel fate as her husband. While in this state, an old Witch came up to her, and on the Old Lady telling her the cause of her sorrow, she said she would help her, that the Giant was an enemy of hers, and she would not only see that the good sons prospered, but that the Giant should meet with such punishment as his wicked ways deserved. Then the old Witch took the Little Lady on her broom, and they sailed off through the air, straight for the Giant's castle.

On their way the Witch related how the Giant and she hated each other; that she had great power, and wished to kill the Giant. To carry out her design, she began by afflicting



him with corns and tender feet. Now, when the Giant awoke from his sleep he was in such pain that he could bear it no longer, so he thought he would go in search of his missing Shoe, which, like the other one he had in his castle, was easy and large for his foot. When he came to the spot where the Old Lady and her children lived, he saw his old Shoe, and, with a laugh that shook the trees, he thrust his foot into it, breaking through the trap door at the top!



The children, in great alarm, rushed about inside the Shoe, and, in great fear and trembling, scrambled through the door and slits which the Giant had formerly made for his corns. By this time



the Witch and the Little Old Lady, as also Strong-arm, his eleven brothers and his father, were come up to the spot. Strong-arm and his eleven brothers shot their arrows at him till at last he fell wounded, when Strong-arm went up to him and cut off his head. Then the father and the Little Old Woman and her many children built a new house, and lived happily ever afterwards.



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