



The Stars in the Water

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Irish

Intermediate

56 min read

This is to be another sort of chapter altogether. I am going to tell you now what happened. The eighteen years are gone now and we have come to the time when there is something to tell.

When those eighteen years began, you know, Kathleen and Terence were not much more than born. So, if you have got as far as addition and can add eighteen to nothing and find that it makes eighteen, you will see that by this time they were about eighteen years old. John O'Brien and his mother and Kathleen did not live on the east side of Central Park any more. John had got on better and better with the work that he was doing. After a while, instead of having to do work of common kinds any more, he had been put in charge of other men who were doing it. After another while he learned so much about the work and how it was done and how it ought to be done, that he was made one of the partners in the company that did it. So he got a good deal more money and he was able to take his mother and Kathleen out of the little tenement where she was born, and to live in a better place. Then he had a house of his own, over on the west side of the Park, and it was there that Kathleen lived when she was eighteen years old.

Peter had not got along so well. John himself employed him, but Peter knew enough to go only just so far, and there he stuck. He lived in a little better place than he did at first, but he could never make his way like John. And then Terence, as he grew up, made a good deal of trouble. He never would learn anything useful and he never would do anything useful. He never helped his father at all, and always his father had to help him. If there was any fight or any accident or anything troublesome or wrong within a mile, Terence was always in the

midst of it. He was constantly getting his head and his ribs broken, and Peter was always having to pay for other people's things that he had broken, from their heads to their windows.

Ellen's excuse for him, that he was never well and had never been quite himself since he was born, was pretty well worn out. For, people said, he had always been exactly the same ever since he was born, and if that same was not himself, who was it? But Ellen kept saying it none the less. Many a time Mrs. O'Brien tried to make her believe that the boy was a changeling, and not her child at all, and many a time she begged Ellen to let her only try a charm to see if he was, but Ellen never would hear of it. She always said what she had said at first, that nobody knew him but her. She saw him better when she dreamed about him, for then she saw him as he really was, without all the harm that had been done to him by all the sickness that had been on him one time and another.

You might suppose that anybody who could play the fiddle as well as Terence need not have any trouble in making his own living. He might have found a place in a theatre, like the man whose fiddle he had played on first. He might have taught others to play. Or he might have played all by himself, and hundreds of people would have paid to hear him. But he would play only when he chose, and he would never do anything useful with his fiddle. And everybody said he played so wonderfully—everybody except Kathleen.

And this brings us back to Kathleen. Terence heard before he was many years old something about the plan that Peter and John had made, that he and Kathleen should be married when they grew up, if they both liked the plan. He seemed to forget all about this last part, "if they both liked the plan." He liked the plan himself and he seemed to think that that was enough. He had talked about it to Kathleen many times, before they were both eighteen years old, and it troubled Kathleen so that she tried never to see Terence when she could possibly help it. She had always disliked him, though she had always tried not to show it; but as they got a little older and she found that there was no other way to keep away from him at all, she had to tell him so.

But do you suppose that made any difference with Terence? Well, it did make a difference with him, but he did not let anybody see that it did. When Kathleen told him for the first time that she did not like him at all, he went away by himself. He went straight to the hill that is in the north end of the Park, and there he threw himself down on his face on the grass. For hours he lay there, trembling and crying, and beating the ground with his feet and his fists. And it would take another book as large as this to tell all that he was saying to himself or to the grass, or to something under the grass—how can I tell? And you would not want to read the book. It is not likely that you will ever see anybody in such a rage as he was in. But at the end of it he stood up and looked

just as he usually did, and went straight to the O'Briens' and stayed all the evening and kept as near Kathleen as he could, and stared at her all the time. And he talked to her then and afterward, just as if she had told him that she liked him better than anybody else that she knew.

So Kathleen had to go to her grandmother, as she always did when she was in any trouble, and tell her all about it. And her grandmother told her that she and Terence were both a good deal too young to think of anything of the sort, and that she would do all that she could to help her. But she could not do much. She told John about it, and he said that he should be sorry if the plan that he and Peter had made could not be carried out, but he would forbid it himself, as long as Terence was so lazy and so worthless and so bad as he was now. When he got a little older, he hoped that everything would be better, and there was no hurry about anything.

And though Terence made her so much trouble, Kathleen had many other things to think about. She went to school and learned a great deal, and her grandmother taught her a great deal more. Her grandmother told her stories still, and, though she was nearly eighteen and felt that she was getting so dreadfully old, she still liked stories. Then she had a good many friends, and she spent much of her time with them. She visited Ellen often, too, going to see her at times when she thought that Terence would not be at home. Ellen and Peter still lived on the east side of the Park, and some of her friends lived there, too, so that Kathleen often walked through the north end of the Park, near that hill that I have told you about so many times before.

Kathleen was fond of this part of the Park, as everybody is who knows it. But especially she was fond of one little spot that nobody else seemed to notice much. So Kathleen got a feeling that this one place belonged to her, and she was all the more fond of it because of that. It was a tiny little basin of water, near the path, but up a grassy bank. On the side toward the path it was all open, but on the other side there were rocks, and out of a little cleft in the rocks ran a bit of a stream of water that fed the little basin. Then, around the rocks and over them there was more grass, and the hill rose at both sides and above. On the edge of the hill, right over the basin, was a pine-tree, and around it were other trees. Their branches came together over the water and almost shut out the sky from it, but not quite.

Every time that Kathleen passed it, she went up the bank and looked into the still water. She had a feeling that if she ever went by and did not do this the water would miss her and would feel hurt. When she did this by daylight and in summer, if she stood up and looked into the water, she could see a patch of branches and green leaves and blue sky through them, about as big as the basin itself, and that was scarcely larger than a fair-sized tub. But if she stooped down close to the water and looked into it, she saw that there was a great deal of sky

under it, below the trees, which grew upside down. There was almost as much sky under the water as she could see above it, and she believed that there would prove to be quite as much if she could only get her head where she could see it.

She used to look in at night sometimes, too, and try to see if there were any stars in that sky; but in the summer she never could see any, because the leaves on the trees were so thick that they almost hid the sky, and they seemed to be thicker and to hide the sky more by night than they did by day. In the winter it was different. Then there were no leaves, but only branches and twigs, which covered the sky like lace work, and through these Kathleen sometimes thought that she could see a star or two in the water, but she was seldom quite sure. Yet she never passed the place without looking in it, to see the green leaves and the blue sky or the black leaves and the almost black sky, or the stars, if she could find any.

On a certain day—the last day of April it was—there was a good deal of excitement in the fairy palace under the hill. The reason of it was that a new fairy had come to live there. Perhaps you never heard of a baby fairy. I have read a good many stories about fairies that said nothing about any such thing. Now, you needn't try to be so bright about it and say that of course there must be baby fairies, or there could not be any grown-up fairies. That isn't so at all. Fairies are not like men about growing old and dying and other fairies taking their places. I have heard of a fairy funeral, but I can't imagine how it happened, and I think that the story about it must have been a mistake. If you have read this book as far as here, you know that most fairies are thousands of years old, and you know, too—for Naggeneen has told you—what is likely to become of them in the end. Still, there is no sort of doubt that now and then a new fairy is born, and there was one born on this day. He was the son of the King and the Queen, and you can guess well enough that a fairy prince is a person of some consequence.

“What will we do at all for a nurse for the baby?” said the Queen.

“What will we do at all?” said the King.

“It never would do for me to have the care of him at the first,” said the Queen.

“Never a bit,” said the King; “it would ruin him.”

“How would it ruin him?” said the Queen.

“Never a know I know, no more nor you,” said the King, “but you know as well as I it would ruin him.”

“Why can’t I care for my own child?” said the Queen, “the same as a human mother does?”

“I dunno,” said the King, “only we know you can’t. We’ve never dared try, to see what would happen. He must have a human nurse. Maybe it’s something to do with them things Naggeneen was always talking about our having no souls—”

“Don’t be talking about Naggeneen,” said the Queen, “and me not well at all.” Then she was silent for a little while and then she went on talking about Naggeneen herself. “Are you sorry he left us?”

“Who?” said the King.

“Naggeneen,” said the Queen.

“I’m not sorry,” said the King. “We’ve more peace without him. Though he was clever and he often told us the right thing to do and he might tell us the right thing to do now.”

“Did he tell us the right thing to do when he told us to bring Terence here to learn the ways of men and to teach them to us?”

“Sure Terence is a good boy,” said the King, “and he plays the fiddle as well as Naggeneen himself, so we don’t miss Naggeneen for the only thing that he was good for. And Terence is easier to have about other ways.”

“But has he ever learned the ways of men and taught them to us?” the Queen asked.

The King was getting annoyed. “He has learned them, I think,” he said, “but he has never taught them to us. And you know Naggeneen himself said the plan would be no use.”

“He did,” said the Queen; “only you would try it. And just so all this talk is no use. What will we do for a nurse for the baby?”

“We’ll find one some way,” the King answered. “Was you thinking of anyone in particular?”

“I was not thinking of anyone in particular.”

“How would Kathleen O’Brien do, do you think?” the King asked.

“I don’t want to be troubling the O’Briens,” the Queen said, “and they always so kind to us.”

“It would not be troubling them much; we’d only keep her a little while and they’d hardly miss her.”

“If she was once here,” said the Queen, “some one of your men would want to keep her, and it would break the heart of her grandmother. So it would her father’s, too, but I’m not thinking so much of him.”

“We’ll not keep her,” said the King, “only as long as the child needs her.”

“You say that now,” said the Queen; “it would be different if she was once here—I’d like to have her as well as anyone I know.”

“We could find no one else so good,” said the King. “It’s May Eve, you mind. There’s no time when we have more power, and few when we have so much. We’ll all be dancing to-night, and Kathleen often passes along just about dark. It’s likely we could get her to dance with us, and then we’d be sure enough of her. If that fails, there’s other ways. Our power lasts till sunrise.”

“And you think we’d not be keeping her long?” said the Queen.

“We’d have her home almost before she was missed,” the King answered.

“I wouldn’t mind if you tried,” said the Queen.

Kathleen had been to visit Ellen. She was on her way home through the Park, and she had meant to get there before dark, but it was a little later than she had thought, and she saw the red in the sky before her getting darker and duller every minute. As she walked along she saw two other girls of about her own age, whom she knew, in front of her. She overtook them and the three walked on together, though the others could scarcely keep up, Kathleen hurried so.

When they were nearly through the Park they came to the little basin where the water ran down out of the rock. Though she wanted to get home so quickly, she could not pass this place without going up the bank and looking into the water, because she felt so sure that if she did not the water would miss her and feel hurt. She ran up the bank and looked into the still little pool. The other girls went on, and she heard one of them call after her: “Thought you were in a hurry!”

Kathleen did not mind them, but only looked into the water, which was almost black, it was getting so dark all

around. She had not seen the water look so dark in a long time. She looked up over her head and she saw that it was because the little new leaves had begun to come out on the trees and were beginning to hide the sky. She saw one or two of the brightest stars, that had already come out in the sky, and she looked back into the water and tried to see them there, but she could not find them. There was nothing but the little, still, black pool.

She went back to the path and ran on after the other girls. She saw them walking on slowly, only a little way ahead of her. Just as she had nearly come up with them she stood still to look at a wonderful sight. She just thought dimly that it was strange that the other girls were not watching it, too, but the sight itself excited her so that she had not much time to think of that. On the grass, close beside the path, there were ever so many boys and girls—at least she thought at first that they were boys and girls—dancing. The grass in that place sloped upward from the path, and the ground was a little hollowed, in a sort of shell shape. All around the place, except where the path was, trees and bushes hung over the grass. The buds were just opening here, too, and the air was full of the smell of the new spring grass and leaves, which always grows stronger in the evening.

Kathleen stood gazing at the boys and girls dancing. There were so many of them that she could not count them. She thought that they seemed to be a little younger and smaller than herself. The boys all wore green jackets and red caps. When she looked at them more closely she could not tell whether they were boys at all or not. They looked more like old men. And she could scarcely believe that either, because they danced so fast and seemed so lively. Her father could not dance like that, she was sure, and he was not an old man.

But she had no doubt that the girls were girls. Usually she could not tell a pretty girl from an ugly one, any more than any other girl can, but she knew that these were pretty. Anybody would. They had long, golden hair that hung all loose and free and came down to their knees, when the little wind did not blow it away in some other direction. They had deep, soft eyes. They were dressed in long, white gowns, so white that they shone, now like a sheet of pale light and now with a hundred little sparkles, as the water of the sea does sometimes, when it is broken into foam by the prow of a ship. All the men carried lanterns and all the girls had something that looked like long flower-stems, only there were tiny lights on the ends of them, instead of flowers. These and the lanterns did not seem to trouble them at all in dancing, and if Kathleen had seen the lights and had not seen the dancers, she would have thought that they were a swarm of fireflies.

She had scarcely stood there for a minute before one of the men came up to her and asked her to dance with him. Kathleen's first thought was that she ought to be afraid, and her second thought was that she was not afraid a bit. She liked dancing and she had just been wishing that she could dance with these boys and girls.

Then she wondered if it was quite right. Then she could not see what there could be wrong about it. Then she let the little man take her hand and she stepped off the path upon the grass and began to dance. She heard the other girls calling to her again, farther up the path. She called back to them: "I am coming in a minute! Wait for me!" And then she went on dancing.

When she had been only looking on, the dancing had seemed to Kathleen to be quite wonderful, but now she found that she could do it all nearly as well as the little boys and girls. She thought that it might be because the little old man was a better partner for dancing than she had ever had before. They danced around by themselves, moving in and out among the others, no matter how close together they were, and always finding their way, now in the midst of the whole company and now out beyond the very edge of it, and then suddenly all the dancers would join hands and whirl about in a great circle, so fast that Kathleen could not tell whether her feet were touching the ground at all.

It seemed to her that she had never done anything so delightful before. She did not think of going on with the other girls any more. She did not think of getting home early, or of anything but the dancing. She could not tell at all how long she had been dancing, but it was all dark, except for the little lanterns and the little lights on the flower-stems, and the stars were all out in the sky. And then somebody said: "It is time to go."

The man who had been dancing with Kathleen whispered to her: "You are to go with us."

And Kathleen thought of nothing but of going with the queer little old men and the beautiful little girls. They all left the shell-shaped grass-plot and moved along together—Kathleen could scarcely tell even now whether her feet were on the ground or not—over the grass, till they came to a little pool of water—Kathleen's own little pool.

She looked down into it, and there was no doubt about the stars now. There were hundreds of them down under the water, shining up through it from as far below, it seemed, as the stars in the sky were up above. The dancers who came to it first stepped on the surface of the pool, and it bore them up as if it had been a floor of glass. Then Kathleen saw that the rocks behind the pool were not as she had ever seen them before. There was an opening straight into the hill, and when she came nearer still she saw that the water was no longer a little pool. It was more like a long, narrow lake, and it covered the bottom of the opening that led into the hill. All the people were going in, walking along the path of water as easily as if it had been a path of ice.

Again it seemed to Kathleen that she ought to be afraid, and again it seemed to her, still more clearly, that she

was not afraid. When she came to the water she put her foot upon it and walked along it as easily as the others were doing. She thought that she would remember that this water could be walked on, and would try it the next day. She had never thought of trying it before.

But now she and the others were moving along the path into the hill. It was still dark, except for the lights that they carried and the stars that shone up through the water. And these were not the reflection of any stars in the sky, for there was no sky to be seen over them now—only rocks. Then there was a pale violet light shining on the walls of the passage ahead of them. Then, as Kathleen looked down at the water again, to see if she were really walking on it, she saw that there were no more stars, but the water was of a faint, shining yellow, and in a moment she was not walking on water any more, but on a floor, that seemed to her to be all of gold.

She could do nothing now but stand still and look around at the wonderful sight. All around her were walls of silver, so bright that they reflected everything in the great hall, and she could not tell at all how large it was. But she made out that in the middle was a great dome, held up by the most wonderful gleaming columns of gold and silver, first a column of gold and then a column of silver, and these she saw again and again in the walls all about. She could not see the top of the dome from where she stood, it was so high, but all around the sides of it she saw great diamonds and rubies and emeralds, some of them as big as her head, that poured down soft white and red and green lights, and these she saw, too, shining up, a little dimmer, from the gold of the floor, which was almost as good a mirror as the walls.

The sides of the dome, in which the jewels were set, were all of bands and lines and ribbons of gold and silver, wonderfully woven together into shapes and patterns which she could not follow or trace out with her eyes, because they seemed to be always slowly moving—turning and twisting and winding and wreathing about, never for a moment the same, but always new and always beautiful. And when this was reflected in the golden floor it was like the wavering shapes in water that is almost still, but yet has little waves that dance and break up every reflection that is seen in it.

And still, although she saw no lamps except the great white and red and green gems, there came from somewhere—perhaps from the top of the dome, she thought—that violet light that she had seen first on the walls of the passage, and it filled the whole hall, like the glow of a glorious sunset that never faded. And all this was inside a hill that Kathleen had known all the years of her life, and she had never seen anything wonderful about it.

While Kathleen is wondering at the fairy palace I will explain to you the subject which you have been wondering about. If you only knew more we could get on with the story so much faster. It is most annoying. And you have been brought up so well too! I don't see that it is anybody's fault but your own. You have been wondering all along how it was that the fairies seemed to Kathleen to be, as I said, only a little smaller than herself, when you have always heard that fairies were so very little.

Well, to think of your not understanding that! I am bound to say that when I was of your age I was just as ignorant about it as you are now, but then, children now have a good many more advantages than they had in my day. Considering how few advantages we had, it is a great credit to people of my age that we know anything at all, and, considering how many of them you have, it is a disgrace to you that you do not know everything.

When I was a child I used to read about fairies, and the book would say that they were six inches tall, or that they were about as big as a man's thumb, or it would tell about their sitting in flowers. And then I would look at the pictures and they would appear to be as high as a man's knees, or even higher. And I could not understand it. But I made up my mind to find out about it. That is what you must do, when there is anything that you don't understand. There are very few things that you can't do, if you make up your mind to them, except things that are too hard for you. I hate to have morals getting into a story as much as you do, but that is such a good one that it might as well go in.

Now I will tell you. Fairies can be of any size they like, and you never can tell what size they are going to be, from one minute to another. They can be giants, if they like. And as soon as they had Kathleen with them they could make her of any size they liked too. So as long as she was among them they could keep her and themselves just the same size, or as near to it as they liked.

But when fairies are not taking the trouble to be of any particular size—when they are letting themselves alone, as you might say—then they are about six inches tall. And I think that is a very good size to be. It would be better if you were of that size. You wouldn't eat so much and you wouldn't be so much in the way, and you would be much better-looking. Just think: if your face were only three-quarters of an inch long, all those features of it that are so disagreeable wouldn't show so plainly. You might even look rather pretty. You wouldn't need to be so, but you might look so.

And it would be so much easier to know where you were, if you were of that size, that it would save your mother a good deal of trouble. All she would have to do would be to put you on the mantelpiece, and then you

could not get off without breaking your necks—and that would be such an advantage. I don't mean that it would be an advantage to break your necks, because then who would read this book, and why should I take all this trouble to write it? I mean, it would be an advantage that you could not get off. Well, now you see how much better off you would be if you were only six inches tall, and now you understand about the fairies.

While Kathleen was still wondering at the place that she was in, a man whom she had not seen before came up to her. He wore a crown, and she guessed at once that he was some sort of king. It did not surprise her to see a man with a crown. A man with a church steeple on his head would not have surprised her, by this time. "Come with me," he said; "you're wanted at once."

Kathleen followed him to the opposite side of the hall and through a door, into another room. It was much smaller than the hall, but it was just as beautiful, in its own way. There was a woman in this room—another of the beautiful girls, Kathleen would have said—lying on a gold couch. Her hair was hanging down over the pillow on which her head lay, so that Kathleen could scarcely tell which was the hair and which was the gold of the couch. There was a crown lying on a little table beside her, and so Kathleen guessed that she was the Queen. "Kathleen," said the Queen, "do you know why they have brought you here?"

"No, Your Majesty," said Kathleen. She was not a bit frightened, any more than she had been all along, and she knew that that was the way to speak to a queen, just as well as if she had never spoken to anybody else in her life.

"They brought you here, then," said the Queen, "to take care of my baby; but he'll not need you long, and then you can be going back home."

"I'm afraid," Kathleen said, "that I don't know how to take care of a baby very well. I might do something wrong with it. You see my mother died when I was born, and so I was the only baby that there ever was at our house, and I have hardly ever had anything to do with a real live baby."

"You've had something to do with them that was not alive, haven't you?" the Queen asked.

Kathleen smiled a little at that. "There were fifteen of them, I think," she said.

"Well, you'll be having no more trouble with this one," the Queen said, "than with any of those fifteen. Only do as you're told. I can't take care of it myself, because it's the law that it must have a nurse that's a mort—I mean it must have a nurse from outside this place. There's the baby in the cradle there. Try can you make him go to

sleep.”

Kathleen went to the cradle and looked at the baby. It was wide awake and it stared at her like a little owl. Except for that, it looked like any other baby. The way that the baby stared at her came nearer to making Kathleen afraid than anything that she had seen yet. But she took him out of the cradle, sat down on a low seat that she found, began to rock him gently, and sang an old song that her grandmother used to sing to her and that she had sung to her own fifteen babies many a time.

It was scarcely an instant before the baby was asleep. She put him back into the cradle and then turned to the Queen and said: “Shall I do anything more?”

“Not now,” said the King; “come now and have something to eat and drink with us.”

The Queen started at this and cried: “No, no!” but Kathleen did not know what she meant. She knew that she was very hungry, and she followed the King out of the room, back into the hall. Tables had been brought into the hall now, and they were all covered with things to eat that looked very good, and the men and women were sitting at the tables, eating and drinking and talking and laughing. They all stood up as the King came in, and waited till he had taken his place at the head of the table, and then they all sat down again, and the eating and drinking and talking and laughing went on.

One of the men led Kathleen to a seat and put something to eat and drink before her. She did not know what it was, but it looked good. She was just going to taste it, when somebody touched her on the shoulder and somebody said: “Don’t eat that; don’t taste a bit of it.”

She looked around and saw a boy—perhaps she would have said a young man—standing behind her. He was very different from all the other men. He did not look old, as they did. She thought that he was of about her own age, and he was taller than she, while all the others were shorter. “Don’t eat anything or drink anything that they give you,” he said again. “I will give you something to eat.”

He sat down beside her and put a little package on the table before them. He opened it and took out some bread and meat, some strawberries, a little flask full of cream, and a larger one full of water. He gave Kathleen a part of all these and kept a part for himself. “I am not sure,” Kathleen said, “that I ought to let you talk to me, because, you see, I don’t know who you are.”

She had let several people talk to her that evening, without knowing who they were, but this boy seemed to be

somehow altogether different.

“My name is Terence,” he said. “Now I know you are going to ask ‘Terence what?’ It’s Terence nothing; I have no name at all except Terence.”

“I know a boy named Terence,” Kathleen said, “and I don’t like him a bit.”

“I hope that won’t make any difference about your liking me,” said the boy.

“Oh, not at all,” said Kathleen. “It isn’t his name that I don’t like; it’s himself. He is only just as old as I am, and he looks—” Kathleen stopped, surprised at herself, for she had not thought of it before. “He looks a little like these men here, who all seem to be so old; and, besides, he isn’t nice at all.”

“Then let’s not talk about him,” said the boy. “Will you tell me what your name is?”

“Oh, yes; didn’t I tell you? My name is Kathleen O’Brien.”

“And must I call you Kathleen or Miss O’Brien? You see you will have to call me by my first name, because it is the only one I have, and so I think you ought to let me call you by your first name.”

“But if you have only one name,” Kathleen said, “it is your last name just as much as it is your first, so perhaps you ought to call me by my last one.”

“Oh, no,” Terence answered; “you see my name ought to be a first name, only I haven’t any last one, so I think I ought to call you by your first one.”

Kathleen did not say that he might, but he afterward did. She thought that it would be better to change the subject. “It’s just as if we were at a picnic and had brought our own luncheon, isn’t it?” she said. “And all these other people are eating just as if they were at home. Why don’t we do the same way they do?”

“Because,” Terence said, “we are not like them. We mustn’t talk about it aloud. You see they are the Good People, and we are not. I don’t know what I am at all, but you are like the people outside. I knew that as soon as I saw you, and I saw that they were going to let you eat their food. I almost wish I had let you do it now—no, I don’t wish so, either. It would be mean to let you, and I don’t want you to, anyway. You did come from outside, didn’t you? Well, then, you must not eat or drink the least bit of anything while you are here, except what I bring you. All that I bring you is from outside. If you eat a crumb or drink a drop of anything that they have

here, you can never get out again.”

“But they all get out,” said Kathleen. “They were all outside when I saw them first.”

“Oh, yes,” Terence answered, “they are different. They can go out and come in whenever they like; but if anybody from outside eats anything here, he can never go out again. It is that way with me, too, for I am different from the Good People, though I don’t know whether I came from outside or not.”

“You don’t know whether you came from outside or not?”

“No. I came here when I was a little baby. I have often asked them how I came here, but they never would tell me. I have lived here ever since I can remember. Have you a father and a mother?”

“My mother is dead,” Kathleen answered; “I have a father.”

“Yes,” said Terence, as if he were trying to work out a puzzle. “Nearly all the people outside seem to have fathers and mothers. I never had either. I have always lived here, but nobody here is my father or my mother, and I don’t know how I came here. I have been here so long, and yet it seems so strange to me. This is my only home, and yet I never feel at home in it. I always feel as if I belonged somewhere else. I see the people outside and I feel as if I belonged with them more than here, yet I have never been outside this place one single night.”

“You go out often in the daytime, then?” Kathleen asked.

“Oh, yes; I go out every day, almost, and I go to school. Have you been to school?”

“Why, of course,” Kathleen answered; “doesn’t everybody have to go to school?”

“These people here never go to school,” Terence said. “I am the only one who goes, and then I have to try to teach them what I have learned. Do you go home from school and try to teach your father what you have learned?”

“Why, no, indeed,” said Kathleen; “what a funny idea!”

“Sometimes it seems funny to me too,” Terence said, “but you see I can’t tell whether it is funny or not, because I know so little about the people outside. I don’t like to ask them, because they would think it was so strange that I didn’t know; but it is different with you. You have come in here, and I can ask you things that I wouldn’t ask of people outside.”

“If they want to know things,” said Kathleen, “why don’t they go to school themselves?”

“I don’t know that, either,” said Terence, “but they seem to expect me to go to school for all of them. I think that is what I am here for. Before I was old enough to go to school at all they used to bring me things to eat from outside, because, you know, if I ate anything of theirs I never could go out. Then as soon as I was old enough to go to school, they sent me, and I came back every night, and they gave me money to buy all my own food outside, and I have done that ever since, and I have never eaten a bit of the Good People’s food.”

“And don’t you like to stay here?” Kathleen asked. “It seems to me a very beautiful place.”

“No,” said Terence; “they are very kind to me, but I think that I should like to live outside better, and I hope that I shall some time. And then, you see, if I ate anything here I could not go out to go to school, and so I could not teach them. And it is all so strange. It almost makes me cry, it is such a bother sometimes, and then they are so sorry about it themselves and I am so sorry for them, and it almost makes me laugh sometimes, because they can never learn anything. You will see. I think it is time now.”

Some of the men were taking away the tables. “It is time for the lesson,” the King called out. Some of the other men brought in a big blackboard and set it up. Everybody stopped talking and laughing and stood near the blackboard. Terence made some lines and some letters on the board, with a piece of chalk.

“I shall have to try again,” said Terence, “to prove to you the same thing that I tried to prove to you last night. But I’ll try a different way, and maybe you’ll see it better. Now mind, what I am to prove is this: if any triangle has two sides equal, the angles opposite those sides are also equal.”

“And what difference does it make if they’re equal or not?” said one of the men who stood near Kathleen.

“Be still there,” the King said; “do we want to make telephones or do we not? And sure we can’t make telephones without geometry. Hasn’t Terence told you that?”

Terence went on: "Let ABC be any triangle in which the sides AB and AC are equal."

"How can it be any triangle, when it's only one triangle?" said another of the men.

"Keep your silly head shut," said the King. "Terence didn't say it was any triangle; he said let it be. Now will you let that triangle be, or will I come over there and make you let it be?"

The man said nothing more and Terence went on: "Now, consider this triangle as two triangles, BAC and CAB."

"How can it be two triangles," another of the men said, "when it's only one triangle?"

"Will you be still there?" the King said. "Terence doesn't say it's two triangles; he says you're to consider it. Will you consider that triangle two triangles, or will I come over there and make you consider it two triangles?"

"I'll consider it seven triangles, if you like, Your Majesty," the man answered, "but I dunno what good it'll do me."

"Then consider it," said the King, "and don't talk about it. Go on, Terence."

"Now, you see that since the sides AB and AC in each triangle are equal, AB and AC in the first are respectively equal to AC and AB in the second, and the angles between these sides are equal. So the two triangles are equal, by previous proposition. And so the angles of one are equal to the angles of the other, where they are opposite the equal sides; that is, the angle ABC is equal to the angle ACB, being opposite the equal sides AC and AB, by the same previous proposition, and that is what I was to prove."

The King looked at the men with triumph in his eye. "There, you blackguards," he said, "do you understand it at all, now that Terence has made it clear to you?"

One by one the men and women began slowly to shake their heads. Not one of them understood it. "Well, Terence," said the King, shaking his own head, "I dunno how it is; nobody could be asking you to make it any clearer than you have, and yet I'm obliged to say there's never a bit of it I understand myself. Maybe to-morrow night you'll be able to make us see it clearer."

Terence had come back to where Kathleen was. "Isn't it funny," he said, "and yet isn't it a pity? I try to teach them as well as I can, but they never can understand at all."

“And do you mean to say,” said Kathleen, “that you haven’t got any farther in geometry than that? Why, that’s only the fifth proposition of the first book.”

“Of course I’ve got farther than that,” Terence answered, “but they haven’t, and they never will. I have been trying to teach them that proposition—oh, I don’t know how long—and they never will learn it in the world. They want to learn to build railways and bridges and all sorts of things, but how can anybody even get ready to build a railway or a bridge till he’s got over this bridge and the rest of the geometry? I don’t know whether I can ever learn it all myself, but I’m going to the School of Engineering up at the University, next spring, to learn chemistry, and qualitative analysis, and calculus, and analytical mechanics, and graphical statics, and metallurgy, and thermodynamics, and hydraulics, and a lot of other things. But these people here will still be at work on this same triangle years after I am dead, if they have anybody to teach them.”

“Now, Terence, my boy,” said the King, “there’s one thing you can do for us we can understand. Give us a tune out of the fiddle.”

Kathleen was startled to hear this boy named Terence asked to play on the fiddle, just as if he had been the other Terence whom she knew. She wondered if he played like the other Terence. She scarcely dared wait to hear, and she felt as if she should like to run away, only she did not know where to run.

But she did not think any more about running after Terence began to play. This was different. And yet in one way it was the same. For the music that Terence was playing was just the music that the other Terence often played and just what most people liked to hear him play best, though Kathleen had always liked it as little as anything else that he did. She had never heard anyone else play it till now. And now it was so different. She could scarcely tell the difference, and yet she could feel it in every clear note that Terence drew out with his bow.

When she was a little girl, almost as long ago as she could remember, she used to say, when the other Terence played this very music, that it did not mean anything. But now it meant something. Meant something! It meant—everything, Kathleen thought, and yet she could not tell at all what it meant. It was not happiness that it meant, and it was not sorrow; it was not merry, and it was not grave. Sometimes it was light and gentle and sweet, and flowed along as if it were a little fountain of music, bubbling and bubbling out of a hidden place; then it would be slower, but fine and firm, and full and free and true. It seemed to Kathleen to mean so much, and yet she could not tell what, except that there was something like a deep longing that went all through it.

And that made her think of the other Terence's music again, for she remembered now, though she had never thought of it before, that there was a longing in his music too. Perhaps she had done wrong, she thought, to say that it did not mean anything. Still, this was so different. If the other Terence's fiddle had ever seemed to be longing for anything, it had seemed to be hopeless, and the fiddle always seemed to be bitterly laughing at those who were listening to it and thinking that it was so fine. She had never thought of anything like this before, but it seemed clear to her now, listening to the same music played so differently. For now, below all the longing and sounding through it, there were strength and hope and life and faith in something good.

I do not say that Kathleen thought all this out while she was listening. She only felt the most of it. But she felt it so much that she scarcely knew what she was doing, and she moved by little and little toward Terence, till she was nearer to him than anybody else, and looked at him as if he were something more wonderful than she had ever seen before, till she found that she could not look at him, because her eyes were wet. And then the music stopped.

Then said the King: "I said that was something that we could understand, Terence, but I dunno if it is. It's the wonderful player you are all out, but I never heard you play like that before, and I think there's something in it that's more than I can find out. That's enough of it for to-night."

Terence had already come back to Kathleen. She could scarcely speak to him even yet. "Who taught you to play like that?" she said.

“I don’t quite know,” he answered, “whether anybody taught me. They taught me to play here, and the music that I just played is their music, but I don’t play it the way they do. I don’t know why that is. Just as soon as they had taught me so that I could play at all, I began to play in my own way. Their music is sweet and bright and merry and sparkling, and sometimes it seems to be sad, but it never means anything.”

Kathleen was startled again to hear Terence say the very words that she had said so many times about the other Terence’s music. “But I never played before in my life,” Terence went on, “the way I have been playing just now. I think it was because you were here. You understood, and so I thought of nothing but you all the time that I was playing, and I think it made me play better. They never understand. They love music and they hate geometry, but they understand one just as well as the other.”

The King came up to Kathleen and said: “It is time for you to come and be looking after the child again.”

Kathleen went with him and he led her back into the room where the Queen was. “Where is the box of ointment?” the King said to the Queen.

“I have it here under my pillow,” the Queen answered; “come here and get it, Kathleen.”

The Queen took something from under her pillow and held it so that Kathleen had to come close to her to get it. “Did you eat anything?” the Queen asked, as Kathleen bent over her.

Kathleen did not quite know whether she ought to answer or not, but the Queen looked at her so kindly that she thought that there could be no harm, and she said: “Only what Terence gave me.”

“That was right,” said the Queen, and then she went on, speaking louder, so that the King could hear: “Take this box of ointment. In the morning, as soon as the baby is awake, take him out of the cradle and wash him, and then just touch his eyes with this ointment; but be careful that you do not touch your own eyes with it.”

Kathleen took the box, which seemed to be of solid gold, and looked at it. What was in it looked like a soft, green salve. She slipped it into the pocket of her gown. “How shall I know when it is morning?” she asked. It seemed to her that here under the hill there would not be much difference between night and day.

“You’ll know it’s morning when the child wakes up,” the Queen said; “or when you wake up yourself, for that matter. You can go to bed now. There’s your bed, next to the cradle.”

The King left them, and Kathleen, who was really very tired, lay down on another gold couch, almost like the Queen's, that had been placed near the cradle, and in a minute she was asleep.

It seemed scarcely another minute before she was awake again. She remembered that the Queen had said that when she awoke it would be morning, and she looked to see if the baby was awake too. He was, and she took him out of the cradle. Then she saw a large gold basin full of water. She washed the baby in it, and he stared at her all the time, with big, owlish eyes. Then she took the box of ointment out of her pocket. She touched it with her finger and then touched each of the baby's eyes with it. Instantly his eyes looked brighter and deeper, and instead of staring at her stupidly, as they had done before, they seemed to look straight through her. Nothing had frightened her at all, and now she was getting so that nothing startled her. So she only laid the baby back in his cradle and put the box of ointment into her pocket.

In a moment the King came in and said it was time for breakfast. He and the Queen went out into the hall together and Kathleen followed them. As soon as she was in the hall she saw Terence. He was looking for her and they sat down and ate breakfast together. Then Terence went away.

All day, except when it was time for meals, Kathleen sat with the Queen or looked after the baby, though there was really nothing to do for him. Whenever it was time for a meal they went out into the hall, and there Kathleen always found Terence, and she always ate with him, and ate only what he brought her.

In the evening the King came to her and said, "Kathleen, it is time for us to go and dance again; come with us."

Then Terence took her by both hands and said, "Don't go with them; don't go; if you do, I am afraid that you will never come back."

"Of course I shall come back," she said; "you have been very kind to me, and I would come back to see you again, if it was for nothing else. And then I don't know whether I must do anything more for the baby. And then—" Kathleen stopped short as she thought. "I ought not to come back—not to-night! I ought to go home! Oh, how anxious my father and my grandmother must be about me! I have been here all night and all day, and they must think that I am dead. And I have not thought of them the whole time. I am wicked to have stayed here so long."

"Then you will not come back," Terence said. "You know why I brought you all that you have had to eat and to drink. It was so that you might leave this place. I might have let you eat their food, and then you could never

leave it, unless to go out with them and dance on their green and then come back again. I made it so that you could go, and now you will go and you will not come back.”

“I will come back,” Kathleen answered, “but I must see my father and my grandmother and tell them that I am safe. Perhaps I will come back to-morrow, if I can, but I will come back. I would come back just because you wanted to see me, you have been so good to me. It was very good of you, if you wanted me to stay, to bring me the things to eat and drink, so that I could go if I liked.”

“No, it was not good of me at all,” Terence answered; “I had no right to let them keep you here always, even if I wanted you to be here. But I hoped and I always hope that I shall leave this place some time myself, and I did not want to have to leave you here. I would not have left you here. Promise that you will come back.”

“I will come back,” Kathleen answered.

“Come along now,” said the King, hurrying up to Kathleen again. “It’s time we were dancing this minute.”

All the little men and women were moving out of the hall and Kathleen went with them. In an instant they were again in the passage that Kathleen remembered. The floor was of gold, like the floor of the hall, and then she saw that she was walking on the water once more. The yellow glow was under it still, but fainter than in the hall. The violet light on the walls of the passage grew dimmer; she saw the lights that the men and women carried, shining ahead of her and all around her. Then she looked down at the water and saw the stars shining up through it, as if there were another sky far down under her feet. And then—she felt the cool, fresh breath of the outside air, and it was delicious to her, and she was standing on her own little pool, and deep down under it there were thousands of stars. She and all the others walked—or drifted, as it seemed to Kathleen—up the bank of sweet-smelling new grass, to the little hollowed place, with the trees and the bushes growing around it and hanging over it, where Kathleen had first seen the Good People. And then they began the dance.

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