

THE YELLOW DWARF



WALTER
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ONCE upon a time there was a Queen who had an only daughter, and she was so fond of her that she never corrected her faults; therefore the Princess became so proud, and so vain of her beauty that she despised everybody. The Queen gave her the name of Toubelle; and sent her portrait to several friendly kings. As soon as they saw it, they all fell in love with her. The Queen, however, saw no means of inducing her to decide in favour of one of them, so, not knowing what to do, she went to consult a powerful Fairy, called the Fairy of the Desert: but it was not easy to see her, for she was guarded by lions. The Queen would have had little chance if she had not known how to prepare a cake that would appease them. She made one herself, put it into a little basket, and set out on her journey. Being tired with walking, she lay down at the foot of a tree and fell asleep; and on awaking, she found her basket empty, and the cake gone, while the lions were roaring dreadfully. "Alas, what will become of me!" she exclaimed, clinging to the tree. Just then she heard, "Hist! A-hem!" and raising her eyes, she saw up in the tree a little man not more than two feet high. He was eating oranges, and said to her, "I know you well, Queen; you have good reason to be afraid of the lions, for they have devoured many before you, and—you have no cake." "Alas," cried the poor Queen, "I should die with less pain if my dear daughter were but married!" "How! you have a daughter!" exclaimed the Yellow Dwarf. (He was so called from the colour of his skin, and his living in an orange-tree.) "I am delighted to hear it, for I have sought a wife by land and sea. If you will promise her to me, I will save you from the lions." The Queen looked at him, and was scarcely less frightened at his horrible figure than at the lions. She made no answer until she saw them on the brow of a hill, running towards her. At this the poor Queen cried out, "Save me! Toubelle is yours." The trunk of the orange-tree immediately opened; the Queen rushed into it; it closed, and the lions were baulked of their prey.

The unfortunate Queen then dropped insensible to the ground, and





