

**Enys Tregarthen Piskey Stories**

**Note that the following five have not yet been published online**

## THE PISKEY WARRIORS

IF THERE IS a moor more full of legendary tales than another, it is the Goss Moor. The old people brought up on it used to tell many a weird legend about the wild, lonely spot. One of these was a woman called Emlyn Moyle; a charming old body with shining seer's eyes, gray like her own carns, and soft hair white and silky like Piskey wool showing under her clean, starched cap.

This old woman was born and brought up in a small hamlet named Belovely, or Belowda, which stands right on the moor and consists of a few cottages facing Castle-an-Dinas. Emlyn's cottage was one of the oldest in the village. It was thatched and white washed and under the thatch peeped tiny casement windows.

Emlyn was a born story teller like the old people before her, and many a tale she told to her friends. Sometimes, she told them on winter evenings as they sat around the peat fire while the fierce wind swept by their village; sometimes, in the spring when she and other neighbors were on the moor looking after their geese, for most of the women of Belovely kept geese. The great moor was dotted with their geese huts, little shelters made of earth and stone, their turfen roofs often white with daisies or golden with trefoils. In these huts the geese would lay their eggs and hatch out their young.

Emlyn was never happier than when telling tales of the Piskeys and other Small People. When she was young, the men and maids of Belovely used to go out on the moor to hunt for fairies who knew where gold was hidden. For it was believed that the Little People were the keepers of the treasure buried in some forgotten time, perhaps by a different race of men from those now living on the moor. Emlyn told her listeners where the Piskeys were said to dwell, of their little walks-tiny paths of brightest green-where they took their strolls when the evening star came up behind the hills. She told of little men who rode the Goss Moor ponies when the moon was high, and how they were all booted and spurred and clad in white breeches, red riding coats, and soft hats, and how they rode till the sun began to rise behind the eastern range of hills.

She told them, too, a weird tale about Giant Tregagle who, when a storm raged over the moor, flew by like the wind to Roche Rocks. A little hermitage stood there, dedicated to St. Michael.

'Old Tregagle would tear along with the Bad One behind him,' Emlyn said, 'Knowing that if only he could thrust his head inside that sanctuary he would be safe.'

But the tales she liked best to tell were about Castle-an-Dinas, the large, entrenched camp standing some seven hundred feet above the sea. Some said it was British, some Danish, with its three great rings, or vallums, on its brow built of turf and unwrought stone.

According to the old people who lived at Belovely when Emlyn was a little maid, the Castle had been King Arthur's hunting-seat. One day, it was said, when hunting the wild boar, King Arthur's horse stamped hard on a moorstone and left the prints of his hoofs upon it. The hoofprints are still on the stone to show the natives of the moorland that in the long ago Arthur and his knights came and stayed at Castle-an-Dinas and went riding on their own moor.

Another tale Emlyn used to tell was of a great battle fought hundreds of years ago somewhere on the moor, perhaps on Castel-an-Dinas itself. Whether one really had been fought or not, nobody could ever say, but the legend has it that, when the mists cover the hills and the moor, little Piskey warriors, tiny men in scarlet jackets, refight that battle on the outer circle of the great entrenched hill, perhaps where it was first fought. People passing near the Castle in the fog have heard their battle cries and the crashing of tiny arms. Stopping to listen, they would whisper to each other, 'The little bits of men are fighting that great battle over again.'

This strange legend may be a fragment of some forgotten tale of an invading race, perhaps the Danish, which fought to get possession of the land. It may speak of that weird conflict in the west when King Arthur and his hosts fought their last great fight –

‘And ever pushed Sir Modred league by league  
Back to the sunset bounds of Lyonesse.’

As they fought and drove the rebels down to where the sunset fires the cliffs, the mists closed in upon them, taking strange shapes of beasts and men that were not men. This chilled their hearts and brains till they knew not friend from foe, and friends slew friends not knowing what they did.

Whether there was any truth at all in the wild tale of a battle, handed down from a dim past by the natives of the moor, Emlyn could not say. However, when the old camp has been shut in by thick mist, many have heard the warriors fighting their mimic fight, and some have seen them when the fog has lifted for a moment. Emlyn was one of those who both heard and saw.

It happened in this way.

One day when the orchises were sending up their pale green spikes to break into purple flower and the broom was glowing with golden blossom, Emlyn went to tend her geese, who were hatching out their young. The air was full of the fragrance of wild flowers blossoming near the pools scattered over the great moor. The heather was still brown under the April sky, but it was washed with silver sunlight here and there.

The birds were full of high intent, bringing food to their families hidden in the furze brakes. Larks were singing above, pouring their wealth of rapturous song on their little brown mates sitting on tiny, freckled eggs on the

turfen sods. The day was clear as well as mild, and the distant hills were blue as air. Castel-an-Dinas with its triple rings stood out plainly against a background of sky.

‘Tis a day to make your heart sing as well as the birds,’ Emlyn said to herself as she took her seat near the geese huts.

There the gray, patient geese were sitting, watched over by Father Gander, who shot out his long white neck snake-wise and hissed his disapproval. But Emlyn heeded him to and took out her knitting, looking about her as she did so. There was much to see. Not far away were pools where flocks of geese and goslings sailed over the surface of the clear brown water, each a boat of gray or gold. The willows surrounding the pools were golden, too, with yellow catkins, or goose-chicks as the natives called them because they were round and soft like goslings.

In the course of the morning, one of Emlyn’s geese hatched out several of her chicks. Emlyn took them from the mother and wrapped them in flannel till the rest were hatched. If she had not, the silly goose would have waddled off with her little chicks of fluffy gold and left the ones unhatched to die of cold within the eggs. Such is the way of geese when they are left unwatched.

As the morning drew toward noon, the character of the moor began to change. Emlyn, as she sat with the goose-chicks in her lap, saw a thin cloud of mist steal over the head of Castel-an-Dinas.

‘There is a fog coming up over the Castle,’ she said to herself. ‘I hope it won’t spread and thicken till the old goose has hatched out the rest of her chicks.’

The goose was not so obliging as Emlyn had hoped, and the mist had crept over all the hills near and far and half-hidden the moor before she left the turf shelter with the last of her hatched goslings.

Emlyn had no sooner set the flannel-wrapped goslings free when the goose and all her little brood went off to the nearest pool. They were accompanied by Father Gander who gave vent to his feelings in loud shrill cries as he proudly led his family to the water by the willows. Emlyn went after them to bring them back, and, by the time she had done this and fed them, the fog had shut out everything from view.

‘I hope I shan’t lose my way going home,’ she said as she started for Belovely. ‘It is thick as a hedge already, and I can’t see the length of my hand.’

She felt her way along. After she had been walking some time, she put her foot into a hole and fell. She was unhurt, but she felt bewildered, like one Piskey-ridden, and went on her way hardly knowing where she was going. She went down and up, but could not find her way. Suddenly her steps were arrested by strange little cries

coming out of the mist and the sound of clashing; what it was she did not know. Then, with a flash, came back the legend of the old battle and the Piskey warriors fighting the mimic fight in the mist on the outer ring of the Castle.

‘Whenever have I got to?’ she muttered as the cries came louder through the thick fog. ‘I can never be up on the Castle! But if I have wandered up here in the mist, I must be close to the outside ring.’ She bent her head to listen. ‘I can hear the little warriors quite near, and they’re fighting like dragons. I can hear the sounds of their little swords. Oh, I do hope I shan’t see them, too!’

Emlyn had scarcely said this when the fog parted in front of her, and through the rift she saw the top of the Castle and its three entrenchments. Not far away were hundreds of little men in red jackets in battle order. In their tiny hands were tiny swords.

It was a dreadful battle the Piskey warriors were fighting not many yards from where the old woman stood. They were terribly in earnest, and they looked so fierce, so strange and old – thousands of years old, perhaps. Emlyn longed to turn and fly, but she dared not move for fear of drawing attention to herself. So she stood still, watching the mimic battle fought by little men. How long she stood on the circle she never could tell, she knew only that it seemed hours and hours.

Time and again she saw them rush at each other, uttering their battle cries, striking at each other with their little swords. The mist curled in between them as they thrust and parried. Then, when Emlyn felt she could not watch another moment, the fog met again and made a wall between her and the little warriors, hiding them from her sight. But the battle was evidently to be fought to a finish, and their weird cries and the noise of sword striking sword still came through the mist.

Emlyn did not move for the fog was thick around her, and she kept quite still till the sounds had ceased. Hardly had they ceased when the fog lifted and over the Castle the moon shone white and clear. On the circle, where she had almost dreaded to see slain bodies of little warriors still grasping elfin swords, she saw nothing but sleeping flowers. There was not a sign anywhere that a battle had been fought.

‘I s’pose I did see the Piskey warriors fighting, as others have seen them before me,’ Emlyn said to herself as she went on her way to Belovely. ‘If I did, I don’t ever want to see them fighting again, not even if they were only playing at fighting that great battle fought hundreds and hundreds of years ago.’

Such was the weird tale old Emlyn told of the mimic battle fought on the outer circle of Castel-an-Dinas which the natives of the moor still say was King Arthur’s hunting-seat.

## HUNTING THE FAIRIES

ANNABEL was a little Cornish maid as pretty as a daisy and as sweet.

All the young men who lived in the village where she lived were in love with her; bus she loved none of them save Carveth Rosewarne, and him she was not allowed to marry because he was very poor. Her father was well-to-do, and he had given out to the village at large, and to Carveth in particular, that nobody should marry his daughter who was not as rich as himself.

‘Then I will never marry anybody,’ said poor little Annabel, when she was told what her father had said. ‘A maid will I live and a maid will I die if I cannot have Carveth,’ and she cried and she cried till her eyes were as red as a ferret’s.

Annabel was a motherless girl, and had been brought up by her father’s housekeeper, who loved her dearly and was very sorry that she was not allowed to have the lad of her choice because he happened to be poor.

The Christian name of this old servant was Vechan, and Vechan was as quaint as her name. She was a Cornish woman and a believer in the supernatural, and all the Small People of fairies, some of whom, she said, lived near the Old Men’s Dwellings<sup>1</sup> which stood on a great wild moor not very far from the village.

When Annabel was a little maid, Vechan used to tell her about these fairies and that they looked after the crocks of gold which were said to be buried near the huts of the Old Men, and how the young men and maidens who were in love with one another and couldn’t afford to marry, went out on the moor when the moon was up to hunt for Little Men; and if by any good chance they came upon a Little Men bending down as if looking for something or digging with a little pickaxe and shovel, they stood stock-still till he had gone away and then they began to dig where they had seen the Tiny Man digging. If they were fortunate enough to find a crock of gold, which they sometimes did, they got married as soon as ever they could.

Now Annabel was in love with Carveth and he with her, and they could not get married for the same reason that these other poor young men and maidens could not. Vechan’s old tales came back to her, and the more she thought about them the more she longed that Carveth might go and hunt for Little Men and dig up crocks of gold. ‘It would be so easy for us to get married then,’ she said.

One evening when the little Cornish maid went to meet her handsome young lover at their trysting-place, which was close to a gate overlooking the great moor where the Old Men’s Dwellings stood up greyly in the distance, she told him some of the stories which Vechan had told her about the Little Men and their crocks of gold, and begged him to go and hunt for them and dig for gold, as the young men and maidens did in the long ago.

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<sup>1</sup>Ancient beehive huts

Much as Carveth loved sweet Annabel, he was not at all willing to go out hunting for Little Men even for her dear sake, for he said it would be like looking for a wee's nest.<sup>2</sup>

'Then you will never be able to marry me,' said poor little Annabel, and she cried and she cried till her sweet blue eyes were again as red as a ferret's.

His sweetheart's distress was more than he could stand, and he said that, in spite of his lack of faith in Little Men, he would go out on the moor and hunt for them, if it was only to bring back her smiles.

'You must go when the moon is near her full and hanging like a silver ball over the Old Men's Dwellings,' said Annabel, wiping away her tears and smiling again.

'The moon is near her full tonight,' said Carveth. 'She is rising now. Look sweeting.' And Annabel turned her lovely face towards the range of granite-crowned hills which guarded the moor on the east, and she saw the moon very large and red rising over the head of one of the highest tors.

'How beautiful the moon is,' murmured the little Cornish maid. 'She is the lover's moon when she rises like that and hangs round and white over the Old Men's Dwellings to show young men and maidens the haunts of Little Men and where the money crocks are buried.'

'Money crocks and Dinky Men will turn your dear little brain if you think so much about them,' Carveth laughed. 'Since your mind is set on my going to hunt for such, I must go at once. The moon will have travelled to the homes of the Old Men by the time I get there. Good-bye, dear love.'

'Good-bye,' she said lifting her face to his as he stooped to kiss her, 'and good luck to your hunting,' she called after him as he strode away over the moor.

When he was gone too far to call him back, she was sorry she had made him go, for the wild tales which Vechan had told her of how the Small People enticed human beings into their houses and kept them there for ever and ever, came back to her and filled her with alarm for Carveth's safety.

The moor was very still as the young man made his way to the ancient homes of prehistoric men. Not a sound broke the stillness, save now and then the croak of a frog in the marshes, or the chirp of a cricket in the long grass.

The sky was clear and without a cloud and soft as moor-flowers, and the moon was exceedingly bright and made everything on the moor stand out in weird distinctness.

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<sup>2</sup>Mare's nest.

He walked quickly till he came near the circle of beehive huts, when he went slower, not because he was afraid of frightening Little Men – for, as we have seen, he did not believe there were such – but because the walls of the Old Men’s Dwellings looked so uncanny and unreal in the moonshine. The weirdness of it all and the silence made him feel queer, and his feet dragged slowly as he walked towards the ghost-like huts.

When he came to within a yard or so of the first hut, he stood still and listened. Everything remained quiet, and not even a leaf stirred nor the cry of a night-bird broke the silence of the place.

As he stood listening a tiny sound like some one digging fell upon his ear. Turning his glance whence the sound came, he saw to his amazement a tiny man five or six inches high bending over a bit of ground close to one of the nearest dwellings digging away for all he was worth. He was dressed in a red cloak and sugar-loaf hat and brown leggings. He looked dreadfully old; his little face was wrinkled and brown, and his hair and beard were very white and long, and as he dug with the tiniest of tiny pickaxes, his beard swept the ground.

Carveth was so astonished to find that there were Little Men, that he could not help ejaculating, ‘My dear life!’ He had no sooner given expression to his feelings in that simple but natural way than the Little Man looked up, shot a quick glance at him, cried ‘Ha, ha, ha,’ and vanished, tiny pickaxe and all!

‘Oh dear, I wish I hadn’t spoken,’ said Carveth to himself. ‘I fear I have frightened the little chap away. But fancy there being little bits of men like that! I never could have believed it if I hadn’t seen one with my own two eyes!’ He went and looked at the spot where he had seen the Little Man digging, but to his astonishment the ground was unbroken and not a mark of a tiny tool could he see anywhere.

‘He must have been like an old hen digging for daylight and not for gold,’ said Carveth to himself, as he stooped and looked at the ground, which was bare.

As he spoke he heard, or thought he heard, all kinds of funny little noises coming from the huts – hee hee’s and ha ha’s which made him feel like he did not know what, as he afterwards told Annabel.

‘The Old Men’s Dwellings are haunted,’ he said to himself. And he left the beehive huts, marched quicker than he came, and went away over the moor to the village as fast as his legs would take him.

‘You must go again to-night, but later,’ said Annabel when Carveth next met her at their trysting place, and told her all his adventure in his hunt for Little Men and their buried gold. ‘You had better take a pickaxe and shovel with you this time in case you see the dear little Dinky Man again, so that you can dig where you see him digging, and you will be sure to find a crock of gold there, and will be as rich as my father.’



‘He won’t say nay to our marrying then, will he, sweet?’ cried Carveth, with a great laugh.

‘No,’ said little Annabel, blushing like the heart of a red, red rose.

They waited hand in hand by the gate till the moon rose over the great hills, and then Carveth kissed his little love good-night went down to his house for pickaxe and shovel, and strode across the moor.

When he got to the Old Men’s Dwellings, the moon was hanging over the great green space between them and the tors. The night was again quiet, the sky the same clear, soft blue, and the ancient homes of the Old Men looked as weird and uncanny as on the previous night.

Carveth stopped a few feet from the huts and stood still, listening.

There was silence everywhere as before, and no sound of a tiny pickaxe or shovel. After listening many minutes and wondering whether he had better begin digging where he had seen the Little Man digging the night before, he saw something very small and very bright coming like the wind over the moor in the direction of the huts. It was very low down on the grass. Carveth watched it and wondered what it could be. In a minute or less the flying light – for so he said it was – came to the Old Men’s Dwellings and stopped dead, and he saw a little bit of a pony no bigger than a child’s toy horse, with a lantern about the size of a gooseberry suspended from his collar, and astride his back was the tiny Old Man he had seen the night before.

The Dinky Man was holding in front of him a pickaxe and shovel, which he tossed on the ground and dismounted.

‘My Granfer! What shall I see next?’ thought Carveth; but amazed as he was, he had the good sense not to let a word escape his lips.

The Little Man picked up his pickaxe and shovel and, leaving the tiny pony to take care of itself, went to the place where the youth had seen him digging the night before.

When he got there he put his lantern on the ground, took off his bright, red cloak, turned up his vest sleeves, spat on his tiny hands, and began to dig.

Carveth stood stock-still and hardly breathed as he watched him. He kept his eyes on him for ever so long – he did not know how long – and the longer he did so the more excited he became, and unconsciously he drew nearer and nearer the Little Digger. When he was within a foot of him, the Dinky Man looked up, saw the tall youth gazing down on him with all the eyes in his head, and then with a ‘Ha, ha, ha’ and ‘Hee, hee, haw,’ he

vanished, little pickaxe, lantern, and all; and in another minute Carveth saw a tiny light going over the moor like the wind, which he felt sure was the Piskey pony with the tiny lantern hanging from his neck.

When the light was out of sight, the young man looked very carefully at the ground where the little red-cloaked chap had been digging, but again there was no sign that the ground had been disturbed.

‘The ground was too hard for the Dinky Man’s Pickaxe,’ said Carveth to himself. ‘I would have helped him gladly if he had only asked me. I will dig for myself and Annabel now,’ he cried gaily. And taking up his own pickaxe, he began to dig with all his strength but to his surprise he could not make any impression on the hard ground.

‘This is very queer,’ said Carveth, resting for a minute to mop his face; and as he spoke he heard queer little sounds coming from the Old Men’s Dwellings, which made him feel so nervous that he dropped his pickaxe and went back to his home.

The following evening, when he and Annabel met again as usual at their trysting-place, he told her all his adventure, and said that he was afraid he should never be able to break the ground to dig up a crock of money, ‘even if there is one buried there,’ he said.

‘You must try your luck again to-night, nevertheless,’ insisted Annabel. ‘Vechan said that if you were fortunate enough to see a Little Man digging, there is sure to be gold buried under the ground.’

‘It will be like digging for daylight, which perhaps the Dinky Man was doing,’ laughed Carveth. ‘But for thy sweet sake I will go once more and try what I can do,’

And he went, and when he arrived at the Old Men’s Dwellings the moon was not yet risen over the tors, and for some time the walls of the ancient huts were in darkness. There was more wind to-night, and it stirred the long grass and ling, and sand through the furze bushes which grew near the hut circle. The green plovers were up and about, and their pee-wits made the lonely spot seem less lonely. Once the whoo, whoo, whoo of a short-eared owl came from one of the Old Dwellings, and more than once the curlews whistled.

Carveth seated himself on a bank of thyme under the walls of one of the huts, and waited for the moon to rise high in the sky.

He had been sitting there a very long time when a tiny sound of digging reached his ears, and when the moonlight was sufficiently strong he saw it was the very same Little Man he had seen the two previous nights. His little figure was almost bent double as he dug. He evidently found digging very hard work, for more than once as Carveth watched him he stopped and mopped his face.

As the young man kept his eyes on him, afraid to move for fear of frightening him away, he saw that he was unable to break the hard ground; and he was so sorry at his failure, that he forgot he meant not to speak and called out –

‘Let me help you, will you, Little Mister?’

He had no sooner spoken than he remembered that he ought to have kept silent.

‘Aw dear, I’ve done it now. I’ve lost my chance of getting a money crock,’ he said to himself, ‘and the Small Man will be off like a flash of lightning through a thornbush, and will never come back again.’

But to his surprise the little fellow did not disappear. He stood up and stared hard at Carveth, who was still sitting on the bank of thyme, and after staring at him for a second or more, he piped –

‘It was very kind of you to offer to help a little old man like me, and I thank you. But I am *not* digging for gold as the little maid supposed, but there is a grain of truth in what you said about my digging for daylight. I have been digging for the last three nights to see what *you* were made of!’

‘Have you?’ cried Carveth, surprised that the tiny little fellow had been able to read his thoughts.

‘Yes,’ responded the Dinky Man. ‘That is worth digging for, isn’t it? Better to find out a young fellow’s character than try to dig up a crock full of money, eh?’ as Carveth said nothing. ‘If that young man is worth a pinch of salt, he will forget what brought him to the dwellings of the Old Men when he sees a tiny little old chap like me working for dear life, and will offer to lend me a hand with my digging, and I was not disappointed. I find that you have a kind heart and willing hands if you have nothing else. You will do more than get bran for ducks if you have the chance, and it shan’t be my fault if you haven’t the chance. You came out here on the moor to hunt for Little Men, did you not? And to make them show you where the money crocks were buried?’ he added, with a twinkle in his little black eyes, as he still stared at Carveth.

‘I did,’ said the young man, looking rather ashamed. ‘I suppose I ought not to have been so foolish. But the fact is, dear Little Mister, I am in love, and young men in love do very foolish things sometimes, especially when the little maiden they like asks them to do foolish things. I love a little maid who is the dearest and loveliest little dear in all the Cornish land; but, alas! I cannot marry her because I am very poor and the father of her is rich – the richest man in these parts. I am willing to work my hands to the bone to make a home worthy of my little Annabel, and I *do* work; but what is a lad to do who has nothing to work with but one pair of hands.’

‘Love and worth ought to do wonders, muttered the Dinky Man, ‘and patience,’ he added thoughtfully. ‘But lovers are generally impatient, aren’t they?’

‘I fear they are,’ answered Carveth, ‘and hopeful generally, even when there is only a straw when she remembered the old tales about you Little People and your kindness to poor lovers like me and Annabel, and so I came out here at her wish and for her sweet sake with the forlorn hope of seeing Little Men and finding some of their gold. According to the old widdles<sup>3</sup>if you come upon a Dinky Man digging, there is sure to be a money crock under the ground. I saw you digging last night and the night before, and when you had ridden away on your little bit of a pony I tried my luck, but I could not break the ground.’

‘If you had dug through to the other side of the world you would not have found a money crock,’ said the Little Man.

‘Little Men do not reveal the hiding-places of gold to every love-sick youth who comes to the Old Men’s Dwellings.’

‘Don’t they?’ said poor Carveth ‘Then I can never hope to find a money crock and Annabel and I will never be able to get married.’

‘Never is rather a long word, young man, and not for a lover to use,’ cried the Dinky Man, ‘and certainly not for a great big fellow like you who has grit in his bones and a pair of strong hands, willing to work for his ladylove.’

‘You’re right,’ said Carveth.‘I will work and work and save and save till I can make a home worthy of my little Annabel. ‘Tis about time I made tracks for home, Little Mister; I shan’t forget ‘ee nor your wise words.’ And he stood up in the moon-light, for the moon was high in the heavens now and shining down on Little Man and Big Man alike.

‘You are in a terrible por,’<sup>4</sup>piped the Dinky Man. ‘I like you, and I am sorry for sweet Annabel who believes in us Little People. Take my pickaxe and throw it as far as you can throw, and. where it falls dig, and you will find something worth digging for, even if you dig for a year and a day.’

The Little Man held out his tiny pickaxe to Carveth as he spoke, and Carveth took it and threw it, and as it went through the air it flashed like a beam of light.

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<sup>3</sup> Tales

<sup>4</sup> Hurry

‘Ha, ha, ha,’ laughed the Little Man. ‘My little pickaxe is kind to you, for it has fallen on the ground where a great big money crock is buried; you are in luck.’ And he ran towards the place where the elf’s pickaxe had fallen, and Carveth followed, taking with him his own pickaxe and shovel.

‘Dig, dig, dig,’ cried the Dinky Man, laughing and dancing, dancing and laughing, and Carveth began to dig as fast as ever he could.

He dug and he dug, and he shovelled and he shovelled, and the Dinky Man laughed and capered all the time. The faster he worked, the faster the Little Man danced!

‘Don’t stop digging,’ cried the tiny elf, whenever Carveth stopped for a moment to wipe his face. ‘There is no time to lose, for the moon is on her way to her place of setting over the sea, and the stars will soon be dim. Dig, dig, dig, shovel, shovel, shovel, till you find what you want – a great big money crock.’

And the young man did as he was told, and as he dug and dug, and shovelled and shovelled, the moon swam farther away, the plovers called over his head, the curlews whistled around him, and the owls whoo-whoood.

By this time he had dug a great pit and was ready to drop with fatigue, but as yet there was no sight of a money crock. And just as he was beginning to think that the red-cloaked elf with the quaint high hat was making a fool of him, his pickaxe struck on something that rang, and when he brushed away the earth, lo and behold, a great big crock stood revealed heaped full with spade-guineas! He uttered a cry of joy, and the Dinky Man danced and cried –

‘Take all the gold the money crock contains, buy lands with it, and then marry your dear little ladylove before the year is out;’ and catching up his tiny pickaxe, he vanished.

Carveth never knew how he got home with his burden of gold but he did somehow. And when he got there he put it away in a safe place, and on the morrow he hastened to tell Annabel of his great find, and how good the dear Little Man had been to him. ‘We shall be able to follow his advice and get married before the year is out, shan’t we, sweet?’

‘Yes,’ whispered Annabel with a blush, ‘and we shall live happy ever after like those young men and maids in the old tales that Vechan told me.’

Carveth laid out his money in land as the Small Man had advised, and he laid it out wisely and well. There was a large farm offered for sale soon after he found his crock of gold, and he bought it, much to the astonishment of everybody; and Annabel’s money-loving, grasping old father said he was quite willing now that Carveth should marry his daughter, for he must be a prosperous young man to be able to buy the best farm in the parish.

So handsome Carveth and sweet Annabel were married before the year was out, and they were happy as the days were long, Vechan said, and Vechan knew, for she took up her abode with them. And when little sons and daughters were born to the happy couple, and the little ones were old enough to listen to stories, she told them about the Dinky Men who lived out on the moor near the Old Men's Dwellings, and how kind they were to young men and maidens who loved one another with all their hearts.

### A PISKEY WHO RODE IN A POCKET

On one of the moors near Minster Woods in North Cornwall dwelt a lot of Piskeys or Elf Men.

These little Elf Men were very mischievous and as cunning as a wagon-load of monkeys. They danced and made merry, they hunted with dogs, they stole colts from farmers' stables, and when they had made panniers and stirrups in the manes and tails, they galloped them over the moors and downs; they put up magic lights to lead travellers astray, and they got into rooms through keyholes where they knew junkets and sweet cakes were kept, and ate them all up!

One of these little Piskeys got tired of doing all these things, and he told his companions that he should go and seek some new adventure, and he went.

He was the quaintest of little Elf Men; his face was browner than the seeds of the burdock with which he tied up the horses' tails and manes; his eyes were darker than moor pools under furze bushes and sharper than gimlets. He was whiskered from ear to ear, and his whiskers were long and grey like the old men's beards<sup>5</sup> in the autumn. His dress was as quaint as himself. He wore a long red riding-coat as bright as hips and haws, green breeches, and high boots which reached to the breeches, and on his shaggy head he wore a soft green hat turned up at the side with a scarlet feather stuck in the front. He was most fascinating to look at, and his tiny brown face was so ridiculously funny that, if it had been your good fortune to see him, as it was the old woman's I am going to tell you about, you would have laughed till you cried!

Well, this quaint little person danced away over the moors, every now and again bursting into gay laughter as he danced. His hee, hee ha's, his hee, hee haw's rang out over the lonely moorland, but nobody heard him save the moor birds and other wild creatures of that wild open country; but as it was nothing new to them to hear little Elf Men laughing, they took no notice of it.

On and on he went, dancing and laughing, laughing and dancing, till he came to Minster Woods, which, you know, is not far from Boscastle and far-famed Tintagel, and he danced down the slope of the moorland into the woods. He danced on and on through the great green place till he came to a road leading to Lesnewth, a parish not far from Minster; and seeing a boulder thickly covered with moss and lichen, he climbed up on it and looked about him.

The time of year was the beginning of June. The great trees were full of young leaf, and the afternoon sun was shining behind them, making the woods full of a beautiful green light. This place of trees was also full of the music of blackbirds and thrushes and other song-birds, and if the little Piskey had liked birds' songs as much as he did his own laughter, he would have sat and listened to their entrancing melody. But he did not.

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<sup>5</sup> Clematis

As he sat on the lichen-covered stone he looked up the woods and down the woods, and when he saw any one coming his dark little eyes glistened like the sunshine on the leaves of the trees.

Many people passed through the woods that afternoon and evening on their way from Boscastle, where they had been to do their shopping, but nobody saw the little Elf Man in the bright riding-coat, green breeches, and soft hat with the scarlet feather sitting on the boulder by the woodland path, for not one in ten thousand has the gift of seeing the Small People. But the little Elf Man saw everybody that passed on his way, and many passed – old men, young men, old women, young women, and even children – and as each one went by he winked his bright little eyes and said –

‘You won’t do. I couldn’t get any fun out of you!’

He sat on the stone till the shadows began to stretch themselves in the woods, and when the birds had sung their evensong, an elderly woman, as round as a tub, came waddling up the path. She was dressed in a black gown, and a grey turn-over, a white gooky bonnet<sup>6</sup>, and a butcher-blue apron completed her attire. Her arm was crooked through the handle of a covered basket which held her shopping, and at her side hung a large pocket which old-fashioned Cornish people call an underdale pocket.<sup>7</sup>

When the Piskey caught sight of this old dame waddling through the woods, he clapped his hands and cried, ‘She’ll do. Her pocket is just the thing for a beautiful ride through these great woods. Ha ha!’

When the woman came to where the Elf Man was sitting, he slipped off the boulder, caught hold of her gown, and the next minute was in her great calico pocket looking out over its top!

He was no sooner there than the poor old dame was in his power, and a look of bewilderment spread over her large, fat face, and she gazed helplessly about her.

‘In the name of fortune, what outlandish country have I got to?’ she said aloud to herself. ‘It is as queer as Piskey Land, iss fay it is. I have come up from Boscastle on my way back to Lesnewth through Minster Woods, and now I don’t know where I am more than a year-old cheeld.<sup>8</sup> But I must try and find my way home somehow, for the day has begun to clap in, and soon it will be dark.’

The little Elf Man listened to the old woman’s outburst with huge delight, and he doubled himself up with laughter and nearly tumbled headlong out of the great big pocket.

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<sup>6</sup> A kind of sun-bonnet.

<sup>7</sup> A pocket worn under a gown.

<sup>8</sup> Child.



The old dame waddled on through the woods, jerking her pocket as she went – the right way, as it happened – till in her bewilderment she took a wrong turning in the woods, and instead of going in the direction of Lesnewth, she went from it. She went up and down many a wrong path in her wanderings in the woods before she broke the spell the Piskey had cast over her through being in her pocket. Every turning she took brought her into a stranger country, she told herself, and she never knew whether she was going through the woods or round them, or whether she was in the woods at all!

‘I must be mazed,’<sup>9</sup> she kept muttering to herself as she jogged along, ‘and I am sweating leaking.’

She was as plump as a Christmas goose, and she puffed and she puffed as she went up this path and down that; and the more she puffed and the more she waddled the more she jerked her great big pocket, which was just what the little Elf Man wanted.

‘I say, this is fine!’ he laughed. ‘I am having the best ride I have had for years and years. I am being jerked up and down in the old woman’s comfortable pocket like a hazelnut in a moor stream. Ho, ho, ho! I haven’t half had my ride yet. Gee up, old dear.’

And the poor bewildered old dame did, little guessing by what occult means she was compelled to ‘gee up.’ All through the great woods she wandered, until she was ready to drop.

As she went this way and that through the woods, the day died and night followed quickly, and by and by the moon arose and outlined the leaves of the trees with soft, mysterious radiance. Her light fell in silver splashes on the fronds of the oak-ferns which grew plentifully in the underwood, and wherever it fell it gave an unreality to the place, especially where the trees cast giant shadows across the light. The wooded place looked so uncanny it was small wonder that the dazed old body thought that she was in the Piskey’s Country or Fairyland of which she had heard all her days. It was quiet as well as mysterious there in the woods, and hardly a sound was heard save the wind in the trees and an owl hooting in the grey little. Minster church down in the bottom, and the ha, ha, ha’s of the gay little Piskey as he leant out over the old woman’s pocket.

The little Elf Man was still enjoying his delightful ride, and the wee eyes of him under the soft hat sparkled like the moon-shine on the oak-fern.

When the old woman felt she could not go a step farther, she stopped and sat down on a trunk of a tree lying by the path; and she had no sooner seated herself than up she started and cried –

‘Why, what a silly old body I am! I am Piskey-laden as sure as I am Mary Penhale. I’ll turn my pocket inside out this very minute, iss fay. I will, and free myself from the Piskey’s spell.’

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<sup>9</sup>Mad

As quick as thought she caught up her pocket, which hung loose at her waist, and pulled out its inside, and as she did so out fell the little Elf Man on to his nose; and when he picked himself up, she saw him in all the splendour of his red riding-coat and high boots, and the whimsical little dark, whiskered face with the gleaming eyes under the great hat!

She uttered a piercing cry, which rang through the woods: and then, as the quaint little figure danced off, she said to herself: 'No wonder I did not know where I was and couldn't find my way home to Lesnewth with that little Piskey Man in my under-dale pocket. He was having a game with me all the time, the little rascal!'

As she thus gave vent to her feelings, she heard a 'Ha, ha, ha' and a 'Hee, hee, haw!' and sending her glance towards the uncanny laughter, she saw a face peeping at her from behind a tree, and she made haste for her life over a small rustic bridge which she knew in a moment to be Newmill Bridge, which separates Minster parish from St. Juliot's.

Day was beginning to break as she passed over the bridge, and the dark singing water of the great stream, flowing through the woods on its way to Boscastle, caught the glory of the lovely dawn as she went on her way to Lesnewth.

## THE PISKEY SHOEMAKER

Once upon a time there was a widow woman called Jane Treloar. She had one little girl, and they lived at a village with the sweet-sounding name of Rosevanion. She was very poor, and eked out a living for herself and her child by knitting and bee-keeping. She knew a great deal about bees and their ways, and so did Marget, her little girl. They loved their bees, and when the summer came and the heather broke into blossom on the downs, which were about a mile and a half from their village, they took them to those great open spaces in their quaint little hives, to gather honey from the countless flowers that grew there. There was no honey like the honey got from downflowers, Jane declared; and her customers, who bought all the honey she could spare, said the same.

Marget looked forward to the time for the bees to be taken to the downs, for she always went with her mother and the bees, and they spent a whole day there and had a kind of picnic outside a crellas, or beehive hut, in front of which the hives were placed.

Near the crellas was a boulder of granite covered with patches of black and yellow lichen, and here Jane Treloar and Marget generally sat whenever they came to the downs. The crellas behind sheltered them from the wind, and there was the great stretch of downland before them, and in the distance the sea.

The beehives were kept on the downs all the summer and part of the autumn, and Jane and her little maid paid frequent visits to the bees to see that nobody robbed the hives of their golden store.

One summer Jane went out charing every day, and Marget had to come alone to see how the bees were faring. She was not at all nervous of going by herself to the downs, for she was country bred and she loved them, especially when the heather was in blossom.

One summer's day the child came to work beside the bees, which were going and coming to and from their little hives all day long, and, as she was sitting knitting on the granite boulder, she heard something tapping in the crellas. At first she thought it was a bird, but as the tapping continued she knew it could not be. Wondering what it was, she looked over her shoulder into the crellas. The sound came from a flat moorland stone that lay on the floor of the old hut. Tap, tap, tap it went all the time. It was a musical tap, and made her think of the ripples of moorland streams and the silvery laughter of the Small People of whom she had often heard from the grannies and granfers of the village where she lived, but there was nothing to be seen.

When she went back she told her mother of the tap, tap, tapping she had heard, and asked if she could tell her what it was.

'I can't,' said her mother, 'unless it is the golden hammer of the little Piskey Shoemaker.'

‘The little Piskey Shoemaker!’ echoed Marget, looking very excited. ‘What do you mean, mother?’

‘I have heard the old folks tell that a Piskey Shoemaker sets up a golden bench on the stone in the crellas out there on the downs and makes shoes for the Small People. He does not put up his bench there very often – about once in a hundred years, ‘tis said – but when he does, he stays there till he has made all his shoes. His tiny hammer, which is all ashine like sunlight, is heard all the summer through, and sometimes the following summer too.’

‘How interesting!’ cried Marget, with sparkling eyes. ‘Has anybody ever seen the little Piskey Shoemaker and his dinky shiny hammer?’

‘Yes,’ answered her mother, ‘but only those who have the gift of seeing the Dinky Folk. The Piskey Shoemaker is a little bit of a man, about as high as a teaspoon.’

‘I wish I could see him,’ sighs the child. ‘Can’t I?’

‘Some have got Piskey-eyed by finding a four-leaved clover,’ answered her mother. ‘If you found one, and held it over the place where you heard the tapping of his little hammer, you might perhaps be able to see him sitting behind his bench making dinky shoes.’

‘I will look for a four-leaved clover the very next time I go out to the downs,’ Marget cried.

‘You mustn’t be disappointed if you do not find one,’ said her mother, ‘for it is almost as difficult to find as a wee’s nest.<sup>10</sup> But whether you find one or not, you must think yourself lucky to have heard the tip tap of the Piskey Shoemaker’s hammer, for it is not everybody who can hear it.’

The next time Marget went to the downs she hastened into the hut to see whether the Piskey Shoemaker was still making shoes, and as she stood listening she heard the tip tap of his dinky hammer. She jumped for joy when she heard it, and rushed out to look for a four-leaved clover.

There were beds of clover here and there all over the downs, white, purple, and pink, with lovely green leaves, but not one clover could she find that had four leaves, and she searched and she searched till sundown, when she had to go back to Rosevanion.

‘I told you that a four-leaved clover was almost as difficult to find as a wee’s nest,’ said Jane Treloar when her little daughter told her of her unsuccessful search, ‘and you must rest contented with having heard the Piskey Shoemaker’s dinky hammer.’

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<sup>10</sup> Mare’s nest.

But Marget was not contented, and the more she heard the tapping of his little hammer, the more she longed to see him. Every time she went to the downs to see that the beehives were not disturbed, she spent part of her time looking for a clover with four leaves. The summer days passed quickly, and as they passed the great open spaces of the downs grew more and more gorgeous with rose-coloured heath and other flowers, and still the Piskey Shoemaker's fairy hammer was heard, and still Marget searched for the four-leaved clover, which alas! She could not find.

When the autumn came and the clover's sweet blossoms faded and the heath and ling began to turn brown as Piskey purses, Marget's mother came in her donkey-cart to take home her beehives and bees, and the disappointed child came no more to the downs till the following year.

When summer came again, Jane Treloar once more took her bees to the downs in her donkey-cart, and Marget went with them. No sooner did the little maid come in sight of the crellas than she got out of the cart and rushed off to see whether the Piskey Shoemaker was still in the old hut making shoes; and her heart beat with hope and fear as she stood by the grey old stone and listened.

At first there was no sound, and she was afraid that the little Shoemaker had made all his shoes, and that his fairy hammer would not be heard again for another hundred years.

As she listened a little noise came up from the stone, faint at first, and then the tapping of the hammer rang out. Tap, tap, tap it went, and never stopped once, as if the Piskey Shoemaker was in a dreadful hurry to finish his shoes.

Whilst Marget was listening to the tapping her mother drove up with the bees, and when she had placed their hives in front of the crellas, she asked her child if the Dinky shoemaker was still knocking with his golden hammer.

'I am sure he is,' cried Marget. 'Listen, mother,' and her mother listened, but she could not hear a sound save the angry humming of her disturbed bees.

'Tis as I said,' said Jane Treloar, when she had listened five minutes or more, 'tisn't everybody who has the good luck to hear the Piskey Shoemaker hammering the sprigs into his dinky shoes.'

'I can hear him ever so plainly,' cried the child. 'I b'lieve he wants me to see him, and I'll go again and search for a clover with four leaves,' and off she tore, and whilst her mother sat on a boulder and knitted, she turned over the beds of clover; but again her search was in vain, and she almost cried with disappointment at her failure.

‘P’r’aps you will be rewarded for your pains before the summer is out,’ said her mother, trying to comfort her. ‘The summer has only just begun; there’s plenty of time yet.’

‘But the Piskey Shoemaker may have made all his shoes before I find one,’ wailed poor little Marget, ‘and I do want to see him.’

Just then the Piskey Shoemaker gave such an encouraging tap with his hammer, or what sounded to the child encouraging, that hope sprang up in her heart again, and she wiped her eyes and told herself that she would never give up looking for a four-leaved clover till she could no longer hear the dinky hammer.

The summer flew by quite as quickly as the last one had flown, and the great down looked almost more beautiful, Marget thought, and the larks rained down their music on her as she bent over the clover blossoms, over which her bees wandered in their quest for nectar to make their delicious honey.

When the child had begun once more to despair of ever finding what she had so patiently searched for so long, she happened upon a pure white clover that possessed four beautiful green leaves, and the place where she found it was just outside the crellas! Her sunburnt hands trembled as she plucked it, and when she held it safe she went into the hut and again listened to hear whether the Piskey Shoemaker was making shoes.

In a minute or less the silvery clanging of the tiny hammer came up from the stone, and bending over it, she said softly –

‘Little Piskey Shoemaker, let me see you, please for I have a four-leaved clover in my hand.’

She repeated this three times, and, as she repeated it the third time, she saw a teeny tiny old man in a brown leathern apron sitting before a golden bench tapping teeny tiny sprigs into a teeny tiny shoe with a little bit of a hammer which shone like a beam of light. On the bench were rows of dinky shoes which looked like flowers and dewdrops in the shape of shoes, so lovely were they, and in front of the bench were teeny tiny shoemaker’s tools with handles of the same precious metal of which the bench was made. All this Marget took in at a glance, and her quick child eyes noted the Piskey Shoemaker himself. He wasn’t at all what she had pictured him, and not a bit like a fairy except in size, but he was certainly like a shoemaker, apron and all, and so old-looking! His face was as brown as his leather apron, and his hair as white as sloan-blowth, she told herself, and so were his whiskers and beard. The only bright thing about him was his round red skullcap, and also his eyes, which were sharp as gimlets and dark like November nights when there is no moon.

The little Shoemaker took not the smallest notice of the child, and at first she did not even know whether he knew that she could see him. He went on driving the teeny tiny sprigs into the shoe on his knee as if he had not a moment to lose. The shoes on the bench were in pairs except one, which, Marget thought as she looked at it,

was the most beautiful of all, and the one the Shoemaker was tapping with his little golden hammer was evidently its fellow. It was even smaller than the other shoes, and all of a shimmer and colour like a dewdrop hanging from a thorn bush with a lovely sunrise reflected in it. It looked all on fire one moment, and blue the next, then an exquisite violet, then rose-pink, and in another moment it was all the colours of a rainbow, one colour flashing into the other as fast as light.

If the Shoemaker was somewhat a disappointment, his tiny hammer, his bench, and all it held, were not; and as for the shoes, she had never imagined anything half so beautiful, and the more she looked at them the more wonderful did they seem.

As Marget stood gazing down at them in childish rapture, a sweet sound like the twitterings of baby larks in the long grass fell on her ear. It came from outside the hut, and, sending her glance in the direction of the sound, she saw a troop of teeny tiny women coming in the direction of the crellas. The Dinky Shoemaker also heard the sound, and bending over the shoe on his knee he said as if to himself –

‘Her Little Highness and her ladies are coming for their shoes, and this one not quite finished. Dear, dear, I did not expect them yet, and that terrible child here! As long as she keeps silent and holds the four-leaved clover in her hand I cannot make myself invisible, and Her Highness and her ladies have come to try on their shoes. How unfortunate that it should happen so,’ and he gave the exquisite little shoe an impatient tap.

Marget heard his remarks, and she said to herself that she would not speak a single word to break the charm. Her Highness and her ladies, as the Piskey Shoemaker called them, came tripping up to the crellas, chatting and laughing as they came; and when they came close to the crellas, the child was astonished at their beauty. They were all beautiful, but the most beautiful of all was the one walking slightly in advance of her companions. Her face was like the pale blossom of the wood-sorrel, and the hair that framed it the colour of golden trefoils. She wore a cloak of trefoil green, and a hood of the same delicate hue half hid her charming little face. Hoods and cloaks were evidently the fashion in the Small People’s world, for every little lady wore one, but each was of a different colour, and as they tripped into the old crellas they looked like little walking flowers.

They tripped along very quickly, and Marget had hardly recovered from her surprise of seeing such lovely little ladies when they were in the hut. The Piskey Shoemaker rose as they entered, and stood with all the dignity of his inches.

‘We have come to see whether you have finished our shoes,’ said the first little lady, in a voice as sweet and clear as a fairy bell. ‘Have you finished them?’

‘I have, your Highness,’ answered the little Shoemaker. ‘I tapped in the last sprig as you came over the fairy roads,’ and he put the shoe on the bench beside its fellow.

‘What darling shoes!’ cried Her Highness, sending her glance over the rows of shoes on the bench, ‘Which pair is mine?’

‘Those I have just finished, your Highness,’ answered the Piskey Shoemaker. ‘I trust they will meet with your approval. I have never made better shoes, and I have been making shoes for over ten hundred years.’

‘My dear life!’ cried Marget to herself. ‘What a very old man he must be! Fancy his being a shoemaker all those hundreds of years. No wonder he looks so old and kiskey.’<sup>11</sup>

‘I am sure you have never made better shoes,’ said Her Highness, ‘and I think the last pair is the best of all.’

‘I am glad you think so,’ piped the Dinky Shoemaker. ‘They were made to your order, and I hope they will fit.’

‘I must try them on,’ cried Her Highness, and down she sat on the edge of the stone and stuck out her tiny feet.

‘What a dinky foot!’ said Marget again to herself. ‘It is as white as a snowflake and not so big.’

The Piskey Shoemaker took up the last pair of shoes he had finished, and bending very low, he slipped them on her tiny feet. ‘The shoes are a perfect fit,’ he said.

‘They are,’ she cried, with a silvery laugh. ‘You know, don’t you, that the King of the little Good People is going to choose his Queen to-night, and that the little woman who has on the prettiest shoes is to be the Queen?’

‘I do, your Highness,’ answered the Piskey Shoemaker, ‘and that every little lady in the Small People’s country who has had shoes made for the grand occasion hopes that His Majesty will deem her shoes the prettiest and best.’

‘I know that all here do,’ said Her Highness, with delicious candour, ‘and will break our hearts if the King only glances at our shoes and passes on. You know, I suppose, that the shoe-maker who made the shoes His Majesty considers the prettiest will be made Court Shoemaker, and wear the cap and cloak of the Golden Shoes.’

‘I do,’ answered the Piskey Shoemaker, ‘and I humbly hope that one of the wearers of the shoes I have made will be the Queen.’

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<sup>11</sup> Brown and withered.



“We believe that the wearer of the shoes will have something to do with His Majesty’s choice,” laughed one of the little ladies, and she cast a sly glance at Her Highness, who was admiring her shoes.

“That wouldn’t be fair to any of us,” cried a little lady, “nor to the one who made the shoes. Our shoemakers are quite as anxious to be Court Shoemaker as we to be the Queen.”

“I am sure they are,” said Her Highness, “and I hope our shoemaker will be, and I hope one of us will be chosen Queen. But you never know your luck. His Majesty’s taste is unknown to us in the matter of shoes. My pair is beautiful, and so is yours, but he may not think so. Come and try on your shoes.”

And they did so, and there was such merry laughter during the process that Marget nearly laughed more than once.

When that was done one of the little women said to the shoemaker –

“You will of course be present at the choosing of the Queen to-night?”

“Yes,” he said. “Every Piskey Shoemaker has been invited to attend. Not one of us would like to be absent. It will be a grand sight.”

“It will be a grand sight,” laughed the little ladies, “such as few mortals have had the good luck to see.”

“I wish I could see it,” cried Marget, quite forgetting what she had overheard the shoemaker say, that as long as she held the four-leaved clover in her hand and kept silent he could not make himself invisible. “I would give anything to know whether one of you little dears will be made the Queen.”

She had no sooner spoken than the Small People vanished, including the Piskey Shoemaker, his golden bench and all; where the gay little crowd had stood a moment before, there was nothing to be seen. The grey stone was there, but no sound came from it; the only sound was the lovely music of a lark singing above the old crellas and the droning bees outside the doorway, and when she saw that the fairy vision had gone she was ready to cry.

“I was a gawk to speak,” she said to herself. “I shall never know now which pair of shoes the King of the good Little People will like the best, or whether he won’t like them at all,” and she went outside the hut and sat on the boulder like one in a dream.

It was early in the day when she had rushed into the crellas with the four-leaved clover, and when she came to herself, as she put it, she found it was sundown, and that the sun had already dipped behind the cars.

“I must have been Piskey-ridden in that old crellas,” she cried as she got off the moorstone. “It will be in the dimmets<sup>12</sup> before I get back to mother,” and she ran for her life across the downs in the direction of her village. She had not gone very far when a white fog like fairy mist rose up from the ground and enveloped her. When it had cleared she found herself on strange downs, where she had never been before, and close to great cairns which stood up white and mysterious in the moonshine.

“Tis a queer place I have got to,” she whispered to herself, “but I must try and find my way home.”

As she was walking along, not knowing whither she was going, she saw in the bright moonlight a troop of tiny men coming towards her. They were not half a foot high, and their faces were brown and wizened. They wore red skullcaps and leathern aprons, and each held a shoemaker’s hammer in his hand.

“They are Piskey Shoemakers,” said Marget to herself, and, as she said it, one of them looked up, and she saw that it was the little shoemaker she had seen in the crellas. Whether he saw her she did not know, but as he and his companion shoemakers were passing her one said to another, “I’m off to Piskey Round,” and Marget cried, not knowing that she cried, “And I’m off to Piskey round,” and the words had hardly left her lips when she was jerked up, and in a minute or less found herself standing close to a great grassy place as round as a plate, and on its outer round were circles of flowers—circle above circle, with openings like you find in earth entrenchments on some of the Cornish hills. In the centre of the round, which was as green as larch needles in the spring-time, were two chairs, which glittered and sparkled like Cornish diamonds.

Marget had hardly taken all this in when she saw a wonderful little wain drawn by four cream-coloured horses no bigger than rats coming down the Piskey roads, which were lit on either side by very soft pale green lights, which she thought must be glow-worm lights. The wain was driven by a dinky man dressed in blue, and in it were seated tiny women laughing and talking.

This fairy carriage pulled up at one of the entrances to the flower-circle, where the dinky women got out and tripped to the higher circles and took their places. The child noticed that they were all beautifully dressed, and that their little gowns were just short enough to reveal their shoes.

Almost before the little women had taken their seats the Piskey Shoemakers came and took up their position near where Marget was standing, and, as they did so, she saw that they were gazing up the narrow roads whence the fairy wain had come; and following their glance, she beheld dozens and dozens of other little wains driven by dinky men, some dressed in green, some in yellow, some in red, and all with a bunch of flowers tied on to their whips. They drove at a quick trot, and pulled up, as the first little driver had done, at the openings of the circles of flowers, to allow the tiny women who filled the little wains to get out, which they quickly did. All the tiny

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<sup>12</sup> Dimmets: twilight

women folk were even more exquisitely dressed than the first, and all looked at their beautiful shoes as they tripped to the flower-circles and took their seats.

When they were seated, several other little carriages or chariots came down the Piskey roads like the wind. Each carriage was of different colour, and every little driver was in fairy's livery, and all of them were very grand little persons indeed in Marget's eyes. The little ladies in the carriage were dressed in white; the only bits of colour they had were a tiny nosegay they wore in the bosom of their exquisite gowns, and their wonderful shoes. Marget saw each little lady alight, and it reminded her of those she had seen in the crellas. Her Highness was in the last carriage, and very beautiful she looked in her gown, which was as soft as sloe-blossom and as white. From her white hood peeped her golden hair and sweet face. The child thought she was the loveliest of all the lovely little ladies and her shoes the most beautiful. Her Highness, like the other tiny women, tripped to the flower-circles, and took her place in the lowest, and Marget never took her eyes off her till he had taken her seat. All the circles were now filled with tiny women, and they looked, as they sat on the low banks, lovelier than the banks of flowers on which they sat. They were little blossoms themselves, Marget thought. The faces of the Little People were very vivacious, and most of them turned in the direction of the West, where Jupiter, the evening planet, was going down to his setting. Marget looked westward too, and by and by came a far-away sound of music; and as the sound came nearer and nearer, she caught sight of a number of tiny fiddlers fiddling merrily as they came, and behind them pranced golden-coloured horses with white tails and manes with dinky men on their backs. The soft night air was alive with the music of the fiddles; the fiddlers did not stop playing till they came to the great round, and then the tiny horsemen dismounted and took their stand at each entrance of the flower-circles. When they had done this another sound of music fell on the air, and again Marget strained her eyes westward, and saw another crowd of musickers, as she called them, coming down the Piskey roads dressed in scarlet and playing the sweetest of sweet airs on reed pipes and flutes. Then followed a golden carriage with twenty snow-white horses with scarlet trappings, and the horses were led by dinky men in red and blue, blowing silver trumpets; and on either side of this wonderful little equipage, which was evidently a fairy state carriage, came other dinky men on horse-back.

The Piskey Shoemakers stood up stiff and straight and held their golden hammer-heads up against their breasts, and whispered to each other as they did so-

'It is His Majesty the King at last,' they said. 'We shall soon know now which little lady will be the future Queen, and who will be Court Shoemaker and wear the cloak and cap of the Golden Shoes.'

'I am afraid it won't be me,' said one little shoemaker.

'I'm afraid it won't be me,' said another little shoemaker; and all the little shoemakers said the same thing. 'But It must be one of us,' added a little shoemaker. 'If I am Court Shoemaker, I hope I shan't be too grand to look at my fellow-shoemakers.'

'I hope not,' said all the little shoemakers. 'You won't be worthy of your grand position if you are.'

The royal carriage drew nearer and nearer the great round ring, and when it came quite close the horsemen dismounted and His Majesty stepped out of the carriage.

He was a wonderfully grand little person, with a crown on his head, and from his shoulder hung a cloak which in colour was not unlike His Highness's shoes. One moment it was purple and red, the next all the colours of the iris of the sky.

His gracious Little Majesty, bowing right and left, walked into the great flower-encircled ring where the little grand ladies sat with their feet peeping out from under their beautiful gowns.

When the King came to the chair he stood still, and one of the trumpeters blew a silver blast, and another proclaimed that His Majesty the King had come to Piskey Round in order to choose a Queen. The most beautiful and the most perfect shoes would be to him a sign that the wearer loved him best, for the lady who loved him with all her heart would order shoes that would please him best.

There was a rustling in the flower-circles at the proclamation, and a sound like the sound of the summer wind passing over the beds of wild thyme, and all the tiny women looked down at their tiny shoes.

As they looked, His Majesty the King walked to the circles and, beginning at the highest, went his rounds. He bent his eyes on each little face and each little foot as he passed, and all the onlookers, including the Piskey Shoemakers and Marget, watched him as he went. The onlookers craned their necks, and the child hardly breathed as he went. There was not a sound to be heard save only the chirp of a cricket outside the charmed place.

His Majesty passed from circle to circle till he came to the lowest circle, and when he came there, Marget glanced at the Piskey Shoemakers, and saw that most of them were looking down over their little noses, but the eyes of *her* shoe-maker, as she called the one who had made shoes in the old crellas, were burning like hot cinders.

'It is easy to see it will be one of his little ladies who will be the Queen,' said the child to herself, "but which one?'

From lady to lady the King went, and very slowly he went, glancing keenly at each lovely face and each little shod foot till he came to Her Highness, who was sitting at the end of the last row; and when the King came to where she sat, he looked at her sweet face and then at her shoes, and his face grew bright as a sunbeam, and bowing very low he said in a voice that all could hear –

‘Your Highness, the shoes which the ladies of my country have honoured me by having made for this important occasion are all beautiful, but the shoes that please me most are those which grace your little feet. They and you have won my heart. Therefore, if you will be my Queen, give me your hand.’

Her Highness, blushing till it was the delicate pink of a cross-leaved heath-bell, laid her dinky hand in his, and the King led her forth in front of all his people, who, as he did so, gave a great shout, and the shouting was so sweet and spontaneous that Marget almost shouted too. The fiddlers began to fiddle a merry tune, the pipers piped, and the fluters fluted, and the air was alive with enchanting music.

When the King and his newly-made Queen were seated in their chairs of state, a silver trumpet sounded again, and in the silence that followed, the trumpeter called for the shoemaker who had had the good fortune to make Her Majesty’s shoes; and Marget, looking at the group of Piskey Shoemakers, saw her little old shoemaker step out and walk with his tiny head erect into the great round. When the shoemaker came close to the two shining chairs, the King cried –

‘Your shoes, which are the most beautiful shoes I have ever seen, have won me a sweet and lovely Queen. Come, kneel before us, that we may show you our royal pleasure by making you Court Shoemaker.’

And the little Piskey Shoemaker obeyed most willingly, and as he knelt before their Little Majesties, the King took up a cloak of royal blue, emblazoned with golden shoes, and a cap of the same rich colour, also emblazoned with shoes, and putting the cloak on his shoulders and the cap on his head, he said: ‘I cloak thee with the cloak of the Golden Shoes, and place the cap of the Golden Shoes on thy head, the mark of thy high estate, Prince Shoemaker, and Shoemaker to the King and Queen of the good Little People. Rise, Prince of Shoemakers and Court Shoemaker.’

And as the little Prince Shoemaker arose, all the good Little People shouted and clapped their hands, and the little fiddlers fiddled what Marget heard one of the Wee Folk call the ‘Tune of the Golden Shoes,’ and the fluters fluted, and the pipers piped. As they did so, the other Piskey Shoemakers came into the round to greet the Prince of Shoemakers and the Shoemaker to their gracious Majesties, and to escort him out of the ring.

‘The little old Piskey Shoemakers is gentry now,’ said Marget to herself, ‘and a grand little person he looks in his cap and cloak of the Golden Shoes. He looks an inch taller, which is saying something for a dinky little man like him.’

The Piskey Shoemakers had hardly left the ring when a great swarm of bees came flying into it and began to hum, and a wonderful humming they made. The dinky women left their seats and came into the great grassy place, followed by the dinky men, who when the King and Queen arose joined hands and began to dance. The

faster the bees hummed the faster they danced. The bees were humming like mad, and their tiny wings glittered like burnished gold as they hummed.

‘The bees are humming the air of the King and Queen’s Wedding,’ said one of the little shoemakers, who had again taken up their position. ‘The people who own them will be very lucky, and will have more honey than they know what to do with.’

‘I believe they are my mother’s bees,’ cried Marget, who was too excited to hold her tongue any longer, ‘and she sent me out to the downs to look after them.’

She had no sooner spoken than the bees stopped humming, and all the little dancing people vanished the Piskey Round, the circles of fairy flowers, and all; and wherever she glanced was nothing but downs, and over her head a gracious moon floating in a dark blue sky crowded with stars.

‘Whenever am I?’ cried poor Marget, gazing helplessly around her. ‘I wish I knew where I was, and how to find my way home.’

As she cried she saw a little knot of Piskey Shoemakers eying her curiously, and as she looked at them with her wistful eyes, one said to another –

‘I’m off to Rosevanion.’

‘And I am off to Rosevanion too,’ cried Marget, and she had no sooner said the words than she was lifted off her feet, and in a minute or less she found herself in the village of Rosevanion, close to her mother’s door!

## AN ENCHANTED FIELD

NOT a great distance from the long stretch of the lonely St. Breock Downs, on a road between St. Issey and Wadebridge, was an enchanted field. This field was the haunt of Piskey who had laid a spell upon it, and the spell was that anybody, man or woman, who happened to pass through it between sunset and sunrise could not find his way out of it again till he had broken the spell by the simple means of turning one of his garments inside out, or even his pockets, which he seldom thought of doing till the little elf-folk had had their game over him. The peculiarity of this field was not only that men and women got Piskey-laden, as the Cornish people call it, but they had the amazing sight of seeing its hedges rise all round the field till they looked as high as granite tors. One day a man had occasion to pass through this field of enchantment. He had heard of the spells cast upon it by the Piskey, and the rising of the hedges; but he did not believe a word of it, and said it was a pack of nonsense!

The sun had set before he entered the field and the day had closed in. But there was light enough to see everything in the field: its two entrances – one by which he came, and one into the road leading to the market town – and its rough stone hedges, half smothered in flowers, moss, and ferns, and topped with thorn bushes which make the Cornish hedges so delightful.

He had not gone very far around the field when a strange feeling came over him, what he called ‘mizzy-mazey.’

‘I must get out of this,’ he said to himself, ‘as quickly as ever I can,’ and he strode towards the road gate; but when he got to the gate he could not see it, and went round and round the field trying to find it. But he could not find it nor the gate through which he had come.

Round and round the field of enchantment he went many times, and although the light was still sufficiently strong for him to see everything, he could not distinguish either gate.

‘This is a pretty how-de-do,’ he said to himself, and as he said it a little laugh came out of the long grass quite close to his feet, but he could not see anything that caused the laugh.

‘‘Tis terrible queer,’ he said again to himself, ‘iss fy it is,’ and once more a little laugh came out of the lush grass.

It was a quiet evening, almost breathless, and no sound save that uncanny laughter and the bleating of a lamb in a distant meadow. The evening was fine as well as still, and as the sky grew darker the stars came out in flocks. The man at last grew tired of wandering round the enchanted field, and he sat down on a big stone to rest. As he seated himself, he heard hundreds of gay little laughs before and behind him, and then he saw the amazing sight of the rising of the enchanted hedges. Slowly they rose, higher and higher each minute till they looked as high as Cornish hills. As their dark heights were lifted into the dark blue of the night sky with its flocks of white stars he

heard again the merry laughter. The field seemed full of little laughing voices, but he could not see anything that might have caused it.

‘I have got into a queer country, it strikes me,’ he said to himself, with a groan, ‘and I would give all I have to find my way out of it. There is more than a mite of truth in the old widdles after all.’

He had no sooner said this than he saw in the mountainous hedge facing him a strange, soft, pale green light. It was a wonderful light, as if the hedge were thickly studded with glow-worms. The light grew brighter and brighter, and out of the brightness appeared tiny red-roofed houses. At each door stood a little man and a little woman dressed almost exactly like the little weather people in quaint little weather houses he had often seen in Cornish cottages. As the green light grew still stronger he saw that each little house had a lovely little garden in front of it full of trees and flowers, and in most of the gardens were fine little ladies and fine little gentlemen talking and laughing and ‘carrying on.’

The sight delighted the man. He said it was as good as a Christmas play to see the carrying on of the Small People, for he knew now that they were Small People and that he was in the Piskey Country.

He could hear their gay laughter and happy voices in the soundless night very distinctly, and see the tiny Piskey houses, the gardens, and the Wee Folk.

As he was enjoying all this, from one of the Small People’s gardens came a sound of exquisite music, and sending his glance in the direction of the sound, he saw a little fiddler fiddling away as fast as he could fiddle, keeping time with heel and toe, and a yard or so from where he was fiddling was a score of little men and women dancing for all they were worth. The stirring strains of the fiddle and the gay little dancers fascinated the man as he listened and watched.

‘The dinky chap is crowding away like a crowder at a harvest supper,’ he said to himself, ‘and the Small People are dancing the prettiest reel I have ever seen in my life.’

When the little fiddler had done fiddling he came and stood on a bed of moss low down in the mountain-like hedge and gazed at the man seated on the stone. He was so enchanting to look at, with his three-cornered hat, long red coat, knee-breeches, and buckled shoes, and his fiddle tucked under his arm, that the man was charmed, and he called out

‘You are the finest little fiddler I ever clapped eyes on, and first-rate at the crowd. You would knock most fiddlers into a cocked hat, iss fy, you would!’



The words had hardly left his lips when the little fiddler vanished, and all the Piskey houses and gardens and the gay Little People disappeared from the great dark hedges which still stood up all around the enchanted field like granite-crowned hills shutting him in.

‘Why, I believe I am Piskey-laden,’ cried the man, ‘and I shall be Piskey-laden till next-never day unless I can break the Piskeys’ spell by turning my coat inside out.’

He began to take off his coat as he spoke, and when he had taken it off and turned it he gave it a shake, and out from its folds tumbled two or more little Piskeys with grey beards as long as themselves, in scarlet cloaks and sugar-loaf hats.

‘My dear life!’ cried the man. ‘No wonder I have seen sights and heard sounds with these little chaps hidden away in my coat. Thanks be, I am free of them now!’

As he stood up he saw a Dinky Man make a face at him and disappear with a ‘Ha! ha! hee!’ into the grass. The hedges took their natural size and shape, and in front of him was the gate he had so vainly tried to find! He strode towards it, and in a minute or less was out of the enchanted field and on the road leading to St. Breock Downs.