

One day in the middle of winter, when the snowflakes fell from the sky like feathers, a queen sat at a window netting. Then he said to the dwarfs, "Let me have this coffin, and I will give you for it whatever you ask." But the elder dwarf answered, "We would not give it thee for all the gold in the world." She looked so innocent and beautiful as she knelt, that the hunter's heart was moved with compassion: "Run away, then, thou poor child," he cried; "I cannot harm thee." Snow-white thanked him so sweetly, and was out of sight in a few moments. But the thought that he had not killed her was as if a stone-weight had been lifted from his heart. To satisfy the queen, he took part of the inside of a young fawn, which the wicked woman thought was poor little Snow-white, and was overjoyed to think she was dead. But the poor little motherless child, when she found herself alone in the wood, and saw nothing but trees and leaves, was dreadfully frightened, and knew not what to do. At last she began to run over the sharp stones and through the thorns, and though the wild beasts sprang out before her, they did her no harm. She ran on as long as she could till her little feet became quite sore; and towards evening she saw, to her great joy, a pretty little house. So she went up to it, and found the door open and no one at home. It was a tiny little house, but everything in it was so clean and neat and elegant that it is beyond description. In the middle of the room stood a small table, covered with a snow-white table-cloth, ready for supper. On it were arranged seven little plates, seven little spoons, seven little knives and forks, and seven mugs. By the wall stood seven little beds, near each other, covered with white quilts. Poor Snow-white, who was hungry and thirsty, ate a few vegetables and a little bread from each plate, and drank a little drop of wine from each cup, for she did not like to take all she wanted from one alone. After this, feeling very tired, she thought she would lie down and rest on one of the beds, but she found it difficult to choose one to suit her. One was too long, another too short; so she tried them all till she came to the seventh, and that was so comfortable that she laid herself down, and was soon fast asleep. When it was quite dark the masters of the house came home. They were seven little dwarfs, who dug and searched in the mountains for minerals. First they lighted seven little lamps, and as soon as the room was full of light they saw that some one had been there, for everything did not stand in the order in which they had left it. Then said the first, "Who has been sitting in my little chair?" But the mirror replied: "Queen, thou art the fairest here, But not when Snow-white is near; Over the mountains still is she, Fairer a thousand times than thee." As the looking-glass thus replied, the queen trembled and quaked with rage. Then she went into a lonely forbidden chamber where no one was allowed to come, and poisoned a beautiful apple. Outwardly it looked ripe and tempting, of a pale green with rosy cheeks, so that it made everyone's mouth water to look at it, but whoever ate even a small piece must die. As soon as this apple was ready, the wicked queen painted her face, disguised her hair, dressed herself as a farmer's wife, and went again over the mountains to the dwarfs' cottage. When she knocked at the door, Snow-white stretched her head out of the window, and said, "I dare not let you in; the seven dwarfs have forbidden me." And as soon as she arrived at home, and asked her mirror who was the most beautiful in the land, it replied: "Fair queen, there is none in all the land So beautiful as thou." Then had her envious heart rest, at least such rest as a heart full of envy and malice ever can have. The little dwarfs, when they came home in the evening, found poor Snow-white on the ground; but though they lifted her up, there were no signs of breath from her mouth, and they found she was really dead. Yet they tried in every way to

restore her; they tried to extract the poison from her lips, they combed her hair, and washed it with wine and water, but all to no purpose: the dear child gave no signs of life, and at last they knew she was dead. Then they laid her on a bier, and the seven dwarfs seated themselves round her, and wept and mourned for three days. They would have buried her then, but there was no change in her appearance; her face was as fresh, and her cheeks and lips had their usual colour. Then said one, "We cannot lay this beautiful child in the dark, cold earth." To her vexation the mirror replied: "Fair queen, at home there is none like thee, But over the mountains is Snow-white free, With seven little dwarfs, who are strange to see; A thousand times fairer than thou is she." The queen was furious when she heard this, for she knew the mirror was truthful, and that the hunter must have deceived her, and that Snow-white still lived. So she sat and pondered over these facts, thinking what would be best to do, for as long as she was not the most beautiful woman in the land, her jealousy gave her no peace. After a time, she decided what to do. First, she painted her face, and whitened her hair; then she dressed herself in old woman's clothes, and was so disguised that no one could have recognised her. Watching an opportunity, she left the castle, and took her way to the wood near the mountains, where the seven little dwarfs lived. When she reached the door, she knocked, and cried, "Beautiful goods to sell; beautiful goods to sell." Then answered the mirror: "Queen, thou art not the fairest now; Snow-white over the mountain's brow A thousand times fairer is than thou." When she heard this she was so terrified that the blood rushed to her heart, for she knew that after all she had done Snow-white was still alive. Now this wicked queen had some knowledge of witchcraft, and she knew how to poison a comb, so that whoever used it would fall dead. This the wicked stepmother soon got ready, and dressing herself again like an old woman, but quite different from the last, she started off to travel over the mountains to the dwarfs' cottage. Poor Snow-white could not refuse such a present, so she opened the door and let the woman in, quite forgetting the advice of the dwarfs. After she had bought a few things, the old woman said, "Let me try this comb in your hair; it is so fine it will make it beautifully smooth and glossy." Presently she said, "Child, come here; I will show you how to lace your stays properly." Snow-white had no suspicion, so she placed herself before the old woman that she might lace her stays. But no sooner was the lace in the holes than she began to lace so fast and pull so tight that Snow-white could not breathe, and presently fell down at her feet as if dead. Not long after, the seven dwarfs came home, and they were terribly frightened to see dear little Snow-white lying on the ground without motion, as if she were dead. They lifted her up, and saw in a moment that her stays had been laced too tight. Quickly they cut the stay-lace in two, till Snow-white began to breathe a little, and after a time was restored to life. But when the dwarfs heard what had happened, they said: "That old market-woman was no other than your wicked stepmother." "Everything that is pretty," she replied; "laces, and pearls, and earrings, and bracelets of every colour;" and she held up her basket, which was lined with glittering silk. The dwarfs talked a little while together, and then one said, "Do you think you could be our little housekeeper, to make the beds, cook the dinner, and wash and sew and knit for us, and keep everything neat and clean and orderly? If you can, then you shall stay here with us, and nobody shall hurt you." Then the wicked queen glanced in at the window with a horrible look in her eye, and laughed aloud as she exclaimed: "White as snow, red as blood, and black as ebony; this time the dwarfs will not be able to awake thee." Her netting-needle

was of black ebony, and as she worked, and the snow glittered, she pricked her finger, and three drops of blood fell into the snow. But the mirror answered: "Queen, thou art lovely still to see, But Snow-white will be A thousand times more beautiful than thee." Then the queen was terrified, and turned green and yellow with jealousy. If she had caught sight of Snow-white at that moment, she would have been ready to tear her heart out of her body, she hated the maiden so fiercely. And this jealousy and envy grew every day stronger and stronger in her heart, like a disease, till she had no rest day or night. At last she sent for a hunter, who lived near a forest, and said to him, "Hunter, I want to get rid of that child. Never let her appear before my eyes again." So the hunter enticed the child into the wood; but when he took out his hunting-knife to thrust into Snow-white's innocent heart, she fell on her knees and wept, and said, "Ah, dear hunter, leave me my life; I will run away into the wild wood, and never, never come home any more." Then she related to them all that had happened; how her stepmother had sent her into the wood with the hunter, who had spared her life, and that, after wandering about for a whole day, she had found their house. So she unbolted the door, and told her to come in. Oh, how delighted Snow-white was with the pretty things; she bought several trinkets, and a beautiful silk lace for her stays, but she did not see the evil eye of the old woman who was watching her. cried the woman, "are you afraid it is poisoned? Look here now, I will cut the apple in halves; you shall have the rosy-cheek side, and I will eat the other." And the birds of the air came near and mourned for Snow-white; first the owl, then the raven, and at last the dove. "Who has been eating my vegetables?" said the fourth.