

Farmer Boggins lived on a lonely farm, and there were a great many pixies and other fairies all around. One morning in threshing-time Farmer Boggins went out to the barn before anyone else, and what was his surprise to find that a great heap of grain had been threshed out in the night. He wondered who had done it. When his labourers came to work he questioned them, but none of them knew anything about it. The next night the same thing happened; no one went near the barn, but in the morning there was a heap of clean grain on the floor. The third night the farmer made up his mind to find out who it was that was helping him, so he hid himself behind some hay, and lay there watching. The moon shone in and lighted all the floor, but for a long time the farmer heard and saw nothing. Then suddenly he heard a sound of threshing, and there was a pixie beating out the grain with a flail. The little man was not a foot high. He was as brown as a nut and had scarce a rag of clothes upon him. He worked so hard that the sweat poured down his forehead, and now and then he stopped to wipe it away. Then he would cry out proudly, "How I sweat! How I sweat!" The farmer was filled with admiration, and the third time the little man cried "How I sweat!" the farmer could hold his tongue no longer, but answered him, "That you do!" No sooner had he spoken, however, than the pixie was gone. The farmer waited for a while, but the little man did not return. At last Farmer Boggins went back to the house and told his good wife all that had happened. "You stupid!" she cried, when he had made an end of the story. "You should never have spoken to him. The small folk cannot bear to be spoken to!" Well, the mischief was done, and now the only thing to do was to think of some way to coax the pixie back again to the work.