

One day I received a letter which stood out even among the many curious communications that the post drifts to my door. It set forth that on a certain day early in the year 1891, in a certain defunct literary newspaper, I, the undersigned, had criticised a fairy-tale book of the genus of "Alice in Wonderland," and that I had said of it I doubted "if children would be taken in by it." "Now, continued the triumphant author, "if you will read the enclosed extract" (and at this point I became aware of a scrap of paper, torn from some unnamed provincial print) "you will see that Miss Dorothy Drew, the much-talked-of granddaughter of Mr. Gladstone, has expressed herself as delighted with the book."

"*Et* *pro* *badly*, *he* *well* *on*, *with* *a* *de* *icious* *touch*, *the* *child* inherits some of her grandfather's genius. Please read the extract and return it to me." "Good heavens!" I groaned: "does this man, himself an author, imagine that I have borne in mind my criticism of him for more than three long years, and that in the midst of my multifarious business I am to re-open the subject with him? and is my word of so much weight that even when printed in a dead-and-gone journal, this man has carried it about in his bosom and brooded over it through all the changes and chances of the years? and do they who glibly call for signed criticisms ever dimly dream of the direful perspectives thereby opened up? Nevertheless, the man has written pretty poems in his time; and knowing from my classics that the poet is of an irritable breed, I obeyed his instructions implicitly. I read the extract (from which I gathered that he had presented the "infant phenomenon" with the book that took her in), and I sent it back to the proud possessor. I even exceeded my instructions, and prepaid the postage. Alas! I only brought down upon my head a bitterer scorn and more reverberate thunders.

"Sir," wrote the bard with irate italics, "your returning the extract I sent you *in re* my fairy-tale and Miss Dorothy Drew *without a word of comment* is enough for me. I would not *care* to say what I think of you *after that*! Silence on my part is

wisest here. But I *will* say that your forecast of my tale has been completely falsified by events, though you are not *candid* enough to acknowledge it! I thought at the time your Review was an inane one, and now my opinion is justified. Yours, etc."

How my forecast of (*sic*!) his tale has been "completely falsified by events" because one child likes his book is still mysterious to me. But that any being in his senses, and one, too, who professes the humorous, should think that I care twopence whether I was right or wrong in doubting if children would be taken in by an unimportant fairy-tale reviewed three and a half years ago (and amply praised, too, for the matter of that)—this is even darker to me.