FAIRYLAND IN 'FIFTY-FOUR. Household words / conducted by Charles Dickens; Dec 3, 1853; 8, 193; British Periodicals pg. 313

"*Familiar in their Mouths as HOUSEHOLD WORDS.*"—SHAKESPEARE.

HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

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FAIRYLAND IN 'FIFTY-FOUR.

O, BROTHERS GRIMM; O, Madame D'Anois, O, Sultana Scheherazade and Princess Codadad, why did you die? O, Merlin, Albertus Magnus, Friar Bacon, Nostradamus, Doctor Dee, why did I implicitly believe in your magic; and then have my confidence utterly abused by Davy, Brewster, Liebig, Faraday, Lord Brougham and Dr. Bachhoffner of the Polytechnic Institution? What have I done that all the gold and jewels and flowers of Fairyland should have been ground in a base mechanical mill and kneaded by you—ruthless unimaginative philosophers—into Household Bread of Useful Knowledge administered to me in tough slices at lectures and forced down my throat by convincing experiments? Are the Good People, the Brownies, the Leprechauns, the Banshees, the Witchwolves, White Ladies, Witches, Pixies, Wilis, Giants, Ogres, Fairy godmothers, Good Women in the Wood, Genii, Ghoules, Afrites, Peris, Elves, to give up the ghost; and am I to be deprived of all the delicious imaginings of my childhood and have nothing in their stead?

"By no means," answers a burly Djin in a white hat and a frock coat with a huge lily in the button-hole, "Come with me, and I will conjure for you, by the aid of my crystal (a million times bigger and clearer than the crystal of Raphael the astrologer), a fairy palace with fairy terraces, and fairy gardens, and fairy fountains, compared to which the palace of Sardanapalus was a hovel, and the gardens of the Hesperides a howling waste. You shall see, through my crystal, so far into the past, that the retrospection shall not end until the world before the flood is revealed to you, with the fat, slimy, scaly monsters which then had life upon it. You shall be made as well acquainted with an Egyptian tomb as you are with St. Clement's churchyard, and shall wander into the *cella* of a Nubian temple as familiarly as you would enter your own parish church. You shall sit awe-struck on the steps of an Assyrian palace; you shall draw hard breath in a Grecian temple; you shall slake your thirst at the fountain in a Byzantine court; you shall tread on the prayer-carpet in a Moorish mosque; you shall wag your beard in the hall of a Mediæval castle; and you shall be hospitably entertained in a Pompeian house. You shall see, in their habits as they were, the heroes and sages of all time, and the Art of all time and the skill of all nations. You shall be transported in one minute from this, your native cold and wet, to the warm and spicy airs of the tropics; and, in one step, you shall exchange your own hedge thorn and stunted herbage for the gigantic palms and rich grasses of the East. You shall range over the earth's surface and cull the choicest trees and fruits and flowers; you shall behold the lion in his native lair and the tiger in his jungle. Only look through my crystal long enough; and, beginning as ignorant as a Hottentot, you shall end wiser a hundred fold than Solon. Enter!"

The magician is right; but as Beauty's chamber was guarded by griffins, and all enchanted castles are defended by dragons, so is Fairyland guarded by gnomes; blue, and uncompromising. One occupies a little crypt on either side of the door by which visitors are admitted to Fairyland in Crystal. To judge from the costumes of these gnomes you would take them to be plain constables of the Metropolitan Police; but, my word for it, they have all the gnomical etceteras beneath their uniform and oilskin. The entrance to Fairyland is not effected by rubbing a lamp, or clapping the hands three times, or by exclaiming "Open Sesame;" but, as a concession to the non-magical tendencies of some of the visitors, a commutation is accepted in the shape of five shillings current money of the realm. These may be paid in the very palpable and business-like shape of two half crowns; but you may be sure they no sooner enter the exchequer of Fairyland than they change into dry leaves. In a like spirit of concession to mundane prejudices, you undergo a ceremony, apparently that of signing your name in a book; but which is doubtless the preliminary for having your horoscope cast. So also you are presented with a document ostensibly resembling a pass-check, but which is a talisman of the Abracadabraic description; for, the moment you receive it, you find yourself framed and glazed in the very middle of the great magic crystal.

Don't look about you—don't seek to

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penetrate yet into any one of the Fine Art Courts into which this fairy crystal is divided, but hurry up the very first staircase. Pursue its geometrical windings up, and up and up, till you can mount no further. Then approach the railing of the topmost, endmost gallery. Grasp the balustrade firmly; suppress whatever sudden impulse may come over you to turn giddy, to faint away, or to throw yourself headlong from the gallery. Set your lips firm, and look straight ahead—along the glorious length and breadth of the nave of the Crystal Palace. Messrs. Aladdin, Vathek, and Company, built very magnificent palaces in their time; but *this* one is immeasurably beyond them. Castles of steel, brass, cedar, adamant, amber, and chalcedony, hide your diminished heads! Grand Cairo, Stamboul, Bagdad, Ispahan, Tyre, Sidon, Rhodes, Nineveh, you possessed—all of you—some very magnificent structures; your architectural glories will last as long as human knowledge, yet *this* thought never struck you. You never could combine magnificence, strength, lightness, space, perspective, colour, out of glass and iron, deal boards and zinc *louvres*. Your fairies were clumsy architects compared with the great magician of the lily. "Not a frieze, nor a pediment, nor a portico," sighs Vitruvius. "Not a single Corinthian pilaster or a Doric entablature," grumbles Palladio. "Where are the Parian marbles, the mahogany, the carving, the gilding, and the enriched mouldings?" roars Orlando Gibbins. "It 's very nice and very pretty, but it's only a perpetual repetition of a column, a girder, a truss, a gallery, a window, and a ridge-and-furrow roof." "Of course," answers Cosmos Murchison, "could it be otherwise? Isn't it a crystal? and isn't a crystal an agglomeration of identical forms. Split a crystal, and will not the fractures be precisely of the same shape as the parent piece?" It is this very Fairy-like repetition, this geometrical painting, if I may call it so, that constitutes, in my mind, the chiefest beauty of Crystal Fairy-land. The repetition of girder and gallery and column; the multifarious intersections of shaft and girder, quadrangle following quadrangle, nave and aisles, transept and wings, courts and galleries interlacing, intercepting, in such admirably regular irregularity—in such rigid yet fanciful perspective; all, when taken singly, patterns of sublimity; all, when combined into a whole, a grand spectacle of artistic contrivance, which has left the mark of the modern magician's wand.

Gaze yet your fill up and down this glorious nave. Can you have any doubt of this being Fairyland? Look at that huge female head in the far, far distance. That only marks the centre of the nave. Gaze at the working fairies below, tinkling and hammering, and the Palace growing, it would seem, visibly beneath their fingers. They seem few and far between, these working fairies, yet there are four thousand of them employed about Fairyland. You come on them unawares—a nail is being driven here, a rivet fastened, a sash fitted there; but from the gallery the nave looks a vast solitude. It being a fairy palace, the visitors and the workmen are swallowed up in its immensity.

Very wonderful is the mixture of familiar things with those that in their grandeur approach the sublime. The hall of the Fairy Palace is strangely strewn with tools and fragments of planking and old ropes. We look above, and the eye wanders through maze after maze of bright but harmonious colours. We look below, and the eye falls on brick pits (like neat family graves), being built for stoves, or for the reservoirs of fountains; on yawning caverns, disclosing neat arrays of anything but supernatural gas and water pipes; on mounds of bricks (some thousands in each doubtless), which look from the lofty gallery no bigger than dust-heaps; and, stranger than all, in the midst of all this finished and unfinished beauty, the dusky fairies sprinkle themselves about in their fustian and corduroy.

Descend. Down, and down, and down, we follow the windings of the corkscrew staircase; iron, as what is not that is to be strong in this wonderful place? We are on the ground floor. Glancing above, straightway we see a giddy scaffolding and a forest of poles, and columns, and girders, the skeleton of another wing of the Fairy Palace yet unglazed and incomplete. And without too, through the transparent walls we see towering high, a gigantic elaboration of our acquaintance the corkscrew staircase, winding up and up, and hugging, like a serpent, a lofty campanile. This is to be the enchanted tower of the Fairy Palace, which is to give water power to those grand fountains which are to laugh the vaunted *grandes eaux* of Versailles to scorn, and cause the statue of the *grand monarque* to hide his diminished wig. Passing yet along, elbowed by sheds, plankings, travelling paint-pots, locomotive steam engines, poles and ladders, we see too, another scaffolding, and passing it we shudder, and think of the scaffolding that fell the other day; when all the wisdom of the magician, and all the subtlety of the contractors could avail nothing against the stern will of the demon Gravity.

We pass a fustian fairy who is deliberately cutting bread and cheese with a very unfairy-like knife, and we are in Egypt. In Egypt. Here is Rameses, and here are all his dynasties. Here is the god Anubis. Here Isis, cat, dog, crocodile, and cow divinities; hieroglyphics, sarcophagi, strange doorways with winged summits, beetling massive columns with palm tree capitals. Where are the priests of Isis, to feed the sacred crocodiles upon cakes of flour and honey? Where is old Herodotus, to sit upon

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the plinth of this huge statue and tell us diverting lies? Where is Pharaoh's butler, and where Pharaoh's baker? Yonder is the frowning, gigantic, towering, enigmatical head of the sphinx. Where is the desert, and where are the pyramids, and the Hebrew brickmakers, and the straw, without which they could not make the bricks? Yonder are the legs of Memnon; where is his temple, where the plain of Thebes, where Memphis, where the labyrinth of Mœris, and the mysteries?

Rub your eyes. Dear me! dear me! This is not Egypt; but merely a court of the Fairy Palace, representing the progress of Egyptian art. The sphinx is only plaster of Paris, and two Italian modellers in dusty moustaches and blouses, flaked with white like the frost of a twelfth cake, are giving the finishing touch to the legs of Memnon. So from Egypt into Nineveh, from Nineveh into Greece, from Greece into Rome, from Rome to the Renaissance, from the Renaissance to the Louis Quatorze. We wander from court to court, each firmly stamping in our mind's eye the use and progress, and culmination and decadence of every school, losing ourselves in the mazes of antiquity, and finding ourselves in the Crystal Palace again. Lost every now and then in wonders of art and architecture, from the winged lions of Nineveh to Rauch's great statue of Bavaria; from the triumphs of Sesostris to Pradier's colossal Victorys sculptured for the tomb of Napoleon; from the Discobolus, the Dying Gladiator, the Medicean Venus, to Marochetti's statue of Washington.

Somebody tells me, that in 'fifty-four, these splendid courts of art will exhibit the finest collection of models of sculpture in the world. Every museum in Europe has been ransacked, and the cream of each has been brought to Fairyland to teach the English people to understand, to appreciate, to love art. I say, to teach them. They are teachable, docile, eager even to learn; but they have not been taught as yet. They shall leave the penny plain and twopence coloured style, and the smooth album landscapes and poonah exteriors, and smirking heads; the highly finished engravings of stags ripping up one another's entrails with their horns, the colossal statues of kings without stirrups, and kings with pigtails, and dukes upon the tops of doors, and admirals on the tops of masts. Here, in the Fairy Palace of our modern magician, Josephus Liliensis, will be spread before them a banquet culled from the choicest treasures of the Louvre, the Vatican, the Museo Borbonico, the Pitti Palace, and the Glyptotheca, and as they run they will read —aye, and read to a glorious purpose.

A curious population may be noted in this department of Fairyland. Hirsute men with faces full of stern determination are busily putting together, and finishing, and furbishing up great statues, and busts, and groups of animals. Giacomo Perugio, from Bologna, perchance, is skilfully adjusting, in an anatomical manner the arm of the Farnese Hercules; while Bartolomeo Guari is peacefully heating plaster of Paris in a homely iron saucepan wherewith to fasten on the head of the Erycinian boar. Huge, baker-like sacks, containing the flour of art—the snowy gypsum of which these goodly sculpture loaves are moulded—are strewn about, with their plain canvas and ruddled sides in curious propinquity to the most exquisite creations of Phidias and Praxiteles, to the mysterious aspirations of the nameless but deathless sculptors of Babylon and Egypt. Diana the huntress, and Antinow, and the Gladiator, and the Fawn dancing, and the Fawn laughing. Grecian and Roman Fairyland holds them all. They are all here, breathing that immortal life of beauty and poetry which laughs at the scythe of Time, and the fury of barbarism, and the neglect of ignorance; which has survived—and will, through all ages, even though it be only in a shattered *torso* or a maimed limb—the fanaticism of the iconoclast, the antiquarian sacrilege of the Christian, the shells and gunpowder of the barbarous Turk. These Fine Art Courts of the Fairy Palace not only carry the mind back thousands of years—to the Forum and the Acropolis, to Semiramis and Sennacherib, to Alcibiades and Augustus; but, by the mere potency of their beauty and refinement of embodied thought, purifies and enlightens, elevates and ennobles our intellects and our hearts. These plaster casts are monuments of pure, honest, soulful art. Their prototypes were chiselled, doubtless, by pagans and pantheists; but of a surety, even though unknown to them, a breath from heaven must have touched the strings of these men's souls; the lux, the light, the fire of genius, must have been in them, with them — in their plastic fingers, with their fervent hearts when they moulded these forms and faces—immortal, unapproachable, save by the human frames whose most exquisite conditions they delineate.

Fairy-land behind the scenes! The wonders of the Forum and the Acropolis standing on wooden plinths (afterwards to be plasterified) labelled "Fragile, with care, this side up." Greece and Athens have come to Sydenham by railway. The Emperor Trajan has travelled by a vile, mechanical luggage train on the South-Eastern Railway. The Medicean Venus has been in the care of Messrs. Chaplin and Horne, and the Laocoon has been delivered by Messrs. Pickford as if he had been a grand pianoforte or an engine boiler. Brought to the very portals of Fairyland by a burly carter, with a brass-clasped blotting-paper-interleaved account book, in which he has requested the authorities of Fairyland to register the receipt of the package.

Fairyland begins to assume a pantomimic

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appearance—so many and so sudden are the transitions. Delighted with Greece and Rome, our minds saturated with classical associations, we saunter along, looking back with something quite like regret and gentle love on the days of the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, and trochees, and dactyls, and spondees. The mystic numbers of the *As in præsenti* float though our memory like strains of bygone music; we sigh to toil once more over the arches of the *Pons asinorum*, when, *presto*, we are in the midst of steam engines, hot water pipes, fairies in fustian, and bricks and tiles.

Tiles, certainly; but somebody points out to us that we have not quite done with the classics yet. These tiles, as somebody commends to our attention, are of a peculiar shape and make. They were fashioned very probably by a simple Teddy the Tiler, or some other industrial equally innocent of the classics, for a special and very classical purpose. For that—no less—of tiling the house of a Roman gentleman in the Roman city of Pompeii.

Into which, through as unadulterated an English hoarding door as ever had "no admittance except on business" inscribed upon it, we speedily intrude into the chamber of a Roman maiden, the saloon of a Pompeian family, or the study of an old world student. The walls are alive with forms and colours of enchanting brightness. Cupids, peeping archly out of bowers; mimic bird-cages, with birds pecking at the wires, strung from the roof with threads of paint; reclining fauns; satyrs, twinkling fun out of their roguish eyes, and bacchantes dancing on slack ropes of wreathed flowers. Mystic signs, and landscapes, and pilasters that seem to start into the room, and make you careful not to run against their true perspective. Then, in the open court, beside the family fountain (sweet substitute for the Englishman's fireside) how eloquent, how classical, how poetical, how sentimental one might be in this Roman house! Now is the time to think about the atrium, the sedilia, the cothurnus, the toga virilis, amphoræ, the Street of Tombs and the house of the Tragic Poet. Yet now is also the time to content ourselves with contemplating the fairy aspect of this Roman house; the open courtyard with no blue Italian sky above, but the glass ridges and furrows and iron girders of Josephus Liliensis; the narrow little bedchambers all around, which the fairy artists (mostly foreigners) are decorating with fanciful arabesques; the gilded columns, the bright mural paintings—triumphs of fairy-polychromy—and, superintending all, an intelligent foreigner smoking a cigar and attired in a cut-away coat and a wide-awake hat. Why doesn't he wear the toga virilis? Why isn't his name Quintus Curtius Max?

Now too is the time to contrast all this loveliness with the sudden horrors of the swallowed city. Now is the time to remember the skeleton clutching the bag of gold, the dead soldier in his fetters, the breast of the dancing girl pressed against the ashes, the mark of the wine-cup on the marble counter. Now is the time to see the molten lava welling and creeping up the gorgeous walls; to picture Vesuvius vomiting forth fire and stones; the flaming river of lava rushing down the sides of the mountain; the shower of red hot ashes, the plague of stones, the pestilence of burning sparks, the swallowing up alive of Pompeii, men, women, children, houses, city and all.

We lose ourselves for a while in a maze of corridors of unpretending deal boards, containing innumerable pigeon-holes;—offices devoted to officials superintending different departments of Fairyland. These are the spiders watching over the intricacies of the great web; and here they sit in their parlours: but they do not follow the example of the spider in the popular ballad, by asking the flies or visitors to walk in—"Private" being the rule over the doors, and admittance the exception.

The vicinity of Fairyland is not without that extremely mundane attribute, mud. I became sensible of this fact when approaching its precinct; I am confirmed in my opinion by most woful experience when I leave the halls of the Fairy Palace to traverse the park and gardens of Fairyland. Somebody, as we descend ranges of noble terraces, shows me where the magnificent fountains that are to surpass Versailles are to be; where the waterfall laid down to a scale of one-eighth the dimensions of Niagara; where the *al fresco* statues; where the famous lake now being excavated, in whose waters—by means of this same cascade—tidal effects are to be produced; where a belt of botanical plants is to encircle the entire space. While admiring the vastness of the gardens, the vivid beauty of the velvety sward, the taste with which every path and plot, every alley and avenue have been laid out; while gloating over the blue distance of the most beautiful landscape near London, I cannot help wishing that the weather had not been quite so moist lately; that the fairy soil was not quite so stiff in some parts and so sloppy in others; and finally that I had not forgotten to bring American overshoes or a pair of mudlark's boots with me to Fairyland.

But what are these trifling thorns to the rose, when we approach the terminus of our walk; which is through a wood, and across several planks over gulleys, and through many morasses, quagmires, cart-ruts and ditches? We are bound for, and at last arrive at a long low shed, where there is a furnace, several tons of modelling clay, several modellers, a book for us to sign our autographs in, an astute Triton in hessian boots and low-crowned

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hat (possibly his conch-shell), several rats, and finally the world before the flood.

The world before the flood. Yes. Ages, perhaps, before Noah's ark was built, or launched, or thought of. In this shed the Triton known as Waterhouse Hawkins has conspired with the King of Animals, Professor Owen, to bring back those antediluvian days when there were giants in the land. Pre-Adamite, perhaps; pre-Noahite, certainly. Modelled according to some subtle theory, admirably carried out into practice; the marvels of what we may call scientific art—plasticity applied to comparative anatomy—are the great monsters and reptiles of the fossil world. The ichthyosaurus, the plesiosaurus, the megatherium, the mastodon, igua-arneton; gigantic creatures of lizard, toadlike, froglike, beastlike form grin at you, crawl at you, wind their hideous tails round you. Here is a monster within whose monstrous feet the Triton, Waterhouse, intends to give a dinner to twenty-two persons; and a bearded assistant, coolly squatted between the monster's forelegs, is as coolly giving him a coat of scales with his modelling tool. All these antediluvian monsters, which will finally be executed in a composition as hard as stone, will be placed on the shores of two artificial islands in the lake; one exhibiting the secondary, the other the tertiary epochs of the world. There, among reeds and slime, the great fish lizards crawl, and higher up the great Irish elk reposes. All of which is explained to us in a little studio, where sepia sketches of elks and mastodon, and megatheria mingle with clay sketch models and casts of skulls and femurs of fossil mammalia and reptiles.

In 'fifty-four—when the nave and aisles, transepts and courts, gardens and parterres, of this gigantic Palace are all swept and garnished, the floor laid, the cumbrous materials of industry removed, the interior tinted to the harmonious hues proposed by the Colour King, Owen Jones; when the temperatures of half the climates of the globe are imitated; when specimens of the vegetation of half the world are brought to flourish, here, within seven miles of London; when the loveliest flowers of the world bloom in this great crystal; when the great fountains send up their silver spray; when almost everything that is beautiful in Nature, in Art, in Industry has here its type, its representative, its imitation; when its halls are thronged by thousands of every class and shade of class—when it shall be recognised as a palace and a pleasure ground for those whose lot it is to labour, as well as for those who sit in ivory chairs and ride in golden coaches: when the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, and its railways, its electric telegraphs, its banqueting halls for every grade of mortals from the lavish noble to the economical artisan, are completed, do you think I shall have been guilty of exaggeration in calling it Fairyland? In calling its accomplished inventor a magician? In declaring that magic and magicians are not dead when such structures exist as the Crystal Palace, and such men are among us as the Djin, Josephus Liliensis, otherwise Sir Joseph Paxton?

THE CRADLE AND THE GRAVE.

At the beginning of the Winter of 1850 I was working quietly in Sydney, by no means dissatisfied with my position, when a vague rumour reached the city that gold had been found in the Bathurst district of the colony. As one result of the excitement that succeeded, it only concerns me now to state that the following advertisement which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald emanated from the writer of these pages:—

TURON GOLD DIGGINGS. Wanted by a party who is about to proceed to the mines, a gentleman, willing to join him in and to share the expenses of the adventure. Address, W., Y—— Street, Wooloomooloo.

Having written the above advertisement I, on the same day, resigned my situation.

In the course of the next morning, there came three replies. The first was from a recent emigrant, or what in Sydney parlance is known commonly as a "new chum." He certainly would know too little of colonial life. The second was from a gentleman who, as I more than suspected, knew too much to be either an agreeable associate or an eligible partner. The third came in the form of a very short note, requesting an interview at a certain time and place, on the subject of my advertisement. I liked the look of it, and at the hour named by my correspondent, duly called at a boarding house appointed as our meeting. So I met with the person who became my partner.

He was singularly handsome; very dark, but darkened as I thought by exposure chiefly, though he must have been originally dark, for he had raven hair and a completely black moustache. His eye, large, black, and restless, never became fixed on anybody; that I grew afterwards to notice, when I noticed also that his manner—which was generally lively and at all times that of a gentleman—now and then fell by a sudden change from gaiety into a perfect pit of gloom. I shall call this partner of mine Browden. We agreed without delay upon the terms of partnership, and commenced together preparations for a start.

Winter was then rapidly approaching, but we were bold and were unwilling to delay. My partner, alike careless and confident, caused me to feel young in his company, because he went to work with so much cool indifference. To me, red-hot with excitement, his cold manner was quite unintelligible, and I could not refrain on one occasion from expressing my sense of his self-possession, upon the eve of a change that surely was an epoch in our

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