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Ross Winn

The Archic (A Fairy Tale)

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1903

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Once upon a time, in a kingdom situated between two seas, the people kept a certain great monster, called an archic. This archic was a most ferocious beast with great iron claws and a mouth large enough to swallow a dozen men at a gulp. The people held this frightful monster in great esteem, altho it was a great burden to them, for it had to be fed constantly upon the fat of the land, and demanded human flesh and blood, as well as the choice fruits of the soil, and was always hungry.

This savage beast had to be securely chained, and a vast number of men, called archons, or officers of the archic, were required to feed and care for the monster. Every once in a while the archic would break his chain and do no end of mischief among the people; and at all times he had to have human blood to satisfy his appetite.

Altho the people feared the archic greatly, they agreed that he was a necessary evil, and very useful to keep other evil-doers quiet, for when a man did anything not approved by the people, they gave him to the archic. It thus happened that, if a man was very wealthy, he could appease the appetite of the beast with such things as it liked to feed upon, and thus escape himself; but when a poor man, who had not the means to appease the monster's appetite, fell into its clutches he was apt to fare rather badly.

But the people, tho they agreed that the archic was a useful and necessary evil, were not satisfied with the manner in which it was kept, and they were continually devising new methods of feeding it, and of utilizing its usefulness.

Some wanted to curtail its activity as much as possible, while others wished to lengthen its chain, and give it more scope and power. But there were a few individuals who said that the monster ought to be killed. These persons were called Anarchists; and the vast majority of the people regarded them as wicked. And especially the archons, or keepers of the archic, who said that the Anarchists should be given to the archic as a sacrifice to law and order.

But the Anarchists continued to reason with the people, and at last so many of them were convinced, that they begun to ignore the archic, and refused to contribute to its support. The result was that the archic, deprived of its daily supply of food, sickened and died; and when it was no more, the people discovered that it had been

a great curse, an unmixed evil that was not in the least necessary to their happiness, but on the contrary, had made life miserable for all the people without their knowing the cause. And there was great rejoicing, and everybody declared that they had always been Anarchists to the third and fourth generation of ancestors.