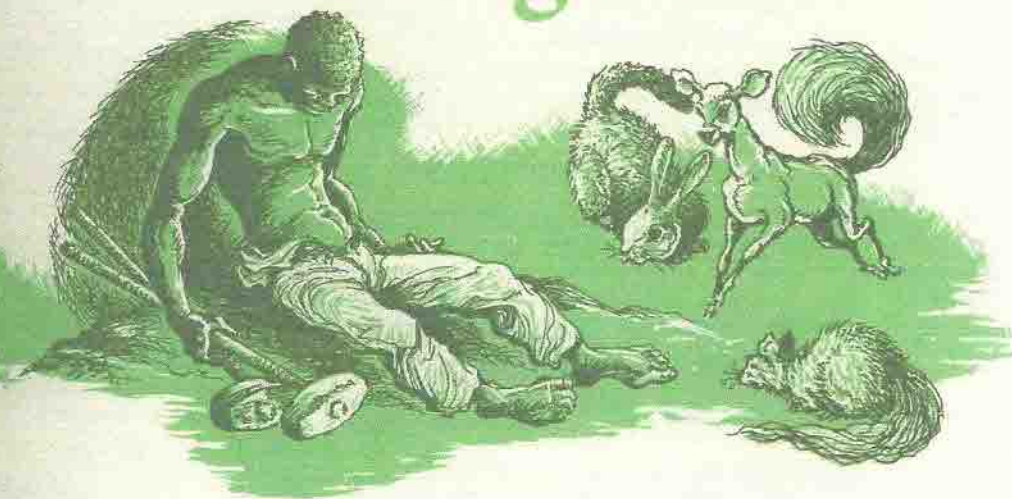


# THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

MARJORIE BARROWS, *Editor*

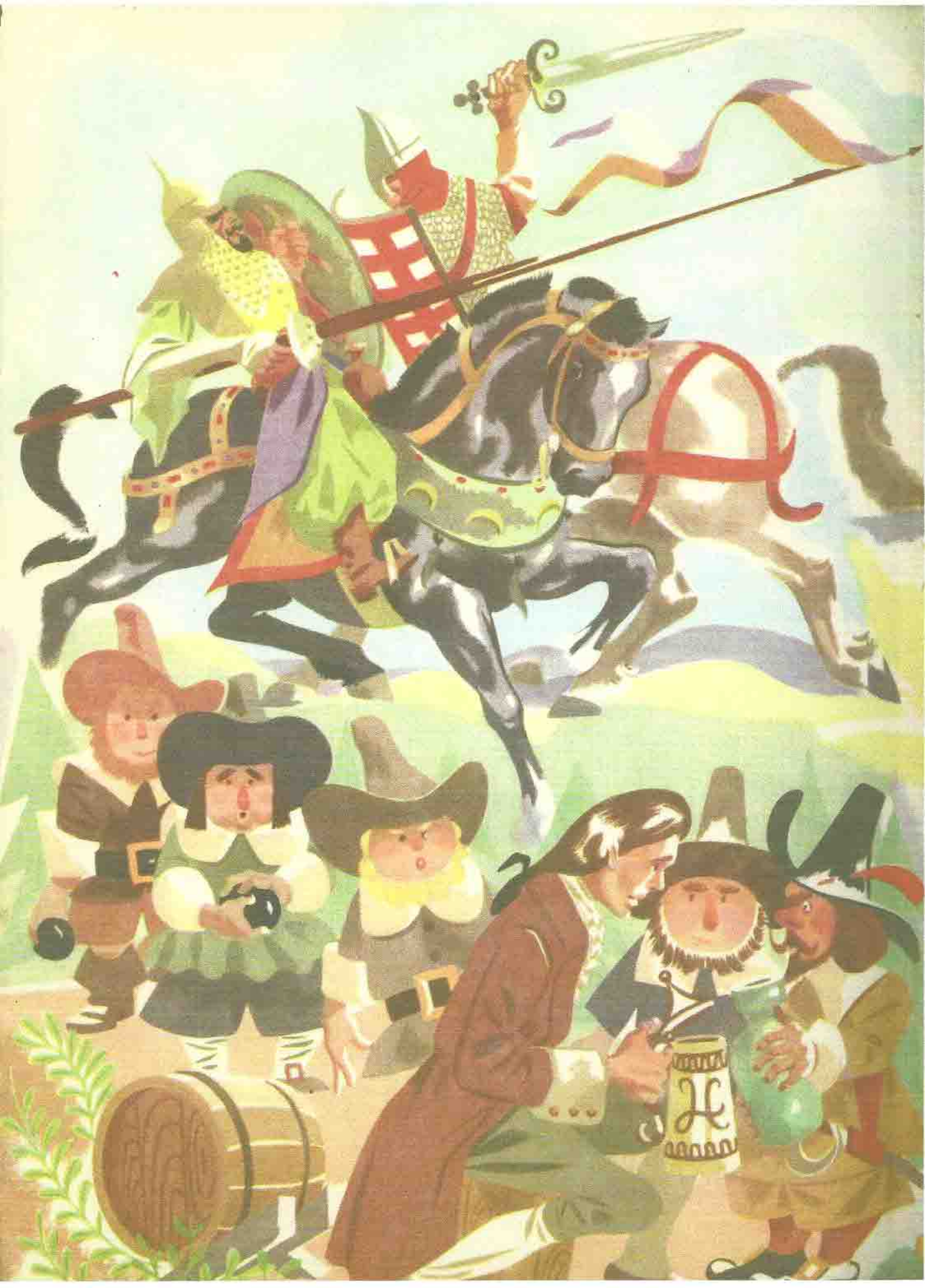
## Myths and Legends



MATHILDA SCHIRMER  
*Associate Editor*

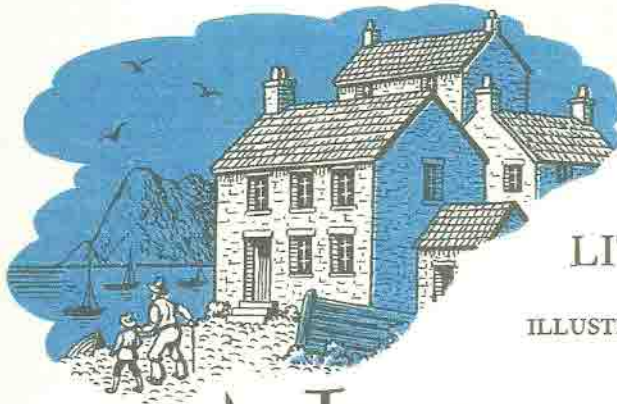
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GROLIER INCORPORATED • *New York*



## Part I: FOR YOUNGER READERS

A CORNISH TALE



*Enys Tregarthen*

BUCCA BOO'S

LITTLE MERRY MEN

ILLUSTRATED BY *John Dukes McKee*

**N**EARLY everybody in Mevagissey had heard of Bucca Boo, the Neptune of the Cornish sea, and how he had commanded his nine little mermen to row in their longboat to a large rock pool near one of Mevagissey's high cliffs. There, cormorants and gulls nested, and a rare weed called the Weed of Health grew. The Mevagissey people had also heard that whoever was lucky enough to see the wonderful little boat, curved like a moon on her back, and bring her inside Mevagissey Quay would bring good luck to himself and the whole fishing town.

No one believed the old whiddle any more except Merlin Legassick, an ancient fisherman, and his grandson and namesake. Old Merlin declared that his great-granfer had seen such a boat come into the basin, but as he was crippled in his legs he could not climb up the slippery sides of the rock and so lost the chance of getting the little craft and bringing her into the quay.

This old whiddle had made a great impression on the younger Merlin, and it was the one desire of his heart to see the little boat his great-great-grandfather had seen, so he watched for her coming at each flow of the tide.

In those days the people of Mevagissey were all fisherfolk and exceedingly poor, owing to the scarcity of fish. Most of them knew, more often than not, the pangs of hunger. Old Merlin Legassick and his children and grandchildren were some

of the worst sufferers, as they were a large family and, being so many to share the little food there was, they had often to go supperless to bed.

As the fishing grew worse and worse, Merlin the elder and Merlin the younger longed more and more for the coming of the little boat into Bucca Boo's Basin, for it would turn the luck of the fishing from bad to good if only one of them could see her there and get hold of her. But, in spite of all their watching and longing, she had not yet come into the pool.

The younger Merlin was beginning to despair of her ever coming at all. The elder Merlin was often a bit down in the mouth too, only he would not allow it and cheered his little grandson by telling him that she was bound to put into the basin sometime, adding impressively, "'Tis a prize worth waiting for even if she don't come till you be as ould and gray-headed as your granfer."

Neither Merlin went fishing. The old man was too feeble and the boy too young, but the former mended the fishing nets, and the little lad got the bait to supply the hooks. Late one afternoon in the beginning of June when the larks were thrilling the blue air with their melodies and Mevagissey cliffs were a sight to see, with the pink of the thrifts and the red and gold of the lady's fingers, old Merlin sent his namesake to Polstreath beach to dig sprats in the great stretch of sand there.

As the lad was leaving the cottage on the cliffside, the grand-sire begged him to keep an extra lookout for the dinky longboat.

"'Tis such handsome weather," he said, "an' the sea from Rame's Head to Chapel Point is like a millpond a'most. Which-ever way the little merry men be pleased to come, they will be able to get into the bay as easy as any of our own boats."

Old Merlin's manner was so eager and his voice so earnest that the boy, instead of going to Polstreath as he was bidden, went to Bucca Boo's Basin. When he got there the tide had not yet reached the rock where the pool was, but it was flowing fast toward it. The sea was rougher than his grandfather had allowed him to expect, and waves were breaking against the northern cliffs, which were by far the boldest in the bay.

“The wee chaps and their dinky longboat won’t come today, that’s certain,” said the boy to himself, a look of disappointment on his bright young face as he stood gazing seaward. “If they don’t make haste granfer an’ me won’t be alive to watch, for we shall soon die of hunger, an’ all the other folk in Mevagissey will, too.”

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a laugh from somewhere close to him stole upon his ear. At first he thought it was the giggle of a kittiwake, which often laughs as it flies over the cliffs, but as it was followed by a chorus of tiny voices singing he knew it could not be. Much wondering what it was, young Merlin listened intently, and as he listened it dawned upon him that it *might* be Bucca Boo’s little merry men come into the basin at last.

No sooner had this idea taken possession of his mind than he climbed up the side of the rock and peeped into the pool. There, to his unspeakable delight, was a tiny boat not much bigger than a child’s toy and curved like a moon on her back.



