



The Sorcerer's Apprentice

THE weird legend of the Sorcerer's Apprentice, known to the modern world by the poetry of Goethe and the music of Dukas, was related by Lucian in the *Philopseudes*. Here is the legend, in Sir Thomas More's translation:

When a certain Eucrates saw an Egyptian magician named Pancrates do many marvels, he gradually insinuated himself into his friendship until he learned nearly all his secrets. At last the magician persuaded him to leave all his servants in Memphis and accompany him alone, for they would have no lack of servants; and from that time (Eucrates said) thus we lived.

"When we came into an inn, he taking the bolt of the door, or a broom or bar, and clothing it, spoke a charm to it, and to enable it to go, and in all things to resemble a man. The thing going forth, would draw water, provide, and dress our supper, and diligently wait and attend upon us. After his business was done, he pronounced another charm, and turned the broom into a broom again, and the pestle into a pestle. This was an art which, though I labored much, I could not learn

of him. For this was a mystery which he denied me, though in all things else he were open.

"One day, hiding myself in a dark corner, I overheard his charm, which was but three syllables. He having appointed the bolt its business, went into the market.

"The next day, he having some other appointment in the market, I taking the pestle and appareling it, in like manner pronounced the syllables, and bid it fetch me some water. When it had brought me a basin full, 'It is enough,' I said, 'fetch no more, but be a pestle again.' But it was so far from obeying me, that it ceased not to fetch water till it had overflowed the room. I, much troubled at the accident, and fearing lest if Pancrates return (as he did) he would be much displeased, took an ax and cut the pestle in two. Then both parts taking several buckets fetched water. And instead of one, I had two servants.

"In the meantime Pancrates came in, and perceiving what had happened, transformed them into wood again, as they were before I uttered the spell. Shortly after he secretly left me, and vanishing went I know not whither."