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THE GREEN FAIRY BOOK

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Содержание

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TO THE FRIENDLY READER

This is the third, and probably the last, of the Fairy Books of many colours. First there was the *Blue Fairy Book*; then, children, you asked for more, and we made up the *Red Fairy Book*; and, when you wanted more still, the *Green Fairy Book* was put together. The stories in all the books are borrowed from many countries; some are French, some German, some Russian, some Italian, some Scottish, some English, one Chinese. However much these nations differ about trifles, they all agree in liking fairy tales. The reason, no doubt, is that men were much like children in their minds long ago, long, long ago, and so before they took to writing newspapers, and sermons, and novels, and long poems, they told each other stories, such as you read in the fairy books. They believed that witches could turn people into beasts, that beasts could speak, that magic rings could make their owners invisible, and all the other wonders in the stories. Then, as the world became grown-up, the fairy tales which were not written down would have been quite forgotten but that the old grannies remembered them, and told them to the little grandchildren: and when they, in their turn, became grannies,

they remembered them, and told them also. In this way these tales are older than reading and writing, far older than printing. The oldest fairy tales ever written down were written down in Egypt, about Joseph's time, nearly three thousand five hundred years ago. Other fairy stories Homer knew, in Greece, nearly three thousand years ago, and he made them all up into a poem, the *Odyssey*, which I hope you will read some day. Here you will find the witch who turns men into swine, and the man who bores out the big foolish giant's eye, and the cap of darkness, and the shoes of swiftness, that were worn later by Jack the Giant-Killer. These fairy tales are the oldest stories in the world, and as they were first made by men who were childlike for their own amusement, so they amuse children still, and also grown-up people who have not forgotten how they once were children.

Some of the stories were made, no doubt, not only to amuse, but to teach goodness. You see, in the tales, how the boy who is kind to beasts, and polite, and generous, and brave, always comes best through his trials, and no doubt these tales were meant to make their hearers kind, unselfish, courteous, and courageous. This is the moral of them. But, after all, we think more as we read them of the diversion than of the lesson. There are grown-up people now who say that the stories are not good for children, because they are not true, because there are no witches, nor talking beasts, and because people are killed in them, especially wicked giants. But probably you who read the tales know very well how much is true and how much is only make-believe,

and I never yet heard of a child who killed a very tall man merely because Jack killed the giants, or who was unkind to his stepmother, if he had one, because, in fairy tales, the stepmother is often disagreeable. If there are frightful monsters in fairy tales, they do not frighten you now, because that kind of monster is no longer going about the world, whatever he may have done long, long ago. He has been turned into stone, and you may see his remains in museums. Therefore, I am not afraid that you will be afraid of the magicians and dragons; besides, you see that a really brave boy or girl was always their master, even in the height of their power.

Some of the tales here, like *The Half-Chick*, are for very little children; others for older ones. The longest tales, like *Heart of Ice*, were not invented when the others were, but were written in French, by clever men and women, such as Madame d'Aulnoy, and the Count de Caylus, about two hundred years ago. There are not many people now, perhaps there are none, who can write really good fairy tales, because they do not believe enough in their own stories, and because they want to be wittier than it has pleased Heaven to make them.

So here we give you the last of the old stories, for the present, and hope you will like them, and feel grateful to the Brothers Grimm, who took them down from the telling of old women, and to M. Sébillot and M. Charles Marelles, who have lent us some tales from their own French people, and to Mr. Ford, who drew the pictures, and to the ladies, Miss Blackley, Miss Alma

Alleyne, Miss Eleanor Sellar, Miss May Sellar, Miss Wright, and Mrs. Lang, who translated many of the tales out of French, German, and other languages.

If we have a book for you next year, it shall not be a fairy book. What it is to be is a secret, but we hope that it will not be dull. So good-bye, and when you have read a fairy book, lend it to other children who have none, or tell them the stories in your own way, which is a very pleasant mode of passing the time.

THE BLUE BIRD

Once upon a time there lived a King who was immensely rich. He had broad lands, and sacks overflowing with gold and silver; but he did not care a bit for all his riches, because the Queen, his wife, was dead. He shut himself up in a little room and knocked his head against the walls for grief, until his courtiers were really afraid that he would hurt himself. So they hung feather-beds between the tapestry and the walls, and then he could go on knocking his head as long as it was any consolation to him without coming to much harm. All his subjects came to see him, and said whatever they thought would comfort him: some were grave, even gloomy with him; and some agreeable, even gay; but not one could make the least impression upon him. Indeed, he hardly seemed to hear what they said. At last came a lady who was wrapped in a black mantle, and seemed to be in the deepest grief. She wept and sobbed until even the King's attention was attracted; and when she said that, far from coming to try and diminish his grief, she, who had just lost a good husband, was come to add her tears to his, since she knew what he must be feeling, the King redoubled his lamentations. Then he told the sorrowful lady long stories about the good qualities of his departed Queen, and she in her turn recounted all the virtues of her departed husband; and this passed the time so agreeably that the King quite forgot to thump his head against the feather-

beds, and the lady did not need to wipe the tears from her great blue eyes as often as before. By degrees they came to talking about other things in which the King took an interest, and in a wonderfully short time the whole kingdom was astonished by the news that the King was married again – to the sorrowful lady.

Now the King had one daughter, who was just fifteen years old. Her name was Fiordelisa, and she was the prettiest and most charming Princess imaginable, always gay end merry. The new Queen, who also had a daughter, very soon sent for her to come to the Palace. Turritella, for that was her name, had been brought up by her godmother, the Fairy Mazilla, but in spite of all the care bestowed upon her, she was neither beautiful nor gracious. Indeed, when the Queen saw how ill-tempered and ugly she appeared beside Fiordelisa she was in despair, and did everything in her power to turn the King against his own daughter, in the hope that he might take a fancy to Turritella. One day the King said that it was time Fiordelisa and Turritella were married, so he would give one of them to the first suitable Prince who visited his Court. The Queen answered:

'My daughter certainly ought to be the first to be married; she is older than yours, and a thousand times more charming!'

The King, who hated disputes, said, 'Very well, it's no affair of mine, settle it your own way.'

Very soon after came the news that King Charming, who was the most handsome and magnificent Prince in all the country round, was on his way to visit the King. As soon as the

Queen heard this, she set all her jewellers, tailors, weavers, and embroiderers to work upon splendid dresses and ornaments for Turritella, but she told the King that Fiordelisa had no need of anything new, and the night before the King was to arrive, she bribed her waiting woman to steal away all the Princess's own dresses and jewels, so that when the day came, and Fiordelisa wished to adorn herself as became her high rank, not even a ribbon could she find.

However, as she easily guessed who had played her such a trick, she made no complaint, but sent to the merchants for some rich stuffs. But they said that the Queen had expressly forbidden them to supply her with any, and they dared not disobey. So the Princess had nothing left to put on but the little white frock she had been wearing the day before; and dressed in that, she went down when the time of the King's arrival came, and sat in a corner hoping to escape notice. The Queen received her guest with great ceremony, and presented him to her daughter, who was gorgeously attired, but so much splendour only made her ugliness more noticeable, and the King, after one glance at her, looked the other way. The Queen, however, only thought that he was bashful, and took pains to keep Turritella in full view. King Charming then asked if there was not another Princess, called Fiordelisa.

'Yes,' said Turritella, pointing with her finger, 'there she is, trying to keep out of sight because she is not smart.'

At this Fiordelisa blushed, and looked so shy and so lovely,

that the King was fairly astonished. He rose, and bowing low before her, said —

'Madam, your incomparable beauty needs no adornment.'

'Sire,' answered the Princess, 'I assure you that I am not in the habit of wearing dresses as crumpled and untidy as this one, so I should have been better pleased if you had not seen me at all.'

'Impossible!' cried King Charming. 'Wherever such a marvellously beautiful Princess appears I can look at nothing else.'

Here the Queen broke in, saying sharply —

'I assure you, Sire, that Fiordelisa is vain enough already. Pray make her no more flattering speeches.'

The King quite understood that she was not pleased, but that did not matter to him, so he admired Fiordelisa to his heart's content, and talked to her for three hours without stopping.

The Queen was in despair, and so was Turritella, when they saw how much the King preferred Fiordelisa. They complained bitterly to the King, and begged and teased him, until he at last consented to have the Princess shut up somewhere out of sight while King Charming's visit lasted. So that night, as she went to her room, she was seized by four masked figures, and carried up into the topmost room of a high tower, where they left her in the deepest dejection. She easily guessed that she was to be kept out of sight for fear the King should fall in love with her; but then, how disappointing that was, for she already liked him very much, and would have been quite willing to be chosen for

his bride! As King Charming did not know what had happened to the Princess, he looked forward impatiently to meeting her again, and he tried to talk about her with the courtiers who were placed in attendance on him. But by the Queen's orders they would say nothing good of her, but declared that she was vain, capricious, and bad-tempered; that she tormented her waiting-maids, and that, in spite of all the money that the King gave her, she was so mean that she preferred to go about dressed like a poor shepherdess, rather than spend any of it. All these things vexed the King very much, and he was silent.

'It is true,' thought he, 'that she was very poorly dressed, but then she was so ashamed that it proves that she was not accustomed to be so. I cannot believe that with that lovely face she can be as ill-tempered and contemptible as they say. No, no, the Queen must be jealous of her for the sake of that ugly daughter of hers, and so these evil reports are spread.'

The courtiers could not help seeing that what they had told the King did not please him, and one of them cunningly began to praise Fiordelisa, when he could talk to the King without being heard by the others.

King Charming thereupon became so cheerful, and interested in all he said, that it was easy to guess how much he admired the Princess. So when the Queen sent for the courtiers and questioned them about all they had found out, their report confirmed her worst fears. As to the poor Princess Fiordelisa, she cried all night without stopping.

'It would have been quite bad enough to be shut up in this gloomy tower before I had ever seen King Charming,' she said; 'but now when he is here, and they are all enjoying themselves with him, it is too unkind.'

The next day the Queen sent King Charming splendid presents of jewels and rich stuffs, and among other things an ornament made expressly in honour of the approaching wedding. It was a heart cut out of one huge ruby, and was surrounded by several diamond arrows, and pierced by one. A golden true-lover's knot above the heart bore the motto, 'But one can wound me,' and the whole jewel was hung upon a chain of immense pearls. Never, since the world has been a world, had such a thing been made, and the King was quite amazed when it was presented to him. The page who brought it begged him to accept it from the Princess, who chose him to be her knight.

'What!' cried he, 'does the lovely Princess Fiordelisa deign to think of me in this amiable and encouraging way?'

'You confuse the names, Sire,' said the page hastily. 'I come on behalf of the Princess Turritella.'

'Oh, it is Turritella who wishes me to be her knight,' said the King coldly. 'I am sorry that I cannot accept the honour.' And he sent the splendid gifts back to the Queen and Turritella, who were furiously angry at the contempt with which they were treated. As soon as he possibly could, King Charming went to see the King and Queen, and as he entered the hall he looked for Fiordelisa, and every time anyone came in he started round to see who it

was, and was altogether so uneasy and dissatisfied that the Queen saw it plainly. But she would not take any notice, and talked of nothing but the entertainments she was planning. The Prince answered at random, and presently asked if he was not to have the pleasure of seeing the Princess Fiordelisa.

'Sire,' answered the Queen haughtily, 'her father has ordered that she shall not leave her own apartments until my daughter is married.'

'What can be the reason for keeping that lovely Princess a prisoner?' cried the King in great indignation.

'That I do not know,' answered the Queen; 'and even if I did, I might not feel bound to tell you.'

The King was terribly angry at being thwarted like this. He felt certain that Turritella was to blame for it, so casting a furious glance at her he abruptly took leave of the Queen, and returned to his own apartments. There he said to a young squire whom he had brought with him: 'I would give all I have in the world to gain the good will of one of the Princess's waiting-women, and obtain a moment's speech with Fiordelisa.'

'Nothing could be easier,' said the young squire; and he very soon made friends with one of the ladies, who told him that in the evening Fiordelisa would be at a little window which looked into the garden, where he could come and talk to her. Only, she said, he must take very great care not to be seen, as it would be as much as her place was worth to be caught helping King Charming to see the Princess. The squire was delighted, and promised all she

asked; but the moment he had run off to announce his success to the King, the false waiting-woman went and told the Queen all that had passed. She at once determined that her own daughter should be at the little window; and she taught her so well all she was to say and do, that even the stupid Turritella could make no mistake.

The night was so dark that the King had not a chance of finding out the trick that was being played upon him, so he approached the window with the greatest delight, and said everything that he had been longing to say to Fiordelisa to persuade her of his love for her. Turritella answered as she had been taught, that she was very unhappy, and that there was no chance of her being better treated by the Queen until her daughter was married. And then the King entreated her to marry him; and thereupon he drew his ring from his finger and put it upon Turritella's, and she answered him as well as she could. The King could not help thinking that she did not say exactly what he would have expected from his darling Fiordelisa, but he persuaded himself that the fear of being surprised by the Queen was making her awkward and unnatural. He would not leave her until she had promised to see him again the next night, which Turritella did willingly enough. The Queen was overjoyed at the success of her stratagem, and promised herself that all would now be as she wished; and sure enough, as soon as it was dark the following night the King came, bringing with him a chariot which had been given him by an Enchanter who was his friend. This

chariot was drawn by flying frogs, and the King easily persuaded Turritella to come out and let him put her into it, then mounting beside her he cried triumphantly —

'Now, my Princess, you are free; where will it please you that we shall hold our wedding?'

And Turritella, with her head muffled in her mantle, answered that the Fairy Mazilla was her godmother, and that she would like it to be at her castle. So the King told the Frogs, who had the map of the whole world in their heads, and very soon he and Turritella were set down at the castle of the Fairy Mazilla. The King would certainly have found out his mistake the moment they stepped into the brilliantly lighted castle, but Turritella held her mantle more closely round her, and asked to see the Fairy by herself, and quickly told her all that had happened, and how she had succeeded in deceiving King Charming.

'Oho! my daughter,' said the Fairy, 'I see we have no easy task before us. He loves Fiordelisa so much that he will not be easily pacified. I feel sure he will defy us!' Meanwhile the King was waiting in a splendid room with diamond walls, so clear that he could see the Fairy and Turritella as they stood whispering together, and he was very much puzzled.

'Who can have betrayed us?' he said to himself. 'How comes our enemy here? She must be plotting to prevent our marriage. Why doesn't my lovely Fiordelisa make haste and come back to me?'

But it was worse than anything he had imagined when the

Fairy Mazilla entered, leading Turritella by the hand, and said to him —

'King Charming, here is the Princess Turritella to whom you have plighted your faith. Let us have the wedding at once.'

'I!' cried the King. 'I marry that little creature! What do you take me for? I have promised her nothing!'

'Say no more. Have you no respect for a Fairy?' cried she angrily.

'Yes, madam,' answered the King, 'I am prepared to respect you as much as a Fairy can be respected, if you will give me back my Princess.'

'Am I not here?' interrupted Turritella. 'Here is the ring you gave me. With whom did you talk at the little window, if it was not with me?'

'What!' cried the King angrily, 'have I been altogether deceived and deluded? Where is my chariot? Not another moment will I stay here.'

'Oho,' said the Fairy, 'not so fast.' And she touched his feet, which instantly became as firmly fixed to the floor as if they had been nailed there.

'Oh! do whatever you like with me,' said the King; 'you may turn me to stone, but I will marry no one but Fiordelisa.'

And not another word would he say, though the Fairy scolded and threatened, and Turritella wept and raged for twenty days and twenty nights. At last the Fairy Mazilla said furiously (for she was quite tired out by his obstinacy), 'Choose whether you will

marry my goddaughter, or do penance seven years for breaking your word to her.'

And then the King cried gaily: 'Pray do whatever you like with me, as long as you deliver me from this ugly scold!'

'Scold!' cried Turritella angrily. 'Who are you, I should like to know, that you dare to call me a scold? A miserable King who breaks his word, and goes about in a chariot drawn by croaking frogs out of a marsh!'

'Let us have no more of these insults,' cried the Fairy. 'Fly from that window, ungrateful King, and for seven years be a Blue Bird.' As she spoke the King's face altered, his arms turned to wings, his feet to little crooked black claws. In a moment he had a slender body like a bird, covered with shining blue feathers, his beak was like ivory, his eyes were bright as stars, and a crown of white feathers adorned his head.

As soon as the transformation was complete the King uttered a dolorous cry and fled through the open window, pursued by the mocking laughter of Turritella and the Fairy Mazilla. He flew on until he reached the thickest part of the wood, and there, perched upon a cypress tree, he bewailed his miserable fate. 'Alas! in seven years who knows what may happen to my darling Fiordelisa!' he said. 'Her cruel stepmother may have married her to someone else before I am myself again, and then what good will life be to me?'

In the meantime the Fairy Mazilla had sent Turritella back to the Queen, who was all anxiety to know how the wedding

had gone off. But when her daughter arrived and told her all that had happened she was terribly angry, and of course all her wrath fell upon Fiordelisa. 'She shall have cause to repent that the King admires her,' said the Queen, nodding her head meaningly, and then she and Turritella went up to the little room in the tower where the Princess was imprisoned. Fiordelisa was immensely surprised to see that Turritella was wearing a royal mantle and a diamond crown, and her heart sank when the Queen said: 'My daughter is come to show you some of her wedding presents, for she is King Charming's bride, and they are the happiest pair in the world, he loves her to distraction.' All this time Turritella was spreading out lace, and jewels, and rich brocades, and ribbons before Fiordelisa's unwilling eyes, and taking good care to display King Charming's ring, which she wore upon her thumb. The Princess recognised it as soon as her eyes fell upon it, and after that she could no longer doubt that he had indeed married Turritella. In despair she cried, 'Take away these miserable gauds! what pleasure has a wretched captive in the sight of them?' and then she fell insensible upon the floor, and the cruel Queen laughed maliciously, and went away with Turritella, leaving her there without comfort or aid. That night the Queen said to the King, that his daughter was so infatuated with King Charming, in spite of his never having shown any preference for her, that it was just as well she should stay in the tower until she came to her senses. To which he answered that it was her affair, and she could give what orders she pleased about

the Princess.

When the unhappy Fiordelisa recovered, and remembered all she had just heard, she began to cry bitterly, believing that King Charming was lost to her for ever, and all night long she sat at her open window sighing and lamenting; but when it was dawn she crept away into the darkest corner of her little room and sat there, too unhappy to care about anything. As soon as night came again she once more leaned out into the darkness and bewailed her miserable lot.

Now it happened that King Charming, or rather the Blue Bird, had been flying round the palace in the hope of seeing his beloved Princess, but had not dared to go too near the windows for fear of being seen and recognised by Turritella. When night fell he had not succeeded in discovering where Fiordelisa was imprisoned, and, weary and sad, he perched upon a branch of a tall fir tree which grew close to the tower, and began to sing himself to sleep. But soon the sound of a soft voice lamenting attracted his attention, and listening intently he heard it say —

'Ah! cruel Queen! what have I ever done to be imprisoned like this? And was I not unhappy enough before, that you must needs come and taunt me with the happiness your daughter is enjoying now she is King Charming's bride?'

The Blue Bird, greatly surprised, waited impatiently for the dawn, and the moment it was light flew off to see who it could have been who spoke thus. But he found the window shut, and could see no one. The next night, however, he was on the watch,

and by the clear moonlight he saw that the sorrowful lady at the window was Fiordelisa herself.

'My Princess! have I found you at last?' said he, alighting close to her.

'Who is speaking to me?' cried the Princess in great surprise.

'Only a moment since you mentioned my name, and now you do not know me, Fiordelisa,' said he sadly. 'But no wonder, since I am nothing but a Blue Bird, and must remain one for seven years.'

'What! Little Blue Bird, are you really the powerful King Charming?' said the Princess, caressing him.

'It is too true,' he answered. 'For being faithful to you I am thus punished. But believe me, if it were for twice as long I would bear it joyfully rather than give you up.'

'Oh! what are you telling me?' cried the Princess. 'Has not your bride, Turritella, just visited me, wearing the royal mantle and the diamond crown you gave her? I cannot be mistaken, for I saw your ring upon her thumb.'

Then the Blue Bird was furiously angry, and told the Princess all that had happened, how he had been deceived into carrying off Turritella, and how, for refusing to marry her, the Fairy Mazilla had condemned him to be a Blue Bird for seven years.

The Princess was very happy when she heard how faithful her lover was, and would never have tired of hearing his loving speeches and explanations, but too soon the sun rose, and they had to part lest the Blue Bird should be discovered. After

promising to come again to the Princess's window as soon as it was dark, he flew away, and hid himself in a little hole in the fir-tree, while Fiordelisa remained devoured by anxiety lest he should be caught in a trap, or eaten up by an eagle.

But the Blue Bird did not long stay in his hiding-place. He flew away, and away, until he came to his own palace, and got into it through a broken window, and there he found the cabinet where his jewels were kept, and chose out a splendid diamond ring as a present for the Princess. By the time he got back, Fiordelisa was sitting waiting for him by the open window, and when he gave her the ring, she scolded him gently for having run such a risk to get it for her.

'Promise me that you will wear it always!' said the Blue Bird. And the Princess promised on condition that he should come and see her in the day as well as by night. They talked all night long, and the next morning the Blue Bird flew off to his kingdom, and crept into his palace through the broken window, and chose from his treasures two bracelets, each cut out of a single emerald. When he presented them to the Princess, she shook her head at him reproachfully, saying —

'Do you think I love you so little that I need all these gifts to remind me of you?'

And he answered —

'No, my Princess; but I love you so much that I feel I cannot express it, try as I may. I only bring you these worthless trifles to show that I have not ceased to think of you, though I have

been obliged to leave you for a time.' The following night he gave Fiordelisa a watch set in a single pearl. The Princess laughed a little when she saw it, and said —

'You may well give me a watch, for since I have known you I have lost the power of measuring time. The hours you spend with me pass like minutes, and the hours that I drag through without you seem years to me.'

'Ah, Princess, they cannot seem so long to you as they do to me!' he answered. Day by day he brought more beautiful things for the Princess – diamonds, and rubies, and opals; and at night she decked herself with them to please him, but by day she hid them in her straw mattress. When the sun shone the Blue Bird, hidden in the tall fir-tree, sang to her so sweetly that all the passers-by wondered, and said that the wood was inhabited by a spirit. And so two years slipped away, and still the Princess was a prisoner, and Turritella was not married. The Queen had offered her hand to all the neighbouring Princes, but they always answered that they would marry Fiordelisa with pleasure, but not Turritella on any account. This displeased the Queen terribly. 'Fiordelisa must be in league with them, to annoy me!' she said. 'Let us go and accuse her of it.'

So she and Turritella went up into the tower. Now it happened that it was nearly midnight, and Fiordelisa, all decked with jewels, was sitting at the window with the Blue Bird, and as the Queen paused outside the door to listen she heard the Princess and her lover singing together a little song he had just taught her.

These were the words: —

'Oh! what a luckless pair are we,
One in a prison, and one in a tree.
All our trouble and anguish came
From our faithfulness spoiling our enemies' game.
But vainly they practise their cruel arts,
For nought can sever our two fond hearts.'

They sound melancholy perhaps, but the two voices sang them gaily enough, and the Queen burst open the door, crying, 'Ah! my Turritella, there is some treachery going on here!'

As soon as she saw her, Fiordelisa, with great presence of mind, hastily shut her little window, that the Blue Bird might have time to escape, and then turned to meet the Queen, who overwhelmed her with a torrent of reproaches.

'Your intrigues are discovered, Madam,' she said furiously; 'and you need not hope that your high rank will save you from the punishment you deserve.'

'And with whom do you accuse me of intriguing, Madam?' said the Princess. 'Have I not been your prisoner these two years, and who have I seen except the gaolers sent by you?'

While she spoke the Queen and Turritella were looking at her in the greatest surprise, perfectly dazzled by her beauty and the splendour of her jewels, and the Queen said:

'If one may ask, Madam, where did you get all these diamonds? Perhaps you mean to tell me that you have discovered

a mine of them in the tower!'

'I certainly did find them here,' answered the Princess.

'And pray,' said the Queen, her wrath increasing every moment, 'for whose admiration are you decked out like this, since I have often seen you not half as fine on the most important occasions at Court?'

'For my own,' answered Fiordelisa. 'You must admit that I have had plenty of time on my hands, so you cannot be surprised at my spending some of it in making myself smart.'

'That's all very fine,' said the Queen suspiciously. 'I think I will look about, and see for myself.'

So she and Turritella began to search every corner of the little room, and when they came to the straw mattress out fell such a quantity of pearls, diamonds, rubies, opals, emeralds, and sapphires, that they were amazed, and could not tell what to think. But the Queen resolved to hide somewhere a packet of false letters to prove that the Princess had been conspiring with the King's enemies, and she chose the chimney as a good place. Fortunately for Fiordelisa this was exactly where the Blue Bird had perched himself, to keep an eye upon her proceedings, and try to avert danger from his beloved Princess, and now he cried:

'Beware, Fiordelisa! Your false enemy is plotting against you.'

This strange voice so frightened the Queen that she took the letter and went away hastily with Turritella, and they held a council to try and devise some means of finding out what Fairy or Enchanter was favouring the Princess. At last they sent one

of the Queen's maids to wait upon Fiordelisa, and told her to pretend to be quite stupid, and to see and hear nothing, while she was really to watch the Princess day and night, and keep the Queen informed of all her doings.

Poor Fiordelisa, who guessed she was sent as a spy, was in despair, and cried bitterly that she dared not see her dear Blue Bird for fear that some evil might happen to him if he were discovered.

The days were so long, and the nights so dull, but for a whole month she never went near her little window, lest he should fly to her as he used to do.

However, at last the spy, who had never taken her eyes off the Princess day or night, was so overcome with weariness that she fell into a deep sleep, and as soon as the Princess saw that, she flew to open her window and cried softly:

'Blue Bird, blue as the sky,
Fly to me now, there's nobody by.'

And the Blue Bird, who had never ceased to flutter round within sight and hearing of her prison, came in an instant. They had so much to say, and were so overjoyed to meet once more, that it scarcely seemed to them five minutes before the sun rose, and the Blue Bird had to fly away.

But the next night the spy slept as soundly as before, so that the Blue Bird came, and he and the Princess began to think they

were perfectly safe, and to make all sorts of plans for being happy as they were before the Queen's visit. But, alas! the third night the spy was not quite so sleepy, and when the Princess opened her window and cried as usual:

'Blue Bird, blue as the sky,
Fly to me now, there's nobody nigh,'

she was wide awake in a moment, though she was sly enough to keep her eyes shut at first. But presently she heard voices, and peeping cautiously, she saw by the moonlight the most lovely blue bird in the world, who was talking to the Princess, while she stroked and caressed it fondly.

The spy did not lose a single word of the conversation, and as soon as the day dawned, and the Blue Bird had reluctantly said good-bye to the Princess, she rushed off to the Queen, and told her all she had seen and heard.

Then the Queen sent for Turritella, and they talked it over, and very soon came to the conclusion than this Blue Bird was no other than King Charming himself.

'Ah! that insolent Princess!' cried the Queen. 'To think that when we supposed her to be so miserable, she was all the while as happy as possible with that false King. But I know how we can avenge ourselves!'

So the spy was ordered to go back and pretend to sleep as soundly as ever, and indeed she went to bed earlier than usual,

and snored as naturally as possible, and the poor Princess ran to the window and cried:

'Blue Bird, blue as the sky,
Fly to me now, there's nobody by!'

But no bird came. All night long she called, and waited, and listened, but still there was no answer, for the cruel Queen had caused the fir tree to be hung all over with knives, swords, razors, shears, bill-hooks, and sickles, so that when the Blue Bird heard the Princess call, and flew towards her, his wings were cut, and his little black feet clipped off, and all pierced and stabbed in twenty places, he fell back bleeding into his hiding place in the tree, and lay there groaning and despairing, for he thought the Princess must have been persuaded to betray him, to regain her liberty.

'Ah! Fiordelisa, can you indeed be so lovely and so faithless?' he sighed, 'then I may as well die at once!' And he turned over on his side and began to die. But it happened that his friend the Enchanter had been very much alarmed at seeing the Frog chariot come back to him without King Charming, and had been round the world eight times seeking him, but without success. At the very moment when the King gave himself up to despair, he was passing through the wood for the eighth time, and called, as he had done all over the world:

'Charming! King Charming! Are you here?'

The King at once recognised his friend's voice, and answered very faintly:

'I am here.'

The Enchanter looked all round him, but could see nothing, and then the King said again:

'I am a Blue Bird.'

Then the Enchanter found him in an instant, and seeing his pitiable condition, ran hither and thither without a word, until he had collected a handful of magic herbs, with which, and a few incantations, he speedily made the King whole and sound again.

'Now,' said he, 'let me hear all about it. There must be a Princess at the bottom of this.'

'There are two!' answered King Charming, with a wry smile.

And then he told the whole story, accusing Fiordelisa of having betrayed the secret of his visits to make her peace with the Queen, and indeed saying a great many hard things about her fickleness and her deceitful beauty, and so on. The Enchanter quite agreed with him, and even went further, declaring that all Princesses were alike, except perhaps in the matter of beauty, and advised him to have done with Fiordelisa, and forget all about her. But, somehow or other, this advice did not quite please the King.

'What is to be done next?' said the Enchanter, 'since you still have five years to remain a Blue Bird.'

'Take me to your palace,' answered the King; 'there you can at least keep me in a cage safe from cats and swords.'

'Well, that will be the best thing to do for the present,' said his friend. 'But I am not an Enchanter for nothing. I'm sure to have a brilliant idea for you before long.'

In the meantime Fiordelisa, quite in despair, sat at her window day and night calling her dear Blue Bird in vain, and imagining over and over again all the terrible things that could have happened to him, until she grew quite pale and thin. As for the Queen and Turritella, they were triumphant; but their triumph was short, for the King, Fiordelisa's father, fell ill and died, and all the people rebelled against the Queen and Turritella, and came in a body to the palace demanding Fiordelisa.

The Queen came out upon the balcony with threats and haughty words, so that at last they lost their patience, and broke open the doors of the palace, one of which fell back upon the Queen and killed her. Turritella fled to the Fairy Mazilla, and all the nobles of the kingdom fetched the Princess Fiordelisa from her prison in the tower, and made her Queen. Very soon, with all the care and attention they bestowed upon her, she recovered from the effects of her long captivity and looked more beautiful than ever, and was able to take counsel with her courtiers, and arrange for the governing of her kingdom during her absence. And then, taking a bagful of jewels, she set out all alone to look for the Blue Bird, without telling anyone where she was going.

Meanwhile, the Enchanter was taking care of King Charming, but as his power was not great enough to counteract the Fairy Mazilla's, he at last resolved to go and see if he could make

any kind of terms with her for his friend; for you see, Fairies and Enchanters are cousins in a sort of way, after all; and after knowing one another for five or six hundred years and falling out, and making it up again pretty often, they understand one another well enough. So the Fairy Mazilla received him graciously. 'And what may you be wanting, Gossip?' said she.

'You can do a good turn for me if you will,' he answered. 'A King, who is a friend of mine, was unlucky enough to offend you – '

'Aha! I know who you mean,' interrupted the Fairy. 'I am sorry not to oblige you, Gossip, but he need expect no mercy from me unless he will marry my goddaughter, whom you see yonder looking so pretty and charming. Let him think over what I say.'

The Enchanter hadn't a word to say, for he thought Turritella really frightful, but he could not go away without making one more effort for his friend the King, who was really in great danger as long as he lived in a cage. Indeed, already he had met with several alarming accidents. Once the nail on which his cage was hung had given way, and his feathered Majesty had suffered much from the fall, while Madam Puss, who happened to be in the room at the time, had given him a scratch in the eye which came very near blinding him. Another time they had forgotten to give him any water to drink, so that he was nearly dead with thirst; and the worst thing of all was that he was in danger of losing his kingdom, for he had been absent so long that all his subjects believed him to be dead. So considering all

these things the Enchanter agreed with the Fairy Mazilla that she should restore the King to his natural form, and should take Turritella to stay in his palace for several months, and if, after the time was over, he still could not make up his mind to marry her, he should once more be changed into a Blue Bird.

Then the Fairy dressed Turritella in a magnificent gold and silver robe, and they mounted together upon a flying Dragon, and very soon reached King Charming's palace, where he, too, had just been brought by his faithful friend the Enchanter.

Three strokes of the Fairy's wand restored his natural form, and he was as handsome and delightful as ever, but he considered that he paid dearly for his restoration when he caught sight of Turritella, and the mere idea of marrying her made him shudder.

Meanwhile, Queen Fiordelisa, disguised as a poor peasant girl, wearing a great straw hat that concealed her face, and carrying an old sack over her shoulder, had set out upon her weary journey, and had travelled far, sometimes by sea and sometimes by land; sometimes on foot, and sometimes on horseback, but not knowing which way to go. She feared all the time that every step she took was leading her farther from her lover. One day as she sat, quite tired and sad, on the bank of a little brook, cooling her white feet in the clear running water, and combing her long hair that glittered like gold in the sunshine, a little bent old woman passed by, leaning on a stick. She stopped, and said to Fiordelisa:

'What, my pretty child, are you all alone?'

'Indeed, good mother, I am too sad to care for company,' she answered; and the tears ran down her cheeks.

'Don't cry,' said the old woman, 'but tell me truly what is the matter. Perhaps I can help you.'

The Queen told her willingly all that had happened, and how she was seeking the Blue Bird. Thereupon the little old woman suddenly stood up straight, and grew tall, and young, and beautiful, and said with a smile to the astonished Fiordelisa:

'Lovely Queen, the King whom you seek is no longer a bird. My sister Mazilla has given his own form back to him, and he is in his own kingdom. Do not be afraid, you will reach him, and will prosper. Take these four eggs; if you break one when you are in any great difficulty, you will find aid.'

So saying, she disappeared, and Fiordelisa, feeling much encouraged, put the eggs into her bag and turned her steps towards Charming's kingdom. After walking on and on for eight days and eight nights, she came at last to a tremendously high hill of polished ivory, so steep that it was impossible to get a foothold upon it. Fiordelisa tried a thousand times, and scrambled and slipped, but always in the end found herself exactly where she started from. At last she sat down at the foot of it in despair, and then suddenly bethought herself of the eggs. Breaking one quickly, she found in it some little gold hooks, and with these fastened to her feet and hands, she mounted the ivory hill without farther trouble, for the little hooks saved her from slipping. As soon as she reached the top a new difficulty presented itself,

for all the other side, and indeed the whole valley, was one polished mirror, in which thousands and thousands of people were admiring their reflections. For this was a magic mirror, in which people saw themselves just as they wished to appear, and pilgrims came to it from the four corners of the world. But nobody had ever been able to reach the top of the hill, and when they saw Fiordelisa standing there, they raised a terrible outcry, declaring that if she set foot upon their glass she would break it to pieces. The Queen, not knowing what to do, for she saw it would be dangerous to try to go down, broke the second egg, and out came a chariot, drawn by two white doves, and Fiordelisa got into it, and was floated softly away. After a night and a day the doves alighted outside the gate of King Charming's kingdom. Here the Queen got out of the chariot, and kissed the doves and thanked them, and then with a beating heart she walked into the town, asking the people she met where she could see the King. But they only laughed at her, crying:

'See the King? And pray, why do you want to see the King, my little kitchen-maid? You had better go and wash your face first, your eyes are not clear enough to see him!' For the Queen had disguised herself, and pulled her hair down about her eyes, that no one might know her. As they would not tell her, she went on farther, and presently asked again, and this time the people answered that to-morrow she might see the King driving through the streets with the Princess Turritella, as it was said that at last he had consented to marry her. This was indeed terrible

news to Fiordelisa. Had she come all this weary way only to find Turritella had succeeded in making King Charming forget her?

She was too tired and miserable to walk another step, so she sat down in a doorway and cried bitterly all night long. As soon as it was light she hastened to the palace, and after being sent away fifty times by the guards, she got in at last, and saw the thrones set in the great hall for the King and Turritella, who was already looked upon as Queen.

Fiordelisa hid herself behind a marble pillar, and very soon saw Turritella make her appearance, richly dressed, but as ugly as ever, and with her came the King, more handsome and splendid even than Fiordelisa had remembered him. When Turritella had seated herself upon the throne, the Queen approached her.

'Who are you, and how dare you come near my high-mightiness, upon my golden throne?' said Turritella, frowning fiercely at her.

'They call me the little kitchen-maid,' she replied, 'and I come to offer some precious things for sale,' and with that she searched in her old sack, and drew out the emerald bracelets King Charming had given her.

'Ho, ho!' said Turritella, 'those are pretty bits of glass. I suppose you would like five silver pieces for them.'

'Show them to someone who understands such things, Madam,' answered the Queen; 'after that we can decide upon the price.'

Turritella, who really loved King Charming as much as she

could love anybody, and was always delighted to get a chance of talking to him, now showed him the bracelets, asking how much he considered them worth. As soon as he saw them he remembered those he had given to Fiordelisa, and turned very pale and sighed deeply, and fell into such sad thought that he quite forgot to answer her. Presently she asked him again, and then he said, with a great effort:

'I believe these bracelets are worth as much as my kingdom. I thought there was only one such pair in the world; but here, it seems, is another.'

Then Turritella went back to the Queen, and asked her what was the lowest price she would take for them.

'More than you would find it easy to pay, Madam,' answered she; 'but if you will manage for me to sleep one night in the Chamber of Echoes, I will give you the emeralds.'

'By all means, my little kitchen-maid,' said Turritella, highly delighted.

The King did not try to find out where the bracelets had come from, not because he did not want to know, but because the only way would have been to ask Turritella, and he disliked her so much that he never spoke to her if he could possibly avoid it. It was he who had told Fiordelisa about the Chamber of Echoes, when he was a Blue Bird. It was a little room below the King's own bed-chamber, and was so ingeniously built that the softest whisper in it was plainly heard in the King's room. Fiordelisa wanted to reproach him for his faithlessness, and could

not imagine a better way than this. So when, by Turritella's orders, she was left there she began to weep and lament, and never ceased until daybreak.

The King's pages told Turritella, when she asked them, what a sobbing and sighing they had heard, and she asked Fiordelisa what it was all about. The Queen answered that she often dreamed and talked aloud.

But by an unlucky chance the King heard nothing of all this, for he took a sleeping draught every night before he lay down, and did not wake up until the sun was high.

The Queen passed the day in great disquietude.

'If he did hear me,' she said, 'could he remain so cruelly indifferent? But if he did not hear me, what can I do to get another chance? I have plenty of jewels, it is true, but nothing remarkable enough to catch Turritella's fancy.'

Just then she thought of the eggs, and broke one, out of which came a little carriage of polished steel ornamented with gold, drawn by six green mice. The coachman was a rose-coloured rat, the postilion a grey one, and the carriage was occupied by the tiniest and most charming figures, who could dance and do wonderful tricks. Fiordelisa clapped her hands and danced for joy when she saw this triumph of magic art, and as soon as it was evening, went to a shady garden-path down which she knew Turritella would pass, and then she made the mice galop, and the tiny people show off their tricks, and sure enough Turritella came, and the moment she saw it all cried:

'Little kitchen-maid, little kitchen-maid, what will you take for your mouse-carriage?'

And the Queen answered:

'Let me sleep once more in the Chamber of Echoes.'

'I won't refuse your request, poor creature,' said Turritella condescendingly.

And then she turned to her ladies and whispered:

'The silly creature does not know how to profit by her chances; so much the better for me.'

When night came Fiordelisa said all the loving words she could think of, but alas! with no better success than before, for the King slept heavily after his draught. One of the pages said:

'This peasant girl must be crazy;' but another answered:

'Yet what she says sounds very sad and touching.'

As for Fiordelisa, she thought the King must have a very hard heart if he could hear how she grieved and yet pay her no attention. She had but one more chance, and on breaking the last egg she found to her great delight that it contained a more marvellous thing than ever. It was a pie made of six birds, cooked to perfection, and yet they were all alive, and singing and talking, and they answered questions and told fortunes in the most amusing way. Taking this treasure Fiordelisa once more set herself to wait in the great hall through which Turritella was sure to pass, and as she sat there one of the King's pages came by, and said to her:

'Well, little kitchen-maid, it is a good thing that the King

always takes a sleeping draught, for if not he would be kept awake all night by your sighing and lamenting.'

Then Fiordelisa knew why the King had not heeded her, and taking a handful of pearls and diamonds out of her sack, she said, 'If you can promise me that to-night the King shall not have his sleeping draught, I will give you all these jewels.'

'Oh! I promise that willingly,' said the page.

At this moment Turritella appeared, and at the first sight of the savoury pie, with the pretty little birds all singing and chattering, she cried: —

'That is an admirable pie, little kitchen-maid. Pray what will you take for it?'

'The usual price,' she answered. 'To sleep once more in the Chamber of Echoes.'

'By all means, only give me the pie,' said the greedy Turritella. And when night was come, Queen Fiordelisa waited until she thought everybody in the palace would be asleep, and then began to lament as before.

'Ah, Charming!' she said, 'what have I ever done that you should forsake me and marry Turritella? If you could only know all I have suffered, and what a weary way I have come to seek you.'

Now the page had faithfully kept his word, and given King Charming a glass of water instead of his usual sleeping draught, so there he lay wide awake, and heard every word Fiordelisa said, and even recognised her voice, though he could not tell where it

came from.

'Ah, Princess!' he said, 'how could you betray me to our cruel enemies when I loved you so dearly?'

Fiordelisa heard him, and answered quickly:

'Find out the little kitchen-maid, and she will explain everything.'

Then the King in a great hurry sent for his pages and said:

'If you can find the little kitchen-maid, bring her to me at once.'

'Nothing could be easier, Sire,' they answered, 'for she is in the Chamber of Echoes.'

The King was very much puzzled when he heard this. How could the lovely Princess Fiordelisa be a little kitchen-maid? or how could a little kitchen-maid have Fiordelisa's own voice? So he dressed hastily, and ran down a little secret staircase which led to the Chamber of Echoes. There, upon a heap of soft cushions, sat his lovely Princess. She had laid aside all her ugly disguises and wore a white silken robe, and her golden hair shone in the soft lamp-light. The King was overjoyed at the sight, and rushed to throw himself at her feet, and asked her a thousand questions without giving her time to answer one. Fiordelisa was equally happy to be with him once more, and nothing troubled them but the remembrance of the Fairy Mazilla. But at this moment in came the Enchanter, and with him a famous Fairy, the same in fact who had given Fiordelisa the eggs. After greeting the King and Queen, they said that as they were united in wishing

to help King Charming, the Fairy Mazilla had no longer any power against him, and he might marry Fiordelisa as soon as he pleased. The King's joy may be imagined, and as soon as it was day the news was spread through the palace, and everybody who saw Fiordelisa loved her directly. When Turritella heard what had happened she came running to the King, and when she saw Fiordelisa with him she was terribly angry, but before she could say a word the Enchanter and the Fairy changed her into a big brown owl, and she floated away out of one of the palace windows, hooting dismally. Then the wedding was held with great splendour, and King Charming and Queen Fiordelisa lived happily ever after.

L'Oiseau Bleu. Par Mme. d'Aulnoy

THE HALF-CHICK

Once upon a time there was a handsome black Spanish hen, who had a large brood of chickens. They were all fine, plump little birds, except the youngest, who was quite unlike his brothers and sisters. Indeed, he was such a strange, queer-looking creature, that when he first chipped his shell his mother could scarcely believe her eyes, he was so different from the twelve other fluffy, downy, soft little chicks who nestled under her wings. This one looked just as if he had been cut in two. He had only one leg, and one wing, and one eye, and he had half a head and half a beak. His mother shook her head sadly as she looked at him and said:

'My youngest born is only a half-chick. He can never grow up a tall handsome cock like his brothers. They will go out into the world and rule over poultry yards of their own; but this poor little fellow will always have to stay at home with his mother.' And she called him Medio Pollito, which is Spanish for half-chick.

Now though Medio Pollito was such an odd, helpless-looking little thing, his mother soon found that he was not at all willing to remain under her wing and protection. Indeed, in character he was as unlike his brothers and sisters as he was in appearance. They were good, obedient chickens, and when the old hen chicked after them, they chirped and ran back to her side. But Medio Pollito had a roving spirit in spite of his one leg, and when

his mother called to him to return to the coop, he pretended that he could not hear, because he had only one ear.

When she took the whole family out for a walk in the fields, Medio Pollito would hop away by himself, and hide among the Indian corn. Many an anxious minute his brothers and sisters had looking for him, while his mother ran to and fro cackling in fear and dismay.

As he grew older he became more self-willed and disobedient, and his manner to his mother was often very rude, and his temper to the other chickens very disagreeable.

One day he had been out for a longer expedition than usual in the fields. On his return he strutted up to his mother with the peculiar little hop and kick which was his way of walking, and cocking his one eye at her in a very bold way he said:

'Mother, I am tired of this life in a dull farmyard, with nothing but a dreary maize field to look at. I'm off to Madrid to see the King.'

'To Madrid, Medio Pollito!' exclaimed his mother; 'why, you silly chick, it would be a long journey for a grown-up cock, and a poor little thing like you would be tired out before you had gone half the distance. No, no, stay at home with your mother, and some day, when you are bigger, we will go a little journey together.'

But Medio Pollito had made up his mind, and he would not listen to his mother's advice, nor to the prayers and entreaties of his brothers and sisters.

'What is the use of our all crowding each other up in this poky little place?' he said. 'When I have a fine courtyard of my own at the King's palace, I shall perhaps ask some of you to come and pay me a short visit,' and scarcely waiting to say good-bye to his family, away he stumped down the high road that led to Madrid.

'Be sure that you are kind and civil to everyone you meet,' called his mother, running after him; but he was in such a hurry to be off, that he did not wait to answer her, or even to look back.

A little later in the day, as he was taking a short cut through a field, he passed a stream. Now the stream was all choked up, and overgrown with weeds and water-plants, so that its waters could not flow freely.

'Oh! Medio Pollito,' it cried, as the half-chick hopped along its banks, 'do come and help me by clearing away these weeds.'

'Help you, indeed!' exclaimed Medio Pollito, tossing his head, and shaking the few feathers in his tail. 'Do you think I have nothing to do but to waste my time on such trifles? Help yourself, and don't trouble busy travellers. I am off to Madrid to see the King,' and hoppity-kick, hoppity-kick, away stumped Medio Pollito.

A little later he came to a fire that had been left by some gipsies in a wood. It was burning very low, and would soon be out.

'Oh! Medio Pollito,' cried the fire, in a weak, wavering voice as the half-chick approached, 'in a few minutes I shall go quite out, unless you put some sticks and dry leaves upon me. Do help

me, or I shall die!'

'Help you, indeed!' answered Medio Pollito. 'I have other things to do. Gather sticks for yourself, and don't trouble me. I am off to Madrid to see the King,' and hoppity-kick, hoppity-kick, away stumped Medio Pollito.

The next morning, as he was getting near Madrid, he passed a large chestnut tree, in whose branches the wind was caught and entangled. 'Oh! Medio Pollito,' called the wind, 'do hop up here, and help me to get free of these branches. I cannot come away, and it is so uncomfortable.'

'It is your own fault for going there,' answered Medio Pollito. 'I can't waste all my morning stopping here to help you. Just shake yourself off, and don't hinder me, for I am off to Madrid to see the King,' and hoppity-kick, hoppity-kick, away stumped Medio Pollito in great glee, for the towers and roofs of Madrid were now in sight. When he entered the town he saw before him a great splendid house, with soldiers standing before the gates. This he knew must be the King's palace, and he determined to hop up to the front gate and wait there until the King came out. But as he was hopping past one of the back windows the King's cook saw him:

'Here is the very thing I want,' he exclaimed, 'for the King has just sent a message to say that he must have chicken broth for his dinner,' and opening the window he stretched out his arm, caught Medio Pollito, and popped him into the broth-pot that was standing near the fire. Oh! how wet and clammy the water felt

as it went over Medio Pollito's head, making his feathers cling to his side.

'Water, water!' he cried in his despair, 'do have pity upon me, and do not wet me like this.'

'Ah! Medio Pollito,' replied the water, 'you would not help me when I was a little stream away on the fields, now you must be punished.'

Then the fire began to burn and scald Medio Pollito, and he danced and hopped from one side of the pot to the other, trying to get away from the heat, and crying out in pain:

'Fire, fire! do not scorch me like this; you can't think how it hurts.'

'Ah! Medio Pollito,' answered the fire, 'you would not help me when I was dying away in the wood. You are being punished.'

At last, just when the pain was so great that Medio Pollito thought he must die, the cook lifted up the lid of the pot to see if the broth was ready for the King's dinner.

'Look here!' he cried in horror, 'this chicken is quite useless.

It is burnt to a cinder. I can't send it up to the royal table;' and opening the window he threw Medio Pollito out into the street. But the wind caught him up, and whirled him through the air so quickly that Medio Pollito could scarcely breathe, and his heart beat against his side till he thought it would break.

'Oh, wind!' at last he gasped out, 'if you hurry me along like this you will kill me. Do let me rest a moment, or – ' but he was so breathless that he could not finish his sentence.

'Ah! Medio Pollito,' replied the wind, 'when I was caught in the branches of the chestnut tree you would not help me; now you are punished.' And he swirled Medio Pollito over the roofs of the houses till they reached the highest church in the town, and there he left him fastened to the top of the steeple.

And there stands Medio Pollito to this day. And if you go to Madrid, and walk through the streets till you come to the highest church, you will see Medio Pollito perched on his one leg on the steeple, with his one wing drooping at his side, and gazing sadly out of his one eye over the town.

Spanish Tradition

THE STORY OF CALIPH STORK

I

Caliph Chasid, of Bagdad, was resting comfortably on his divan one fine afternoon. He was smoking a long pipe, and from time to time he sipped a little coffee which a slave handed to him, and after each sip he stroked his long beard with an air of enjoyment. In short, anyone could see that the Caliph was in an excellent humour. This was, in fact, the best time of day in which to approach him, for just now he was pretty sure to be both affable and in good spirits, and for this reason the Grand Vizier Mansor always chose this hour in which to pay his daily visit.

He arrived as usual this afternoon, but, contrary to his usual custom, with an anxious face. The Caliph withdrew his pipe for a moment from his lips and asked, 'Why do you look so anxious, Grand Vizier?'

The Grand Vizier crossed his arms on his breast and bent low before his master as he answered:

'Oh, my Lord! whether my countenance be anxious or not I know not, but down below, in the court of the palace, is a pedlar with such beautiful things that I cannot help feeling annoyed at having so little money to spare.'

The Caliph, who had wished for some time past to give his Grand Vizier a present, ordered his black slave to bring the pedlar before him at once. The slave soon returned, followed by the pedlar, a short stout man with a swarthy face, and dressed in very ragged clothes. He carried a box containing all manner of wares – strings of pearls, rings, richly mounted pistols, goblets, and combs. The Caliph and his Vizier inspected everything, and the Caliph chose some handsome pistols for himself and Mansor, and a jewelled comb for the Vizier's wife. Just as the pedlar was about to close his box, the Caliph noticed a small drawer, and asked if there was anything else in it for sale. The pedlar opened the drawer and showed them a box containing a black powder, and a scroll written in strange characters, which neither the Caliph nor the Mansor could read.

'I got these two articles from a merchant who had picked them up in the street at Mecca,' said the pedlar. 'I do not know what they may contain, but as they are of no use to me, you are welcome to have them for a trifle.'

The Caliph, who liked to have old manuscripts in his library, even though he could not read them, purchased the scroll and the box, and dismissed the pedlar. Then, being anxious to know what might be the contents of the scroll, he asked the Vizier if he did not know of anyone who might be able to decipher it.

'Most gracious Lord and master,' replied the Vizier, 'near the great Mosque lives a man called Selim the learned, who knows every language under the sun. Send for him; it may be that he

will be able to interpret these mysterious characters.'

The learned Selim was summoned immediately.

'Selim,' said the Caliph, 'I hear you are a scholar. Look well at this scroll and see whether you can read it. If you can, I will give you a robe of honour; but if you fail, I will order you to receive twelve strokes on your cheeks, and five-and-twenty on the soles of your feet, because you have been falsely called Selim the learned.'

Selim prostrated himself and said, 'Be it according to your will, oh master!' Then he gazed long at the scroll. Suddenly he exclaimed: 'May I die, oh, my Lord, if this isn't Latin!'

'Well,' said the Caliph, 'if it is Latin, let us hear what it means.'

So Selim began to translate: 'Thou who mayest find this, praise Allah for his mercy. Whoever shall snuff the powder in this box, and at the same time shall pronounce the word "Mutabor!" can transform himself into any creature he likes, and will understand the language of all animals. When he wishes to resume the human form, he has only to bow three times towards the east, and to repeat the same word. Be careful, however, when wearing the shape of some beast or bird, not to laugh, or thou wilt certainly forget the magic word and remain an animal for ever.'

When Selim the learned had read this, the Caliph was delighted. He made the wise man swear not to tell the matter to anyone, gave him a splendid robe, and dismissed him. Then he said to his Vizier, 'That's what I call a good bargain, Mansor. I am longing for the moment when I can become some animal.

To-morrow morning I shall expect you early; we will go into the country, take some snuff from my box, and then hear what is being said in air, earth, and water.'

II

Next morning Caliph Chasid had barely finished dressing and breakfasting, when the Grand Vizier arrived, according to orders, to accompany him in his expedition. The Caliph stuck the snuff-box in his girdle, and, having desired his servants to remain at home, started off with the Grand Vizier only in attendance. First they walked through the palace gardens, but they looked in vain for some creature which could tempt them to try their magic power. At length the Vizier suggested going further on to a pond which lay beyond the town, and where he had often seen a variety of creatures, especially storks, whose grave, dignified appearance and constant chatter had often attracted his attention.

The Caliph consented, and they went straight to the pond. As soon as they arrived they remarked a stork strutting up and down with a stately air, hunting for frogs, and now and then muttering something to itself. At the same time they saw another stork far above in the sky flying towards the same spot.

'I would wager my beard, most gracious master,' said the Grand Vizier, 'that these two long legs will have a good chat together. How would it be if we turned ourselves into storks?'

'Well said,' replied the Caliph; 'but first let us remember

carefully how we are to become men once more. True! Bow three times towards the east and say "Mutabor!" and I shall be Caliph and you my Grand Vizier again. But for Heaven's sake don't laugh or we are lost!'

As the Caliph spoke he saw the second stork circling round his head and gradually flying towards the earth. Quickly he drew the box from his girdle, took a good pinch of the snuff, and offered one to Mansor, who also took one, and both cried together 'Mutabor!'

Instantly their legs shrivelled up and grew thin and red; their smart yellow slippers turned to clumsy stork's feet, their arms to wings; their necks began to sprout from between their shoulders and grew a yard long; their beards disappeared, and their bodies were covered with feathers.

'You've got a fine long bill, Sir Vizier,' cried the Caliph, after standing for some time lost in astonishment. 'By the beard of the Prophet I never saw such a thing in all my life!'

'My very humble thanks,' replied the Grand Vizier, as he bent his long neck; 'but, if I may venture to say so, your Highness is even handsomer as a stork than as a Caliph. But come, if it so pleases you, let us go near our comrades there and find out whether we really do understand the language of storks.'

Meantime the second stork had reached the ground. It first scraped its bill with its claw, stroked down its feathers, and then advanced towards the first stork. The two newly made storks lost no time in drawing near, and to their amazement overheard the

following conversation:

'Good morning, Dame Longlegs. You are out early this morning!'

'Yes, indeed, dear Chatterbill! I am getting myself a morsel of breakfast. May I offer you a joint of lizard or a frog's thigh?'

'A thousand thanks, but I have really no appetite this morning. I am here for a very different purpose. I am to dance to-day before my father's guests, and I have come to the meadow for a little quiet practice.'

Thereupon the young stork began to move about with the most wonderful steps. The Caliph and Mansor looked on in surprise for some time; but when at last she balanced herself in a picturesque attitude on one leg, and flapped her wings gracefully up and down, they could hold out no longer; a prolonged peal burst from each of their bills, and it was some time before they could recover their composure. The Caliph was the first to collect himself. 'That was the best joke,' said he, 'I've ever seen. It's a pity the stupid creatures were scared away by our laughter, or no doubt they would have sung next!'

Suddenly, however, the Vizier remembered how strictly they had been warned not to laugh during their transformation. He at once communicated his fears to the Caliph, who exclaimed, 'By Mecca and Medina! it would indeed prove but a poor joke if I had to remain a stork for the remainder of my days! Do just try and remember the stupid word, it has slipped my memory.'

'We must bow three times eastwards and say "Mu.. mu.. mu."'

They turned to the east and fell to bowing till their bills touched the ground, but, oh horror – the magic word was quite forgotten, and however often the Caliph bowed and however touchingly his Vizier cried 'Mu.. mu.' they could not recall it, and the unhappy Chasid and Mansor remained storks as they were.

III

The two enchanted birds wandered sadly on through the meadows. In their misery they could not think what to do next. They could not rid themselves of their new forms; there was no use in returning to the town and saying who they were; for who would believe a stork who announced that he was a Caliph; and even if they did believe him, would the people of Bagdad consent to let a stork rule over them?

So they lounged about for several days, supporting themselves on fruits, which, however, they found some difficulty in eating with their long bills. They did not much care to eat frogs or lizards. Their one comfort in their sad plight was the power of flying, and accordingly they often flew over the roofs of Bagdad to see what was going on there.

During the first few days they noticed signs of much disturbance and distress in the streets, but about the fourth day, as they sat on the roof of the palace, they perceived a splendid procession passing below them along the street. Drums and trumpets sounded, a man in a scarlet mantle, embroidered in

gold, sat on a splendidly caparisoned horse surrounded by richly dressed slaves; half Bagdad crowded after him, and they all shouted, 'Hail, Mirza, the Lord of Bagdad!'

The two storks on the palace roof looked at each other, and Caliph Chasid said, 'Can you guess now, Grand Vizier, why I have been enchanted? This Mirza is the son of my deadly enemy, the mighty magician Kaschnur, who in an evil moment vowed vengeance on me. Still I will not despair! Come with me, my faithful friend; we will go to the grave of the Prophet, and perhaps at that sacred spot the spell may be loosed.'

They rose from the palace roof, and spread their wings toward Medina.

But flying was not quite an easy matter, for the two storks had had but little practice as yet.

'Oh, my Lord!' gasped the Vizier, after a couple of hours, 'I can get on no longer; you really fly too quick for me. Besides, it is nearly evening, and we should do well to find some place in which to spend the night.'

Chasib listened with favour to his servant's suggestion, and perceiving in the valley beneath them a ruin which seemed to promise shelter they flew towards it. The building in which they proposed to pass the night had apparently been formerly a castle. Some handsome pillars still stood amongst the heaps of ruins, and several rooms, which yet remained in fair preservation, gave evidence of former splendour. Chasid and his companion wandered along the passages seeking a dry spot, when suddenly

Mansor stood still.

'My Lord and master,' he whispered, 'if it were not absurd for a Grand Vizier, and still more for a stork, to be afraid of ghosts, I should feel quite nervous, for someone, or something close by me, has sighed and moaned quite audibly.'

The Caliph stood still and distinctly heard a low weeping sound which seemed to proceed from a human being rather than from any animal. Full of curiosity he was about to rush towards the spot from whence the sounds of woe came, when the Vizier caught him by the wing with his bill, and implored him not to expose himself to fresh and unknown dangers. The Caliph, however, under whose stork's breast a brave heart beat, tore himself away with the loss of a few feathers, and hurried down a dark passage. He saw a door which stood ajar, and through which he distinctly heard sighs, mingled with sobs. He pushed open the door with his bill, but remained on the threshold, astonished at the sight which met his eyes. On the floor of the ruined chamber – which was but scantily lighted by a small barred window – sat a large screech owl. Big tears rolled from its large round eyes, and in a hoarse voice it uttered its complaints through its crooked beak. As soon as it saw the Caliph and his Vizier – who had crept up meanwhile – it gave vent to a joyful cry. It gently wiped the tears from its eyes with its spotted brown wings, and to the great amazement of the two visitors, addressed them in good human Arabic.

'Welcome, ye storks! You are a good sign of my deliverance,

for it was foretold me that a piece of good fortune should befall me through a stork.'

When the Caliph had recovered from his surprise, he drew up his feet into a graceful position, bent his long neck, and said: 'Oh, screech owl! from your words I am led to believe that we see in you a companion in misfortune. But, alas! your hope that you may attain your deliverance through us is but a vain one. You will know our helplessness when you have heard our story.'

The screech owl begged him to relate it, and the Caliph accordingly told him what we already know.

IV

When the Caliph had ended, the owl thanked him and said: 'You hear my story, and own that I am no less unfortunate than yourselves. My father is the King of the Indies. I, his only daughter, am named Lusa. That magician Kaschnur, who enchanted you, has been the cause of my misfortunes too. He came one day to my father and demanded my hand for his son Mirza. My father – who is rather hasty – ordered him to be thrown downstairs. The wretch not long after managed to approach me under another form, and one day, when I was in the garden, and asked for some refreshment, he brought me – in the disguise of a slave – a draught which changed me at once to this horrid shape. Whilst I was fainting with terror he transported me here, and cried to me with his awful voice: "There shall you

remain, lonely and hideous, despised even by the brutes, till the end of your days, or till some one of his own free will asks you to be his wife. Thus do I avenge myself on you and your proud father."

'Since then many months have passed away. Sad and lonely do I live like any hermit within these walls, avoided by the world and a terror even to animals; the beauties of nature are hidden from me, for I am blind by day, and it is only when the moon sheds her pale light on this spot that the veil falls from my eyes and I can see.' The owl paused, and once more wiped her eyes with her wing, for the recital of her woes had drawn fresh tears from her.

The Caliph fell into deep thought on hearing this story of the Princess. 'If I am not much mistaken,' said he, 'there is some mysterious connection between our misfortunes, but how to find the key to the riddle is the question.'

The owl answered: 'Oh, my Lord! I too feel sure of this, for in my earliest youth a wise woman foretold that a stork would bring me some great happiness, and I think I could tell you how we might save ourselves.' The Caliph was much surprised, and asked her what she meant.

'The Magician who has made us both miserable,' said she, 'comes once a month to these ruins. Not far from this room is a large hall where he is in the habit of feasting with his companions. I have often watched them. They tell each other all about their evil deeds, and possibly the magic word which you have forgotten may be mentioned.'

'Oh, dearest Princess!' exclaimed the Caliph, 'say, when does he come, and where is the hall?'

The owl paused a moment and then said: 'Do not think me unkind, but I can only grant your request on one condition.'

'Speak, speak!' cried Chasid; 'command, I will gladly do whatever you wish!'

'Well,' replied the owl, 'you see I should like to be free too; but this can only be if one of you will offer me his hand in marriage.'

The storks seemed rather taken aback by this suggestion, and the Caliph beckoned to his Vizier to retire and consult with him.

When they were outside the door the Caliph said: 'Grand Vizier, this is a tiresome business. However, you can take her.'

'Indeed!' said the Vizier; 'so that when I go home my wife may scratch my eyes out! Besides, I am an old man, and your Highness is still young and unmarried, and a far more suitable match for a young and lovely Princess.'

'That's just where it is,' sighed the Caliph, whose wings drooped in a dejected manner; 'how do you know she is young and lovely? I call it buying a pig in a poke.'

They argued on for some time, but at length, when the Caliph saw plainly that his Vizier would rather remain a stork to the end of his days than marry the owl, he determined to fulfil the condition himself. The owl was delighted. She owned that they could not have arrived at a better time, as most probably the magicians would meet that very night.

She then proceeded to lead the two storks to the chamber.

They passed through a long dark passage till at length a bright ray of light shone before them through the chinks of a half-ruined wall. When they reached it the owl advised them to keep very quiet. Through the gap near which they stood they could with ease survey the whole of the large hall. It was adorned with splendid carved pillars; a number of coloured lamps replaced the light of day. In the middle of the hall stood a round table covered with a variety of dishes, and about the table was a divan on which eight men were seated. In one of these bad men the two recognised the pedlar who had sold the magic powder. The man next him begged him to relate all his latest doings, and amongst them he told the story of the Caliph and his Vizier.

'And what kind of word did you give them?' asked another old sorcerer.

'A very difficult Latin word; it is "Mutabor."'

V

As soon as the storks heard this they were nearly beside themselves with joy. They ran at such a pace to the door of the ruined castle that the owl could scarcely keep up with them. When they reached it the Caliph turned to the owl, and said with much feeling: 'Deliverer of my friend and myself, as a proof of my eternal gratitude, accept me as your husband.' Then he turned towards the east. Three times the storks bowed their long necks to the sun, which was just rising over the mountains. 'Mutabor!' they

both cried, and in an instant they were once more transformed. In the rapture of their newly-given lives master and servant fell laughing and weeping into each other's arms. Who shall describe their surprise when they at last turned round and beheld standing before them a beautiful lady exquisitely dressed!

With a smile she held out her hand to the Caliph, and asked: 'Do you not recognise your screech owl?'

It was she! The Caliph was so enchanted by her grace and beauty, that he declared being turned into a stork had been the best piece of luck which had ever befallen him. The three set out at once for Bagdad. Fortunately, the Caliph found not only the box with the magic powder, but also his purse in his girdle; he was, therefore, able to buy in the nearest village all they required for their journey, and so at last they reached the gates of Bagdad.

Here the Caliph's arrival created the greatest sensation. He had been quite given up for dead, and the people were greatly rejoiced to see their beloved ruler again.

Their rage with the usurper Mirza, however, was great in proportion. They marched in force to the palace and took the old magician and his son prisoners. The Caliph sent the magician to the room where the Princess had lived as an owl, and there had him hanged. As the son, however, knew nothing of his father's acts, the Caliph gave him his choice between death and a pinch of the magic snuff. When he chose the latter, the Grand Vizier handed him the box. One good pinch, and the magic word transformed him to a stork. The Caliph ordered him to be

confined in an iron cage, and placed in the palace gardens.

Caliph Chasid lived long and happily with his wife the Princess. His merriest time was when the Grand Vizier visited him in the afternoon; and when the Caliph was in particularly high spirits he would condescend to mimic the Vizier's appearance when he was a stork. He would strut gravely, and with well-stiffened legs, up and down the room, chattering, and showing how he had vainly bowed to the east and cried 'Mu.. Mu.' The Caliphess and her children were always much entertained by this performance; but when the Caliph went on nodding and bowing, and calling 'Mu.. mu.' too long, the Vizier would threaten laughingly to tell the Caliphess the subject of the discussion carried on one night outside the door of Princess Screech Owl.

THE ENCHANTED WATCH

Once upon a time there lived a rich man who had three sons. When they grew up, he sent the eldest to travel and see the world, and three years passed before his family saw him again. Then he returned, magnificently dressed, and his father was so delighted with his behaviour, that he gave a great feast in his honour, to which all the relations and friends were invited.

When the rejoicings were ended, the second son begged leave of his father to go in his turn to travel and mix with the world. The father was enchanted at the request, and gave him plenty of money for his expenses, saying, 'If you behave as well as your brother, I will do honour to you as I did to him.' The young man promised to do his best, and his conduct during three years was all that it should be. Then he went home, and his father was so pleased with him that his feast of welcome was even more splendid than the one before.

The third brother, whose name was Jenik, or Johnnie, was considered the most foolish of the three. He never did anything at home except sit over the stove and dirty himself with the ashes; but he also begged his father's leave to travel for three years. 'Go if you like, you idiot; but what good will it do you?'

The youth paid no heed to his father's observations as long as he obtained permission to go. The father saw him depart with joy, glad to get rid of him, and gave him a handsome sum of

money for his needs.

Once, as he was making one of his journeys, Jenik chanced to cross a meadow where some shepherds were just about to kill a dog. He entreated them to spare it, and to give it to him instead, which they willingly did, and he went on his way, followed by the dog. A little further on he came upon a cat, which someone was going to put to death. He implored its life, and the cat followed him. Finally, in another place, he saved a serpent, which was also handed over to him, and now they made a party of four – the dog behind Jenik, the cat behind the dog, and the serpent behind the cat.

Then the serpent said to Jenik, 'Go wherever you see me go,' for in the autumn, when all the serpents hide themselves in their holes, this serpent was going in search of his king, who was king of all the snakes.

Then he added: 'My king will scold me for my long absence, everyone else is housed for the winter, and I am very late. I shall have to tell him what danger I have been in, and how, without your help, I should certainly have lost my life. The king will ask what you would like in return, and be sure you beg for the watch which hangs on the wall. It has all sorts of wonderful properties, you only need to rub it to get whatever you like.'

No sooner said than done. Jenik became the master of the watch, and the moment he got out he wished to put its virtues to the proof. He was hungry, and thought it would be delightful to eat in the meadow a loaf of new bread and a steak of good beef

washed down by a flask of wine, so he scratched the watch, and in an instant it was all before him. Imagine his joy!

Evening soon came, and Jenik rubbed his watch, and thought it would be very pleasant to have a room with a comfortable bed and a good supper. In an instant they were all before him. After supper he went to bed and slept till morning, as every honest man ought to do. Then he set forth for his father's house, his mind dwelling on the feast that would be awaiting him. But as he returned in the same old clothes in which he went away, his father flew into a great rage, and refused to do anything for him. Jenik went to his old place near the stove, and dirtied himself in the ashes without anybody minding.

The third day, feeling rather dull, he thought it would be nice to see a three-story house filled with beautiful furniture, and with vessels of silver and gold. So he rubbed the watch, and there it all was. Jenik went to look for his father, and said to him: 'You offered me no feast of welcome, but permit me to give one to you, and come and let me show you my plate.'

The father was much astonished, and longed to know where his son had got all this wealth. Jenik did not reply, but begged him to invite all their relations and friends to a grand banquet.

So the father invited all the world, and everyone was amazed to see such splendid things, so much plate, and so many fine dishes on the table. After the first course Jenik prayed his father to invite the King, and his daughter the Princess. He rubbed his watch and wished for a carriage ornamented with gold and silver, and

drawn by six horses, with harness glittering with precious stones. The father did not dare to sit in this gorgeous coach, but went to the palace on foot. The King and his daughter were immensely surprised with the beauty of the carriage, and mounted the steps at once to go to Jenik's banquet. Then Jenik rubbed his watch afresh, and wished that for six miles the way to the house should be paved with marble. Who ever felt so astonished as the King? Never had he travelled over such a gorgeous road.

When Jenik heard the wheels of the carriage, he rubbed his watch and wished for a still more beautiful house, four stories high, and hung with gold, silver, and damask; filled with wonderful tables, covered with dishes such as no king had ever eaten before. The King, the Queen, and the Princess were speechless with surprise. Never had they seen such a splendid palace, nor such a high feast! At dessert the King asked Jenik's father to give him the young man for a son-in-law. No sooner said than done! The marriage took place at once, and the King returned to his own palace, and left Jenik with his wife in the enchanted house.

Now Jenik was not a very clever man, and at the end of a very short time he began to bore his wife. She inquired how he managed to build palaces and to get so many precious things. He told her all about the watch, and she never rested till she had stolen the precious talisman. One night she took the watch, rubbed it, and wished for a carriage drawn by four horses; and in this carriage she at once set out for her father's palace. There

she called to her own attendants, bade them follow her into the carriage, and drove straight to the sea-side. Then she rubbed her watch, and wished that the sea might be crossed by a bridge, and that a magnificent palace might arise in the middle of the sea. No sooner said than done. The Princess entered the house, rubbed her watch, and in an instant the bridge was gone.

Left alone, Jenik felt very miserable. His father, mother, and brothers, and, indeed, everybody else, all laughed at him. Nothing remained to him but the cat and dog whose lives he had once saved. He took them with him and went far away, for he could no longer live with his family. He reached at last a great desert, and saw some crows flying towards a mountain. One of them was a long way behind, and when he arrived his brothers inquired what had made him so late. 'Winter is here,' they said, 'and it is time to fly to other countries.' He told them that he had seen in the middle of the sea the most wonderful house that ever was built.

On hearing this, Jenik at once concluded that this must be the hiding-place of his wife. So he proceeded directly to the shore with his dog and his cat. When he arrived on the beach, he said to the dog: 'You are an excellent swimmer, and you, little one, are very light; jump on the dog's back and he will take you to the palace. Once there, he will hide himself near the door, and you must steal secretly in and try to get hold of my watch.'

No sooner said than done. The two animals crossed the sea; the dog hid near the house, and the cat stole into the chamber.

The Princess recognised him, and guessed why he had come; and she took the watch down to the cellar and locked it in a box. But the cat wriggled its way into the cellar, and the moment the Princess turned her back, he scratched and scratched till he had made a hole in the box. Then he took the watch between his teeth, and waited quietly till the Princess came back. Scarcely had she opened the door when the cat was outside, and the watch into the bargain.

The cat was no sooner beyond the gates than she said to the dog:

'We are going to cross the sea; be very careful not to speak to me.'

The dog laid this to heart and said nothing; but when they approached the shore he could not help asking, 'Have you got the watch?'

The cat did not answer – he was afraid that he might let the talisman fall. When they touched the shore the dog repeated his question.

'Yes,' said the cat.

And the watch fell into the sea. Then our two friends began each to accuse the other, and both looked sorrowfully at the place where their treasure had fallen in. Suddenly a fish appeared near the edge of the sea. The cat seized it, and thought it would make them a good supper.

'I have nine little children,' cried the fish. 'Spare the father of a family!'

'Granted,' replied the cat; 'but on condition that you find our watch.'

The fish executed his commission, and they brought the treasure back to their master. Jenik rubbed the watch and wished that the palace, with the Princess and all its inhabitants, should be swallowed up in the sea. No sooner said than done. Jenik returned to his parents, and he and his watch, his cat and his dog, lived together happily to the end of their days.

Deulin

ROSANELLA

Everybody knows that though the fairies live hundreds of years they do sometimes die, and especially as they are obliged to pass one day in every week under the form of some animal, when of course they are liable to accident. It was in this way that death once overtook the Queen of the Fairies, and it became necessary to call a general assembly to elect a new sovereign. After much discussion, it appeared that the choice lay between two fairies, one called Surcantine and the other Paridamie; and their claims were so equal that it was impossible without injustice to prefer one to the other. Under these circumstances it was unanimously decided that whichever of the two could show to the world the greatest wonder should be Queen; but it was to be a special kind of wonder, no moving of mountains or any such common fairy tricks would do. Surcantine, therefore, resolved that she would bring up a Prince whom nothing could make constant. While Paridamie decided to display to admiring mortals a Princess so charming that no one could see her without falling in love with her. They were allowed to take their own time, and meanwhile the four oldest fairies were to attend to the affairs of the kingdom.

Now Paridamie had for a long time been very friendly with King Bardondon, who was a most accomplished Prince, and whose court was the model of what a court should be. His Queen, Balanice, was also charming; indeed it is rare to find a husband

and wife so perfectly of one mind about everything. They had one little daughter, whom they had named 'Rosanella,' because she had a little pink rose printed upon her white throat. From her earliest infancy she had shown the most astonishing intelligence, and the courtiers knew her smart sayings by heart, and repeated them on all occasions. In the middle of the night following the assembly of fairies, Queen Balanice woke up with a shriek, and when her maids of honour ran to see what was the matter, they found she had had a frightful dream.

'I thought,' said she, 'that my little daughter had changed into a bouquet of roses, and that as I held it in my hand a bird swooped down suddenly and snatched it from me and carried it away.'

'Let some one run and see that all is well with the Princess,' she added.

So they ran; but what was their dismay when they found that the cradle was empty; and though they sought high and low, not a trace of Rosanella could they discover. The Queen was inconsolable, and so, indeed, was the King, only being a man he did not say quite so much about his feelings. He presently proposed to Balanice that they should spend a few days at one of their palaces in the country; and to this she willingly agreed, since her grief made the gaiety of the capital distasteful to her. One lovely summer evening, as they sat together on a shady lawn shaped like a star, from which radiated twelve splendid avenues of trees, the Queen looked round and saw a charming peasant-girl approaching by each path, and what was still more singular

was that everyone carried something in a basket which appeared to occupy her whole attention. As each drew near she laid her basket at Balanice's feet, saying:

'Charming Queen, may this be some slight consolation to you in your unhappiness!'

The Queen hastily opened the baskets, and found in each a lovely baby-girl, about the same age as the little Princess for whom she sorrowed so deeply. At first the sight of them renewed her grief; but presently their charms so gained upon her that she forgot her melancholy in providing them with nursery-maids, cradle-rockers, and ladies-in-waiting, and in sending hither and thither for swings and dolls and tops, and bushels of the finest sweetmeats.

Oddly enough, every baby had upon its throat a tiny pink rose. The Queen found it so difficult to decide on suitable names for all of them, that until she could settle the matter she chose a special colour for everyone, by which it was known, so that when they were all together they looked like nothing so much as a nosegay of gay flowers. As they grew older it became evident that though they were all remarkably intelligent, and profited equally by the education they received, yet they differed one from another in disposition, so much so that they gradually ceased to be known as 'Pearl,' or 'Primrose,' or whatever might have been their colour, and the Queen instead would say:

'Where is my Sweet?' or 'my Beautiful,' or 'my Gay.'

Of course, with all these charms they had lovers by the dozen.

Not only in their own court, but princes from afar, who were constantly arriving, attracted by the reports which were spread abroad; but these lovely girls, the first Maids of Honour, were as discreet as they were beautiful, and favoured no one.

But let us return to Surcantine. She had fixed upon the son of a king who was cousin to Bardondon, to bring up as her fickle Prince. She had before, at his christening, given him all the graces of mind and body that a prince could possibly require; but now she redoubled her efforts, and spared no pains in adding every imaginable charm and fascination. So that whether he happened to be cross or amiable, splendidly or simply attired, serious or frivolous, he was always perfectly irresistible! In truth, he was a charming young fellow, since the Fairy had given him the best heart in the world as well as the best head, and had left nothing to be desired but – constancy. For it cannot be denied that Prince Mirliflor was a desperate flirt, and as fickle as the wind; so much so, that by the time he arrived at his eighteenth birthday there was not a heart left for him to conquer in his father's kingdom – they were all his own, and he was tired of everyone! Things were in this state when he was invited to visit the court of his father's cousin, King Bardondon.

Imagine his feelings when he arrived and was presented at once to twelve of the loveliest creatures in the world, and his embarrassment was heightened by the fact that they all liked him as much as he liked each one of them, so that things came to such a pass that he was never happy a single instant without them. For

could he not whisper soft speeches to Sweet, and laugh with Joy, while he looked at Beauty? And in his more serious moments what could be pleasanter than to talk to Grave upon some shady lawn, while he held the hand of Loving in his own, and all the others lingered near in sympathetic silence? For the first time in his life he really loved, though the object of his devotion was not one person, but twelve, to whom he was equally attached, and even Surcantine was deceived into thinking that this was indeed the height of inconstancy. But Paridamie said not a word.

In vain did Prince Mirliflor's father write commanding him to return, and proposing for him one good match after another. Nothing in the world could tear him from his twelve enchantresses.

One day the Queen gave a large garden-party, and just as the guests were all assembled, and Prince Mirliflor was as usual dividing his attentions between the twelve beauties, a humming of bees was heard. The Rose-maidens, fearing their stings, uttered little shrieks, and fled all together to a distance from the rest of the company. Immediately, to the horror of all who were looking on, the bees pursued them, and, growing suddenly to an enormous size, pounced each upon a maiden and carried her off into the air, and in an instant they were all lost to view. This amazing occurrence plunged the whole court into the deepest affliction, and Prince Mirliflor, after giving way to the most violent grief at first, fell gradually into a state of such deep dejection that it was feared if nothing could rouse him he would

certainly die. Surcantine came in all haste to see what she could do for her darling, but he rejected with scorn all the portraits of lovely princesses which she offered him for his collection. In short, it was evident that he was in a bad way, and the Fairy was at her wits' end. One day, as he wandered about absorbed in melancholy reflections, he heard sudden shouts and exclamations of amazement, and if he had taken the trouble to look up he could not have helped being as astonished as everyone else, for through the air a chariot of crystal was slowly approaching which glittered in the sunshine. Six lovely maidens with shining wings drew it by rose-coloured ribbons, while a whole flight of others, equally beautiful, were holding long garlands of roses crossed above it, so as to form a complete canopy. In it sat the Fairy Paridamie, and by her side a Princess whose beauty positively dazzled all who saw her. At the foot of the great staircase they descended, and proceeded to the Queen's apartments, though everyone had run together to see this marvel, till it was quite difficult to make a way through the crowd; and exclamations of wonder rose on all sides at the loveliness of the strange Princess. 'Great Queen,' said Paridamie, 'permit me to restore to you your daughter Rosanella, whom I stole out of her cradle.'

After the first transports of joy were over the Queen said to Paridamie:

'But my twelve lovely ones, are they lost to me for ever? Shall I never see them again?'

But Paridamie only said:

'Very soon you will cease to miss them!' in a tone that evidently meant 'Don't ask me any more questions.' And then mounting again into her chariot she swiftly disappeared.

The news of his beautiful cousin's arrival was soon carried to the Prince, but he had hardly the heart to go and see her. However, it became absolutely necessary that he should pay his respects, and he had scarcely been five minutes in her presence before it seemed to him that she combined in her own charming person all the gifts and graces which had so attracted him in the twelve Rose-maidens whose loss he had so truly mourned; and after all it is really more satisfactory to make love to one person at a time. So it came to pass that before he knew where he was he was entreating his lovely cousin to marry him, and the moment the words had left his lips, Paridamie appeared, smiling and triumphant, in the chariot of the Queen of the Fairies, for by that time they had all heard of her success, and declared her to have earned the kingdom. She had to give a full account of how she had stolen Rosanella from her cradle, and divided her character into twelve parts, that each might charm Prince Mirliflor, and when once more united might cure him of his inconstancy once and for ever.

And as one more proof of the fascination of the whole Rosanella, I may tell you that even the defeated Surcantine sent her a wedding gift, and was present at the ceremony which took place as soon as the guests could arrive. Prince Mirliflor was constant for the rest of his life. And indeed who would not have

been in his place? As for Rosanella, she loved him as much as all the twelve beauties put together, so they reigned in peace and happiness to the end of their long lives.

By the Comte de Caylus

SYLVAIN AND JOCOSA

Once upon a time there lived in the same village two children, one called Sylvain and the other Jocosa, who were both remarkable for beauty and intelligence. It happened that their parents were not on terms of friendship with one another, on account of some old quarrel, which had, however, taken place so long ago, that they had quite forgotten what it was all about, and only kept up the feud from force of habit. Sylvain and Jocosa for their parts were far from sharing this enmity, and indeed were never happy when apart. Day after day they fed their flocks of sheep together, and spent the long sunshiny hours in playing, or resting upon some shady bank. It happened one day that the Fairy of the Meadows passed by and saw them, and was so much attracted by their pretty faces and gentle manners that she took them under her protection, and the older they grew the dearer they became to her. At first she showed her interest by leaving in their favourite haunts many little gifts such as they delighted to offer one to the other, for they loved each other so much that their first thought was always, 'What will Jocosa like?' or, 'What will please Sylvain?' And the Fairy took a great delight in their innocent enjoyment of the cakes and sweetmeats she gave them nearly every day. When they were grown up she resolved to make herself known to them, and chose a time when they were sheltering from the noonday sun in the deep shade of a flowery

hedgerow. They were startled at first by the sudden apparition of a tall and slender lady, dressed all in green, and crowned with a garland of flowers. But when she spoke to them sweetly, and told them how she had always loved them, and that it was she who had given them all the pretty things which it had so surprised them to find, they thanked her gratefully, and took pleasure in answering the questions she put to them. When she presently bade them farewell, she told them never to tell anyone else that they had seen her. 'You will often see me again,' added she, 'and I shall be with you frequently, even when you do not see me.' So saying she vanished, leaving them in a state of great wonder and excitement. After this she came often, and taught them numbers of things, and showed them many of the marvels of her beautiful kingdom, and at last one day she said to them, 'You know that I have always been kind to you; now I think it is time you did something for me in your turn. You both remember the fountain I call my favourite? Promise me that every morning before the sun rises you will go to it and clear away every stone that impedes its course, and every dead leaf or broken twig that sullies its clear waters. I shall take it as a proof of your gratitude to me if you neither forget nor delay this duty, and I promise that so long as the sun's earliest rays find my favourite spring the clearest and sweetest in all my meadows, you two shall not be parted from one another.'

Sylvain and Jocosa willingly undertook this service, and indeed felt that it was but a very small thing in return for all that

the fairy had given and promised to them. So for a long time the fountain was tended with the most scrupulous care, and was the clearest and prettiest in all the country round. But one morning in the spring, long before the sun rose, they were hastening towards it from opposite directions, when, tempted by the beauty of the myriads of gay flowers which grew thickly on all sides, they paused each to gather some for the other.

'I will make Sylvain a garland,' said Jocosa, and 'How pretty Jocosa will look in this crown!' thought Sylvain.

Hither and thither they strayed, led ever farther and farther, for the brightest flowers seemed always just beyond them, until at last they were startled by the first bright rays of the rising sun. With one accord they turned and ran towards the fountain, reaching it at the same moment, though from opposite sides. But what was their horror to see its usually tranquil waters seething and bubbling, and even as they looked down rushed a mighty stream, which entirely engulfed it, and Sylvain and Jocosa found themselves parted by a wide and swiftly-rushing river. All this had happened with such rapidity that they had only time to utter a cry, and each to hold up to the other the flowers they had gathered; but this was explanation enough. Twenty times did Sylvain throw himself into the turbulent waters, hoping to be able to swim to the other side, but each time an irresistible force drove him back upon the bank he had just quitted, while, as for Jocosa, she even essayed to cross the flood upon a tree which came floating down torn up by the roots, but her efforts were

equally useless. Then with heavy hearts they set out to follow the course of the stream, which had now grown so wide that it was only with difficulty they could distinguish each other. Night and day, over mountains and through valleys, in cold or in heat, they struggled on, enduring fatigue and hunger and every hardship, and consoled only by the hope of meeting once more – until three years had passed, and at last they stood upon the cliffs where the river flowed into the mighty sea.

And now they seemed farther apart than ever, and in despair they tried once more to throw themselves into the foaming waves. But the Fairy of the Meadows, who had really never ceased to watch over them, did not intend that they should be drowned at last, so she hastily waved her wand, and immediately they found themselves standing side by side upon the golden sand. You may imagine their joy and delight when they realised that their weary struggle was ended, and their utter contentment as they clasped each other by the hand. They had so much to say that they hardly knew where to begin, but they agreed in blaming themselves bitterly for the negligence which had caused all their trouble; and when she heard this the Fairy immediately appeared to them. They threw themselves at her feet and implored her forgiveness, which she granted freely, and promised at the same time that now their punishment was ended she would always befriend them. Then she sent for her chariot of green rushes, ornamented with May dew-drops, which she particularly valued and always collected with great care; and ordered her six short-

tailed moles to carry them all back to the well-known pastures, which they did in a remarkably short time; and Sylvain and Jocosa were overjoyed to see their dearly-loved home once more after all their toilful wanderings. The Fairy, who had set her mind upon securing their happiness, had in their absence quite made up the quarrel between their parents, and gained their consent to the marriage of the faithful lovers; and now she conducted them to the most charming little cottage that can be imagined, close to the fountain, which had once more resumed its peaceful aspect, and flowed gently down into the little brook which enclosed the garden and orchard and pasture which belonged to the cottage. Indeed, nothing more could have been thought of, either for Sylvain and Jocosa or for their flocks; and their delight satisfied even the Fairy who had planned it all to please them. When they had explored and admired until they were tired they sat down to rest under the rose-covered porch, and the Fairy said that to pass the time until the wedding guests whom she had invited could arrive she would tell them a story. This is it:

The Yellow Bird

Once upon a time a Fairy, who had somehow or other got into mischief, was condemned by the High Court of Fairyland to live for several years under the form of some creature, and at the moment of resuming her natural appearance once again to make the fortune of two men. It was left to her to

choose what form she would take, and because she loved yellow she transformed herself into a lovely bird with shining golden feathers such as no one had ever seen before. When the time of her punishment was at an end the beautiful yellow bird flew to Bagdad, and let herself be caught by a Fowler at the precise moment when Badi-al-Zaman was walking up and down outside his magnificent summer palace. This Badi-al-Zaman – whose name means 'Wonder-of-the-World' – was looked upon in Bagdad as the most fortunate creature under the sun, because of his vast wealth. But really, what with anxiety about his riches and being weary of everything, and always desiring something he had not, he never knew a moment's real happiness. Even now he had come out of his palace, which was large and splendid enough for fifty kings, weary and cross because he could find nothing new to amuse him. The Fowler thought that this would be a favourable opportunity for offering him the marvellous bird, which he felt certain he would buy the instant he saw it. And he was not mistaken, for when Badi-al-Zaman took the lovely prisoner into his own hands, he saw written under its right wing the words, 'He who eats my head will become a king,' and under its left wing, 'He who eats my heart will find a hundred gold pieces under his pillow every morning.' In spite of all his wealth he at once began to desire the promised gold, and the bargain was soon completed. Then the difficulty arose as to how the bird was to be cooked; for among all his army of servants not one could Badi-al-Zaman trust. At last he asked the Fowler if he were

married, and on hearing that he was he bade him take the bird home with him and tell his wife to cook it.

'Perhaps,' said he, 'this will give me an appetite, which I have not had for many a long day, and if so your wife shall have a hundred pieces of silver.'

The Fowler with great joy ran home to his wife, who speedily made a savoury stew of the Yellow Bird. But when Badi-al-Zaman reached the cottage and began eagerly to search in the dish for its head and its heart he could not find either of them, and turned to the Fowler's wife in a furious rage. She was so terrified that she fell upon her knees before him and confessed that her two children had come in just before he arrived, and had so teased her for some of the dish she was preparing that she had presently given the head to one and the heart to the other, since these morsels are not generally much esteemed; and Badi-al-Zaman rushed from the cottage vowing vengeance against the whole family. The wrath of a rich man is generally to be feared, so the Fowler and his wife resolved to send their children out of harm's way; but the wife, to console her husband, confided to him that she had purposely given them the head and heart of the bird because she had been able to read what was written under its wings. So, believing that their children's fortunes were made, they embraced them and sent them forth, bidding them get as far away as possible, to take different roads, and to send news of their welfare. For themselves, they remained hidden and disguised in the town, which was really rather clever of them; but very soon

afterwards Badi-al-Zaman died of vexation and annoyance at the loss of the promised treasure, and then they went back to their cottage to wait for news of their children. The younger, who had eaten the heart of the Yellow Bird, very soon found out what it had done for him, for each morning when he awoke he found a purse containing a hundred gold pieces under his pillow. But, as all poor people may remember for their consolation, nothing in the world causes so much trouble or requires so much care as a great treasure. Consequently, the Fowler's son, who spent with reckless profusion and was supposed to be possessed of a great hoard of gold, was before very long attacked by robbers, and in trying to defend himself was so badly wounded that he died.

The elder brother, who had eaten the Yellow Bird's head, travelled a long way without meeting with any particular adventure, until at last he reached a large city in Asia, which was all in an uproar over the choosing of a new Emir. All the principal citizens had formed themselves into two parties, and it was not until after a prolonged squabble that they agreed that the person to whom the most singular thing happened should be Emir. Our young traveller entered the town at this juncture, with his agreeable face and jaunty air, and all at once felt something alight upon his head, which proved to be a snow-white pigeon. Thereupon all the people began to stare, and to run after him, so that he presently reached the palace with the pigeon upon his head and all the inhabitants of the city at his heels, and before he knew where he was they made him Emir, to his great

astonishment.

As there is nothing more agreeable than to command, and nothing to which people get accustomed more quickly, the young Emir soon felt quite at his ease in his new position; but this did not prevent him from making every kind of mistake, and so misgoverning the kingdom that at last the whole city rose in revolt and deprived him at once of his authority and his life – a punishment which he richly deserved, for in the days of his prosperity he disowned the Fowler and his wife, and allowed them to die in poverty.

'I have told you this story, my dear Sylvain and Jocosa,' added the Fairy, 'to prove to you that this little cottage and all that belongs to it is a gift more likely to bring you happiness and contentment than many things that would at first seem grander and more desirable. If you will faithfully promise me to till your fields and feed your flocks, and will keep your word better than you did before, I will see that you never lack anything that is really for your good.'

Sylvain and Jocosa gave their faithful promise, and as they kept it they always enjoyed peace and prosperity. The Fairy had asked all their friends and neighbours to their wedding, which took place at once with great festivities and rejoicings, and they lived to a good old age, always loving one another with all their hearts.

By the Comte de Caylus

FAIRY GIFTS

It generally happens that people's surroundings reflect more or less accurately their minds and dispositions, so perhaps that is why the Flower Fairy lived in a lovely palace, with the most delightful garden you can imagine, full of flowers, and trees, and fountains, and fish-ponds, and everything nice. For the Fairy herself was so kind and charming that everybody loved her, and all the young princes and princesses who formed her court, were as happy as the day was long, simply because they were near her. They came to her when they were quite tiny, and never left her until they were grown up and had to go away into the great world; and when that time came she gave to each whatever gift he asked of her. But it is chiefly of the Princess Sylvia that you are going to hear now. The Fairy loved her with all her heart, for she was at once original and gentle, and she had nearly reached the age at which the gifts were generally bestowed. However, the Fairy had a great wish to know how the other princesses who had grown up and left her, were prospering, and before the time came for Sylvia to go herself, she resolved to send her to some of them. So one day her chariot, drawn by butterflies, was made ready, and the Fairy said: 'Sylvia, I am going to send you to the court of Iris; she will receive you with pleasure for my sake as well as for your own. In two months you may come back to me again, and I shall expect you to tell me what you think of her.'

Sylvia was very unwilling to go away, but as the Fairy wished it she said nothing – only when the two months were over she stepped joyfully into the butterfly chariot, and could not get back quickly enough to the Flower-Fairy, who, for her part, was equally delighted to see her again.

'Now, child,' said she, 'tell me what impression you have received.'

'You sent me, madam,' answered Sylvia, 'to the Court of Iris, on whom you had bestowed the gift of beauty. She never tells anyone, however, that it was your gift, though she often speaks of your kindness in general. It seemed to me that her loveliness, which fairly dazzled me at first, had absolutely deprived her of the use of any of her other gifts or graces. In allowing herself to be seen, she appeared to think that she was doing all that could possibly be required of her. But, unfortunately, while I was still with her she became seriously ill, and though she presently recovered, her beauty is entirely gone, so that she hates the very sight of herself, and is in despair. She entreated me to tell you what had happened, and to beg you, in pity, to give her beauty back to her. And, indeed, she does need it terribly, for all the things in her that were tolerable, and even agreeable, when she was so pretty, seem quite different now she is ugly, and it is so long since she thought of using her mind or her natural cleverness, that I really don't think she has any left now. She is quite aware of all this herself, so you may imagine how unhappy she is, and how earnestly she begs for your aid.'

'You have told me what I wanted to know,' cried the Fairy, 'but alas! I cannot help her; my gifts can be given but once.'

Some time passed in all the usual delights of the Flower-Fairy's palace, and then she sent for Sylvia again, and told her she was to stay for a little while with the Princess Daphne, and accordingly the butterflies whisked her off, and set her down in quite a strange kingdom. But she had only been there a very little time before a wandering butterfly brought a message from her to the Fairy, begging that she might be sent for as soon as possible, and before very long she was allowed to return.

'Ah! madam,' cried she, 'what a place you sent me to that time!'

'Why, what was the matter?' asked the Fairy. 'Daphne was one of the princesses who asked for the gift of eloquence, if I remember rightly.'

'And very ill the gift of eloquence becomes a woman,' replied Sylvia, with an air of conviction. 'It is true that she speaks well, and her expressions are well chosen; but then she never leaves off talking, and though at first one may be amused, one ends by being wearied to death. Above all things she loves any assembly for settling the affairs of her kingdom, for on those occasions she can talk and talk without fear of interruption; but, even then, the moment it is over she is ready to begin again about anything or nothing, as the case may be. Oh! how glad I was to come away I cannot tell you.'

The Fairy smiled at Sylvia's unfeigned disgust at her late

experience; but after allowing her a little time to recover she sent her to the Court of the Princess Cynthia, where she left her for three months. At the end of that time Sylvia came back to her with all the joy and contentment that one feels at being once more beside a dear friend. The Fairy, as usual, was anxious to hear what she thought of Cynthia, who had always been amiable, and to whom she had given the gift of pleasing.

'I thought at first,' said Sylvia, 'that she must be the happiest Princess in the world; she had a thousand lovers who vied with one another in their efforts to please and gratify her. Indeed, I had nearly decided that I would ask a similar gift.'

'Have you altered your mind, then?' interrupted the Fairy.

'Yes, indeed, madam,' replied Sylvia; 'and I will tell you why. The longer I stayed the more I saw that Cynthia was not really happy. In her desire to please everyone she ceased to be sincere, and degenerated into a mere coquette; and even her lovers felt that the charms and fascinations which were exercised upon all who approached her without distinction were valueless, so that in the end they ceased to care for them, and went away disdainfully.'

'I am pleased with you, child,' said the Fairy; 'enjoy yourself here for awhile and presently you shall go to Phyllida.'

Sylvia was glad to have leisure to think, for she could not make up her mind at all what she should ask for herself, and the time was drawing very near. However, before very long the Fairy sent her to Phyllida, and waited for her report with unabated interest.

'I reached her court safely,' said Sylvia, 'and she received me

with much kindness, and immediately began to exercise upon me that brilliant wit which you had bestowed upon her. I confess that I was fascinated by it, and for a week thought that nothing could be more desirable; the time passed like magic, so great was the charm of her society. But I ended by ceasing to covet that gift more than any of the others I have seen, for, like the gift of pleasing, it cannot really give satisfaction. By degrees I wearied of what had so delighted me at first, especially as I perceived more and more plainly that it is impossible to be constantly smart and amusing without being frequently ill-natured, and too apt to turn all things, even the most serious, into mere occasions for a brilliant jest.'

The Fairy in her heart agreed with Sylvia's conclusions, and felt pleased with herself for having brought her up so well.

But now the time was come for Sylvia to receive her gift, and all her companions were assembled; the Fairy stood in the midst and in the usual manner asked what she would take with her into the great world.

Sylvia paused for a moment, and then answered: 'A quiet spirit.' And the Fairy granted her request.

This lovely gift makes life a constant happiness to its possessor, and to all who are brought into contact with her. She has all the beauty of gentleness and contentment in her sweet face; and if at times it seems less lovely through some chance grief or disquietude, the hardest thing that one ever hears said is:

'Sylvia's dear face is pale to-day. It grieves one to see her so.'

And when, on the contrary, she is gay and joyful, the sunshine of her presence rejoices all who have the happiness of being near her.

By the Comte de Caylus

PRINCE NARCISSUS AND THE PRINCESS POTENTILLA

Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen who, though it is a very long while since they died, were much the same in their tastes and pursuits as people nowadays. The King, who was called Cloverleaf, liked hunting better than anything else; but he nevertheless bestowed as much care upon his kingdom as he felt equal to – that is to say, he never made an end of folding and unfolding the State documents. As to the Queen, she had once been very pretty, and she liked to believe that she was so still, which is, of course, always made quite easy for queens. Her name was Frivola, and her one occupation in life was the pursuit of amusement. Balls, masquerades, and picnics followed one another in rapid succession, as fast as she could arrange them, and you may imagine that under these circumstances the kingdom was somewhat neglected. As a matter of fact, if anyone had a fancy for a town, or a province, he helped himself to it; but as long as the King had his horses and dogs, and the Queen her musicians and her actors, they did not trouble themselves about the matter. King Cloverleaf and Queen Frivola had but one child, and this Princess had from her very babyhood been so beautiful, that by the time she was four years old the Queen was desperately jealous of her, and so fearful that when she was grown up she

would be more admired than herself, that she resolved to keep her hidden away out of sight. To this end she caused a little house to be built not far beyond the Palace gardens, on the bank of a river. This was surrounded by a high wall, and in it the charming Potentilla was imprisoned. Her nurse, who was dumb, took care of her, and the necessaries of life were conveyed to her through a little window in the wall, while guards were always pacing to and fro outside, with orders to cut off the head of anyone who tried to approach, which they would certainly have done without thinking twice about it. The Queen told everyone, with much pretended sorrow, that the Princess was so ugly, and so troublesome, and altogether so impossible to love, that to keep her out of sight was the only thing that could be done for her. And this tale she repeated so often, that at last the whole court believed it. Things were in this state, and the Princess was about fifteen years old when Prince Narcissus, attracted by the report of Queen Frivola's gay doings, presented himself at the court. He was not much older than the Princess, and was as handsome a Prince as you would see in a day's journey, and really, for his age, not so very scatter-brained. His parents were a King and Queen, whose story you will perhaps read some day. They died almost at the same time, leaving their kingdom to the eldest of their children, and commending their youngest son, Prince Narcissus, to the care of the Fairy Melinette. In this they did very well for him, for the Fairy was as kind as she was powerful, and she spared no pains in teaching the little Prince everything it was good for him to

know, and even imparted to him some of her own Fairy lore. But as soon as he was grown up she sent him out to see the world for himself, though all the time she was secretly keeping watch over him, ready to help in any time of need. Before he started she gave him a ring which would render him invisible when he put it on his finger. These rings seem to be quite common; you must often have heard of them, even if you have never seen one. It was in the course of the Prince's wanderings, in search of experience of men and things, that he came to the court of Queen Frivola, where he was extremely well received. The Queen was delighted with him, so were all her ladies; and the King was very polite to him, though he did not quite see why the whole court was making such a fuss over him.

Prince Narcissus enjoyed all that went on, and found the time pass very pleasantly. Before long, of course, he heard the story about the Princess Potentilla, and, as it had by that time been repeated many times, and had been added to here and there, she was represented as such a monster of ugliness that he was really quite curious to see her, and resolved to avail himself of the magic power of his ring to accomplish his design. So he made himself invisible, and passed the guard without their so much as suspecting that anyone was near. Climbing the wall was rather a difficulty, but when he at length found himself inside it he was charmed with the peaceful beauty of the little domain it enclosed, and still more delighted when he perceived a slender, lovely maiden wandering among the flowers. It was

not until he had sought vainly for the imaginary monster that he realised that this was the Princess herself, and by that time he was deeply in love with her, for indeed it would have been hard to find anyone prettier than Potentilla, as she sat by the brook, weaving a garland of blue forget-me-nots to crown her waving golden locks, or to imagine anything more gentle than the way she tended all the birds and beasts who inhabited her small kingdom, and who all loved and followed her. Prince Narcissus watched her every movement, and hovered near her in a dream of delight, not daring as yet to appear to her, so humble had he suddenly become in her presence. And when evening came, and the nurse fetched the Princess into her little house, he felt obliged to go back to Frivola's palace, for fear his absence should be noticed and someone should discover his new treasure. But he forgot that to go back absent, and dreamy, and indifferent, when he had before been gay and ardent about everything, was the surest way of awakening suspicion; and when, in response to the jesting questions which were put to him upon the subject, he only blushed and returned evasive answers, all the ladies were certain that he had lost his heart, and did their utmost to discover who was the happy possessor of it. As to the Prince, he was becoming day by day more attached to Potentilla, and his one thought was to attend her, always invisible, and help her in everything she did, and provide her with everything that could possibly amuse or please her. And the Princess, who had learnt to find diversion in very small things in her quiet life,

was in a continual state of delight over the treasures which the Prince constantly laid where she must find them. Then Narcissus implored his faithful friend Melinette to send the Princess such dreams of him as should make her recognise him as a friend when he actually appeared before her eyes; and this device was so successful that the Princess quite dreaded the cessation of these amusing dreams, in which a certain Prince Narcissus was such a delightful lover and companion. After that he went a step further and began to have long talks with the Princess – still, however, keeping himself invisible, until she begged him so earnestly to appear to her that he could no longer resist, and after making her promise that, no matter what he was like, she would still love him, he drew the ring from his finger, and the Princess saw with delight that he was as handsome as he was agreeable. Now, indeed, they were perfectly happy, and they passed the whole long summer day in Potentilla's favourite place by the brook, and when at last Prince Narcissus had to leave her it seemed to them both that the hours had gone by with the most amazing swiftness. The Princess stayed where she was, dreaming of her delightful Prince, and nothing could have been further from her thoughts than any trouble or misfortune, when suddenly, in a cloud of dust and shavings, by came the enchanter Grumedan, and unluckily he chanced to catch sight of Potentilla. Down he came straightway and alighted at her feet, and one look at her charming blue eyes and smiling lips quite decided him that he must appear to her at once, though he was rather annoyed

to remember that he had on only his second-best cloak. The Princess sprang to her feet with a cry of terror at this sudden apparition, for really the Enchanter was no beauty. To begin with, he was very big and clumsy, then he had but one eye, and his teeth were long, and he stammered badly; nevertheless, he had an excellent opinion of himself, and mistook the Princess's cry of terror for an exclamation of delighted surprise. After pausing a moment to give her time to admire him, the Enchanter made her the most complimentary speech he could invent, which, however, did not please her at all, though he was extremely delighted with it himself. Poor Potentilla only shuddered and cried:

'Oh! where is my Narcissus?'

To which he replied with a self-satisfied chuckle: 'You want a narcissus, madam? Well, they are not rare; you shall have as many as you like.'

Whereupon he waved his wand, and the Princess found herself surrounded and half buried in the fragrant flowers. She would certainly have betrayed that this was not the kind of narcissus she wanted, but for the Fairy Melinette, who had been anxiously watching the interview, and now thought it quite time to interfere. Assuming the Prince's voice, she whispered in Potentilla's ear:

'We are menaced by a great danger, but my only fear is for you, my Princess. Therefore I beg you to hide what you really feel, and we will hope that some way out of the difficulty may present itself.'

The Princess was much agitated by this speech, and feared lest

the Enchanter should have overheard it; but he had been loudly calling her attention to the flowers, and chuckling over his own smartness in getting them for her; and it was rather a blow to him when she said very coldly that they were not the sort she preferred, and she would be glad if he would send them all away. This he did, but afterwards wished to kiss the Princess's hand as a reward for having been so obliging; but the Fairy Melinette was not going to allow anything of that kind. She appeared suddenly, in all her splendour, and cried:

'Stay, Grumedan; this Princess is under my protection, and the smallest impertinence will cost you a thousand years of captivity. If you can win Potentilla's heart by the ordinary methods I cannot oppose you, but I warn you that I will not put up with any of your usual tricks.'

This declaration was not at all to the Enchanter's taste; but he knew that there was no help for it, and that he would have to behave well, and pay the Princess all the delicate attentions he could think of, though they were not at all the sort of thing he was used to. However, he decided that to win such a beauty it was quite worth while; and Melinette, feeling that she could now leave the Princess in safety, hurried off to tell Prince Narcissus what was going forward. Of course, at the very mention of the Enchanter as a rival he was furious, and I don't know what foolish things he would not have done if Melinette had not been there to calm him down. She represented to him what a powerful enchanter Grumedan was, and how, if he were provoked, he

might avenge himself upon the Princess, since he was the most unjust and churlish of all the enchanters, and had often before had to be punished by the Fairy Queen for some of his ill-deeds. Once he had been imprisoned in a tree, and was only released when it was blown down by a furious wind; another time he was condemned to stay under a big stone at the bottom of a river, until by some chance the stone should be turned over; but nothing could ever really improve him. The Fairy finally made Narcissus promise that he would remain invisible when he was with the Princess, since she felt sure that this would make things easier for all of them. Then began a struggle between Grumedan and the Prince, the latter under the name of Melinette, as to which could best delight and divert the Princess and win her approbation. Prince Narcissus first made friends with all the birds in Potentilla's little domain, and taught them to sing her name and her praises, with all their sweetest trills and most touching melodies, and all day long to tell her how dearly he loved her. Grumedan, thereupon, declared that there was nothing new about that, since the birds had sung since the world began, and all lovers had imagined that they sang for them alone. Therefore he said he would himself write an opera that should be absolutely a novelty and something worth hearing. When the time came for the performance (which lasted five weary hours) the Princess found to her dismay that the 'opera' consisted of this more than indifferent verse, chanted with all their might by ten thousand frogs:

'Admirable Potentilla,
Do you think it kind or wise
In this sudden way to kill a
Poor Enchanter with your eyes?'

Really, if Narcissus had not been there to whisper in her ear and divert her attention, I don't know what would have become of poor Potentilla, for though the first repetition of this absurdity amused her faintly, she nearly died of weariness before the time was over. Luckily Grumedan did not perceive this, as he was too much occupied in whipping up the frogs, many of whom perished miserably from fatigue, since he did not allow them to rest for a moment. The Prince's next idea for Potentilla's amusement was to cause a fleet of boats exactly like those of Cleopatra, of which you have doubtless read in history, to come up the little river, and upon the most gorgeously decorated of these reclined the great Queen herself, who, as soon as she reached the place where Potentilla sat in rapt attention, stepped majestically on shore and presented the Princess with that celebrated pearl of which you have heard so much, saying:

'You are more beautiful than I ever was. Let my example warn you to make a better use of your beauty!'

And then the little fleet sailed on, until it was lost to view in the windings of the river. Grumedan was also looking on at the spectacle, and said very contemptuously:

'I cannot say I think these marionettes amusing. What a to-do

to make over a single pearl! But if you like pearls, madam, why, *I* will soon gratify you.'

So saying, he drew a whistle from his pocket, and no sooner had he blown it than the Princess saw the water of the river bubble and grow muddy, and in another instant up came hundreds of thousands of great oysters, who climbed slowly and laboriously towards her and laid at her feet all the pearls they contained.

'Those are what I call pearls,' cried Grumedan in high glee. And truly there were enough of them to pave every path in Potentilla's garden and leave some to spare! The next day Prince Narcissus had prepared for the Princess's pleasure a charming arbour of leafy branches, with couches of moss and grassy floor and garlands everywhere, with her name written in different-coloured blossoms. Here he caused a dainty little banquet to be set forth, while hidden musicians played softly, and the silvery fountains splashed down into their marble basins, and when presently the music stopped a single nightingale broke the stillness with his delicious chant.

'Ah!' cried the Princess, recognising the voice of one of her favourites, 'Philomel, my sweet one, who taught you that new song?'

And he answered: 'Love, my Princess.'

Meanwhile the Enchanter was very ill-pleased with the entertainment, which he declared was dullness itself.

'You don't seem to have any idea in these parts beyond little

squeaking birds!' said he. 'And fancy giving a banquet without so much as an ounce of plate!'

So the next day, when the Princess went out into her garden, there stood a summer-house built of solid gold, decorated within and without with her initials and the Enchanter's combined. And in it was spread an enormous repast, while the table so glittered with golden cups and plates, flagons and dishes, candlesticks and a hundred other things beside, that it was hardly possible to look steadily at it. The Enchanter ate like six ogres, but the Princess could not touch a morsel. Presently Grumedan remarked with a grin:

'I have provided neither musicians nor singers; but as you seem fond of music I will sing to you myself.'

Whereupon he began, with a voice like a screech-owl's, to chant the words of his 'opera,' only this time happily not at such a length, and without the frog accompaniment. After this the Prince again asked the aid of his friends the birds, and when they had assembled from all the country round he tied about the neck of each one a tiny lamp of some brilliant colour, and when darkness fell he made them go through a hundred pretty tricks before the delighted Potentilla, who clapped her little hands with delight when she saw her own name traced in points of light against the dark trees, or when the whole flock of sparks grouped themselves into bouquets of different colours, like living flowers. Grumedan leaning back in his arm-chair, with one knee crossed over the other and his nose in the air, looked on disdainfully.

'Oh! if you like fireworks, Princess,' said he; and the next night all the will-o'-the-wisps in the country came and danced on the plain, which could be seen from the Princess's windows, and as she was looking out, and rather enjoying the sight, up sprang a frightful volcano, pouring out smoke and flames which terrified her greatly, to the intense amusement of the Enchanter, who laughed like a pack of wolves quarrelling. After this, as many of the will-o'-the-wisps as could get in crowded into Potentilla's garden, and by their light the tall yew-trees danced minuets until the Princess was weary and begged to be excused from looking at anything more that night. But, in spite of Potentilla's efforts to behave politely to the tiresome old Enchanter, whom she detested, he could not help seeing that he failed to please her, and then he began to suspect very strongly that she must love someone else, and that somebody besides Melinette was responsible for all the festivities he had witnessed. So after much consideration he devised a plan for finding out the truth. He went to the Princess suddenly, and announced that he was most unwillingly forced to leave her, and had come to bid her farewell. Potentilla could scarcely hide her delight when she heard this, and his back was hardly turned before she was entreating Prince Narcissus to make himself visible once more. The poor Prince had been getting quite thin with anxiety and annoyance, and was only too delighted to comply with her request. They greeted one another rapturously, and were just sitting down to talk over everything cosily, and enjoy the Enchanter's discomfiture together, when

out he burst in a fury from behind a bush. With his huge club he aimed a terrific blow at Narcissus, which must certainly have killed him but for the adroitness of the Fairy Melinette, who arrived upon the scene just in time to snatch him up and carry him off at lightning speed to her castle in the air. Poor Potentilla, however, had not the comfort of knowing this, for at the sight of the Enchanter threatening her beloved Prince she had given one shriek and fallen back insensible. When she recovered her senses she was more than ever convinced that he was dead, since even Melinette was no longer near her, and no one was left to defend her from the odious old Enchanter.

To make matters worse, he seemed to be in a very bad temper, and came blustering and raging at the poor Princess.

'I tell you what it is, madam,' said he: 'whether you love this whipper-snapper Prince or not doesn't matter in the least. You are going to marry me, so you may as well make up your mind to it; and I am going away this very minute to make all the arrangements. But in case you should get into mischief in my absence, I think I had better put you to sleep.'

So saying, he waved his wand over her, and in spite of her utmost efforts to keep awake she sank into a profound and dreamless slumber.

As he wished to make what he considered a suitable entry into the King's palace, he stepped outside the Princess's little domain, and mounted upon an immense chariot with great solid wheels, and shafts like the trunk of an oak-tree, but all of solid gold.

This was drawn with great difficulty by forty-eight strong oxen; and the Enchanter reclined at his ease, leaning upon his huge club, and holding carelessly upon his knee a tawny African lion, as if it had been a little lapdog. It was about seven o'clock in the morning when this extraordinary chariot reached the palace gates; the King was already astir, and about to set off on a hunting expedition; as for the Queen, she had only just gone off into her first sleep, and it would have been a bold person indeed who ventured to wake her.

The King was greatly annoyed at having to stay and see a visitor at such a time, and pulled off his hunting boots again with many grimaces. Meantime the Enchanter was stumping about in the hall, crying:

'Where is this King? Let him be told that I must see him and his wife also.'

The King, who was listening at the top of the staircase, thought this was not very polite; however, he took counsel with his favourite huntsman, and, following his advice, presently went down to see what was wanted of him. He was struck with astonishment at the sight of the chariot, and was gazing at it, when the Enchanter strode up to him, exclaiming:

'Shake hands, Cloverleaf, old fellow! Don't you know me?'

'No, I can't say I do,' replied the King, somewhat embarrassed.

'Why, I am Grumedan, the Enchanter,' said he, 'and I am come to make your fortune. Let us come in and talk things over a bit.'

Thereupon he ordered the oxen to go about their business, and they bounded off like stags, and were out of sight in a moment. Then, with one blow of his club, he changed the massive chariot into a perfect mountain of gold pieces.

'Those are for your lackeys,' said he to the King, 'that they may drink my health.'

Naturally a great scramble ensued, and at last the laughter and shouting awoke the Queen, who rang for her maids to ask the reason of such an unwonted hurly-burly. When they said that a visitor was asking for her, and then proceeded each one to tell breathlessly a different tale of wonder, in which she could only distinguish the words, 'oxen,' 'gold,' 'club,' 'giant,' 'lion,' she thought they were all out of their minds. Meanwhile the King was asking the Enchanter to what he was indebted for the honour of this visit, and on his replying that he would not say until the Queen was also present, messenger after messenger was dispatched to her to beg her immediate attendance. But Frivola was in a very bad humour at having been so unceremoniously awakened, and declared that she had a pain in her little finger, and that nothing should induce her to come.

When the Enchanter heard this he insisted that she must come.

'Take my club to her Majesty,' said he, 'and tell her that if she smells the end of it she will find it wonderfully reviving.'

So four of the King's strongest men-at-arms staggered off with it; and after some persuasion the Queen consented to try this novel remedy. She had hardly smelt it for an instant when she

declared herself to be perfectly restored; but whether that was due to the scent of the wood or to the fact that as soon as she touched it out fell a perfect shower of magnificent jewels, I leave you to decide. At any rate, she was now all eagerness to see the mysterious stranger, and hastily throwing on her royal mantle, popped her second-best diamond crown over her night-cap, put a liberal dab of rouge upon each cheek, and holding up her largest fan before her nose – for she was not used to appearing in broad daylight – she went mincing into the great hall. The Enchanter waited until the King and Queen had seated themselves upon their throne, and then, taking his place between them, he began solemnly:

'My name is Grumedan. I am an extremely well-connected Enchanter; my power is immense. In spite of all this, the charms of your daughter Potentilla have so fascinated me that I cannot live without her. She fancies that she loves a certain contemptible puppy called Narcissus; but I have made very short work with him. I really do not care whether you consent to my marriage with your daughter or not, but I am bound to ask your consent, on account of a certain meddling Fairy called Melinette, with whom I have reason for wishing to keep on good terms.'

The King and Queen were somewhat embarrassed to know what answer to make to this terrible suitor, but at last they asked for time to talk over the matter: since, they said, their subjects might think that the heir to the throne should not be married with as little consideration as a dairymaid.

'Oh! take a day or two if you like,' said the Enchanter; 'but in the meantime, I am going to send for your daughter. Perhaps you will be able to induce her to be reasonable.'

So saying, he drew out his favourite whistle, and blew one ear-piercing note – whereupon the great lion, who had been dozing in the sunny courtyard, come bounding in on his soft, heavy feet. 'Orion,' said the Enchanter, 'go and fetch me the Princess, and bring her here at once. Be gentle now!'

At these words Orion went off at a great pace, and was soon at the other end of the King's gardens. Scattering the guards right and left, he cleared the wall at a bound, and seizing the sleeping Princess, he threw her on to his back, where he kept her by holding her robe in his teeth. Then he trotted gently back, and in less than five minutes stood in the great hall before the astonished King and Queen.

The Enchanter held his club close to the Princess's charming little nose, whereupon she woke up and shrieked with terror at finding herself in a strange place with the detested Grumedan. Frivola, who had stood by, stiff with displeasure at the sight of the lovely Princess, now stepped forward, and with much pretended concern proposed to carry off Potentilla to her own apartments that she might enjoy the quiet she seemed to need. Really her one idea was to let the Princess be seen by as few people as possible; so, throwing a veil over her head, she led her away and locked her up securely. All this time Prince Narcissus, gloomy and despairing, was kept a prisoner by Melinette in her

castle in the air, and in spite of all the splendour by which he was surrounded, and all the pleasures which he might have enjoyed, his one thought was to get back to Potentilla. The Fairy, however, left him there, promising to do her very best for him, and commanding all her swallows and butterflies to wait upon him and do his bidding. One day, as he paced sadly to and fro, he thought he heard a voice he knew calling to him, and sure enough there was the faithful Philomel, Potentilla's favourite, who told him all that had passed, and how the sleeping Princess had been carried off by the Lion to the great grief of all her four-footed and feathered subjects, and how, not knowing what to do, he had wandered about until he heard the swallows telling one another of the Prince who was in their airy castle and had come to see if it could be Narcissus. The Prince was more distracted than ever, and tried vainly to escape from the castle, by leaping from the roof into the clouds; but every time they caught him, and rolling softly up, brought him back to the place from which he started, so at last he gave up the attempt and waited with desperate patience for the return of Melinette. Meanwhile matters were advancing rapidly in the court of King Cloverleaf, for the Queen quite made up her mind that such a beauty as Potentilla must be got out of the way as quickly as possible. So she sent for the Enchanter secretly, and after making him promise that he would never turn herself and King Cloverleaf out of their kingdom, and that he would take Potentilla far away, so that never again might she set eyes upon her, she arranged the wedding for the next day but one.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.