LANG ANDREW

THE GREY FAIRY BOOK

Andrew Lang

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Содержание

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Preface

The tales in the Grey Fairy Book are derived from many countries – Lithuania, various parts of Africa, Germany, France, Greece, and other regions of the world. They have been translated and adapted by Mrs. Dent, Mrs. Lang, Miss Eleanor Sellar, Miss Blackley, and Miss hang. ‘The Three Sons of Hali’ is from the last century ‘Cabinet des Fees,’ a very large collection. The French author may have had some Oriental original before him in parts; at all events he copied the Eastern method of putting tale within tale, like the Eastern balls of carved ivory. The stories, as usual, illustrate the method of popular fiction. A certain number of incidents are shaken into many varying combinations, like the fragments of coloured glass in the kaleidoscope. Probably the possible combinations, like possible musical combinations, are not unlimited in number, but children may be less sensitive in the matter of fairies than Mr. John Stuart Mill was as regards music.

Donkey Skin

There was once upon a time a king who was so much beloved by his subjects that he thought himself the happiest monarch in the whole world, and he had everything his heart could desire. His palace was filled with the rarest of curiosities, and his gardens with the sweetest flowers, while in the marble stalls of his stables stood a row of milk-white Arabs, with big brown eyes.

Strangers who had heard of the marvels which the king had collected, and made long journeys to see them, were, however, surprised to find the most splendid stall of all occupied by a donkey, with particularly large and drooping ears. It was a very fine donkey; but still, as far as they could tell, nothing so very remarkable as to account for the care with which it was lodged; and they went away wondering, for they could not know that every night, when it was asleep, bushels of gold pieces tumbled out of its ears, which were picked up each morning by the attendants.

After many years of prosperity a sudden blow fell upon the king in the death of his wife, whom he loved dearly. But before she died, the queen, who had always thought first of his happiness, gathered all her strength, and said to him:

'Promise me one thing: you must marry again, I know, for the good of your people, as well as of yourself. But do not set about it in a hurry. Wait until you have found a woman more beautiful and better formed than myself.'

'Oh, do not speak to me of marrying,' sobbed the king; 'rather let me die with you!' But the queen only smiled faintly, and turned over on her pillow and died.

For some months the king's grief was great; then gradually he began to forget a little, and, besides, his counsellors were always urging him to seek another wife. At first he refused to listen to them, but by-and-by he allowed himself to be persuaded to think of it, only stipulating that the bride should be more beautiful and attractive than the late queen, according to the promise he had made her.

Overjoyed at having obtained what they wanted, the counsellors sent envoys far and wide to get portraits of all the most famous beauties of every country. The artists were very busy and did their best, but, alas! nobody could even pretend that any of the ladies could compare for a moment with the late queen.

At length, one day, when he had turned away discouraged from a fresh collection of pictures, the king's eyes fell on his adopted daughter, who had lived in the palace since she was a baby, and he saw that, if a woman existed on the whole earth more lovely than the queen, this was she! He at once made known what his wishes were, but the young girl, who was not at all ambitious, and had not the faintest desire to marry him, was filled with dismay, and begged for time to think about it. That night, when everyone was asleep, she started in a little car drawn by a big sheep, and went to consult her fairy godmother.

'I know what you have come to tell me,' said the fairy, when the maiden stepped out of the car; 'and if you don't wish to marry him, I will show you how to avoid it. Ask him to give you a dress that exactly matches the sky. It will be impossible for him to get one, so you will be quite safe.' The girl thanked the fairy and returned home again.

The next morning, when her father (as she had always called him) came to see her, she told him that she could give him no answer until he had presented her with a dress the colour of the sky. The king, overjoyed at this answer, sent for all the choicest weavers and dressmakers in the kingdom, and commanded them to make a robe the colour of the sky without an instant's delay, or he would cut off their heads at once. Dreadfully frightened at this threat, they all began to dye and cut and sew, and in two days they brought back the dress, which looked as if it had been cut straight out of the heavens! The poor girl was thunderstruck, and did not know what to do; so in the night she harnessed her sheep again, and went in search of her godmother.

‘The king is cleverer than I thought,’ said the fairy; ‘but tell him you must have a dress of moonbeams.’

And the next day, when the king summoned her into his presence, the girl told him what she wanted.

‘Madam, I can refuse you nothing,’ said he; and he ordered the dress to be ready in twenty-four hours, or every man should be hanged.

They set to work with all their might, and by dawn next day, the dress of moonbeams was laid across her bed. The girl, though she could not help admiring its beauty, began to cry, till the fairy, who heard her, came to her help.

‘Well, I could not have believed it of him!’ said she; ‘but ask for a dress of sunshine, and I shall be surprised indeed if he manages that!’

The goddaughter did not feel much faith in the fairy after her two previous failures; but not knowing what else to do, she told her father what she was bid.

The king made no difficulties about it, and even gave his finest rubies and diamonds to ornament the dress, which was so dazzling, when finished, that it could not be looked at save through smoked glasses!

When the princess saw it, she pretended that the sight hurt her eyes, and retired to her room, where she found the fairy awaiting her, very much ashamed of herself.

‘There is only one thing to be done now,’ cried she; ‘you must demand the skin of the ass he sets such store by. It is from that donkey he obtains all his vast riches, and I am sure he will never give it to you.’

The princess was not so certain; however, she went to the king, and told him she could never marry him till he had given her the ass’s skin.

The king was both astonished and grieved at this new request, but did not hesitate an instant. The ass was sacrificed, and the skin laid at the feet of the princess.

The poor girl, seeing no escape from the fate she dreaded, wept afresh, and tore her hair; when, suddenly, the fairy stood before her.

‘Take heart,’ she said, ‘all will now go well! Wrap yourself in this skin, and leave the palace and go as far as you can. I will look after you. Your dresses and your jewels shall follow you underground, and if you strike the earth whenever you need anything, you will have it at once. But go quickly: you have no time to lose.’

So the princess clothed herself in the ass’s skin, and slipped from the palace without being seen by anyone.

Directly she was missed there was a great hue and cry, and every corner, possible and impossible, was searched. Then the king sent out parties along all the roads, but the fairy threw her invisible mantle over the girl when they approached, and none of them could see her.

The princess walked on a long, long way, trying to find some one who would take her in, and let her work for them; but though the cottagers, whose houses she passed, gave her food from charity, the ass’s skin was so dirty they would not allow her to enter their houses. For her flight had been so hurried she had had no time to clean it.

Tired and disheartened at her ill-fortune, she was wandering, one day, past the gate of a farmyard, situated just outside the walls of a large town, when she heard a voice calling to her. She turned and saw the farmer’s wife standing among her turkeys, and making signs to her to come in.

‘I want a girl to wash the dishes and feed the turkeys, and clean out the pig-sty,’ said the w omen, ‘and, to judge by your dirty clothes, you would not be too fine for the work.’

The girl accepted her offer with joy, and she was at once set to work in a corner of the kitchen, where all the farm servants came and made fun of her, and the ass’s skin in which she was wrapped. But by-and-by they got so used to the sight of it that it ceased to amuse them, and she worked so

hard and so well, that her mistress grew quite fond of her. And she was so clever at keeping sheep and herding turkeys that you would have thought she had done nothing else during her whole life!

One day she was sitting on the banks of a stream bewailing her wretched lot, when she suddenly caught sight of herself in the water. Her hair and part of her face was quite concealed by the ass's head, which was drawn right over like a hood, and the filthy matted skin covered her whole body. It was the first time she had seen herself as other people saw her, and she was filled with shame at the spectacle. Then she threw off her disguise and jumped into the water, plunging in again and again, till she shone like ivory. When it was time to go back to the farm, she was forced to put on the skin which disguised her, and now seemed more dirty than ever; but, as she did so, she comforted herself with the thought that to-morrow was a holiday, and that she would be able for a few hours to forget that she was a farm girl, and be a princess once more.

So, at break of day, she stamped on the ground, as the fairy had told her, and instantly the dress like the sky lay across her tiny bed. Her room was so small that there was no place for the train of her dress to spread itself out, but she pinned it up carefully when she combed her beautiful hair and piled it up on the top of her head, as she had always worn it. When she had done, she was so pleased with herself that she determined never to let a chance pass of putting on her splendid clothes, even if she had to wear them in the fields, with no one to admire her but the sheep and turkeys.

Now the farm was a royal farm, and, one holiday, when 'Donkey Skin' (as they had nicknamed the princess) had locked the door of her room and clothed herself in her dress of sunshine, the king's son rode through the gate, and asked if he might come and rest himself a little after hunting. Some food and milk were set before him in the garden, and when he felt rested he got up, and began to explore the house, which was famous throughout the whole kingdom for its age and beauty. He opened one door after the other, admiring the old rooms, when he came to a handle that would not turn. He stooped and peeped through the keyhole to see what was inside, and was greatly astonished at beholding a beautiful girl, clad in a dress so dazzling that he could hardly look at it.

The dark gallery seemed darker than ever as he turned away, but he went back to the kitchen and inquired who slept in the room at the end of the passage. The scullery maid, they told him, whom everybody laughed at, and called 'Donkey Skin;' and though he perceived there was some strange mystery about this, he saw quite clearly there was nothing to be gained by asking any more questions. So he rode back to the palace, his head filled with the vision he had seen through the keyhole.

All night long he tossed about, and awoke the next morning in a high fever. The queen, who had no other child, and lived in a state of perpetual anxiety about this one, at once gave him up for lost, and indeed his sudden illness puzzled the greatest doctors, who tried the usual remedies in vain. At last they told the queen that some secret sorrow must be at the bottom of all this, and she threw herself on her knees beside her son's bed, and implored him to confide his trouble to her. If it was ambition to be king, his father would gladly resign the cares of the crown, and suffer him to reign in his stead; or, if it was love, everything should be sacrificed to get for him the wife he desired, even if she were daughter of a king with whom the country was at war at present!

'Madam,' replied the prince, whose weakness would hardly allow him to speak, 'do not think me so unnatural as to wish to deprive my father of his crown. As long as he lives I shall remain the most faithful of his subjects! And as to the princesses you speak of, I have seen none that I should care for as a wife, though I would always obey your wishes, whatever it might cost me.'

'Ah! my son,' cried she, 'we will do anything in the world to save your life – and ours too, for if you die, we shall die also.'

'Well, then,' replied the prince, 'I will tell you the only thing that will cure me – a cake made by the hand of "Donkey Skin."'

'Donkey Skin?' exclaimed the queen, who thought her son had gone mad; 'and who or what is that?'

'Madam,' answered one of the attendants present, who had been with the prince at the farm, '"Donkey Skin" is, next to the wolf, the most disgusting creature on the face of the earth. She is a girl who wears a black, greasy skin, and lives at your farmer's as hen-wife.'

'Never mind,' said the queen; 'my son seems to have eaten some of her pastry. It is the whim of a sick man, no doubt; but send at once and let her bake a cake.'

The attendant bowed and ordered a page to ride with the message.

Now it is by no means certain that 'Donkey Skin' had not caught a glimpse of the prince, either when his eyes looked through the keyhole, or else from her little window, which was over the road. But whether she had actually seen him or only heard him spoken of, directly she received the queen's command, she flung off the dirty skin, washed herself from head to foot, and put on a skirt and bodice of shining silver. Then, locking herself into her room, she took the richest cream, the finest flour, and the freshest eggs on the farm, and set about making her cake.

As she was stirring the mixture in the saucepan a ring that she sometimes wore in secret slipped from her finger and fell into the dough. Perhaps 'Donkey Skin' saw it, or perhaps she did not; but, any way, she went on stirring, and soon the cake was ready to be put in the oven. When it was nice and brown she took off her dress and put on her dirty skin, and gave the cake to the page, asking at the same time for news of the prince. But the page turned his head aside, and would not even condescend to answer.

The page rode like the wind, and as soon as he arrived at the palace he snatched up a silver tray and hastened to present the cake to the prince. The sick man began to eat it so fast that the doctors thought he would choke; and, indeed, he very nearly did, for the ring was in one of the bits which he broke off, though he managed to extract it from his mouth without anyone seeing him.

The moment the prince was left alone he drew the ring from under his pillow and kissed it a thousand times. Then he set his mind to find how he was to see the owner – for even he did not dare to confess that he had only beheld 'Donkey Skin' through a keyhole, lest they should laugh at this sudden passion. All this worry brought back the fever, which the arrival of the cake had diminished for the time; and the doctors, not knowing what else to say, informed the queen that her son was simply dying of love. The queen, stricken with horror, rushed into the king's presence with the news, and together they hastened to their son's bedside.

'My boy, my dear boy!' cried the king, 'who is it you want to marry? We will give her to you for a bride; even if she is the humblest of our slaves. What is there in the whole world that we would not do for you?'

The prince, moved to tears at these words, drew the ring, which was an emerald of the purest water, from under his pillow.

'Ah, dear father and mother, let this be a proof that she whom I love is no peasant girl. The finger which that ring fits has never been thickened by hard work. But be her condition what it may, I will marry no other.'

The king and queen examined the tiny ring very closely, and agreed, with their son, that the wearer could be no mere farm girl. Then the king went out and ordered heralds and trumpeters to go through the town, summoning every maiden to the palace. And she whom the ring fitted would some day be queen.

First came all the princesses, then all the duchesses' daughters, and so on, in proper order. But not one of them could slip the ring over the tip of her finger, to the great joy of the prince, whom excitement was fast curing. At last, when the high-born damsels had failed, the shopgirls and chambermaids took their turn; but with no better fortune.

'Call in the scullions and shepherdesses,' commanded the prince; but the sight of their fat, red fingers satisfied everybody.

'There is not a woman left, your Highness,' said the chamberlain; but the prince waved him aside.

'Have you sent for "Donkey Skin," who made me the cake?' asked he, and the courtiers began to laugh, and replied that they would not have dared to introduce so dirty a creature into the palace.

'Let some one go for her at once,' ordered the king. 'I commanded the presence of every maiden, high or low, and I meant it.'

The princess had heard the trumpets and the proclamations, and knew quite well that her ring was at the bottom of it all. She, too, had fallen in love with the prince in the brief glimpse she had had of him, and trembled with fear lest someone else's finger might be as small as her own. When, therefore, the messenger from the palace rode up to the gate, she was nearly beside herself with delight. Hoping all the time for such a summons, she had dressed herself with great care, putting on the garment of moonlight, whose skirt was scattered over with emeralds. But when they began calling to her to come down, she hastily covered herself with her donkey-skin and announced she was ready to present herself before his Highness. She was taken straight into the hall, where the prince was awaiting her, but at the sight of the donkey-skin his heart sank. Had he been mistaken after all?

'Are you the girl,' he said, turning his eyes away as he spoke, 'are you the girl who has a room in the furthest corner of the inner court of the farmhouse?'

'Yes, my lord, I am,' answered she.

'Hold out your hand then,' continued the prince, feeling that he must keep his word, whatever the cost, and, to the astonishment of every one present, a little hand, white and delicate, came from beneath the black and dirty skin. The ring slipped on with the utmost ease, and, as it did so, the skin fell to the ground, disclosing a figure of such beauty that the prince, weak as he was, fell on his knees before her, while the king and queen joined their prayers to his. Indeed, their welcome was so warm, and their caresses so bewildering, that the princess hardly knew how to find words to reply, when the ceiling of the hall opened, and the fairy godmother appeared, seated in a car made entirely of white lilac. In a few words she explained the history of the princess, and how she came to be there, and, without losing a moment, preparations of the most magnificent kind were made for the wedding.

The kings of every country in the earth were invited, including, of course, the princess's adopted father (who by this time had married a widow), and not one refused.

But what a strange assembly it was! Each monarch travelled in the way he thought most impressive; and some came borne in litters, others had carriages of every shape and kind, while the rest were mounted on elephants, tigers, and even upon eagles. So splendid a wedding had never been seen before; and when it was over the king announced that it was to be followed by a coronation, for he and the queen were tired of reigning, and the young couple must take their place. The rejoicings lasted for three whole months, then the new sovereigns settled down to govern their kingdom, and made themselves so much beloved by their subjects, that when they died, a hundred years later, each man mourned them as his own father and mother.

[From le Cabinet de Fees.]

The Goblin Pony

‘Don’t stir from the fireplace to-night,’ said old Peggy, ‘for the wind is blowing so violently that the house shakes; besides, this is Hallow-e’en, when the witches are abroad, and the goblins, who are their servants, are wandering about in all sorts of disguises, doing harm to the children of men.’

‘Why should I stay here?’ said the eldest of the young people. ‘No, I must go and see what the daughter of old Jacob, the rope-maker, is doing. She wouldn’t close her blue eyes all night if I didn’t visit her father before the moon had gone down.’

‘I must go and catch lobsters and crabs’ said the second, ‘and not all the witches and goblins in the world shall hinder me.’

So they all determined to go on their business or pleasure, and scorned the wise advice of old Peggy. Only the youngest child hesitated a minute, when she said to him, ‘You stay here, my little Richard, and I will tell you beautiful stories.’

But he wanted to pick a bunch of wild thyme and some blackberries by moonlight, and ran out after the others. When they got outside the house they said: ‘The old woman talks of wind and storm, but never was the weather finer or the sky more clear; see how majestically the moon stalks through the transparent clouds!’

Then all of a sudden they noticed a little black pony close beside them.

‘Oh, ho!’ they said, ‘that is old Valentine’s pony; it must have escaped from its stable, and is going down to drink at the horse-pond.’

‘My pretty little pony,’ said the eldest, patting the creature with his hand, ‘you mustn’t run too far; I’ll take you to the pond myself.’

With these words he jumped on the pony’s back and was quickly followed by his second brother, then by the third, and so on, till at last they were all astride the little beast, down to the small Richard, who didn’t like to be left behind.

On the way to the pond they met several of their companions, and they invited them all to mount the pony, which they did, and the little creature did not seem to mind the extra weight, but trotted merrily along.

The quicker it trotted the more the young people enjoyed the fun; they dug their heels into the pony’s sides and called out, ‘Gallop, little horse, you have never had such brave riders on your back before!’

In the meantime the wind had risen again, and the waves began to howl; but the pony did not seem to mind the noise, and instead of going to the pond, cantered gaily towards the sea-shore.

Richard began to regret his thyme and blackberries, and the eldest brother seized the pony by the mane and tried to make it turn round, for he remembered the blue eyes of Jacob the rope-maker’s daughter. But he tugged and pulled in vain, for the pony galloped straight on into the sea, till the waves met its forefeet. As soon as it felt the water it neighed lustily and capered about with glee, advancing quickly into the foaming billows. When the waves had covered the children’s legs they repented their careless behaviour, and cried out: ‘The cursed little black pony is bewitched. If we had only listened to old Peggy’s advice we shouldn’t have been lost.’

The further the pony advanced, the higher rose the sea; at last the waves covered the children’s heads and they were all drowned.

Towards morning old Peggy went out, for she was anxious about the fate of her grandchildren. She sought them high and low, but could not find them anywhere. She asked all the neighbours if they had seen the children, but no one knew anything about them, except that the eldest had not been with the blue-eyed daughter of Jacob the rope-maker.

As she was going home, bowed with grief, she saw a little black pony coming towards her, springing and curveting in every direction. When it got quite near her it neighed loudly, and galloped past her so quickly that in a moment it was out of her sight.

[From the French, Kletke.]

An Impossible Enchantment

There once lived a king who was much loved by his people, and he, too, loved them warmly. He led a very happy life, but he had the greatest dislike to the idea of marrying, nor had he ever felt the slightest wish to fall in love. His subjects begged him to marry, and at last he promised to try to do so. But as, so far, he had never cared for any woman he had seen, he made up his mind to travel in hopes of meeting some lady he could love.

So he arranged all the affairs of state in an orderly manner, and set out, attended by only one equerry, who, though not very clever, had most excellent good sense. These people indeed generally make the best fellow travellers.

The king explored several countries, doing all he could to fall in love, but in vain; and at the end of two years' journeys he turned his face towards home, with as free a heart as when he set out.

As he was riding along through a forest he suddenly heard the most awful miawing and shrieking of cats you can imagine. The noise drew nearer, and nearer, and at last they saw a hundred huge Spanish cats rush through the trees close to them. They were so closely packed together that you could easily have covered them with a large cloak, and all were following the same track. They were closely pursued by two enormous apes, dressed in purple suits, with the prettiest and best made boots you ever saw.

The apes were mounted on superb mastiffs, and spurred them on in hot haste, blowing shrill blasts on little toy trumpets all the time.

The king and his equerry stood still to watch this strange hunt, which was followed by twenty or more little dwarfs, some mounted on wolves, and leading relays, and others with cats in leash. The dwarfs were all dressed in purple silk liveries like the apes.

A moment later a beautiful young woman mounted on a tiger came in sight. She passed close to the king, riding at full speed, without taking any notice of him; but he was at once enchanted by her, and his heart was gone in a moment.

To his great joy he saw that one of the dwarfs had fallen behind the rest, and at once began to question him.

The dwarf told him that the lady he had just seen was the Princess Mutinosa, the daughter of the king in whose country they were at that moment. He added that the princess was very fond of hunting, and that she was now in pursuit of rabbits.

The king then asked the way to the court, and having been told it, hurried off, and reached the capital in a couple of hours.

As soon as he arrived, he presented himself to the king and queen, and on mentioning his own name and that of his country, was received with open arms. Not long after, the princess returned, and hearing that the hunt had been very successful, the king complimented her on it, but she would not answer a word.

Her silence rather surprised him, but he was still more astonished when he found that she never spoke once all through supper-time. Sometimes she seemed about to speak, but whenever this was the case her father or mother at once took up the conversation. However, this silence did not cool the king's affection, and when he retired to his rooms at night he confided his feelings to his faithful equerry. But the equerry was by no means delighted at his king's love affair, and took no pains to hide his disappointment.

'But why are you vexed?' asked the king. 'Surely the princess is beautiful enough to please anyone?'

'She is certainly very handsome,' replied the equerry, 'but to be really happy in love something more than beauty is required. To tell the truth, sire,' he added, 'her expression seems to me hard.'

'That is pride and dignity,' said the king, 'and nothing can be more becoming.'

‘Pride or hardness, as you will,’ said the equerry; ‘but to my mind the choice of so many fierce creatures for her amusements seems to tell of a fierce nature, and I also think there is something suspicious in the care taken to prevent her speaking.’

The equerry’s remarks were full of good sense; but as opposition is only apt to increase love in the hearts of men, and especially of kings who hate being contradicted, this king begged, the very next day, for the hand of the Princess Mutinosa. It was granted him on two conditions.

The first was that the wedding should take place the very next day; and the second, that he should not speak to the princess till she was his wife; to all of which the king agreed, in spite of his equerry’s objections, so that the first word he heard his bride utter was the ‘Yes’ she spoke at their marriage.

Once married, however, she no longer placed any check on herself, and her ladies-in-waiting came in for plenty of rude speeches – even the king did not escape scolding; but as he was a good-tempered man, and very much in love, he bore it patiently. A few days after the wedding the newly married pair set out for their kingdom without leaving many regrets behind.

The good equerry’s fears proved only too true, as the king found out to his cost. The young queen made her self most disagreeable to all her court, her spite and bad temper knew no bounds, and before the end of a month she was known far and wide as a regular vixen.

One day, when riding out, she met a poor old woman walking along the road, who made a curtsy and was going on, when the queen had her stopped, and cried: ‘You are a very impertinent person; don’t you know that I am the queen? And how dare you not make me a deeper curtsy?’

‘Madam,’ said the old woman, ‘I have never learnt how to measure curtsies; but I had no wish to fail in proper respect.’

‘What!’ screamed the queen; ‘she dares to answer! Tie her to my horse’s tail and I’ll just carry her at once to the best dancing-master in the town to learn how to curtsy.’

The old woman shrieked for mercy, but the queen would not listen, and only mocked when she said she was protected by the fairies. At last the poor old thing submitted to be tied up, but when the queen urged her horse on he never stirred. In vain she spurred him, he seemed turned to bronze. At the same moment the cord with which the old woman was tied changed into wreaths of flowers, and she herself into a tall and stately lady.

Looking disdainfully at the queen, she said, ‘Bad woman, unworthy of your crown; I wished to judge for myself whether all I heard of you was true. I have now no doubt of it, and you shall see whether the fairies are to be laughed at.’

So saying the fairy Placida (that was her name) blew a little gold whistle, and a chariot appeared drawn by six splendid ostriches. In it was seated the fairy queen, escorted by a dozen other fairies mounted on dragons.

All having dismounted, Placida told her adventures, and the fairy queen approved all she had done, and proposed turning Mutinosa into bronze like her horse.

Placida, however, who was very kind and gentle, begged for a milder sentence, and at last it was settled that Mutinosa should become her slave for life unless she should have a child to take her place.

The king was told of his wife’s fate and submitted to it, which, as he could do nothing to help it, was the only course open to him.

The fairies then all dispersed, Placida taking her slave with her, and on reaching her palace she said: ‘You ought by rights to be scullion, but as you have been delicately brought up the change might be too great for you. I shall therefore only order you to sweep my rooms carefully, and to wash and comb my little dog.’

Mutinosa felt there was no use in disobeying, so she did as she was bid and said nothing.

After some time she gave birth to a most lovely little girl, and when she was well again the fairy gave her a good lecture on her past life, made her promise to behave better in future, and sent her back to the king, her husband.

Placida now gave herself up entirely to the little princess who was left in her charge. She anxiously thought over which of the fairies she would invite to be godmothers, so as to secure the best gift, for her adopted child.

At last she decided on two very kindly and cheerful fairies, and asked them to the christening feast. Directly it was over the baby was brought to them in a lovely crystal cradle hung with red silk curtains embroidered with gold.

The little thing smiled so sweetly at the fairies that they decided to do all they could for her. They began by naming her Graziella, and then Placida said: 'You know, dear sisters, that the commonest form of spite or punishment amongst us consists of changing beauty to ugliness, cleverness to stupidity, and oftener still to change a person's form altogether. Now, as we can only each bestow one gift, I think the best plan will be for one of you to give her beauty, the other good understanding, whilst I will undertake that she shall never be changed into any other form.'

The two godmothers quite agreed, and as soon as the little princess had received their gifts, they went home, and Placida gave herself up to the child's education. She succeeded so well with it, and little Graziella grew so lovely, that when she was still quite a child her fame was spread abroad only too much, and one day Placida was surprised by a visit from the Fairy Queen, who was attended by a very grave and severe-looking fairy.

The queen began at once: 'I have been much surprised by your behaviour to Mutinosa; she had insulted our whole race, and deserved punishment. You might forgive your own wrongs if you chose, but not those of others. You treated her very gently whilst she was with you, and I come now to avenge our wrongs on her daughter. You have ensured her being lovely and clever, and not subject to change of form, but I shall place her in an enchanted prison, which she shall never leave till she finds herself in the arms of a lover whom she herself loves. It will be my care to prevent anything of the kind happening.'

The enchanted prison was a large high tower in the midst of the sea, built of shells of all shapes and colours. The lower floor was like a great bathroom, where the water was let in or off at will. The first floor contained the princess's apartments, beautifully furnished. On the second was a library, a large wardrobe-room filled with beautiful clothes and every kind of linen, a music-room, a pantry with bins full of the best wines, and a store-room with all manner of preserves, bonbons, pastry and cakes, all of which remained as fresh as if just out of the oven.

The top of the tower was laid out like a garden, with beds of the loveliest flowers, fine fruit trees, and shady arbours and shrubs, where many birds sang amongst the branches.

The fairies escorted Graziella and her governess, Bonnetta, to the tower, and then mounted a dolphin which was waiting for them. At a little distance from the tower the queen waved her wand and summoned two thousand great fierce sharks, whom she ordered to keep close guard, and not to let a soul enter the tower.

The good governess took such pains with Graziella's education that when she was nearly grown up she was not only most accomplished, but a very sweet, good girl.

One day, as the princess was standing on a balcony, she saw the most extraordinary figure rise out of the sea. She quickly called Bonnetta to ask her what it could be. It looked like some kind of man, with a bluish face and long sea-green hair. He was swimming towards the tower, but the sharks took no notice of him.

'It must be a merman,' said Bonnetta.

'A man, do you say?' cried Graziella; 'let us hurry down to the door and see him nearer.'

When they stood in the doorway the merman stopped to look at the princess and made many signs of admiration. His voice was very hoarse and husky, but when he found that he was not understood he took to signs. He carried a little basket made of osiers and filled with rare shells, which he presented to the princess.

She took it with signs of thanks; but as it was getting dusk she retired, and the merman plunged back into the sea.

When they were alone, Graziella said to her governess: 'What a dreadful-looking creature that was! Why do those odious sharks let him come near the tower? I suppose all men are not like him?'

'No, indeed,' replied Bonnetta. 'I suppose the sharks look on him as a sort of relation, and so did not attack him.'

A few days later the two ladies heard a strange sort of music, and looking out of the window, there was the merman, his head crowned with water plants, and blowing a great sea-shell with all his might.

They went down to the tower door, and Graziella politely accepted some coral and other marine curiosities he had brought her. After this he used to come every evening, and blow his shell, or dive and play antics under the princess's window. She contented herself with bowing to him from the balcony, but she would not go down to the door in spite of all his signs.

Some days later he came with a person of his own kind, but of another sex. Her hair was dressed with great taste, and she had a lovely voice. This new arrival induced the ladies to go down to the door. They were surprised to find that, after trying various languages, she at last spoke to them in their own, and paid Graziella a very pretty compliment on her beauty.

The mermaid noticed that the lower floor was full of water. 'Why,' cried she, 'that is just the place for us, for we can't live quite out of water.' So saying, she and her brother swam in and took up a position in the bathroom, the princess and her governess seating themselves on the steps which ran round the room.

'No doubt, madam,' said the mermaid, 'you have given up living on land so as to escape from crowds of lovers; but I fear that even here you cannot avoid them, for my brother is already dying of love for you, and I am sure that once you are seen in our city he will have many rivals.'

She then went on to explain how grieved her brother was not to be able to make himself understood, adding: 'I interpret for him, having been taught several languages by a fairy.'

'Oh, then, you have fairies, too?' asked Graziella, with a sigh.

'Yes, we have,' replied the mermaid; 'but if I am not mistaken you have suffered from the fairies on earth.'

The princess, on this, told her entire history to the mermaid, who assured her how sorry she felt for her, but begged her not to lose courage; adding, as she took her leave: Perhaps, some day, you may find a way out of your difficulties.'

The princess was delighted with this visit and with the hopes the mermaid held out. It was something to meet someone fresh to talk to.

'We will make acquaintance with several of these people,' she said to her governess, 'and I dare say they are not all as hideous as the first one we saw. Anyhow, we shan't be so dreadfully lonely.'

'Dear me,' said Bonnetta, 'how hopeful young people are to be sure! As for me I feel afraid of these folk. But what do you think of the lover you have captivated?'

'Oh, I could never love him,' cried the princess; 'I can't bear him. But, perhaps, as his sister says they are related to the fairy Marina, they may be of some use to us.'

The mermaid often returned, and each time she talked of her brother's love, and each time Graziella talked of her longing to escape from her prison, till at length the mermaid promised to bring the fairy Marina to see her, in hopes she might suggest something.

Next day the fairy came with the mermaid, and the princess received her with delight. After a little talk she begged Graziella to show her the inside of the tower and let her see the garden on the top, for with the help of crutches she could manage to move about, and being a fairy could live out of water for a long time, provided she wetted her forehead now and then.

Graziella gladly consented, and Bonnetta stayed below with the mermaid.

When they were in the garden the fairy said: ‘Let us lose no time, but tell me how I can be of use to you.’ Graziella then told all her story and Marina replied: ‘My dear princess, I can do nothing for you as regards dry land, for my power does not reach beyond my own element. I can only say that if you will honour my cousin by accepting his hand, you could then come and live amongst us. I could teach you in a moment to swim and dive with the best of us. I can harden your skin without spoiling its colour. My cousin is one of the best matches in the sea, and I will bestow so many gifts on him that you will be quite happy.’

The fairy talked so well and so long that the princess was rather impressed, and promised to think the matter over.

Just as they were going to leave the garden they saw a ship sailing nearer the tower than any other had done before. On the deck lay a young man under a splendid awning, gazing at the tower through a spy-glass; but before they could see anything clearly the ship moved away, and the two ladies parted, the fairy promising to return shortly.

As soon as she was gone Graziella told her governess what she had said. Bonnetta was not at all pleased at the turn matters were taking, for she did not fancy being turned into a mermaid in her old age. She thought the matter well over, and this was what she did. She was a very clever artist, and next morning she began to paint a picture of a handsome young man, with beautiful curly hair, a fine complexion, and lovely blue eyes. When it was finished she showed it to Graziella, hoping it would show her the difference there was between a fine young man and her marine suitor.

The princess was much struck by the picture, and asked anxiously whether there could be any man so good looking in the world. Bonnetta assured her that there were plenty of them; indeed, many far handsomer.

‘I can hardly believe that,’ cried the princess; ‘but, alas! If there are, I don’t suppose I shall ever see them or they me, so what is the use? Oh, dear, how unhappy I am!’

She spent the rest of the day gazing at the picture, which certainly had the effect of spoiling all the merman’s hopes or prospects.

After some days, the fairy Marina came back to hear what was decided; but Graziella hardly paid any attention to her, and showed such dislike to the idea of the proposed marriage that the fairy went off in a regular huff.

Without knowing it, the princess had made another conquest. On board the ship which had sailed so near was the handsomest prince in the world. He had heard of the enchanted tower, and determined to get as near it as he could. He had strong glasses on board, and whilst looking through them he saw the princess quite clearly, and fell desperately in love with her at once. He wanted to steer straight for the tower and to row off to it in a small boat, but his entire crew fell at his feet and begged him not to run such a risk. The captain, too, urged him not to attempt it. ‘You will only lead us all to certain death,’ he said. ‘Pray anchor nearer land, and I will then seek a kind fairy I know, who has always been most obliging to me, and who will, I am sure, try to help your Highness.’

The prince rather unwillingly listened to reason. He landed at the nearest point, and sent off the captain in all haste to beg the fairy’s advice and help. Meantime he had a tent pitched on the shore, and spent all his time gazing at the tower and looking for the princess through his spyglass.

After a few days the captain came back, bringing the fairy with him. The prince was delighted to see her, and paid her great attention. ‘I have heard about this matter,’ she said; ‘and, to lose no time, I am going to send off a trusty pigeon to test the enchantment. If there is any weak spot he is sure to find it out and get in. I shall bid him bring a flower back as a sign of success; and if he does so I quite hope to get you in too.’

‘But,’ asked the prince, ‘could I not send a line by the pigeon to tell the princess of my love?’

‘Certainly,’ replied the fairy, ‘it would be a very good plan.’

So the prince wrote as follows: —

‘Lovely Princess, – I adore you, and beg you to accept my heart, and to believe there is nothing I will not do to end your misfortunes. – BLONDEL.

This note was tied round the pigeon’s neck, and he flew off with it at once. He flew fast till he got near the tower, when a fierce wind blew so hard against him that he could not get on. But he was not to be beaten, but flew carefully round the top of the tower till he came to one spot which, by some mistake, had not been enchanted like the rest. He quickly slipped into the arbour and waited for the princess.

Before long Graziella appeared alone, and the pigeon at once fluttered to meet her, and seemed so tame that she stopped to caress the pretty creature. As she did so she saw it had a pink ribbon round its neck, and tied to the ribbon was a letter. She read it over several times and then wrote this answer: —

‘You say you love me; but I cannot promise to love you without seeing you. Send me your portrait by this faithful messenger. If I return it to you, you must give up hope; but if I keep it you will know that to help me will be to help yourself. – GRAZIELA.

Before flying back the pigeon remembered about the flower, so, seeing one in the princess’s dress, he stole it and flew away.

The prince was wild with joy at the pigeon’s return with the note. After an hour’s rest the trusty little bird was sent back again, carrying a miniature of the prince, which by good luck he had with him.

On reaching the tower the pigeon found the princess in the garden. She hastened to untie the ribbon, and on opening the miniature case what was her surprise and delight to find it very like the picture her governess had painted for her. She hastened to send the pigeon back, and you can fancy the prince’s joy when he found she had kept his portrait.

‘Now,’ said the fairy, ‘let us lose no more time. I can only make you happy by changing you into a bird, but I will take care to give you back your proper shape at the right time.’

The prince was eager to start, so the fairy, touching him with her wand, turned him into the loveliest humming-bird you ever saw, at the same time letting him keep the power of speech. The pigeon was told to show him the way.

Graziella was much surprised to see a perfectly strange bird, and still more so when it flew to her saying, ‘Good-morning, sweet princess.’

She was delighted with the pretty creature, and let him perch on her finger, when he said, ‘Kiss, kiss, little birdie,’ which she gladly did, petting and stroking him at the same time.

After a time the princess, who had been up very early, grew tired, and as the sun was hot she went to lie down on a mossy bank in the shade of the arbour. She held the pretty bird near her breast, and was just falling asleep, when the fairy contrived to restore the prince to his own shape, so that as Graziella opened her eyes she found herself in the arms of a lover whom she loved in return!

At the same moment her enchantment came to an end. The tower began to rock and to split. Bonnetta hurried up to the top so that she might at least perish with her dear princess. Just as she reached the garden, the kind fairy who had helped the prince arrived with the fairy Placida, in a car of Venetian glass drawn by six eagles.

‘Come away quickly,’ they cried, ‘the tower is about to sink!’ The prince, princess, and Bonnetta lost no time in stepping into the car, which rose in the air just as, with a terrible crash, the tower sank into the depths of the sea, for the fairy Marina and the mermen had destroyed its foundations to avenge themselves on Graziella. Luckily their wicked plans were defeated, and the good fairies took their way to the kingdom of Graziella’s parents.

They found that Queen Mutinosa had died some years ago, but her kind husband lived on peaceably, ruling his country well and happily. He received his daughter with great delight, and there were universal rejoicings at the return of the lovely princess.

The wedding took place the very next day, and, for many days after, balls, dinners, tournaments, concerts and all sorts of amusements went on all day and all night.

All the fairies were carefully invited, and they came in great state, and promised the young couple their protection and all sorts of good gifts. Prince Blondel and Princess Graziella lived to a good old age, beloved by every one, and loving each other more and more as time went on.

The Story Of Dschemil and Dschemila

There was once a man whose name was Dschemil, and he had a cousin who was called Dschemila. They had been betrothed by their parents when they were children, and now Dschemil thought that the time had come for them to be married, and he went two or three days' journey, to the nearest big town, to buy furniture for the new house.

While he was away, Dschemila and her friends set off to the neighbouring woods to pick up sticks, and as she gathered them she found an iron mortar lying on the ground. She placed it on her bundle of sticks, but the mortar would not stay still, and whenever she raised the bundle to put it on her shoulders it slipped off sideways. At length she saw the only way to carry the mortar was to tie it in the very middle of her bundle, and had just unfastened her sticks, when she heard her companions' voices.

'Dschemila, what are you doing? it is almost dark, and if you mean to come with us you must be quick!'

But Dschemila only replied, 'You had better go back without me, for I am not going to leave my mortar behind, if I stay here till midnight.'

'Do as you like,' said the girls, and started on their walk home.

The night soon fell, and at the last ray of light the mortar suddenly became an ogre, who threw Dschemila on his back, and carried her off into a desert place, distant a whole month's journey from her native town. Here he shut her into a castle, and told her not to fear, as her life was safe. Then he went back to his wife, leaving Dschemila weeping over the fate that she had brought upon herself.

Meanwhile the other girls had reached home, and Dschemila's mother came out to look for her daughter.

'What have you done with her?' she asked anxiously.

'We had to leave her in the wood,' they replied, 'for she had picked up an iron mortar, and could not manage to carry it.'

So the old woman set off at once for the forest, calling to her daughter as she hurried along.

'Do go home,' cried the townspeople, as they heard her; 'we will go and look for your daughter; you are only a woman, and it is a task that needs strong men.'

But she answered, 'Yes, go; but I will go with you! Perhaps it will be only her corpse that we shall find after all. She has most likely been stung by asps, or eaten by wild beasts.'

The men, seeing her heart was bent on it, said no more, but told one of the girls she must come with them, and show them the place where they had left Dschemila. They found the bundle of wood lying where she had dropped it, but the maiden was nowhere to be seen.

'Dschemila! Dschemila!' cried they; but nobody answered.

'If we make a fire, perhaps she will see it,' said one of the men. And they lit a fire, and then went, one this way, and one that, through the forest, to look for her, whispering to each other that if she had been killed by a lion they would be sure to find some trace of it; or if she had fallen asleep, the sound of their voices would wake her; or if a snake had bitten her, they would at least come on her corpse.

All night they searched, and when morning broke and they knew no more than before what had become of the maiden, they grew weary, and said to the mother: 'It is no use. Let us go home, nothing has happened to your daughter, except that she has run away with a man.'

'Yes, I will come,' answered she, 'but I must first look in the river. Perhaps some one has thrown her in there.' But the maiden was not in the river.

For four days the father and mother waited and watched for their child to come back; then they gave up hope, and said to each other: 'What is to be done? What are we to say to the man to whom Dschemila is betrothed? Let us kill a goat, and bury its head in the grave, and when the man returns we must tell him Dschemila is dead.'

Very soon the bridegroom came back, bringing with him carpets and soft cushions for the house of his bride. And as he entered the town Dschemila's father met him, saying, 'Greeting to you. She is dead.'

At these words the young man broke into loud cries, and it was some time before he could speak. Then he turned to one of the crowd who had gathered round him, and asked: 'Where have they buried her?'

'Come to the churchyard with me,' answered he; and the young man went with him, carrying with him some of the beautiful things he had brought. These he laid on the grass and then began to weep afresh. All day he stayed, and at nightfall he gathered up his stuffs and carried them to his own house. But when the day dawned he took them in his arms and returned to the grave, where he remained as long as it was light, playing softly on his flute. And this he did daily for six months.

One morning, a man who was wandering through the desert, having lost his way, came upon a lonely castle. The sun was very hot, and the man was very tired, so he said to himself, 'I will rest a little in the shadow of this castle.' He stretched himself out comfortably, and was almost asleep, when he heard a voice calling to him softly:

'Are you a ghost,' it said, 'or a man?'

He looked up, and saw a girl leaning out of a window, and he answered:

'I am a man, and a better one, too, than your father or your grandfather.'

'May all good luck be with you,' said she; 'but what has brought you into this land of ogres and horrors?'

'Does an ogre really live in this castle?' asked he.

'Certainly he does,' replied the girl, 'and as night is not far off he will be here soon. So, dear friend, depart quickly, lest he return and snap you up for supper.'

'But I am so thirsty!' said the man. 'Be kind, and give me some drink, or else I shall die! Surely, even in this desert there must be some spring?'

'Well, I have noticed that whenever the ogre brings back water he always comes from that side; so if you follow the same direction perhaps you may find some.'

The man jumped up at once and was about to start, when the maiden spoke again: 'Tell me, where are you going?'

'Why do you want to know?'

'I have an errand for you; but tell me first whether you go east or west.'

'I travel to Damascus.'

'Then do this for me. As you pass through our village, ask for a man called Dschemil, and say to him: "Dschemila greets you, from the castle, which lies far away, and is rocked by the wind. In my grave lies only a goat. So take heart."'

And the man promised, and went his way, till he came to a spring of water. And he drank a great draught and then lay on the bank and slept quietly. When he woke he said to himself, 'The maiden did a good deed when she told me where to find water. A few hours more, and I should have been dead. So I will do her bidding, and seek out her native town and the man for whom the message was given.'

For a whole month he travelled, till at last he reached the town where Dschemil dwelt, and as luck would have it, there was the young man sitting before his door with his beard unshaven and his shaggy hair hanging over his eyes.

'Welcome, stranger,' said Dschemil, as the man stopped. 'Where have you come from?'

'I come from the west, and go towards the east,' he answered.

'Well, stop with us awhile, and rest and eat!' said Dschemil. And the man entered; and food was set before him, and he sat down with the father of the maiden and her brothers, and Dschemil. Only Dschemil himself was absent, squatting on the threshold.

'Why do you not eat too?' asked the stranger. But one of the young men whispered hastily: 'Leave him alone. Take no notice! It is only at night that he ever eats.'

So the stranger went on silently with his food. Suddenly one of Dschemil's brothers called out and said: 'Dschemil, bring us some water!' And the stranger remembered his message and said:

'Is there a man here named "Dschemil"? I lost my way in the desert, and came to a castle, and a maiden looked out of the window and…'

'Be quiet,' they cried, fearing that Dschemil might hear. But Dschemil had heard, and came forward and said:

'What did you see? Tell me truly, or I will cut off your head this instant!'

'My lord,' replied the stranger, 'as I was wandering, hot and tired, through the desert, I saw near me a great castle, and I said aloud, "I will rest a little in its shadow." And a maiden looked out of a window and said, "Are you a ghost or a man?" And I answered, "I am a man, and a better one, too, than your father or your grandfather." And I was thirsty and asked for water, but she had none to give me, and I felt like to die. Then she told me that the ogre, in whose castle she dwelt, brought in water always from the same side, and that if I too went that way most likely I should come to it. But before I started she begged me to go to her native town, and if I met a man called Dschemil I was to say to him, "Dschemila greets you, from the castle which lies far away, and is rocked by the wind. In my grave lies only a goat. So take heart."'

Then Dschemil turned to his family and said: 'Is this true? and is Dschemila not dead at all, but simply stolen from her home?'

'No, no,' replied they, 'his story is a pack of lies. Dschemila is really dead. Everybody knows it.'

'That I shall see for myself,' said Dschemil, and, snatching up a spade, hastened off to the grave where the goat's head lay buried.

And they answered, 'Then hear what really happened. When you were away, she went with the other maidens to the forest to gather wood. And there she found an iron mortar, which she wished to bring home; but she could not carry it, neither would she leave it. So the maidens returned without her, and as night was come, we all set out to look for her, but found nothing. And we said, "The bridegroom will be here to-morrow, and when he learns that she is lost, he will set out to seek her, and we shall lose him too. Let us kill a goat, and bury it in her grave, and tell him she is dead." Now you know, so do as you will. Only, if you go to seek her, take with you this man with whom she has spoken that he may show you the way.' 'Yes; that is the best plan,' replied Dschemil; 'so give me food, and hand me my sword, and we will set out directly.'

But the stranger answered: 'I am not going to waste a whole month in leading you to the castle! If it were only a day or two's journey I would not mind; but a month – no!'

'Come with me then for three days,' said Dschemil, 'and put me in the right road, and I will reward you richly.'

'Very well,' replied the stranger, 'so let it be.'

For three days they travelled from sunrise to sunset, then the stranger said: 'Dschemil?'

'Yes,' replied he.

'Go straight on till you reach a spring, then go on a little farther, and soon you will see the castle standing before you.'

'So I will,' said Dschemil.

'Farewell, then,' said the stranger, and turned back the way he had come.

It was six and twenty days before Dschemil caught sight of a green spot rising out of the sandy desert, and knew that the spring was near at last. He hastened his steps, and soon was kneeling by its side, drinking thirstily of the bubbling water. Then he lay down on the cool grass, and began to think. 'If the man was right, the castle must be somewhere about. I had better sleep here to-night, and to-morrow I shall be able to see where it is.' So he slept long and peacefully. When he awoke the sun was high, and he jumped up and washed his face and hands in the spring, before going on his journey. He had not walked far, when the castle suddenly appeared before him, though a moment before not a trace of it could be seen. 'How am I to get in?' he thought. 'I dare not knock, lest the

ogre should hear me. Perhaps it would be best for me to climb up the wall, and wait to see what will happen. So he did, and after sitting on the top for about an hour, a window above him opened, and a voice said: 'Dschemil!' He looked up, and at the sight of Dschemila, whom he had so long believed to be dead, he began to weep.

'Dear cousin,' she whispered, 'what has brought you here?'

'My grief at losing you.'

'Oh! go away at once. If the ogre comes back he will kill you.'

'I swear by your head, queen of my heart, that I have not found you only to lose you again! If I must die, well, I must!'

'Oh, what can I do for you?'

'Anything you like!'

'If I let you down a cord, can you make it fast under your arms, and climb up?'

'Of course I can,' said he.

So Dschemila lowered the cord, and Dschemil tied it round him, and climbed up to her window. Then they embraced each other tenderly, and burst into tears of joy.

'But what shall I do when the ogre returns?' asked she.

'Trust to me,' he said.

Now there was a chest in the room, where Dschemila kept her clothes. And she made Dschemil get into it, and lie at the bottom, and told him to keep very still.

He was only hidden just in time, for the lid was hardly closed when the ogre's heavy tread was heard on the stairs. He flung open the door, bringing men's flesh for himself and lamb's flesh for the maiden. 'I smell the smell of a man!' he thundered. 'What is he doing here?'

'How could any one have come to this desert place?' asked the girl, and burst into tears.

'Do not cry,' said the ogre; 'perhaps a raven has dropped some scraps from his claws.'

'Ah, yes, I was forgetting,' answered she. 'One did drop some bones about.'

'Well, burn them to powder,' replied the ogre, 'so that I may swallow it.'

So the maiden took some bones and burned them, and gave them to the ogre, saying, 'Here is the powder, swallow it.'

And when he had swallowed the powder the ogre stretched himself out and went to sleep.

In a little while the man's flesh, which the maiden was cooking for the ogre's supper, called out and said:

'Hist! Hist!
A man lies in the kist!'

And the lamb's flesh answered:

'He is your brother,
And cousin of the other.'

The ogre moved sleepily, and asked, 'What did the meat say, Dschemila?'

'Only that I must be sure to add salt.'

'Well, add salt.'

'Yes, I have done so,' said she.

The ogre was soon sound asleep again, when the man's flesh called out a second time:

'Hist! Hist!
A man lies in the kist!'

And the lamb's flesh answered:

'He is your brother,
And cousin of the other.'

'What did it say, Dschemila?' asked the ogre.
'Only that I must add pepper.'
'Well, add pepper.'
'Yes, I have done so,' said she.
The ogre had had a long day's hunting, and could not keep himself awake. In a moment his eyes were tight shut, and then the man's flesh called out for the third time:

'Hist! Hist
A man lies in the kist,'

And the lamb's flesh answered:

'He is your brother,
And cousin of the other.'

'What did it say, Dschemila?' asked the ogre.
'Only that it was ready, and that I had better take it off the fire.'
'Then if it is ready, bring it to me, and I will eat it.'
So she brought it to him, and while he was eating she supped off the lamb's flesh herself, and managed to put some aside for her cousin.
When the ogre had finished, and had washed his hands, he said to Dschemila: 'Make my bed, for I am tired.'
So she made his bed, and put a nice soft pillow for his head, and tucked him up.
'Father,' she said suddenly.
'Well, what is it?'
'Dear father, if you are really asleep, why are your eyes always open?'
'Why do you ask that, Dschemila? Do you want to deal treacherously with me?'
'No, of course not, father. How could I, and what would be the use of it?'
'Well, why do you want to know?'
'Because last night I woke up and saw the whole place shining in a red light, which frightened me.'
'That happens when I am fast asleep.'
'And what is the good of the pin you always keep here so carefully?'
'If I throw that pin in front of me, it turns into an iron mountain.'
'And this darning needle?'
'That becomes a sea.'
'And this hatchet?'
'That becomes a thorn hedge, which no one can pass through. But why do you ask all these questions? I am sure you have something in your head.'
'Oh, I just wanted to know; and how could anyone find me out here?' and she began to cry.
'Oh, don't cry, I was only in fun,' said the ogre.
He was soon asleep again, and a yellow light shone through the castle.
'Come quick!' called Dschemil from the chest; 'we must fly now while the ogre is asleep.'
'Not yet,' she said, 'there is a yellow light shining. I don't think he is asleep.'

So they waited for an hour. Then Dschemil whispered again: ‘Wake up! There is no time to lose!’

‘Let me see if he is asleep,’ said she, and she peeped in, and saw a red light shining. Then she stole back to her cousin, and asked, ‘But how are we to get out?’

‘Get the rope, and I will let you down.’

So she fetched the rope, the hatchet, and the pin and the needles, and said, ‘Take them, and put them in the pocket of your cloak, and be sure not to lose them.’

Dschemil put them carefully in his pocket, and tied the rope round her, and let her down over the wall.

‘Are you safe?’ he asked.

‘Yes, quite.’

‘Then untie the rope, so that I may draw it up.’

And Dschemila did as she was told, and in a few minutes he stood beside her.

Now all this time the ogre was asleep, and had heard nothing. Then his dog came to him and said, ‘O, sleeper, are you having pleasant dreams? Dschemila has forsaken you and run away.’

The ogre got out of bed, gave the dog a kick, then went back again, and slept till morning.

When it grew light, he rose, and called, ‘Dschemila! Dschemila!’ but he only heard the echo of his own voice! Then he dressed himself quickly; buckled on his sword and whistled to his dog, and followed the road which he knew the fugitives must have taken. ‘Cousin,’ said Dschemila suddenly, and turning round as she spoke.

‘What is it?’ answered he.

‘The ogre is coming after us. I saw him.’

‘But where is he? I don’t see him.’

‘Over there. He only looks about as tall as a needle.’

Then they both began to run as fast as they could, while the ogre and his dog kept drawing always nearer. A few more steps, and he would have been by their side, when Dschemila threw the darning needle behind her. In a moment it became an iron mountain between them and their enemy.

‘We will break it down, my dog and I,’ cried the ogre in a rage, and they dashed at the mountain till they had forced a path through, and came ever nearer and nearer.

‘Cousin!’ said Dschemila suddenly.

‘What is it?’

‘The ogre is coming after us with his dog.’

‘You go on in front then,’ answered he; and they both ran on as fast as they could, while the ogre and the dog drew always nearer and nearer.

‘They are close upon us!’ cried the maiden, glancing behind, ‘you must throw the pin.’

So Dschemil took the pin from his cloak and threw it behind him, and a dense thicket of thorns sprang up round them, which the ogre and his dog could not pass through.

‘I will get through it somehow, if I burrow underground,’ cried he, and very soon he and the dog were on the other side.

‘Cousin,’ said Dschemila, ‘they are close to us now.’

‘Go on in front, and fear nothing,’ replied Dschemil.

So she ran on a little way, and then stopped.

‘He is only a few yards away now,’ she said, and Dschemil flung the hatchet on the ground, and it turned into a lake.

‘I will drink, and my dog shall drink, till it is dry,’ shrieked the ogre, and the dog drank so much that it burst and died. But the ogre did not stop for that, and soon the whole lake was nearly dry. Then he exclaimed, ‘Dschemila, let your head become a donkey’s head, and your hair fur!’

But when it was done, Dschemil looked at her in horror, and said, ‘She is really a donkey, and not a woman at all!’

And he left her, and went home.

For two days poor Dschemila wandered about alone, weeping bitterly. When her cousin drew near his native town, he began to think over his conduct, and to feel ashamed of himself.

'Perhaps by this time she has changed back to her proper shape,' he said to himself, 'I will go and see!'

So he made all the haste he could, and at last he saw her seated on a rock, trying to keep off the wolves, who longed to have her for dinner. He drove them off and said, 'Get up, dear cousin, you have had a narrow escape.'

Dschemila stood up and answered, 'Bravo, my friend. You persuaded me to fly with you, and then left me helplessly to my fate.'

'Shall I tell you the truth?' asked he.

'Tell it.'

'I thought you were a witch, and I was afraid of you.'

'Did you not see me before my transformation? and did you not watch it happen under your very eyes, when the ogre bewitched me?'

'What shall I do?' said Dschemil. 'If I take you into the town, everyone will laugh, and say, "Is that a new kind of toy you have got? It has hands like a woman, feet like a woman, the body of a woman; but its head is the head of an ass, and its hair is fur."'

'Well, what do you mean to do with me?' asked Dschemila. 'Better take me home to my mother by night, and tell no one anything about it.'

'So I will,' said he.

They waited where they were till it was nearly dark, then Dschemil brought his cousin home.

'Is that Dschemil?' asked the mother when he knocked softly.

'Yes, it is.'

'And have you found her?'

'Yes, and I have brought her to you.'

'Oh, where is she? let me see her!' cried the mother.

'Here, behind me,' answered Dschemil.

But when the poor woman caught sight of her daughter, she shrieked, and exclaimed, 'Are you making fun of me? When did I ever give birth to an ass?'

'Hush!' said Dschemil, 'it is not necessary to let the whole world know! And if you look at her body, you will see two scars on it.'

'Mother,' sobbed Dschemila, 'do you really not know your own daughter?'

'Yes, of course I know her.'

'What are her two scars then?'

'On her thigh is a scar from the bite of a dog, and on her breast is the mark of a burn, where she pulled a lamp over her when she was little.'

'Then look at me, and see if I am not your daughter,' said Dschemila, throwing off her clothes and showing her two scars.

And at the sight her mother embraced her, weeping.

'Dear daughter,' she cried, 'what evil fate has befallen you?'

'It was the ogre who carried me off first, and then bewitched me,' answered Dschemila.

'But what is to be done with you?' asked her mother.

'Hide me away, and tell no one anything about me. And you, dear cousin, say nothing to the neighbours, and if they should put questions, you can make answer that I have not yet been found.'

'So I will,' replied he.

Then he and her mother took her upstairs and hid her in a cupboard, where she stayed for a whole month, only going out to walk when all the world was asleep.

Meanwhile Dschemil had returned to his own home, where his father and mother, his brothers and neighbours, greeted him joyfully.

'When did you come back?' said they, 'and have you found Dschemila?'

'No, I searched the whole world after her, and could hear nothing of her.'

'Did you part company with the man who started with you?'

'Yes; after three days he got so weak and useless he could not go on. It must be a month by now since he reached home again. I went on and visited every castle, and looked in every house. But there were no signs of her; and so I gave it up.'

And they answered him: 'We told you before that it was no good. An ogre or an ogress must have snapped her up, and how can you expect to find her?'

'I loved her too much to be still,' he said.

But his friends did not understand, and soon they spoke to him again about it.

'We will seek for a wife for you. There are plenty of girls prettier than Dschemila.'

'I dare say; but I don't want them.'

'But what will you do with all the cushions and carpets, and beautiful things you bought for your house?'

'They can stay in the chests.'

'But the moths will eat them! For a few weeks, it is of no consequence, but after a year or two they will be quite useless.'

'And if they have to lie there ten years I will have Dschemila, and her only, for my wife. For a month, or even two months, I will rest here quietly. Then I will go and seek her afresh.'

'Oh, you are quite mad! Is she the only maiden in the world? There are plenty of others better worth having than she is.'

'If there are I have not seen them! And why do you make all this fuss? Every man knows his own business best.

'Why, it is you who are making all the fuss yourself.'

But Dschemil turned and went into the house, for he did not want to quarrel.

Three months later a Jew, who was travelling across the desert, came to the castle, and laid himself down under the wall to rest.

In the evening the ogre saw him there and said to him, 'Jew, what are you doing here? Have you anything to sell?'

'I have only some clothes,' answered the Jew, who was in mortal terror of the ogre.

'Oh, don't be afraid of me,' said the ogre, laughing. 'I shall not eat you. Indeed, I mean to go a bit of the way with you myself.'

'I am ready, gracious sir,' replied the Jew, rising to his feet.

'Well, go straight on till you reach a town, and in that town you will find a maiden called Dschemila and a young man called Dschemil. Take this mirror and this comb with you, and say to Dschemila, "Your father, the ogre, greets you, and begs you to look at your face in this mirror, and it will appear as it was before, and to comb your hair with this comb, and it will be as formerly." If you do not carry out my orders, I will eat you the next time we meet.'

'Oh, I will obey you punctually,' cried the Jew.

After thirty days the Jew entered the gate of the town, and sat down in the first street he came to, hungry, thirsty, and very tired.

Quite by chance, Dschemil happened to pass by, and seeing a man sitting there, full in the glare of the sun, he stopped, and said, 'Get up at once, Jew; you will have a sunstroke if you sit in such a place.'

'Ah, good sir,' replied the Jew, 'for a whole month I have been travelling, and I am too tired to move.'

'Which way did you come?' asked Dschemil.

‘From out there,’ answered the Jew pointing behind him.

‘And you have been travelling for a month, you say? Well, did you see anything remarkable?’

‘Yes, good sir; I saw a castle, and lay down to rest under its shadow. And an ogre woke me, and told me to come to this town, where I should find a young man called Dschemil, and a girl called Dschemila.’

‘My name is Dschemil. What does the ogre want with me?’

‘He gave me some presents for Dschemila. How can I see her?’

‘Come with me, and you shall give them into her own hands.’

So the two went together to the house of Dschemil’s uncle, and Dschemil led the Jew into his aunt’s room.

‘Aunt!’ he cried, ‘this Jew who is with me has come from the ogre, and has brought with him, as presents, a mirror and a comb which the ogre has sent her.’

‘But it may be only some wicked trick on the part of the ogre,’ said she.

‘Oh, I don’t think so,’ answered the young man, ‘give her the things.’

Then the maiden was called, and she came out of her hiding place, and went up to the Jew, saying, ‘Where have you come from, Jew?’

‘From your father the ogre.’

‘And what errand did he send you on?’

‘He told me I was to give you this mirror and this comb, and to say “Look in this mirror, and comb your hair with this comb, and both will become as they were formerly.”’

And Dschemila took the mirror and looked into it, and combed her hair with the comb, and she had no longer an ass’s head, but the face of a beautiful maiden.

Great was the joy of both mother and cousin at this wonderful sight, and the news that Dschemila had returned soon spread, and the neighbours came flocking in with greetings.

‘When did you come back?’

‘My cousin brought me.’

‘Why, he told us he could not find you!’

‘Oh, I did that on purpose,’ answered Dschemil. ‘I did not want everyone to know.’

Then he turned to his father and his mother, his brothers and his sisters-in-law, and said, ‘We must set to work at once, for the wedding will be to-day.’

A beautiful litter was prepared to carry the bride to her new home, but she shrank back, saying, ‘I am afraid, lest the ogre should carry me off again.’

‘How can the ogre get at you when we are all here?’ they said. ‘There are two thousand of us all told, and every man has his sword.’

‘He will manage it somehow,’ answered Dschemila, ‘he is a powerful king!’

‘She is right,’ said an old man. ‘Take away the litter, and let her go on foot if she is afraid.’

‘But it is absurd!’ exclaimed the rest; ‘how can the ogre get hold of her?’

‘I will not go,’ said Dschemila again. ‘You do not know that monster; I do.’

And while they were disputing the bridegroom arrived.

‘Let her alone. She shall stay in her father’s house. After all, I can live here, and the wedding feast shall be made ready.’

And so they were married at last, and died without having had a single quarrel.

[Marehen und Gedichte aus der Stadt Tripolis,]

Janni and the Draken

Once there was a man who shunned the world, and lived in the wilderness. He owned nothing but a flock of sheep, whose milk and wool he sold, and so procured himself bread to eat; he also carried wooden spoons, and sold them. He had a wife and one little girl, and after a long time his wife had another child. The evening it was born the man went to the nearest village to fetch a nurse, and on the way he met a monk who begged him for a night's lodging. This the man willingly granted, and took him home with him. There being no one far nor near to baptize the child, the man asked the monk to do him this service, and the child was given the name of Janni.

In the course of time Janni's parents died, and he and his sister were left alone in the world; soon affairs went badly with them, so they determined to wander away to seek their fortune. In packing up, the sister found a knife which the monk had left for his godson, and this she gave to her brother.

Then they went on their way, taking with them the three sheep which were all that remained of their flocks. After wandering for three days they met a man with three dogs who proposed that they should exchange animals, he taking the sheep, and they the dogs. The brother and sister were quite pleased at this arrangement, and after the exchange was made they separated, and went their different ways.

Janni and his sister in course of time came to a great castle, in which dwelt forty Draken, who, when they heard that Janni had come, fled forty fathoms underground.

So Janni found the castle deserted, and abode there with his sister, and every day went out to hunt with the weapons the Draken had left in the castle.

One day, when he was away hunting, one of the Draken came up to get provisions, not knowing that there was anyone in the castle. When he saw Janni's sister he was terrified, but she told him not to be afraid, and by-and-by they fell in love with each other, for every time that Janni went to hunt the sister called the Drakos up. Thus they went on making love to each other till at length, unknown to Janni, they got married. Then, when it was too late, the sister repented, and was afraid of Janni's wrath when he found it out.

One day the Drakos came to her, and said: 'You must pretend to be ill, and when Janni asks what ails you, and what you want, you must answer: "Cherries," and when he inquires where these are to be found, you must say: "There are some in a garden a day's journey from here." Then your brother will go there, and will never come back, for there dwell three of my brothers who will look after him well.'

Then the sister did as the Drakos advised, and next day Janni set out to fetch the cherries, taking his three dogs with him. When he came to the garden where the cherries grew he jumped off his horse, drank some water from the spring, which rose there, and fell directly into a deep sleep. The Draken came round about to eat him, but the dogs flung themselves on them and tore them in pieces, and scratched a grave in the ground with their paws, and buried the Draken so that Janni might not see their dead bodies. When Janni awoke, and saw his dogs all covered with blood, he believed that they had caught, somewhere, a wild beast, and was angry because they had left none of it for him. But he plucked the cherries, and took them back to his sister.

When the Drakos heard that Janni had come back, he fled for fear forty fathoms underground. And the sister ate the cherries and declared herself well again.

The next day, when Janni was gone to hunt, the Drakos came out, and advised the sister that she should pretend to be ill again, and when her brother asked her what she would like, she should answer 'Quinces,' and when he inquired where these were to be found, she should say: 'In a garden distant about two days' journey.' Then would Janni certainly be destroyed, for there dwelt six brothers of the Drakos, each of whom had two heads.

The sister did as she was advised, and next day Janni again set off, taking his three dogs with him. When he came to the garden he dismounted, sat down to rest a little, and fell fast asleep. First there came three Draken round about to eat him, and when these three had been worried by the dogs, there came three others who were worried in like manner. Then the dogs again dug a grave and buried the dead Draken, that their master might not see them. When Janni awoke and beheld the dogs all covered with blood, he thought, as before, that they had killed a wild beast, and was again angry with them for leaving him nothing. But he took the quinces and brought them back to his sister, who, when she had eaten them, declared herself better. The Drakos, when he heard that Janni had come back, fled for fear forty fathoms deeper underground.

Next day, when Janni was hunting, the Drakos went to the sister and advised that she should again pretend to be ill, and should beg for some pears, which grew in a garden three days' journey from the castle. From this quest Janni would certainly never return, for there dwelt nine brothers of the Drakos, each of whom had three heads.

The sister did as she was told, and next day Janni, taking his three dogs with him, went to get the pears. When he came to the garden he laid himself down to rest, and soon fell asleep.

Then first came three Draken to eat him, and when the dogs had worried these, six others came and fought the dogs a long time. The noise of this combat awoke Janni, and he slew the Draken, and knew at last why the dogs were covered with blood.

After that he freed all whom the Draken held prisoners, amongst others, a king's daughter. Out of gratitude she would have taken him for her husband; but he put her off, saying: 'For the kindness that I have been able to do to you, you shall receive in this castle all the blind and lame who pass this way.' The princess promised him to do so, and on his departure gave him a ring.

So Janni plucked the pears and took them to his sister, who, when she had eaten them, declared she felt better. When, however, the Drakos heard that Janni had come back yet a third time safe and sound, he fled for fright forty fathoms deeper underground; and, next day, when Janni was away hunting, he crept out and said to the sister: 'Now are we indeed both lost, unless you find out from him wherein his strength lies, and then between us we will contrive to do away with him.'

When, therefore, Janni had come back from hunting, and sat at evening with his sister by the fire, she begged him to tell her wherein lay his strength, and he answered: 'It lies in my two fingers; if these are bound together then all my strength disappears.'

'That I will not believe,' said the sister, 'unless I see it for myself.'

Then he let her tie his fingers together with a thread, and immediately he became powerless. Then the sister called up the Drakos, who, when he had come forth, tore out Janni's eyes, gave them to his dogs to eat, and threw him into a dry well.

Now it happened that some travellers, going to draw water from this well, heard Janni groaning at the bottom. They came near, and asked him where he was, and he begged them to draw him up from the well, for he was a poor unfortunate man.

The travellers let a rope down and drew him up to daylight. It was not till then that he first became aware that he was blind, and he begged the travellers to lead him to the country of the king whose daughter he had freed, and they would be well repaid for their trouble.

When they had brought him there he sent to beg the princess to come to him; but she did not recognise him till he had shown her the ring she had given him.

Then she remembered him, and took him with her into the castle.

When she learnt what had befallen him she called together all the sorceresses in the country in order that they should tell her where the eyes were. At last she found one who declared that she knew where they were, and that she could restore them. This sorceress then went straight to the castle where dwelt the sister and the Drakos, and gave something to the dogs to eat which caused the eyes to reappear. She took them with her and put them back in Janni's head, so that he saw as well as before.

Then he returned to the castle of the Drakos, whom he slew as well as his sister; and, taking his dogs with him, went back to the princess and they were immediately married.

The Partnership of the Thief and the Liar

There was once upon a time a thief, who, being out of a job, was wandering by himself up and down the seashore. As he walked he passed a man who was standing still, looking at the waves.

'I wonder,' said the thief, addressing the stranger, 'if you have ever seen a stone swimming?'

'Most certainly I have,' replied the other man, 'and, what is more, I saw the same stone jump out of the water and fly through the air.'

'This is capital,' replied the thief. 'You and I must go into partnership. We shall certainly make our fortunes. Let us start together for the palace of the king of the neighbouring country. When we get there, I will go into his presence alone, and will tell him the most startling thing I can invent. Then you must follow and back up my lie.'

Having agreed to do this, they set out on their travels. After several days' journeying, they reached the town where the king's palace was, and here they parted for a few hours, while the thief sought an interview with the king, and begged his majesty to give him a glass of beer.

'That is impossible,' said the king, 'as this year there has been a failure of all the crops, and of the hops and the vines; so we have neither wine nor beer in the whole kingdom.'

'How extraordinary!' answered the thief. 'I have just come from a country where the crops were so fine that I saw twelve barrels of beer made out of one branch of hops.'

'I bet you three hundred florins that is not true,' answered the king.

'And I bet you three hundred florins it is true,' replied the thief.

Then each staked his three hundred florins, and the king said he would decide the question by sending a servant into that country to see if it was true.

So the servant set out on horseback, and on the way he met a man, and he asked him whence he came. And the man told him that he came from the self-same country to which the servant was at that moment bound.

'If that is the case,' said the servant, 'you can tell me how high the hops grow in your country, and how many barrels of beer can be brewed from one branch?'

'I can't tell you that,' answered the man, 'but I happened to be present when the hops were being gathered in, and I saw that it took three men with axes three days to cut down one branch.'

Then the servant thought that he might save himself a long journey; so he gave the man ten florins, and told him he must repeat to the king what he had just told him. And when they got back to the palace, they came together into the king's presence.

And the king asked him: 'Well, is it true about the hops?'

'Yes, sire, it is,' answered the servant; 'and here is a man I have brought with me from the country to confirm the tale.'

So the king paid the thief the three hundred florins; and the partners once more set out together in search of adventures. As they journeyed, the thief said to his comrade: 'I will now go to another king, and will tell him something still more startling; and you must follow and back up my lie, and we shall get some money out of him; just see if we don't.'

When they reached the next kingdom, the thief presented himself to the king, and requested him to give him a cauliflower. And the king answered: 'Owing to a blight among the vegetables we have no cauliflower.'

'That is strange,' answered the thief. 'I have just come from a country where it grows so well that one head of cauliflower filled twelve water-tubs.'

'I don't believe it,' answered the king.

'I bet you six hundred florins it is true,' replied the thief.

'And I bet you six hundred florins it is not true,' answered the king. And he sent for a servant, and ordered him to start at once for the country whence the thief had come, to find out if his story

of the cauliflower was true. On his journey the servant met with a man. Stopping his horse he asked him where he came from, and the man replied that he came from the country to which the other was travelling.

'If that is the case,' said the servant, 'you can tell me to what size cauliflower grows in your country? Is it so large that one head fills twelve water-tubs?'

'I have not seen that,' answered the man. 'But I saw twelve waggons, drawn by twelve horses, carrying one head of cauliflower to the market.'

And the servant answered: 'Here are ten florins for you, my man, for you have saved me a long journey. Come with me now, and tell the king what you have just told me.'

'All right,' said the man, and they went together to the palace; and when the king asked the servant if he had found out the truth about the cauliflower, the servant replied: 'Sire, all that you heard was perfectly true; here is a man from the country who will tell you so.'

So the king had to pay the thief the six hundred florins. And the two partners set out once more on their travels, with their nine hundred florins. When they reached the country of the neighbouring king, the thief entered the royal presence, and began conversation by asking if his majesty knew that in an adjacent kingdom there was a town with a church steeple on which a bird had alighted, and that the steeple was so high, and the bird's beak so long, that it had pecked the stars till some of them fell out of the sky.

'I don't believe it,' said the king.

'Nevertheless I am prepared to bet twelve hundred florins that it is true,' answered the thief.

'And I bet twelve hundred florins that it is a lie,' replied the king. And he straightway sent a servant into the neighbouring country to find out the truth.

As he rode, the servant met a man coming in the opposite direction. So he hailed him and asked him where he came from. And the man replied that he came out of the very town to which the man was bound. Then the servant asked him if the story they had heard about the bird with the long beak was true.

'I don't know about that,' answered the man, 'as I have never seen the bird; but I once saw twelve men shoving all their might and main with brooms to push a monster egg into a cellar.'

'That is capital,' answered the servant, presenting the man with ten florins. 'Come and tell your tale to the king, and you will save me a long journey.'

So, when the story was repeated to the king, there was nothing for him to do but to pay the thief the twelve hundred florins.

Then the two partners set out again with their ill-gotten gains, which they proceeded to divide into two equal shares; but the thief kept back three of the florins that belonged to the liar's half of the booty. Shortly afterwards they each married, and settled down in homes of their own with their wives. One day the liar discovered that he had been done out of three florins by his partner, so he went to his house and demanded them from him.

'Come next Saturday, and I will give them to you,' answered the thief. But as he had no intention of giving the liar the money, when Saturday morning came he stretched himself out stiff and stark upon the bed, and told his wife she was to say he was dead. So the wife rubbed her eyes with an onion, and when the liar appeared at the door, she met him in tears, and told him that as her husband was dead he could not be paid the three florins.

But the liar, who knew his partner's tricks, instantly suspected the truth, and said: 'As he has not paid me, I will pay him out with three good lashes of my riding whip.'

At these words the thief sprang to his feet, and, appearing at the door, promised his partner that if he would return the following Saturday he would pay him. So the liar went away satisfied with this promise.

But when Saturday morning came the thief got up early and hid himself under a truss of hay in the hay-loft.

When the liar appeared to demand his three florins, the wife met him with tears in her eyes, and told him that her husband was dead.

'Where have you buried him?' asked the liar.

'In the hay-loft,' answered the wife.

'Then I will go there, and take away some hay in payment of his debt,' said the liar. And proceeding to the hay-loft, he began to toss about the hay with a pitchfork, prodding it into the trusses of hay, till, in terror of his life, the thief crept out and promised his partner to pay him the three florins on the following Saturday.

When the day came he got up at sunrise, and going down into the crypt of a neighbouring chapel, stretched himself out quite still and stiff in an old stone coffin. But the liar, who was quite as clever as his partner, very soon bethought him of the crypt, and set out for the chapel, confident that he would shortly discover the hiding-place of his friend. He had just entered the crypt, and his eyes were not yet accustomed to the darkness, when he heard the sound of whispering at the grated windows. Listening intently, he overheard the plotting of a band of robbers, who had brought their treasure to the crypt, meaning to hide it there, while they set out on fresh adventures. All the time they were speaking they were removing the bars from the window, and in another minute they would all have entered the crypt, and discovered the liar. Quick as thought he wound his mantle round him and placed himself, standing stiff and erect, in a niche in the wall, so that in the dim light he looked just like an old stone statue. As soon as the robbers entered the crypt, they set about the work of dividing their treasure. Now, there were twelve robbers, but by mistake the chief of the band divided the gold into thirteen heaps. When he saw his mistake he said they had not time to count it all over again, but that the thirteenth heap should belong to whoever among them could strike off the head of the old stone statue in the niche with one stroke. With these words he took up an axe, and approached the niche where the liar was standing. But, just as he had waved the axe over his head ready to strike, a voice was heard from the stone coffin saying, in sepulchral tones: 'Clear out of this, or the dead will arise from their coffins, and the statues will descend from the walls, and you will be driven out more dead than alive.' And with a bound the thief jumped out of his coffin and the liar from his niche, and the robbers were so terrified that they ran helter-skelter out of the crypt, leaving all their gold behind them, and vowing that they would never put foot inside the haunted place again. So the partners divided the gold between them, and carried it to their homes; and history tells us no more about them.

Fortunatus and His Purse

Once upon a time there lived in the city of Famagosta, in the island of Cyprus, a rich man called Theodorus. He ought to have been the happiest person in the whole world, as he had all he could wish for, and a wife and little son whom he loved dearly; but unluckily, after a short time he always grew tired of everything, and had to seek new pleasures. When people are made like this the end is generally the same, and before Fortunatus (for that was the boy's name) was ten years old, his father had spent all his money and had not a farthing left.

But though Theodorus had been so foolish he was not quite without sense, and set about getting work at once. His wife, too, instead of reproaching him sent away the servants and sold their fine horses, and did all the work of the house herself, even washing the clothes of her husband and child.

Thus time passed till Fortunatus was sixteen. One day when they were sitting at supper, the boy said to Theodorus, 'Father, why do you look so sad. Tell me what is wrong, and perhaps I can help you.'

'Ah, my son, I have reason enough to be sad; but for me you would now have been enjoying every kind of pleasure, instead of being buried in this tiny house.'

'Oh, do not let that trouble you,' replied Fortunatus, 'it is time I made some money for myself. To be sure I have never been taught any trade. Still there must be something I can do. I will go and walk on the seashore and think about it.'

Very soon – sooner than he expected – a chance came, and Fortunatus, like a wise boy, seized on it at once. The post offered him was that of page to the Earl of Flanders, and as the Earl's daughter was just going to be married, splendid festivities were held in her honour, and at some of the tilting matches Fortunatus was lucky enough to win the prize. These prizes, together with presents from the lords and ladies of the court, who liked him for his pleasant ways, made Fortunatus feel quite a rich man.

But though his head was not turned by the notice taken of him, it excited the envy of some of the other pages about the Court, and one of them, called Robert, invented a plot to move Fortunatus out of his way. So he told the young man that the Earl had taken a dislike to him and meant to kill him; Fortunatus believed the story, and packing up his fine clothes and money, slipped away before dawn.

He went to a great many big towns and lived well, and as he was generous and not wiser than most youths of his age, he very soon found himself penniless. Like his father, he then began to think of work, and tramped half over Brittany in search of it. Nobody seemed to want him, and he wandered about from one place to another, till he found himself in a dense wood, without any paths, and not much light. Here he spent two whole days, with nothing to eat and very little water to drink, going first in one direction and then in another, but never being able to find his way out. During the first night he slept soundly, and was too tired to fear either man or beast, but when darkness came on for the second time, and growls were heard in the distance, he grew frightened and looked about for a high tree out of reach of his enemies. Hardly had he settled himself comfortably in one of the forked branches, when a lion walked up to a spring that burst from a rock close to the tree, and crouching down drank greedily. This was bad enough, but after all, lions do not climb trees, and as long as Fortunatus stayed up on his perch, he was quite safe. But no sooner was the lion out of sight, than his place was taken by a bear, and bears, as Fortunatus knew very well, are tree-climbers. His heart beat fast, and not without reason, for as the bear turned away he looked up and saw Fortunatus!

Now in those days every young man carried a sword slung to his belt, and it was a fashion that came in very handily for Fortunatus. He drew his sword, and when the bear got within a yard of him he made a fierce lunge forward. The bear, wild with pain, tried to spring, but the bough he was standing on broke with his weight, and he fell heavily to the ground. Then Fortunatus descended from his tree (first taking good care to see no other wild animals were in sight) and killed him with

a single blow. He was just thinking he would light a fire and make a hearty dinner off bear's flesh, which is not at all bad eating, when he beheld a beautiful lady standing by his side leaning on a wheel, and her eyes hidden by a bandage.

'I am Dame Fortune,' she said, 'and I have a gift for you. Shall it be wisdom, strength, long life, riches, health, or beauty? Think well, and tell me what you will have.'

But Fortunatus, who had proved the truth of the proverb that 'It's ill thinking on an empty stomach,' answered quickly, 'Good lady, let me have riches in such plenty that I may never again be as hungry as I am now.'

And the lady held out a purse and told him he had only to put his hand into it, and he and his children would always find ten pieces of gold. But when they were dead it would be a magic purse no longer.

At this news Fortunatus was beside himself with joy, and could hardly find words to thank the lady. But she told him that the best thing he could do was to find his way out of the wood, and before bidding him farewell pointed out which path he should take. He walked along it as fast as his weakness would let him, until a welcome light at a little distance showed him that a house was near. It turned out to be an inn, but before entering Fortunatus thought he had better make sure of the truth of what the lady had told him, and took out the purse and looked inside. Sure enough there were the ten pieces of gold, shining brightly. Then Fortunatus walked boldly up to the inn, and ordered them to get ready a good supper at once, as he was very hungry, and to bring him the best wine in the house. And he seemed to care so little what he spent that everybody thought he was a great lord, and vied with each other who should run quickest when he called.

After a night passed in a soft bed, Fortunatus felt so much better that he asked the landlord if he could find him some men-servants, and tell him where any good horses were to be got. The next thing was to provide himself with smart clothes, and then to take a big house where he could give great feasts to the nobles and beautiful ladies who lived in palaces round about.

In this manner a whole year soon slipped away, and Fortunatus was so busy amusing himself that he never once remembered his parents whom he had left behind in Cyprus. But though he was thoughtless, he was not bad-hearted. As soon as their existence crossed his mind, he set about making preparations to visit them, and as he was not fond of being alone he looked round for some one older and wiser than himself to travel with him. It was not long before he had the good luck to come across an old man who had left his wife and children in a far country many years before, when he went out into the world to seek the fortune which he never found. He agreed to accompany Fortunatus back to Cyprus, but only on condition he should first be allowed to return for a few weeks to his own home before venturing to set sail for an island so strange and distant. Fortunatus agreed to his proposal, and as he was always fond of anything new, said that he would go with him.

The journey was long, and they had to cross many large rivers, and climb over high mountains, and find their way through thick woods, before they reached at length the old man's castle. His wife and children had almost given up hopes of seeing him again, and crowded eagerly round him. Indeed, it did not take Fortunatus five minutes to fall in love with the youngest daughter, the most beautiful creature in the whole world, whose name was Cassandra.

'Give her to me for my wife,' he said to the old man, 'and let us all go together to Famagosta.'

So a ship was bought big enough to hold Fortunatus, the old man and his wife, and their ten children – five of them sons and five daughters. And the day before they sailed the wedding was celebrated with magnificent rejoicings, and everybody thought that Fortunatus must certainly be a prince in disguise. But when they reached Cyprus, he learned to his sorrow that both his father and mother were dead, and for some time he shut himself up in his house and would see nobody, full of shame at having forgotten them all these years. Then he begged that the old man and his wife would remain with him, and take the place of his parents.

For twelve years Fortunatus and Cassandra and their two little boys lived happily in Famagosta. They had a beautiful house and everything they could possibly want, and when Cassandra's sisters married the purse provided them each with a fortune. But at last Fortunatus grew tired of staying at home, and thought he should like to go out and see the world again. Cassandra shed many tears at first when he told her of his wishes, and he had a great deal of trouble to persuade her to give her consent. But on his promising to return at the end of two years she agreed to let him go. Before he went away he showed her three chests of gold, which stood in a room with an iron door, and walls twelve feet thick. 'If anything should happen to me,' he said, 'and I should never come back, keep one of the chests for yourself, and give the others to our two sons.' Then he embraced them all and took ship for Alexandria.

The wind was fair and in a few days they entered the harbour, where Fortunatus was informed by a man whom he met on landing, that if he wished to be well received in the town, he must begin by making a handsome present to the Sultan. 'That is easily done,' said Fortunatus, and went into a goldsmith's shop, where he bought a large gold cup, which cost five thousand pounds. This gift so pleased the Sultan that he ordered a hundred casks of spices to be given to Fortunatus; Fortunatus put them on board his ship, and commanded the captain to return to Cyprus and deliver them to his wife, Cassandra. He next obtained an audience of the Sultan, and begged permission to travel through the country, which the Sultan readily gave him, adding some letters to the rulers of other lands which Fortunatus might wish to visit.

Filled with delight at feeling himself free to roam through the world once more, Fortunatus set out on his journey without losing a day. From court to court he went, astonishing everyone by the magnificence of his dress and the splendour of his presents. At length he grew as tired of wandering as he had been of staying at home, and returned to Alexandria, where he found the same ship that had brought him from Cyprus lying in the harbour. Of course the first thing he did was to pay his respects to the Sultan, who was eager to hear about his adventures.

When Fortunatus had told them all, the Sultan observed: 'Well, you have seen many wonderful things, but I have something to show you more wonderful still;' and he led him into a room where precious stones lay heaped against the walls. Fortunatus' eyes were quite dazzled, but the Sultan went on without pausing and opened a door at the farther end. As far as Fortunatus could see, the cupboard was quite bare, except for a little red cap, such as soldiers wear in Turkey.

'Look at this,' said the Sultan.

'But there is nothing very valuable about it,' answered Fortunatus. 'I've seen a dozen better caps than that, this very day.'

'Ah,' said the Sultan, 'you do not know what you are talking about. Whoever puts this cap on his head and wishes himself in any place, will find himself there in a moment.'

'But who made it?' asked Fortunatus.

'That I cannot tell you,' replied the Sultan.

'Is it very heavy to wear?' asked Fortunatus.

'No, quite light,' replied the Sultan, 'just feel it.'

Fortunatus took the cap and put it on his head, and then, without thinking, wished himself back in the ship that was starting for Famagosta. In a second he was standing at the prow, while the anchor was being weighed, and while the Sultan was repenting of his folly in allowing Fortunatus to try on the cap, the vessel was making fast for Cyprus.

When it arrived, Fortunatus found his wife and children well, but the two old people were dead and buried. His sons had grown tall and strong, but unlike their father had no wish to see the world, and found their chief pleasure in hunting and tilting. In the main, Fortunatus was content to stay quietly at home, and if a restless fit did seize upon him, he was able to go away for a few hours without being missed, thanks to the cap, which he never sent back to the Sultan.

By-and-by he grew old, and feeling that he had not many days to live, he sent for his two sons, and showing them the purse and cap, he said to them: ‘Never part with these precious possessions. They are worth more than all the gold and lands I leave behind me. But never tell their secret, even to your wife or dearest friend. That purse has served me well for forty years, and no one knows whence I got my riches.’ Then he died and was buried by his wife Cassandra, and he was mourned in Famagosta for many years.

The Goat-faced Girl

There was once upon a time a peasant called Masaniello who had twelve daughters. They were exactly like the steps of a staircase, for there was just a year between each sister. It was all the poor man could do to bring up such a large family, and in order to provide food for them he used to dig in the fields all day long. In spite of his hard work he only just succeeded in keeping the wolf from the door, and the poor little girls often went hungry to bed.

One day, when Masaniello was working at the foot of a high mountain, he came upon the mouth of a cave which was so dark and gloomy that even the sun seemed afraid to enter it. Suddenly a huge green lizard appeared from the inside and stood before Masaniello, who nearly went out of his mind with terror, for the beast was as big as a crocodile and quite as fierce looking.

But the lizard sat down beside him in the most friendly manner, and said: 'Don't be afraid, my good man, I am not going to hurt you; on the contrary, I am most anxious to help you.'

When the peasant heard these words he knelt before the lizard and said: 'Dear lady, for I know not what to call you, I am in your power; but I beg of you to be merciful, for I have twelve wretched little daughters at home who are dependent on me.'

'That's the very reason why I have come to you,' replied the lizard. 'Bring me your youngest daughter to-morrow morning. I promise to bring her up as if she were my own child, and to look upon her as the apple of my eye.'

When Masaniello heard her words he was very unhappy, because he felt sure, from the lizard's wanting one of his daughters, the youngest and tenderest too, that the poor little girl would only serve as dessert for the terrible creature's supper. At the same time he said to himself, 'If I refuse her request, she will certainly eat me up on the spot. If I give her what she asks she does indeed take part of myself, but if I refuse she will take the whole of me. What am I to do, and how in the world am I to get out of the difficulty?'

As he kept muttering to himself the lizard said, 'Make up your mind to do as I tell you at once. I desire to have your youngest daughter, and if you won't comply with my wish, I can only say it will be the worse for you.'

Seeing that there was nothing else to be done, Masaniello set off for his home, and arrived there looking so white and wretched that his wife asked him at once: 'What has happened to you, my dear husband? Have you quarrelled with anyone, or has the poor donkey fallen down?'

'Neither the one nor the other,' answered her husband,' but something far worse than either. A terrible lizard has nearly frightened me out of my senses, for she threatened that if I did not give her our youngest daughter, she would make me repent it. My head is going round like a mill-wheel, and I don't know what to do. I am indeed between the Devil and the Deep Sea. You know how dearly I love Renzolla, and yet, if I fail to bring her to the lizard to-morrow morning, I must say farewell to life. Do advise me what to do.'

When his wife had heard all he had to say, she said to him: 'How do you know, my dear husband, that the lizard is really our enemy? May she not be a friend in disguise? And your meeting with her may be the beginning of better things and the end of all our misery. Therefore go and take the child to her, for my heart tells me that you will never repent doing so.'

Masaniello was much comforted by her words, and next morning as soon as it was light he took his little daughter by the hand and led her to the cave.

The lizard, who was awaiting the peasant's arrival, came forward to meet him, and taking the girl by the hand, she gave the father a sack full of gold, and said: 'Go and marry your other daughters, and give them dowries with this gold, and be of good cheer, for Renzolla will have both father and mother in me; it is a great piece of luck for her that she has fallen into my hands.'

Masaniello, quite overcome with gratitude, thanked the lizard, and returned home to his wife.

As soon as it was known how rich the peasant had become, suitors for the hands of his daughters were not wanting, and very soon he married them all off; and even then there was enough gold left to keep himself and his wife in comfort and plenty all their days.

As soon as the lizard was left alone with Renzolla, she changed the cave into a beautiful palace, and led the girl inside. Here she brought her up like a little princess, and the child wanted for nothing. She gave her sumptuous food to eat, beautiful clothes to wear, and a thousand servants to wait on her.

Now, it happened, one day, that the king of the country was hunting in a wood close to the palace, and was overtaken by the dark. Seeing a light shining in the palace he sent one of his servants to ask if he could get a night's lodging there.

When the page knocked at the door the lizard changed herself into a beautiful woman, and opened it herself. When she heard the king's request she sent him a message to say that she would be delighted to see him, and give him all he wanted.

The king, on hearing this kind invitation, instantly betook himself to the palace, where he was received in the most hospitable manner. A hundred pages with torches came to meet him, a hundred more waited on him at table, and another hundred waved big fans in the air to keep the flies from him. Renzolla herself poured out the wine for him, and, so gracefully did she do it, that his Majesty could not take his eyes off her.

When the meal was finished and the table cleared, the king retired to sleep, and Renzolla drew the shoes from his feet, at the same time drawing his heart from his breast. So desperately had he fallen in love with her, that he called the fairy to him, and asked her for Renzolla's hand in marriage. As the kind fairy had only the girl's welfare at heart, she willingly gave her consent, and not her consent only, but a wedding portion of seven thousand golden guineas.

The king, full of delight over his good fortune, prepared to take his departure, accompanied by Renzolla, who never so much as thanked the fairy for all she had done for her. When the fairy saw such a base want of gratitude she determined to punish the girl, and, cursing her, she turned her face into a goat's head. In a moment Renzolla's pretty mouth stretched out into a snout, with a beard a yard long at the end of it, her cheeks sank in, and her shining plaits of hair changed into two sharp horns. When the king turned round and saw her he thought he must have taken leave of his senses. He burst into tears, and cried out: 'Where is the hair that bound me so tightly, where are the eyes that pierced through my heart, and where are the lips I kissed? Am I to be tied to a goat all my life? No, no! nothing will induce me to become the laughing-stock of my subjects for the sake of a goat-faced girl!'

When they reached his own country he shut Renzolla up in a little turret chamber of his palace, with a waiting-maid, and gave each of them ten bundles of flax to spin, telling them that their task must be finished by the end of the week.

The maid, obedient to the king's commands, set at once to work and combed out the flax, wound it round the spindle, and sat spinning at her wheel so diligently that her work was quite done by Saturday evening. But Renzolla, who had been spoilt and petted in the fairy's house, and was quite unaware of the change that had taken place in her appearance, threw the flax out of the window and said: 'What is the king thinking of that he should give me this work to do? If he wants shirts he can buy them. It isn't even as if he had picked me out of the gutter, for he ought to remember that I brought him seven thousand golden guineas as my wedding portion, and that I am his wife and not his slave. He must be mad to treat me like this.'

All the same, when Saturday evening came, and she saw that the waiting-maid had finished her task, she took fright lest she should be punished for her idleness. So she hurried off to the palace of the fairy, and confided all her woes to her. The fairy embraced her tenderly, and gave her a sack full of spun flax, in order that she might show it to the king, and let him see what a good worker she was. Renzolla took the sack without one word of thanks, and returned to the palace, leaving the kind fairy very indignant over her want of gratitude.

When the king saw the flax all spun, he gave Renzolla and the waiting-maid each a little dog, and told them to look after the animals and train them carefully.

The waiting-maid brought hers up with the greatest possible care, and treated it almost as if it were her son. But Renzolla said: 'I don't know what to think. Have I come among a lot of lunatics? Does the king imagine that I am going to comb and feed a dog with my own hands?' With these words she opened the window and threw the poor little beast out, and he fell on the ground as dead as a stone.

When a few months had passed the king sent a message to say he would like to see how the dogs were getting on. Renzolla, who felt very uncomfortable in her mind at this request, hurried off once more to the fairy. This time she found an old man at the door of the fairy's palace, who said to her: 'Who are you, and what do you want?'

When Renzolla heard his question she answered angrily: 'Don't you know me, old Goat-beard? And how dare you address me in such a way?'

'The pot can't call the kettle black,' answered the old man, 'for it is not I, but you who have a goat's head. Just wait a moment, you ungrateful wretch, and I will show you to what a pass your want of gratitude has brought you.'

With these words he hurried away, and returned with a mirror, which he held up before Renzolla. At the sight of her ugly, hairy face, the girl nearly fainted with horror, and she broke into loud sobs at seeing her countenance so changed.

Then the old man said: 'You must remember, Renzolla, that you are a peasant's daughter, and that the fairy turned you into a queen; but you were ungrateful, and never as much as thanked her for all she had done for you. Therefore she has determined to punish you. But if you wish to lose your long white beard, throw yourself at the fairy's feet and implore her to forgive you. She has a tender heart, and will, perhaps, take pity on you.'

Renzolla, who was really sorry for her conduct, took the old man's advice, and the fairy not only gave her back her former face, but she dressed her in a gold embroidered dress, presented her with a beautiful carriage, and brought her back, accompanied by a host of servants, to her husband. When the king saw her looking as beautiful as ever, he fell in love with her once more, and bitterly repented having caused her so much suffering.

So Renzolla lived happily ever afterwards, for she loved her husband, honoured the fairy, and was grateful to the old man for having told her the truth.

[From the Italian. Kletke.]

What Came of Picking Flowers

There was once a woman who had three daughters whom she loved very much. One day the eldest was walking in a water-meadow, when she saw a pink growing in the stream. She stooped to pick the flower, but her hand had scarcely touched it, when she vanished altogether. The next morning the second sister went out into the meadow, to see if she could find any traces of the lost girl, and as a branch of lovely roses lay trailing across her path, she bent down to move it away, and in so doing, could not resist plucking one of the roses. In a moment she too had disappeared. Wondering what could have become of her two sisters, the youngest followed in their footsteps, and fell a victim to a branch of delicious white jessamine. So the old woman was left without any daughters at all.

She wept, and wept, and wept, all day and all night, and went on weeping so long, that her son, who had been a little boy when his sisters disappeared, grew up to be a tall youth. Then one night he asked his mother to tell him what was the matter.

When he had heard the whole story, he said, 'Give me your blessing, mother, and I will go and search the world till I find them.'

So he set forth, and after he had travelled several miles without any adventures, he came upon three big boys fighting in the road. He stopped and inquired what they were fighting about, and one of them answered:

'My lord! our father left to us, when he died, a pair of boots, a key, and a cap. Whoever puts on the boots and wishes himself in any place, will find himself there. The key will open every door in the world, and with the cap on your head no one can see you. Now our eldest brother wants to have all three things for himself, and we wish to draw lots for them.'

'Oh, that is easily settled,' said the youth. 'I will throw this stone as far as I can, and the one who picks it up first, shall have the three things.' So he took the stone and flung it, and while the three brothers were running after it, he drew hastily on the boots, and said, 'Boots, take me to the place where I shall find my eldest sister.'

The next moment the young man was standing on a steep mountain before the gates of a strong castle guarded by bolts and bars and iron chains. The key, which he had not forgotten to put in his pocket, opened the doors one by one, and he walked through a number of halls and corridors, till he met a beautiful and richly-dressed young lady who started back in surprise at the sight of him, and exclaimed, 'Oh, sir, how did you contrive *to* get in here?' The young man replied that he was her brother, and told her by what means he had been able to pass through the doors. In return, she told him how happy she was, except for one thing, and that was, her husband lay under a spell, and could never break it till there should be put to death a man who could not die.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.