

ANONYMOUS , ШАРЛЬ ПЕРРО

THE POPULAR STORY OF BLUE BEARD

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A LONG time ago, and at a considerable distance from any town, there lived a gentleman, who was not only in possession of great riches, but of the largest estates in that part of the country. Although he had some very elegant neat mansions on his estates, he generally resided in a magnificent castle, beautifully situated on a rising ground, surrounded with groves of the finest evergreens, and other choice trees and shrubs.

The inside of this fine castle was even more beautiful than the outside; for the rooms were all hung with the richest damask, curiously ornamented; the Chairs and sofas were covered with the finest velvet, fringed with gold; and his table-dishes and plates were either of silver or gold, finished in the most elegant style. His carriages and horses might have served a king, and perhaps were finer than any monarch's of the present day. The gentleman's appearance, however, did not altogether correspond to his wealth; for, to a fierce disagreeable countenance, was added an ugly blue beard, which made him an object of fear and disgust in the neighbourhood, where he usually went by the name

of Blue Beard.

There resided, at some considerable distance from Blue Beard's castle, an old lady and her two daughters, who were people of some rank, but by no means wealthy. The two young ladies were very pretty, and the fame of their beauty having reached Blue Beard, he determined to ask one of them in marriage. Having ordered a carriage, he called at their house, where he saw the two young ladies, and was very politely received by their mother, with whom he begged a few moments conversation.

After the two young ladies left the room, he began by describing his immense riches, and then told her the purpose of his visit, begging she would use her interest in his favour. They were both so lovely, he said, that he would be happy to get either of them for his wife, and would therefore leave it to their own choice to determine upon the subject, and immediately took his leave.

When the proposals of Blue Beard were mentioned to the young ladies by their mother, both Miss Anne and her sister Fatima protested, that they would never marry an ugly man, and particularly one with such a frightful blue beard; because, although he possessed immense riches, it was reported in the country, that he had married several beautiful ladies, and nobody could tell what had become of them.

Their mother said, that the gentleman was agreeable in his conversation and manners; that the ugliness of his face, and the

blue beard, were defects which they would soon be reconciled to from habit: that his immense riches would procure them every luxury their heart could desire; and he was so civil, that she was certain the scandalous reports about his wives must be entirely without foundation.

The two young ladies were as civil as they possibly could be, in order to conceal the disgust they felt at Blue Beard, and, to soften their refusal, replied to this effect, – That, at present, they had no desire to change their situation; but if they had, the one sister could never think of depriving the other of so good a match, and that they did not wish to be separated.

Blue Beard having called next day, the old lady told him what her daughters had said; on which he sighed deeply, and pretended to be very much disappointed; but as he had the mother on his side, he still continued his visits to the family. Blue Beard, knowing the attractions that fine houses, fine furniture, and fine entertainments, have on the minds of ladies in general, invited the mother, her two daughters, and two or three other ladies who were then on a visit to them, to spend a day or two with him at his castle.

Blue Beard's invitation was accepted, and having spent a considerable time in arranging their wardrobe, and in adorning their persons, they all set out for the splendid mansion of Blue Beard.

On coming near the castle, although they had heard a great deal of the taste and expense that had been employed in

decorating it, they were struck with the beauty of the trees that overshadowed the walks through which they passed, and with the fragrancy of the flowers which perfumed the air. When they reached the castle, Blue Beard, attended by a number of his servants in splendid dresses, received them with the most polite courtesy, and conducted them to a magnificent drawing-room.

An elegant repast was ready in the dining-room, to which they adjourned. Here they were again astonished by the grandeur of the apartment and the elegance of the entertainment, and the rooms that were open, and were truly astonished at the magnificence that everywhere met their view.

The time rolled pleasantly away a-midst a succession of the most agreeable felt so happy, that the evening passed away before they were aware.

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