TALES OF FOLK AND FAIRIES

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THE MEESTER STOORWORM. A STORY FROM SCOTLAND

There was once a lad, and what his real name was nobody remembered, unless it was the mother who bore him; but what every one called him was Ashipattle. They called him that because he sat among the ashes to warm his toes.

He had six older brothers, and they did not think much of him. All the tasks they scorned to do themselves they put upon Ashipattle. He gathered the sticks for the fire, he swept the floor, he cleaned the byre, he ran the errands, and all he got for his pains were kicks and cuffs and mocking words. Still he was a merry fellow, and as far as words went he gave his brothers as good as they sent.

Ashipattle had one sister, and she was very good and kind to him. In return for her kindness he told her long stories of trolls and giants and heroes and brave deeds, and as long as he would tell she would sit and listen. But his brothers could not stand his stories, and used to throw clods at him to make him be quiet. They were angry because Ashipattle was always the hero of his own stories, and in his tales there was nothing he dared not do.

Now while Ashipattle was still a lad, but a tall, stout one, a great misfortune fell upon the kingdom, for a Stoorworm rose up out of the sea; and of all Stoorworms it was the greatest and the worst. For this reason it was called the Meester Stoorworm. Its length stretched half around the world, its one eye was as red as fire, and its breath was so poisonous that whatever it breathed upon was withered.

There was great fear and lamentation throughout the land because of the worm, for every day it drew nearer to the shore, and every day the danger from it grew greater. When it was first discovered it was so far away that its back was no more than a low, long, black line upon the horizon, but soon it was near enough for them to see the horns upon its back, and its scales, and its one fierce eye, and its nostrils that breathed out and in.

In their fear the people cried upon the King to save them from the monster, but the King had no power to save them more than any other man. His sword, Snickersnapper, was the brightest and sharpest and most wonderful sword in all the world, but it would need a longer sword than Snickersnapper to pierce through that great body to the monster's heart. The King summoned his councillors,—all the wisest men in the kingdom,—and they consulted and talked together, but none of them could think of any plan to beat or drive the Stoorworm off, so powerful it was.

Now there was in that country a sorcerer, and the King had no love for him. Still, when all the wisemen and councillors could think of no plan for destroying the Stoorworm, the King said, "Let us send for this sorcerer, and have him brought before us, and hear what he has to say; for 'twould seem there is no help in any of us for this evil that has come upon us."

So the sorcerer was brought, and he stood up in the council and looked from one to another. Last of all he looked at the King, and there his eyes rested.

"There is one way, and only one," said he, "by which the land can be saved from destruction. Let the King's only daughter, the Princess Gemlovely, be given to the Stoorworm as a sacrifice, and he will be satisfied and quit us."

No sooner had the sorcerer said this than a great tumult arose in the council. The councillors were filled with horror, and cried aloud that the sorcerer should be torn to pieces for speaking such words.

But the King arose and bade them be silent,—and he was as white as death.

"Is this the only way to save my people?" he asked.

"It is the only way I know of," answered the sorcerer.

The King stood still and white for a time. "Then," said he, "if it is the only way, so let it be. But first let it be proclaimed, far and wide throughout my kingdom, that there is an heroic deed to be done. Whosoever will do battle with the Stoorworm and slay it, or drive it off, shall have the Princess Gemlovely for a bride, and the half of my kingdom, and my sword

Snickersnapper for his own; and after my death he shall rule as king over all the realm."

Then the King dismissed the Council, and they went away in silence, with dark and heavy looks.

A proclamation was sent out as the King commanded, saying that whoever could kill the Stoorworm or drive it away should have the Princess, and the half of the kingdom as a reward, and the King's sword, and after the King's death should reign over the whole realm.

When this news went out many a man wished he might win these three prizes for himself, for what better was there to be desired than a beauteous wife, a kingdom to reign over, and the most famous sword in all the world. But fine as were the prizes, only six-and-thirty bold hearts came to offer themselves for the task, so great was the fear of the Stoorworm. Of this number the first twelve who looked at the Stoorworm fell ill at sight of him and had to be carried home. The next twelve did not stay to be carried, but ran home on their own legs and shut themselves up in strong fortresses; and the last twelve stayed at the King's palace with their hearts in their stomachs, and their wrists too weak with fear to strike a blow, even to win a kingdom.

So there was nothing left but for the Princess to be offered up to the Stoorworm, for it was better that one should be lost, even though that one were the Princess, than that the whole country should be destroyed.

Then there was great grief and lamenting throughout the land, for the Princess Gemlovely was so kind and gentle that she was beloved by all, both high and low. Only Ashipattle heard it all unmoved. He said nothing, but sat by the fire and thought and thought, and what his thoughts were he told to nobody.

The day was set when the Princess was to be offered up to the Stoorworm, and the night before there was a great feast at the palace, but a sad feast it was. Little was eaten and less was said. The King sat with his back to the light and bit his fingers, and no one dared to speak to him.

In the poorer houses there was a great stir and bustle and laying out of coats and dresses, for many were planning to go to the seashore to see the Princess offered up to the Stoorworm,—though a gruesome sight 'twould be to see. Ashipattle's father and brothers were planning to go with the rest, but his mother and sister wept, and said they would not see it for anything in the world.

Now Ashipattle's father had a horse named Feetgong, and he was not much to look at. Nevertheless the farmer treasured him, and it was not often he would let any one use him but himself. When the farmer rode Feetgong he could make him go like the wind,—none faster,—and that without beating him, either. Then when the farmer wished him to stop Feetgong would stand as still as though he were frozen to the ground; no one could make him budge. But if any one other than the farmer rode him, then it was quite different. Feetgong would jog along, and not even a beating would drive him faster, and then if one wanted him to stop that was as hard to do as it was to start him. Ashipattle was sure there was some secret about this; that his father had a way to make him go that no one knew about; but what that way was he could not find out.

The day before the beauteous Gemlovely was to be sacrificed Ashipattle said to his mother, "Tell me something; how is it that Feetgong will not go for you or my brothers or any one, but when my father mounts him he goes like the wind,—none faster?"

Then his mother answered, "Indeed, I do not know."

"It seems a strange thing that my father would not tell you that," said Ashipattle, "and you his own true wife."

To this his mother answered nothing.

"A strange thing," said Ashipattle; "and in all the years you've lived together not a thing have you kept back from him, whether he wished it or no. But even a good husband always holds back some secret from his wife."

Still his mother spoke never a word, but Ashipattle could see that she was thinking.

That night Ashipattle lay awake long after the others were asleep. He heard his father snoring and his brothers, too, but it seemed his mother could not sleep. She turned and twisted and sighed aloud, until at last she awakened her husband.

“What ails you,” he asked, “that you turn and twist in bed and sigh so loud that a body scarce can sleep.”

“It’s no wonder I sigh and cannot sleep,” answered his wife. “I have been thinking and turning things over in my mind, and I can see very plainly that you do not love me as a good husband should love his wife.”

“How can you say that?” asked her husband. “Have I not treated you well in all these years? Have I not shown my love in every way?”

“Yes, but you do not trust me,” said his wife. “You do not tell me what is in your heart.”

“What have I not told you?”

“You have never told me about Feetgong; you have never told me why it is that he goes like the wind whenever you mount him, and when any one else rides him he is so slow there is no getting anywhere with him.” Then she began to sob as if her heart would break. “You do not trust me,” said she.

“Wait, wait!” cried the Goodman. “That is a secret I had never thought to tell any one, but since you have set your heart on knowing—listen! Only you must promise not to tell a living soul what I tell you now.”

His wife promised.

“Then this is it,” said her husband. “When I want Feetgong to go moderately fast I slap him on the right shoulder; when I want him to stop I slap him on the left shoulder, and when I want him to go like the wind I blow upon the dried windpipe of a goose that I always carry in the right-hand pocket of my coat.”

“Now indeed I know that you love me when you tell me this,” said his wife. And then she went to sleep, for she was satisfied.

Ashipattle waited until near morning, and then he arose and dressed himself. He put on the coat of one brother, and the breeches of another, and the shoes of a third, and so on, for his own clothes were nothing but rags. He felt in the right-hand pocket of his father's coat, and there, sure enough, he found the dried windpipe of a goose. He took that and he took a pot of burning peat, and covered it over so it would keep hot; and he took also a big kitchen knife. Then he went out and led Feetgong from the stable. He sprang upon his back and slapped him on the right shoulder, and away they went.

The noise awoke the goodman and he jumped from bed and ran to the window. There was some one riding away on his dear Feetgong. Then he called out at the top of his voice:

"Hie! Hie! Ho!

Feetgong, whoa!"

When Feetgong heard his master calling he stopped and stood stockstill. But Ashipattle whipped out the dried windpipe of the goose and blew upon it, and away went Feetgong like the wind; none could go faster. No one could overtake them.

After a while, and not so long either, they came to the seashore, and there, a little way out from the shore, lay the King's own boat with the boatman in it. He was keeping the boat there until day dawned. Then the King and his court would come, bringing the beauteous Gemlovely to offer up to the Stoorworm. They would put her in the boat and set the sails to carry her toward him.

Ashipattle looked out across the water, and he could see the black back of the beast rising out of the sea like a long low mountain.

He lighted down from Feetgong and called across the water to the boatman, "Hello, friend! How fares it with you out there?"

"Bitterly, bitterly!" answered the boatman. "Here I sit and freeze all night, for it is cold on the water, and not a soul except myself but what is safe asleep in a good warm bed."

“I have a fire here in the pot,” called Ashipattle. “Draw your boat in to shore and come and warm yourself, for I can see even from here that you are almost perished.”

“That I may not do,” answered the man. “The King and his court may come at any time now, and they must find me ready and waiting for them as the commands were.”

Then Ashipattle put his pot down on the shore and stood and thought a bit. Suddenly he dropped on his knees and began to dig in the sand as though he had gone mad. “Gold! Gold!” he shouted.

“What is the matter?” called the boatman. “What have you found?”

“Gold! Gold!” shouted Ashipattle, digging faster than ever.

The boatman thought Ashipattle must certainly have found a treasure in the sand. He made haste to bring the boat to land. He sprang out upon the shore, and pushing Ashipattle aside, he dropped on his knees and began to scoop out the sand. But Ashipattle did not wait to see whether he found anything. He caught up the pot and leaped into the boat, and before the boatman could stop him he pushed off from the shore.

Too late the boatman saw what he was doing. He ran down to the edge of the water and shouted and stormed and cried to Ashipattle to come back, but Ashipattle paid no heed to him. He never even turned his head. He set the sail and steered over toward where the great monster lay, with the waves washing up and breaking into foam against him.

And now the dawn was breaking. It was time for the monster to awake, and down the road from the castle came riding the King and all his court, and the Princess Gemlovely rode among them on a milk-white horse. All the color was gone from her face, and she looked as white as snow.

When the King and all the others reached the shore there stood the boatman, wringing his hands and lamenting, and the boat was gone.

“What is this?” asked the King. “What have you done with my boat, and why are you standing here?”

“Look! Look!” cried the boatman and he pointed out to sea.

The King looked, and then first he saw Ashipattle in the boat, sailing away toward the monster,—for before his eyes had been dim with sorrow, and he had seen naught but what was close before him.

The King looked, and all the court looked with him, and a great cry arose, for they guessed that Ashipattle was sailing out to do battle with the Stoorworm.

As they stood staring the sun shone red and the monster awoke. Slowly, slowly his great jaws opened in a yawn, and as he yawned the water rushed into his mouth like a great flood and on down his throat. Ashipattle’s boat was caught in the swirl and swept forward faster than any sail could carry it. Then slowly the monster closed his mouth and all was still save for the foaming and surging of the waters.

Ashipattle steered his boat close in against the monster’s jaws, and it lay there, rocking in the tide, while he waited for the Stoorworm to yawn again.

Presently slowly, slowly, the great jaws gaped, and the flood rushed in, foaming. Ashipattle’s boat was swept in with the water, and it almost crushed against one of the monster’s teeth, but Ashipattle fended it off, and it was carried on the flood down into the Stoorworm’s throat.

Down and down went the boat with Ashipattle in it and the sound of surging waters filled his ears. It was light there in the monster’s throat, for the roof and the sides of it shone with phosphorescence so that he could see everything.

As he swept on, the roof above him grew lower and lower, and the water grew shallower and shallower; for it drained off into passages that opened off from the throat into the rest of the body.

At last the roof grew so low that the mast of the boat wedged against it. Then Ashipattle stepped over the side of the boat into the water, and it had grown so shallow it was scarce as high as his knees. He took the pot of peat, that was still hot, and the knife, and went a little further until he came to where the beast’s heart was. He could see it beat, beat, beating.

Ashipattle took his knife and dug a hole in the heart, and emptied the hot peat into it. Then he blew and blew on the peat. He blew until his cheeks almost cracked with blowing, and it seemed as though the peat would never burn. But at last it flared up; the oil of the heart trickled down upon it, and the flame burst into a blaze. Higher and higher waxed the fire. All the heart shone red with the light of it.

Then the lad ran back and jumped into the boat and pushed it clear of the roof. And none too soon, for as the fire burned deeper into the heart, the monster felt the burn of it and began to writhe and twist. Then he gave a great cough that sent the waters surging back out of his body and into the sea again in a mighty flood.

Ashipattle's boat was caught in the rush and swept like a straw up out of the Stoorworm's throat and into the light of day. The monster spewed him and his boat all the way across the sea and up on the shore, almost at the King's feet.

The King himself sprang from his steed and ran and helped Ashipattle to his feet. Then every one fled back to a high hill, for the sea was rising in a mighty flood with the beating and tossing of the Stoorworm.

Then began such a sight as never was seen before and perchance will never be seen again. For first the monster flung his tail so high that it seemed as though it would strike the sun from the sky. And next it fell into the sea with such a slap as sent the waves high up the rocks; and now it was his head that flung aloft, and the tongue caught on the point of the crescent moon and hung there, and for a while it looked as though the moon would be pulled from the sky, but it stood firm, and the monster's tongue tore, so that the head dropped back into the sea with such force that the teeth flew out of its mouth, and these teeth became the Orkney Islands.

Again its head reared high and fell back, and more teeth flew out, and these became the Shetland Islands. The third time his head rose and fell, and teeth flew out; they became the Faroe Islands.

So the monster beat and threshed and struggled, while the King and the Princess and Ashipattle and all the people looked on with fear and wonder at the dreadful sight.

But at last the struggle became weaker, for the heart was almost burned out. Then the Stoorworm curled up and lay still, for it was dead, and its great coils became the place called Iceland.

So was the monster killed, and that was the manner of his death!

But the King turned to Ashipattle and called him son, and took the hand of the Princess Gemlovely and laid it in the lad's hand, for now she was to be his bride as the King had promised.

Then they all rode back to the palace together, and the King took the sword Snickersnapper and gave it to Ashipattle for him to keep as his own.

A great feast was spread in honor of the slaying of the Stoorworm. All who chose to come were welcome, and all was mirth and rejoicing.

The honest farmer, Ashipattle's father, and his mother and his sister and his brothers heard of the feast and put on their best clothes and came, but the farmer had no Feetgong to ride. When they entered the great hall and saw Ashipattle sitting there at the King's right hand in the place of honor, with the Princess Gemlovely beside him, they could hardly believe their eyes, for they had not known he was the hero every one was talking about. But Ashipattle looked at them and nodded, and all was well.

Not long after that Ashipattle and the Princess were married, and a grand wedding it was, I can tell you; and after the old King died Ashipattle became ruler of the whole realm, and he and the Princess lived in mutual love and happiness together the rest of their long lives.

JEAN MALIN AND THE BULL-MAN. A LOUISIANA TALE

There was once a little boy who was all alone in the world; he had no father or mother, and no home; and no one to care for him. That made him very sad.

One day he sat by the roadside, and he was so sad that he began to weep. Presently a fine coach came rolling along, and in it sat a beautiful, grand lady. She leaned back against the cushions and looked about, first on this side and then on that, and enjoyed herself.

When she saw the little boy she made the coachman stop.

"Come here, little boy," she called in a gentle voice.

The child lifted his head, and then he rose and came over to her.

"What is your name?" asked the lady.

"Jean Malin," the child answered.

"Why are you weeping, Jean? Has some one been unkind to you?"

"No; I am weeping because I have no one to be either unkind or kind to me. I am all alone in the world, and I have no home."

When the lady heard that she felt very sorry for him. "Come; sit here in the coach beside me," she said, "and I will take you home with me. My home shall be your home, and I will keep you with me always if you are a good boy and do as I tell you."

Jean Malin climbed into the coach, and the lady took him home with her. She talked to him and questioned him on the way, and she soon found that he was a clever boy and very polite in his manners.

When they arrived at the lady's house she gave him a pretty little suit of clothes and bade him wash and dress himself, and then he came in and waited on her at supper.

After that he lived there, and the lady became very fond of him. As for Jean Malin, he soon loved his mistress so dearly that if she had been his own mother he could not have loved her better. Everything she said and did seemed to him exactly right.

The lady had a lover who was a great, handsome man with a fine deep voice. This gentleman often came to the house to take meals with the lady, and he always spoke to Jean Malin very pleasantly; but Jean could not abide him. He used to run and hide whenever this man came to the house. The lady scolded him for it, but he could not help it.

The gentleman's name was Mr. Bulbul.

"I do not know what is the matter with you," said the lady to Jean Malin. "Why is it you do not like Mr. Bulbul? He is very kind to you."

"I do not know, but I wish I might never see him again," answered Jean.

"That is very wrong of you. Perhaps sometime I may marry Mr. Bulbul. Then he will be your master. What will you do then?"

"Perhaps I will run away."

That angered the lady. "And perhaps I will send you away if you do not behave better and learn to like him."

Now not far from the lady's house there was a pasture, and in this pasture there was a bull,—a fine, handsome animal. Jean Malin often saw it there.

After a while Jean began to notice a curious thing. Whenever Mr. Bulbul came to the house, which was almost every day, the bull disappeared from the pasture, and whenever the bull was in the pasture there was nothing to be seen of the gentleman.

"That is a curious thing," said Jean to himself. "I will watch and find out what this means. I am sure something is wrong."

So one day Jean went out and hid himself behind some rocks at the edge of the pasture. The bull was grazing with his head down and did not see him. After a while the bull raised his head and looked all about him to see if there were any one around. He did not see Jean, because the little boy was behind

the rocks, so the animal thought itself alone. Then it dropped on its knees and cried, “Beau Madjam, fat Madjam, djam, djam, djara, djara!”

At once the bull became a man, and the man was the very Mr. Bulbul who came to visit Jean’s mistress.

The boy was so frightened he shivered all over as though he were cold.

Mr. Bulbul walked away in the direction of the lady’s house, and after he had gone Jean Malin ran home by another way. He crept into the house and heard the lady calling to him, but he would not go to her or show himself. She did not know what had become of him.

The next day Mr. Bulbul came again to the lady’s house. He came very early for he was to have breakfast with her. The lady called Jean Malin to come and wait on them. He did not want to come, but he was obliged to. He was so frightened that he darted about the room, first on one side and then on the other, and did not understand what was said to him. When the lady asked for water he gave her the toast rack, and when she asked for toast he brought her a towel. It really was very provoking.

After Mr. Bulbul had gone the lady called Jean Malin to her. “I am very angry,” said she. “You have acted very stupidly this morning. If you cannot do better and behave in a sensible manner, I will have to send you away.”

When she said this Jean Malin felt very much hurt. He could hardly refrain from weeping.

“Mistress, I will tell you why I acted so. I was afraid, and if you knew what I know, you would be afraid, too, and you would never let that big man come into your house again.”

“What is it that you know and I do not know?” asked the lady.

But Jean Malin would not tell her.

“Very well,” said his mistress; “if you will not tell me willingly I will have you beaten. I will have you beaten until you do tell, so you had better speak now before they begin.”

Jean Malin began to cry. “I did not want to tell you,” said he, “but if I must I must. Dear Mistress, Mr. Bulbul is not a man at all, but that bull that you sometimes see over in the pasture. He uses magic to make himself look like a man so as to come to see you, and then he goes right out and becomes a bull again and eats grass.”

The lady began to laugh. “You are either crazy or dreaming,” said she. “Or, more likely still, you are telling me an untruth so as to excuse yourself and make trouble between him and me.”

But Jean Malin insisted that what he told her was true. “I have seen it, and I know it,” said he. “Moreover I will prove it to you. I do not know how, but I am sure I can prove it.”

“Very well,” said the lady, “if you prove it I will forgive you and treat you as my own son, but if you do not I will have you beaten and sent out of the house as a mischief maker.”

After that Jean went away by himself and thought and thought. He tried to remember the exact words the bull had said when he turned himself into a man, but he could not be sure about them. So the next day he went out and hid himself behind the rocks again, taking care, as before, that the bull should not see him. The bull’s head was down, and it was eating grass.

Soon, however, it raised its head and looked all about it. Seeing no one, the creature dropped on its knees and bellowed, “Beau Madjam, fat Madjam, djam, djam, djara, djara!” At once the bull became a man and walked away in the direction of the lady’s house.

Jean Malin followed, being careful to keep out of sight, and as he went he kept saying over and over to himself, “Beau Madjam, fat Madjam, djam, djam, djara, djara, Beau Madjam, fat Madjam, djam, djam, djara, djara!” He said it over and over, so that he should not forget any least word of it.

When Jean Malin reached home Mr. Bulbul was in the salon with his mistress; Jean could hear them talking together there; his mistress’s voice very fine and clear and then Mr. Bulbul’s big, deep voice.

Jean Malin took a tray of cakes and wine and carried it into the salon just as though his mistress had ordered him to do so. The lady was surprised to see him coming with the tray, but she said, "That is right, Jean. Offer the cake and wine to Mr. Bulbul."

Jean Malin went over to Mr. Bulbul, close in front of him, and then he said in a low voice, as though to himself, "Beau Madjam, fat Madjam, djam, djam, djara, djara!"

Such a noise you never heard. The fine Mr. Bulbul bellowed aloud and jumped up, smashing his chair and knocking the tray with all the plates and glasses and everything out of Jean Malin's hands. The lady shrieked and almost fainted. Then, right there before her, Mr. Bulbul's head grew long and hairy, horns sprouted from his forehead, his arms turned into legs, and his hands and feet into hoofs, and he became a bull and all his clothes fell off him,—his trousers and coat and vest and eyeglasses and collar and everything. He galloped across the salon in a fright, his hoofs clattering on the floor, and burst out through the glass door so fast that he carried it away on his horns and back into the pasture with him.

Then the lady knew that everything Jean Malin had told her was true, and she could not thank him enough.

"Now you shall indeed be to me as a son," said she, "and you shall live here always and never leave me."

Jean Malin was very happy when the lady said that to him. Nevertheless, when he thought of Mr. Bulbul, he could not feel easy in his mind. He was sure the bull would try to revenge itself on him in some way or other. He kept away from the pasture, and wherever he went he was always looking around to see whether the bull were anywhere in sight.

At last he grew so afraid that he determined to go and talk to a black man he knew who dealt in magic. He found the man sitting at the door of his hut, making magic with a horsehair and a snakeskin, and some ground-up glass. Jean Malin, told him everything that had happened, about the bull, and how it had changed itself into a man and had come to visit the lady, and about

the magic words, and how he had forced the man to turn back into a bull again. “And now,” said he, “I am afraid, for I think he means harm to me.”

“You do well to be afraid,” said the black man. “Bulbul will certainly try to do you harm. He knows much magic, but my magic is stronger than his magic, and I will help you. Get me three owl’s eggs and a cup of black goat’s milk and bring them here.”

Jean Malin went away and got the three owl’s eggs and the cup of black goat’s milk, though they were things not easy to find, and then he brought them to the black man.

The black man took them from him and rolled the owl’s eggs in the milk and made magic over them. Then he gave them back to the boy. “Keep these by you all the time,” said he. “Then if the bull comes after you do thus and so, and this and the other, and you will have no more trouble with him.”

Jean Malin thanked the black man and gave him a piece of silver, and went away with the eggs tied up in his handkerchief.

It was a good thing he had them. He had not gone more than halfway home, and was just coming out from a wood, when he heard a big noise, and the bull burst out of a thicket and came charging down on him.

But quick as a flash Jean Malin put the eggs in his mouth and climbed up a tree, and the eggs were not broken.

The bull galloped up and struck the tree with its horns. “You think you are safe, but I will soon have you down,” it cried.

It dropped down on its knees and muttered magic, but Jean could not hear what it said. Then the bull changed into a man with an ax in his hands and began to chop down the tree. Gip, gop! Gip, gop! The chips flew and the branches trembled.

Jean tried to remember the words that would turn the man back into a bull again, but he was so frightened he could not think of them. What he did remember, though, were the eggs the black man had given him. He took one out of his mouth and dropped it down on the bull-man’s right shoulder, and at once his right arm fell off, and the ax dropped to the ground. This did

not trouble the bull-man, however. He caught up the ax in his left hand and chopped away, Gip, gop! Gip, gop! The chips flew faster than ever.

Then Jean Malin dropped the second egg down on the man's left shoulder, and his left arm fell off. Now he had no arms, but he caught up the ax in his mouth and went on chopping, Gip, gop! Gip, gop! The whole tree shook and trembled.

Then Jean Malin dropped the third and last egg down on the man's head, and at once his head fell off.

That ended the man's magic; he could do nothing more, and had to turn into a bull again. He bellowed like anything, but he could not help it, for the black man's magic was stronger than his magic. Away he galloped, with his tail in the air, and that was the last Jean Malin ever saw of him. What became of him nobody ever knew, but he must have gone far, far away.

But Jean Malin climbed down from the tree and went on home, and after that he lived very happily in the lady's house and was like a son to her, just as she had promised him.

THE WIDOW'S SON. A SCANDINAVIAN TALE

Once upon a time there was a poor widow who had only one son, and he was so dear to her that no one could have been dearer. All the same she was obliged to send him out into the world to seek his fortune, for they were so very poor that as long as he stayed at home they were like to starve.

The lad kissed her good-by, and she gave him her blessing, and then off he set, always putting one foot before the other.

He journeyed on a short way and a long way, and then he came to a dark and gloomy wood. He had not gone far into it when he met a tall man as dark and gloomy as the wood itself. The man stopped the lad and said to him, "Are you seeking work or shunning work?"

"I am seeking work," answered the widow's son.

"Then come with me, and I will give you enough to do but not too much," said the man, "and the wages will be according."

That suited the lad. He was quite willing to work for the tall stranger. They set out and traveled along, and after a while they came to a great dark house set all alone in the midst of the wood. The man showed him in and told him what to do. The lad set to work, and everything the man told him to do he did so well and willingly that his master was much pleased with him. After he had done all the tasks set, his master gave him a good bite of supper and a comfortable bed to sleep in.

The next day it was the same thing over. The master told the lad what to do, and the lad did it willingly and well. So it went on for three days. At the end of that time the man said, "Now I am obliged to go away on a journey. Until I return you may do as you please and be your own master. But there is one part of the house you have never seen, and those are the four cellars down below. Into these you must not go under any consideration. If you so much as open one of the doors, you will suffer for it."

“Why should I want to go into the cellars?” asked the lad. “The house and the yard are good enough for me.”

“That is well,” answered the master, and then he mounted a great black steed and rode away.

The lad stayed at home and cleaned and polished and ate and drank. “I wonder what can be in those cellars that my master does not want me to see!” thought the lad. “Not that I mean to look, but it does no harm to wonder about it.”

Every hour the lad stayed there in the house alone he grew more curious about the cellars. At last he could bear it no longer. “I’ll just take a wee peep into one of them,” he said. “That can surely do no harm to any one.”

So he opened the cellar door and went down a flight of stone steps into the first cellar. He looked all about him, and there was nothing at all there but a switch made of brier lying on a shelf behind the door. “That is not much for the Master to have made such a fuss about,” said the lad. “I could see as much as that any day without coming into a cellar for it;” and he went upstairs again and shut the door behind him.

The next day the master came home, and the first thing he asked was, “Have you looked into any of the cellars?”

“Why should I do that?” asked the lad. “I have plenty to do upstairs without poking my nose in where it is not wanted.”

“I will just see for myself whether or not you have looked,” said the master.

He opened one of the doors and went down into the first cellar. When he came back his face was as black as thunder.

“You have disobeyed me and have gone into one of the cellars,” said he. “Now you shall suffer for it!” He took up a cudgel and beat the lad until he was black and blue. “It’s lucky for you you went only into the first cellar,” said he. “Otherwise you would not have come off so lightly.”

Then he sat down to supper.

As for the lad he sat and nursed his bruises and wished he had never heard tell of such a thing as a cellar.

Not long after the master said he was going on another journey. “I will be gone two weeks,” said he, “and whatever you do, do not dare to look into any of the other cellars, or you will suffer for it.”

“I have learned my lesson,” said the lad. “You’ll not find me doing such a thing again.”

After that the master mounted his horse and rode away.

After he had gone the lad cleaned and polished and ate and drank, and then he began to wonder what was in the second cellar. “There must be something more than a stick to see,” said he, “or my master would not be so particular about it.” In the end he determined to look at what was in the second cellar, whatever it cost him. He opened the door and went down the stone steps that led to it and looked about, but all he saw was a shelf behind the door, and on it a stone and a water bottle.

“They are not much to see, and I wish I had not come,” said the lad to himself. “I hope my master will not know about it;” and then he went upstairs and shut the door behind him.

Not long afterward his master came home. The first thing he asked was, “Have you been down in any of the cellars again?”

“How can you think such a thing!” cried the lad. “I have no wish for another beating.”

“All the same, I will see for myself,” said the master, and he went down into the second cellar. Then the lad was frightened, you may well believe.

When the Master came back his face was as red as fire. “You have disobeyed me again,” cried he. Then he seized a cudgel and beat the lad till he could hardly stand.

“This should teach you to obey,” said he, “but I fear as long as you live you will not learn.”

Not long after the Master was going away on a third journey, and this time he was to be away for three weeks. “And if you look in the third cellar,” said he, “your life shall pay the forfeit.” After that he rode away into the forest and out of sight.

Well, for two weeks the lad would not look into the third cellar, but at last his curiosity got the better of him. He opened the third door and went down into the third cellar. There in the middle of it was a brazen caldron set deep in the floor and full of something that seethed and bubbled. “I wonder what that is in the caldron,” said the lad to himself, and he stuck his finger in. When he drew it out it was covered all over with gold. The lad scrubbed and scrubbed, but he could not get the gold off. Then he was terribly frightened. He took a rag and wound it about his finger and hoped his master would not notice it. He shut the door into the cellar and tried to forget about it.

The first thing the Master asked when he came home was, “Have you been down in the third cellar?”

“How can you think it?” asked the lad. “Two drubbings are enough for any one.”

“What is the matter with your finger?” asked the Master.

“Oh, I cut it with the bread-knife.”

The Master snatched the rag off, and there the lad’s finger shone as though it were all of solid gold.

“You have been down in the third cellar,” cried the Master, “and now you must die,”—and his face was as pale as death. He took down a sword from the wall, but the lad fell on his knees and begged and pleaded so piteously for his life that at last the man had to spare him. All the same he gave him such a beating that the lad could not rise from the floor. There he lay and groaned. Then the Master took a flask of ointment from the wall and bathed him all over, and after that the lad was just as well as ever.

Now the Master stayed at home for a long while, but at last he had to go away on still another journey, and now he was to be gone a whole month.

“And if you dare to look in the fourth cellar while I am away, then you shall surely die,” said he. “Do not hope that I will spare you again, for I will not.”

After he had gone the lad resisted his curiosity for three whole weeks. He was dying to look in the fourth cellar and see what was there, but he dared not, for dear life’s sake. But at the end of the third week he was so curious that he could resist no longer. He opened the fourth door and went down the steps into the cellar, and there was a magnificent coal-black horse chained to a manger, and the manger was filled with red-hot coals. At the horse’s tail was a basket of hay.

“That is a cruel thing to do to an animal,” cried the lad, and he loosed the horse from the manger and turned him so he could eat.

Then the black steed spoke to him in a human tone. “You have done a Christian act,” said the horse, “and you shall not suffer for it. If the Troll Master finds you here when he returns he will surely take your life, and that must not be. Look over in yonder corner, and you will find a suit of armor and a sword. Put on the armor and take up the sword in your hand.”

The lad went over to the corner, and there lay the armor and the sword, but when he would have taken them up they were too heavy for him. He could scarce stir them. “Well, there is no help for it,” said the horse. “You will have to bathe in the caldron that is in the third cellar. Only so can you take up the armor and wear it.”

This the lad did not want to do, for he was afraid. “If you do not,” said the horse, “we will both of us lose our lives.”

Then the lad went back to the third cellar and shut his eyes and stepped down into the caldron, and though the waters in it bubbled and seethed they were as cold as ice and as bitter as death. He thought he would have died of cold, but presently he grew quite warm again. He stepped out from the caldron, and he had become the handsomest lad in the world; his skin was red and white, and his eyes shone like stars. He went back to where the horse was, and now he lifted the armor with ease, he had become so strong. He put it on and buckled the sword about him.

“Now we must be off,” cried the horse. “Take the briar whip and the stone and the jug of water and the flask of ointment. Then mount my back and ride. If the Troll Master finds us here when he returns, it will be short shrift for both of us.”

The lad did as the horse bade him; he took the briar whip and the stone, the jug of water and the flask of ointment, and mounted the black steed’s back; and the steed carried him up the steps and out of the house and fast, fast away through the forest and over the plains beyond.

After a while the black horse said, “I hear a noise behind us. Look and see whether any one is coming.”

The lad turned and looked. “Yes, yes; it is the Master,” said he, “and with him is a whole crowd of people.”

“They are his friends he has brought out against us,” said the steed. “If they catch us it will go ill with us. Throw the thorn whip behind us, but be sure you throw it clear and do not let it touch even the tip of my tail.”

The lad threw the whip behind him, and at once a great forest of thorns grew up where it fell. No one could have forced a way through it. The Master and his friends were obliged to go home and get hatchets and axes and cut a path through.

Meanwhile the black horse had gone a long way. Then he said, “Look behind you, for I hear a noise; is any one coming?”

The youth looked over his shoulder. “Yes, it is the Master,” said he, “and with him are a multitude of people—like a church congregation.”

“Still more of his friends have come to help him catch us,” said the horse. “Throw the stone behind us, but be very sure it does not touch me.”

The lad threw the stone behind him, and at once a great stone mountain rose up where it fell. The Master and his friends could by no means cross over it. They were obliged to go home and get something to bore a way through, and this they did.

But by this time the horse had gone a long, long way. Then he said to the lad, “Look back and see whether you see any one, for I hear a noise behind us.”

The lad looked back. “I see the Master coming,” said he, “and a great multitude with him, so that they are like an army for numbers.”

“Yes, yes,” said the horse. “He has all of his friends with him now. Woe betide us if they catch us. Pour the water from the jug behind us, but be careful that none of it touches me.”

The lad stretched back his arm and poured the water out from the jug, but his haste was such that three drops fell upon the horse’s flanks. Immediately a great lake rose about them, and because of the three drops that had fallen on the horse, the lake was not only behind them but about them, too; the steed had to swim for it.

The Trolls came to the edge of the lake, and as there was no way to cross over they threw themselves down on their stomachs and began to drink it up. They drank and they drank and they drank, until at last they all burst.

But the steed came out from the water and up on dry land. Then he went on until he came to a wood, and here he stopped. “Light down now,” said he to the lad, “and take off your armor and my saddle and bridle and hide them in yon hollow oak tree. Over there, a little beyond, is a castle, and you must go and take service there. But first make yourself a wig of hanging gray mosses and put it on.”

The lad did as the horse told him. He took off the saddle and bridle and the armor and hid them in the tree, and made for himself a moss wig; when he put it upon his head all the beauty went out of his face, and he looked so pale and miserable that no one would have wanted him around.

“If you ever need me,” said the horse, “come here to the wood and take out the bridle and shake it, and at once I will be with you.” Then he galloped away into the wood.

The lad in his moss wig went on until he came to the castle. He went to the kitchen door and knocked, and asked if he might take service there.

The kitchen wench looked at him and made a face as though she had a sour taste in her mouth. “Take off that wig and let me see how you look,” said she. “With that on your head you are so ugly that no one would want you around.”

“I cannot take off my wig,” said the lad, “for that I have been told not to do.”

“Then you may seek service elsewhere, for I cannot bear the look of you,” said the kitchen wench, and she shut the door in his face.

Next the lad went to the gardener and asked if he could help him in the gardens, digging and planting.

The gardener looked and stared. “You are not a beauty,” said he, “but out here in the garden no one will be apt to see you, and I need a helper, so you may stay.”

So the lad became the gardener’s helper and dug and hoed in the garden all day.

Now the King and Queen of that country had one fair daughter, and she was as pretty and as fresh as a rose.

One day the gardener set the lad to spading under the Princess’s window. She looked out, and there she saw him. “Br-r-r! But he is an ugly one,” said she. Nevertheless she couldn’t keep her eyes off him.

After a while the lad grew hot with his work. He looked about him, and he saw nobody, so he whipped off his wig to wipe his forehead, and then he was as handsome a lad as ever was seen, so that the Princess’s heart turned right over at the sight of him. Then he put on his wig and became ugly again, and went on spading, but now the Princess knew what he was really like.

The next day there was the lad at work under her window again, but as he had his wig on he was just as ugly as before. Then the Princess said to her maid, “Go down there where the gardener’s lad is working and creep up behind him and twitch his wig off.”

The maid went down to the garden and crept up back of the lad and gave the wig a twitch, but he was too clever for her. He heard her coming, and he held the wig tight down over his ears. All the same the Princess had once seen what he was like without it, and she made up her mind that if she could not have the gardener's lad for a husband she would never marry any one.

Now after this there was a great war and disturbance in the land. The King's enemies had risen up against him and had come to take away his land from him. But the King with his courtiers and his armed men rode out to meet them and turn them back. The lad would have liked to ride with them and strike a blow for the King, but the gardener would not hear of it. Nevertheless the day the King and his army were ready to set out the lad stole away to the stables and begged the stablemen to give him a mount.

It seemed to the men that that would be a merry thing to do. He was such a scarecrow they gave him a scarecrow horse. It was old and blind of one eye and limped on three legs, dragging the fourth behind it. The lad mounted and rode forth with all the rest, and when the courtiers saw him they laughed and laughed until their sides ached.

They had not gone far before they had to cross a swamp, and midway through it the nag stuck fast. There sat the lad, beating it and shouting, "Hie! Hie! Now will you go? Hie! Hie! Now will you go?" Every one went riding by, and as they passed him they pointed and laughed and jeered.

After they had all gone the lad slipped from the nag's back and ran off to the wood. He snatched off his wig and took his armor from the hollow tree and shook the bridle. At once the black steed came galloping up. The lad mounted him and rode off after the others. His armor shone in the sun, and so handsome was he, and so noble his air that any one would have taken him for a prince at least.

When he reached the battle ground he found the King sore pressed, but he rode so fiercely against the enemy that they were obliged to fall back, and the King's own forces won the day. Then the lad rode away so quickly that no one knew what had become of him. The King was sorry, for he wished to thank the brave hero who had fought for him.

But the lad rode back to the wood and hid his armor in a tree and turned the black steed loose. Then he put on his wig and ran back and mounted the sorry nag that was still stuck in the swamp where he had left it.

When the King and his courtiers came riding back there sat the lad in rags and a gray moss wig, and he was beating his horse and shouting, "Hie! Hie! Now will you go?"

Then the courtiers laughed more than ever, and one of them threw a clod at him.

The next day the King again rode forth to war with all his train. There was the lad still seated on the nag in the swamp. "What a fool he is," they cried. "He must have been sitting there all night." Then they rode on and left him.

But the lad ran with haste to the wood and took his armor from the tree and put it on. He shook the bridle, and the black steed came galloping up to him. The lad mounted and rode away to the battle field. The King's forces were falling back, but the lad attacked the enemy so fiercely that they were put to rout. Every one wondered who the hero could be, but as soon as the battle was won he rode away so swiftly that no one had a chance to question him and no one knew what had become of him. "If I could but find him," said the King, "I would honor him as I have never honored any one, for such a hero never was seen before."

But the lad hastened back to the wood; he laid aside his armor and turned the black steed loose. Then he put on his wig again and ran back to the swamp and mounted the sorry nag.

When the King's forces came riding home, there sat the gardener's ugly lad, whipping his sorry nag and crying "Hie! Hie! Now will you go?"

The courtiers looked upon him with scorn. "Why does he not go home and get to work?" they cried. "Such a scarecrow is an insult to all who see him." One of the courtiers, more ill-natured than the rest, shot an arrow at him, and it pierced his leg so the blood flowed. The lad cried out so that it was pitiful to hear him. The King felt sorry for him, ugly though he was, and drew out his own royal handkerchief and threw it to him.

“There, Sirrah! Take that and bind up thy wound!” he cried.

The lad took the handkerchief and bound it about his leg, and so the bleeding was stopped.

The next day, when the courtiers rode by, there sat the lad still upon his broken-down nag, shouting to it as if to urge it forward, and his leg was tied up with the bloody kerchief, and the King’s own initials were on the kerchief in letters of gold.

The courtiers did not dare to jeer at him this time, because the King had been kind to him, but they turned their faces aside so as not to see him.

As soon as they had gone the lad sprang down and ran to the wood and put on his armor and shook the bridle for the black steed, but he was in such haste, that he forgot the kerchief that he had used to bind up his wound, and so, when he rode out upon the battle field, he had it still tied about his leg.

That day the lad fought more fiercely than ever before, and it was well he did, for otherwise the King’s forces would certainly have been defeated. Already they were in retreat when the lad rode forth upon the field. But at sight of him they took heart again, and he led them on and did not stop or stay till he came to where the enemy’s leader was, and with one blow of his sword cut off his head.

Then all the enemy’s forces fled back, and the King’s men pursued after them and cut many of them to pieces, and the rest were glad to get safely back into their own country.

After that the lad would have ridden away as before, but this the King would not allow. He called to him and rode up to where he was, and when he saw the bloody kerchief tied about the stranger’s leg he knew he must be the very one he had left sitting on the old nag in the swamp awhile back.

This the lad could not deny, and when the King questioned him he told him everything.

Then the King said, “Though you are only a gardener’s lad still you are a mighty hero, and the hand of the Princess shall be yours. You shall marry her, and after I die you shall rule over the kingdom in my stead.”

You may guess the lad did not say no to that, for he had seen the Princess sitting at her window, and just from looking at her there he loved her with all his heart.

So the King and the courtiers rode home with the lad in their midst, and when the Princess heard she was to marry him she was filled with joy, for she recognized him at once as the gardener’s boy who had worked beneath her window.

Then all was joy and happiness. A great feast was prepared, and the lad and the Princess were married with the greatest magnificence. But first the lad rubbed his leg with the ointment and then it became quite well again; for it would never have done for him to go limping to his own wedding.

Now as soon as he was married he went out to the stable to tell it to the black steed. He found the horse sad and sorrowful. It stood drooping and would not raise its head or speak when he entered the stall.

The lad was troubled at this. “What ails you, my steed, that you stand there so sorrowful when all around rejoice?” asked he.

“I am sick at heart,” answered the steed, “and you alone can cure me of my sickness.”

“How is that?” asked the lad.

“Promise to do whatsoever I ask of you, and I will tell you.”

“I promise,” replied the lad, “for there is nothing I would not do for you.”

“Then take your sword and cut off my head,” said the steed.

When the lad heard this he was horrified. “What is this you ask of me?” he cried. “All that I have I owe to you, and shall I in return do you such an injury?”

But the black horse reminded him that he had promised. “If you do not do as I ask you,” said he, “then I shall know that you are a coward who dares not keep his word.”

The youth could not refuse after that. He was obliged to do as the horse bade him, but the tears dimmed his eyes so that he could scarcely see. He drew his sword and cut off the horse’s head. At once, instead of a coal-black steed, a handsome young Prince stood before him. The lad could scarce believe his eyes. He stared about him, wondering what had become of the horse.

“There is no need to look for the black steed,” said the princely stranger, “for I am he.” He then told the lad that he was the son of the King of a neighboring country. An enemy had risen up and slain the King and had given the Prince to the black master who had turned him into a horse and taken him away to his castle. “You have rescued me from the enchantment, and now I am free to claim my land again,” said the Prince. He then told the lad that the enemy King whom he had lately slain in battle was the very one who had taken his kingdom from him.

Then the Prince went back with the lad to the palace, and was introduced to the King and the Princess and all the court.

After that the lad and his bride and the Prince rode forth with a great retinue into the Prince’s own country, and his people received him with joy, and he and the lad lived in the greatest love and friendship forever after.

THE WISE GIRL. A SERBIAN STORY

There was once a girl who was wiser than the King and all his councilors; there never was anything like it. Her father was so proud of her that he boasted about her cleverness at home and abroad. He could not keep his tongue still about it. One day he was boasting to one of his neighbors, and he said, "The girl is so clever that not even the King himself could ask her a question she couldn't answer, or read her a riddle she couldn't unravel."

Now it so chanced the King was sitting at a window near by, and he overheard what the girl's father was saying. The next day he sent for the man to come before him. "I hear you have a daughter who is so clever that no one in the kingdom can equal her; and is that so?" asked the King.

Yes, it was no more than the truth. Too much could not be said of her wit and cleverness.

That was well, and the King was glad to hear it. He had thirty eggs; they were fresh and good, but it would take a clever person to hatch chickens out of them. He then bade his chancellor get the eggs and give them to the man.

"Take these home to your daughter," said the King, "and bid her hatch them out for me. If she succeeds she shall have a bag of money for her pains, but if she fails you shall be beaten as a vain boaster."

The man was troubled when he heard this. Still his daughter was so clever he was almost sure she could hatch out the eggs. He carried them home to her and told her exactly what the King had said, and it did not take the girl long to find out that the eggs had been boiled.

When she told her father that, he made a great to-do. That was a pretty trick for the King to have played upon him. Now he would have to take a beating and all the neighbors would hear about it. Would to Heaven he had never had a daughter at all if that was what came of it.

The girl, however, bade him be of good cheer. “Go to bed and sleep quietly,” said she. “I will think of some way out of the trouble. No harm shall come to you, even though I have to go to the palace myself and take the beating in your place.”

The next day the girl gave her father a bag of boiled beans and bade him take them out to a certain place where the King rode by every day. “Wait until you see him coming,” said she, “and then begin to sow the beans.” At the same time he was to call out this, that, and the other so loudly that the King could not help but hear him.

The man took the bag of beans and went out to the field his daughter had spoken of. He waited until he saw the King coming, and then he began to sow the beans, and at the same time to cry aloud, “Come sun, come rain! Heaven grant that these boiled beans may yield me a good crop.”

The King was surprised that any one should be so stupid as to think boiled beans would grow and yield a crop. He did not recognize the man, for he had only seen him once, and he stopped his horse to speak to him. “My poor man,” said he, “how can you expect boiled beans to grow? Do you not know that that is impossible?”

“Whatever the King commands should be possible,” answered the man, “and if chickens can hatch from boiled eggs why should not boiled beans yield a crop?”

When the King heard this he looked at the man more closely, and then he recognized him as the father of the clever daughter.

“You have indeed a clever daughter,” said he. “Take your beans home and bring me back the eggs I gave you.”

The man was very glad when he heard that, and made haste to obey. He carried the beans home and then took the eggs and brought them back to the palace of the King.

After the King had received the eggs he gave the man a handful of flax. “Take this to your clever daughter,” he said, “and bid her make for me within the week a full set of sails for a large ship. If she does this she shall

receive the half of my kingdom as a reward, but if she fails you shall have a drubbing that you will not soon forget."

The man returned to his home, loudly lamenting his hard lot.

"What is the matter?" asked his daughter. "Has the King set another task that I must do?"

Yes, that he had; and her father showed her the flax the King had sent her and gave her the message.

"Do not be troubled," said the girl. "No harm shall come to you. Go to bed and sleep quietly, and to-morrow I will send the King an answer that will satisfy him."

The man believed what his daughter said. He went to bed and slept quietly.

The next day the girl gave her father a small piece of wood. "Carry this to the King," said she. "Tell him I am ready to make the sails, but first let him make me of this wood a large ship that I may fit the sails to it."

The father did as the girl bade him, and the King was surprised at the cleverness of the girl in returning him such an answer.

"That is all very well," said he, "and I will excuse her from this task. But here! Here is a glass mug. Take it home to your clever daughter. Tell her it is my command that she dip out the waters from the ocean bed so that I can ride over the bottom dry shod. If she does this, I will take her for my wife, but if she fails you shall be beaten within an inch of your life."

The man took the mug and hastened home, weeping aloud and bemoaning his fate.

"Well, and what is it?" asked his daughter. "What does the King demand of me now?"

The man gave her the glass mug and told her what the King had said.

"Do not be troubled," said the girl. "Go to bed and sleep in peace. You shall not be beaten, and soon I shall be reigning as Queen over all this land."

The man had trust in her. He went to bed and slept and dreamed he saw her sitting by the King with a crown on her head.

The next day the girl gave her father a bunch of tow. “Take this to the King,” she said. “Tell him you have given me the mug, and I am willing to dip the sea dry, but first let him take this tow and stop up all the rivers that flow into the ocean.”

The man did as his daughter bade him. He took the tow to the King and told him exactly what the girl had said.

Then the King saw that the girl was indeed a clever one, and he sent for her to come before him.

She came just as she was, in her homespun dress and her rough shoes and with a cap on her head, but for all her mean clothing she was as pretty and fine as a flower, and the King was not slow to see it. Still he wanted to make sure for himself that she was as clever as her messages had been.

“Tell me,” said he, “what sound can be heard the farthest throughout the world?”

“The thunder that echoes through heaven and earth,” answered the girl, “and your own royal commands that go from lip to lip.”

This reply pleased the King greatly. “And now tell me,” said he, “exactly what is my royal sceptre worth?”

“It is worth exactly as much as the power for which it stands,” the girl replied.

The King was so well satisfied with the way the girl answered that he no longer hesitated; he determined that she should be his Queen, and that they should be married at once.

The girl had something to say to this, however. “I am but a poor girl,” said she, “and my ways are not your ways. It may well be that you will tire of me, or that you may be angry with me sometime, and send me back to my father’s house to live. Promise that if this should happen you will allow me

to carry back with me from the castle the thing that has grown most precious to me."

The King was willing to agree to this, but the girl was not satisfied until he had written down his promise and signed it with his own royal hand. Then she and the King were married with the greatest magnificence, and she came to live in the palace and reign over the land.

Now while the girl was still only a peasant she had been well content to dress in homespun and live as a peasant should, but after she became Queen she would wear nothing but the most magnificent robes and jewels and ornaments, for that seemed to her only right and proper for a Queen. But the King, who was of a very jealous nature, thought his wife did not care at all for him, but only for the fine things he could give her.

One time the King and Queen were to ride abroad together, and the Queen spent so much time in dressing herself that the King was kept waiting, and he became very angry. When she appeared before him, he would not even look at her. "You care nothing for me, but only for the jewels and fine clothes you wear," he cried. "Take with you those that are the most precious to you, as I promised you, and return to your father's house. I will no longer have a wife who cares only for my possessions and not at all for me."

Very well; the girl was willing to go. "And I will be happier in my father's house than I was when I first met you," said she. Nevertheless she begged that she might spend one more night in the palace, and that she and the King might sup together once again before she returned home.

To this the King agreed, for he still loved her, even though he was so angry with her.

So he and his wife supped together that evening, and just at the last the Queen took a golden cup and filled it with wine. Then, when the King was not looking, she put a sleeping potion in the wine and gave it to him to drink.

He took it and drank to the very last drop, suspecting nothing, but soon after he sank down among the cushions in a deep sleep. Then the Queen caused him to be carried to her father's house and laid in the bed there.

When the King awoke the next morning he was very much surprised to find himself in the peasant's cottage. He raised himself upon his elbow to look about him, and at once the girl came to the bedside, and she was again dressed in the coarse and common clothes she had worn before she was married.

"What means this?" asked the King, "and how came I here?"

"My dear husband," said the girl, "your promise was that if you ever sent me back to my father's house I might carry with me the thing that had become most precious to me in the castle. You are that most precious thing, and I care for nothing else except as it makes me pleasing in your sight."

Then the King could no longer feel jealous or angry with her. He clasped her in his arms, and they kissed each other tenderly. That same day they returned to the palace, and from that time on the King and his peasant Queen lived together in the greatest love and happiness.

THE HISTORY OF ALI COGIA. FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

In the city of Bagdad there once lived a merchant named Ali Cogia. This merchant was faithful and honest in all his dealings, but he had never made the holy pilgrimage to Mecca. He often felt troubled over this, for he knew he was neglecting a religious duty, but he was so occupied with his business affairs that it was difficult for him to leave home. Year after year he planned to make the pilgrimage, but always he postponed it, hoping for some more convenient time.

One night the merchant had a dream so vivid that it was more like a vision than a dream. In this dream or vision an old man appeared before him and, regarding him with a severe and reproachful look, said, "Why have you not made the pilgrimage to Mecca?"

When Ali Cogia awoke he felt greatly troubled. He feared this dream had been sent him as a reproach and a warning from heaven. He was still more troubled when the next night he dreamed the same dream; and when upon the third night the old man again appeared before him and asked the same question, he determined to delay no longer, but to set out upon the pilgrimage as soon as possible.

To this end he sold off all his goods except some that he decided to carry with him to Mecca and to dispose of there. He settled all his debts and rented his shop and his house to a friend, and as he had neither wife nor family, he was now free to set out at any time.

The sale of his goods had brought in quite a large sum of money, so that after he had set aside as much as was needed for the journey he found he had still a thousand gold pieces left over.

These he determined to leave in some safe place until his return. He put the money in an olive jar and covered it over with olives and sealed it carefully.

He then carried the jar to a friend named Abul Hassan, who was the owner of a large warehouse.

“Abul Hassan,” said he, “I am about to make the journey to Mecca, as you perhaps know. I have here a jar of olives that I would like to leave in your warehouse until my return, if you will allow me to do so.”

Abul Hassan was quite willing that his friend should do this and gave him the keys of the warehouse, bidding him place the jar wherever he wished. “I will gladly keep it until you return,” said he, “and you may rest assured the jar will not be disturbed until such time as you shall come and claim it.”

Ali Cogia thanked his friend and carried the jar into the warehouse, placing it in the farthest and darkest corner where it would not be in the way. Soon after he set out upon his journey to Mecca.

When Ali Cogia left Bagdad he had no thought but that he would return in a year’s time at latest. He made the journey safely, in company with a number of other pilgrims. Arrived in Mecca, he visited the celebrated temples and other objects of interest that were there. He performed all his religious duties faithfully, and after that he went to the bazaar and secured a place where he could display the goods he had brought with him.

One day a stranger came through the bazaar and stopped to admire the beauty of the things Ali had for sale.

“It is a pity,” said the stranger, “that you should not go to Cairo. You could go there at no great expense, and I feel assured that you would receive a far better price for your goods there than here. I know, for I have lived in that city all my life, and I am familiar with the prices that are paid for such fine merchandise as yours.” The stranger talked with Ali for some time and then passed on his way.

After he had gone the merchant meditated upon what had been said, and he finally determined to follow the stranger’s advice and to take such goods as he had left to Cairo, and place them on sale there. This he did and found that, as the stranger had promised, the prices he could get there were much higher than those paid in Mecca.

While Ali Cogia was in Cairo he made the acquaintance of some people who were about to journey down into Egypt by caravan. They urged Ali to join them, and after some persuasion he consented to do so, as he had always wished to see that country. From Egypt Ali Cogia journeyed to Constantinople, and then on to other cities and countries. Time flew by so rapidly that when, finally, Ali stopped to reckon up how long it was since he had left Bagdad, he found that seven years had elapsed.

He now determined to return without delay to his own city. He found a camel that suited him, and having bought it he packed upon it such goods as he had left, and set out for Bagdad.

Now all the while that Ali Cogia had been travelling from place to place the jar containing the gold pieces had rested undisturbed and forgotten in Abul Hassan's warehouse. Abul and his wife sometimes talked of Ali and wondered when he would return and how he had fared upon his journey. They were surprised at his long absence and feared some misfortune might have come upon him. At one time there was a rumor that he was dead, but this rumor was afterward denied.

Now the very day that Ali Cogia set out upon his return journey Abul Hassan and his wife were seated at the table at their evening meal, and their talk turned upon the subject of olives.

"It is a long time since we have had any in the house," said the wife. "Indeed, I do not remember when I last tasted one, and yet it is my favorite fruit. I wish we had some now."

"Yes, we must get some," said Abul Hassan. "And by the way, that reminds me of the jar that Ali Cogia left with us. I wonder whether the olives in it are still good. They have been there for some years now."

"Yes, for seven years," replied his wife. "No doubt they are all spoiled by this time."

"That I will see," said Abul Hassan, rising and taking up a light. "If they are still good we might as well have some, for I do not believe Ali Cogia will ever return to claim the jar."

His wife was horrified. “What are you thinking of?” cried she. “Ali Cogia entrusted this jar to you, and you gave your word that it would not be disturbed until he came again to claim it. We heard, indeed, that he was dead, but this rumor was afterward denied. What opinion would he have of you if he returned and found you had helped yourself to his olives?”

Abul Hassan, still holding the light in his hand, waited impatiently until his wife had finished speaking. Then he replied, “Ali Cogia will not return; of that I feel assured. And at any rate, if he should, I can easily replace the olives.”

“You can replace the olives, no doubt,” answered his wife, “but they would not be Ali Cogia’s olives. This jar is a sacred trust and should not be disturbed by you under any consideration.” But though she spoke thus strongly she could see by her husband’s face that he had not changed his determination. He now took up the dish and said, “If the olives are good I will bring a dish full from the jar, but if they are spoiled, as I suppose they are, I will replace the cover and no one will be any the wiser.”

His wife would have tried again to dissuade him, but without listening further he went at once to the warehouse. It did not take him long to find the jar. He took off the cover and found that, as he had suspected, the olives were spoiled. Wishing to see whether those beneath were in the same condition he tilted the jar and emptied some of them out into the dish. What was his surprise to see some gold pieces fall out with the olives. Abul Hassan could hardly believe his eyes. Hastily he plunged his hands down into the jar and soon found that except for the top layer of fruit the whole jar was full of gold pieces.

Abul Hassan’s eyes sparkled with desire. He was naturally a very avaricious man, and the sight of the gold awakened all his greed. It had been there in his warehouse, all unknown to him, for seven years. He felt as though he had been tricked, for, thought he, “All this time I might have been using this money to advantage by trading with it and with no harm to any one, for I could have replaced it at any time I heard Ali Cogia was about to return.”

For a while he stood there lost in thought. Then he returned the gold to the jar, covered it over with olives as before, and replaced the cover, and taking up the empty dish and the light he returned to his wife.

“You were quite right,” said he carelessly. “The olives were spoiled, so I did not bring any.”

“You should not even have opened the jar,” said his wife. “Heaven grant that no evil may come upon us for this.”

To this remark Abul Hassan made no reply, and soon after he and his wife retired to rest. But the merchant could not sleep. All night he tossed and twisted, thinking of the gold and planning how he could make it his own, and it was not until morning that he fell into a troubled sleep.

The next day he arose early and as soon as the bazaar opened he went out and bought a quantity of olives. He brought them home and carried them into the warehouse secretly, and without his wife’s knowing anything about it. Then he again opened Ali Cogia’s jar, and having emptied it of its contents, he filled it with fresh olives and replaced the cover in such a way that no one, looking at it, would have known it had been disturbed. He then threw the spoiled olives away and hid the gold in a secret place known only to himself.

About a month after this Ali Cogia returned to Bagdad. As his own house was still rented he took a room in a khan and at once hastened to Abul Hassan’s house to get his jar.

Abul Hassan was confounded when he saw Ali Cogia enter his house, for he had managed to convince himself that Ali must be dead. This he had done to try to excuse himself in his own eyes for taking the gold. However he hid his confusion as best he could, and made the returned traveller welcome, and asked him how he had fared in his journeyings.

Ali Cogia answered his inquiries politely, but he was uneasy and restless, and as soon as he could make the opportunity he inquired about the olive jar he had left in the warehouse.

“The jar is there where you put it, I am sure,” answered Abul Hassan, “though I myself have not seen it. I do not even know in what part of the warehouse you left it. But here are the keys, and as I am busy I will ask you to get it for yourself.”

Ali Cogia made haste to seek out the jar and was much relieved to find it exactly where he had left it and apparently untouched. He had trust in Abul Hassan’s honor, but a thousand pieces of gold was such a large sum that he could not but feel some concern until he had it in his own hands again.

After thanking his fellow merchant for keeping the jar, more earnestly than seemed necessary, he carried it back to his room in the khan, and having locked the door he opened it. He removed the two top layers of olives and was somewhat surprised not to see the gold. However, he thought he must have covered the money more carefully than he had supposed. He took out more olives, and then still more, but still there were no signs of the gold.

Filled with misgivings, Ali Cogia tilted the jar and emptied out the rest of the olives so hastily that they rolled all over the floor, but not a single piece of gold was there.

The merchant was dismayed. He could scarcely believe that Abul Hassan would rob him of his money, and yet there seemed no other explanation. He knew that the merchant kept his warehouse locked except when he was there himself, and that no one was allowed to visit it but those with whom he was well acquainted, and then only upon special business.

Deeply troubled he returned to the merchant’s house, determined to demand an explanation and, if necessary, to force him by law to return the gold.

Abul Hassan seemed surprised to see Ali return so soon. “Did you forget something?” he asked. “Or do you wish to speak to me upon some business?”

“Do you not guess what I have come to speak to you about?” asked Ali.

“How should I guess? Unless it is to thank me again for keeping your jar for you.”

“Abul Hassan, when I went away I left a thousand pieces of gold in the jar I placed in your warehouse. The gold is now gone. I suppose you saw some way in which you could use it both for your advantage and my own. If such is the case, please to give me some receipt for the money, and I am willing to wait until you can return it to me, but I think you should have spoken of the matter when I was here before.”

Abul Hassan showed the greatest surprise at this address. “I do not know what you are talking about,” said he. “I know nothing about any gold. If there was any in the jar, which I very much doubt, it must be there still, for the jar has never been disturbed since you yourself placed it in my warehouse.”

“The gold certainly was in the jar when I placed it there, and you must know it, for no one else could have taken it. No one goes into the warehouse without your permission, as you have often told me and then only for some express purpose.”

Ali Cogia would have said more, but his fellow merchant interrupted him. “I repeat I know nothing of any gold,” he cried angrily. “Go away and do not trouble me any further, or you will find yourself in difficulties. Do you not see how your loud talking has gathered a crowd about my house?”

And indeed a number of people had gathered in front of Abul’s house, drawn thither by the sound of the dispute. They listened with curiosity to what the merchants were saying and presently became so interested that they began to discuss the matter among themselves, and to argue and dispute as to which of the merchants was in the right.

At last Ali Cogia, finding that Abul would confess nothing, said, “Very well. I see you are determined to keep the money if possible. But you shall find it is not as easy to rob me as you seem to think.” Then, laying his hand upon Abul’s shoulder, he added, “I summon you to appear with me before the Cadi, that he may decide the matter between us.”

Now this is a summons no true Mussulman can disobey. Abul was compelled to go before the Cadi with Ali, and a great crowd of people followed them, eager to know what decision would be given in the matter by the judge.

The Cadi listened attentively to all the two merchants had to say and after reflecting upon the matter he asked, “Abul Hassan, are you ready to swear that you know nothing of the gold Ali Cogia says he left with you, and that you did not disturb the jar?”

“I am,” answered the merchant. “And indeed I wish to swear to it,” and this he did.

“And you, Ali Cogia; have you any witnesses to prove there was gold in the jar when you left it in Abul Hassan’s warehouse?”

“Alas! no; no one knew of it but myself.”

“Then it is your word against his. Abul Hassan has sworn that he did not touch the jar, and unless you can bring witnesses to your truth, I cannot compel him to pay you a thousand pieces of gold that you may never have lost.”

The case was dismissed. Abul Hassan returned to his home, satisfied and triumphant, but Ali Cogia with hanging head and bitterness of heart.

But though the Cadi had decided against him, Ali was not willing to let the matter rest there. He was determined to have justice done him, even though he were obliged to appeal to the Caliph himself.

At that time Haroun-al-Raschid was Commander of the Faithful. Every morning Haroun-al-Raschid went to the mosque to offer up prayers, accompanied by his Grand Vizier and Mesrour the Chief Eunuch. As he returned to the palace all who had complaints to make or petitions to offer stationed themselves along the way and gave their complaints and petitions in written form to Mesrour. Afterward these papers were presented to the Caliph that he might read them and decide upon their merits.

The day after the Cadi had dismissed the case of the two merchants, Ali Cogia set out early in the morning and placed himself beside the way where he knew the Caliph would pass.

In his hand he carried his complaint against Abul Hassan, written out in due form. He waited until Haroun-al-Raschid was returning from the mosque and then put the paper in the hand of Mesrour.

Later, when the Caliph was reading the papers, he was particularly interested in the one presented by Ali Cogia: “This is a curious case,” said he to his Vizier, “and one which it will be difficult to decide. Order the two merchants to appear before me to-morrow, and I will hear what they have to say.”

That evening the Caliph and his Vizier disguised themselves, and, attended only by Mesrour, they went out to wander about the streets of the city. It was the custom of the Caliph to do this, as in this way he learned much about his people, their needs and wants and ways of life, which would otherwise have been hidden from him.

For some time after they set out they heard and saw nothing of importance, but as they came near to a court that opened off one of the streets they heard the voices of a number of boys who were at play there in the moonlight.

The Caliph motioned to his Vizier to be silent, and together they stole to the opening of the court and looked in. The moon was so bright that they could see clearly the faces of the boys at play there. They had gathered about the tallest and most intelligent-looking lad, who appeared to be their leader.

“Let us act out some play,” the leader was saying. “I will be the Cadi, and you shall bring some case before me to be tried.”

“Very well,” cried another. “But what case shall we take?”

“Let us take the case of Ali Cogia and Abul Hassan. We all know about that, and if it had come before me I should have decided it differently from the way the Cadi did.”

All the boys agreed to this by clapping their hands.

The leader then appointed one boy to take the part of Ali Cogia and another to be Abul Hassan. Still others were chosen to be guards and merchants and so on.

The Caliph and his Vizier were much amused by this play of the boys, and they sat down upon a bench so conveniently placed that they could see all that went on without themselves being observed.

The pretended Cadi took his seat and commanded that Abul Hassan and Ali Cogia should be brought before him. “And let Ali Cogia bring with him the jar of olives in which he said he hid the gold,” said he.

The lads who were taking the parts of Ali Cogia and Abul Hassan were now led forward by some of the other boys and were told by the pretended Cadi to state their cases. This they did clearly, for the case had been much talked about by their elders, and they were well acquainted with all the circumstances and had discussed them among themselves.

The pretended Cadi listened attentively to what they said, and then addressing the lad who took the part of Abul he asked, “Abul Hassan, are you willing to swear that you have not touched the jar nor opened it?”

The pretended merchant said he was.

The lad then asked, “Has Ali Cogia brought the jar of olives into court with him?”

“It is here,” said the boys who were taking the parts of officers of the court.

The feigned Cadi ordered them to place the jar before him, which they pretended to do. He then went through the motions of lifting the lid and examining the olives and even of tasting one.

“These are very fine olives,” said he. “Ali Cogia, when did you say you placed this jar in the warehouse?”

“It was when I left Bagdad, seven years ago,” answered the pretended merchant.

“Abul Hassan, is that so?”

The boy who acted the part of Abul said that it was.

“Let the olive merchants be brought into court,” commanded the pretended Cadi.

The boys who were taking the parts of olive merchants now came forward.

“Tell me,” said the feigned Cadi, “how long is it possible to keep olives?”

“However great the care that is taken,” they answered, “it is impossible to preserve them for more than three years. After that time they lose both color and flavor and are fit for nothing but to be thrown out.” The boys spoke with assurance, for their fathers were among the most expert olive dealers in the city, and they knew what they were talking about.

The pretended Cadi then bade them examine the olives in the jar and tell him how old they were. “As you see,” said he, “they are of a fine color, large, and of a delicious fresh taste.”

The feigned merchants pretended to examine them carefully and then announced the olives were of that year’s growth.

“But Ali Cogia says he left them with Abul Hassan seven years ago, and to this statement Abul Hassan agrees.”

“It is impossible they should have been kept that long,” answered the feigned merchants. “As we tell you, after three years olives are worth nothing, and at the end of seven years they would be utterly spoiled. These are fresh olives and of this year’s growth.”

The boy who took the part of Abul Hassan would have tried to explain and make excuses, but the pretended Cadi bade him be silent.

“You have sworn falsely,” said he, “and also proved yourself a thief.”

Then to the pretended guards he cried, “Take him away and let him be hung according to the law.”

The feigned guards dragged away the boy who was acting Abul Hassan and then, the play being finished, all the boys clapped their hands and shouted their approval of the way the feigned Cadi had conducted the case.

Seeing that all was over the Caliph withdrew, beckoning to the Vizier and Mesrour to follow him. After they had gone a short distance, Haroun-al-Raschid turned to the Vizier and asked him what he thought of the play they had just witnessed.

“I think,” said the Vizier, “that the pretended Cadi showed a wisdom and a judgment that the real Cadi would do well to imitate. I also think the boy is a lad of remarkable intelligence.”

“It is my own thought,” replied the Caliph. “Moreover I have a further thought. You know this very case between Ali Cogia and Abul Hassan is to appear before me to-morrow, I have it in mind to send you to bring this boy to the palace, and I will then let him conduct this case in reality as he has to-day in play.”

The Vizier applauded this plan, and he and his master returned to the palace, still talking of the boy.

The next day the Vizier went back to the court they had visited the evening before, and after looking about he found the lad who had taken the part of the Cadi sitting in a doorway. The Vizier approached him and spoke to him in a kind and friendly manner.

“My boy,” said he, “I have come here by order of the Commander of the Faithful. Last evening, when you were acting your play, he overheard all that was said, and he wishes to see you at the palace to-day.”

The boy was alarmed when he heard this, grew pale, and showed great uneasiness. “Have I done something wrong?” he asked. “If I have I did it unknowingly, and I hope I am not to be punished for something I did without intention.”

“You have done no wrong,” answered the Vizier, “and it is not to punish you that the Caliph has sent for you. Indeed he is very much pleased with your conduct, and his sending for you in this manner is a great honor.” He then told the lad what it was the Caliph wished him to do.

Instead of being put at ease by this the lad showed even greater discomfort. “This seems a strange thing for me to do,” said he:—“to decide a case between two grown men—I who am only a child. I am afraid I will not be able to please the Caliph, and that he will be angry with me.”

“Conduct the case as wisely as you did last night when you were playing,” answered the Vizier, “and the Caliph will not be displeased with you.”

The boy then asked permission to go and tell his mother where he was going and for what purpose, and to this the Vizier consented.

When the lad's mother heard that he was to go to the palace to act as judge in a case of such importance she could hardly believe her ears. She was frightened lest the lad should in some way offend the Caliph by saying or doing something ill-judged.

The lad tried to reassure her, though he himself was far from being at ease.

"If the Caliph was pleased with the way I conducted the case last night I do not think he can be so very much displeased with me to-day," said he; "for I feel sure that only in this way can we discover the truth between the two merchants."

When the lad returned to the Vizier he looked very grave, and as they went along together on their way to the palace the Vizier tried in every way to put him more at ease and give him confidence.

Immediately upon their arrival at the palace they were shown into the room where the Caliph was sitting. Haroun-al-Raschid greeted the boy with no less kindness than the Vizier had shown and asked him if he understood the purpose for which he had been brought thither.

The lad said he did.

"Then let the two merchants come in," said the Caliph.

Ali Cogia and Abul Hassan were at once brought in by the officers of the court. Ali Cogia brought with him the jar of olives, for so he had been commanded to do.

The Cadi who had judged between the two merchants had also been ordered to attend, and he entered and took the place assigned to him.

The Caliph then turned to the lad and bade him open the case by bidding the merchants tell their stories, and this, after a moment's pause, the lad did.

Ali Cogia told his story just as he had before, stating that he had left with Abul Hassan seven years before a thousand pieces of gold packed in a jar and covered over with olives.

“Is this the jar you left with Abul Hassan?” asked the boy, pointing to the jar Ali had brought into court.

Ali stated that it was.

“Abul Hassan, do you also say this is the jar Ali Cogia left with you?” asked the lad.

Abul answered that it was. He also asked to be allowed to take his oath that the jar had not been disturbed after it was left in his warehouse until Ali Cogia had returned and removed it.

“That is not necessary at present,” answered the boy. “First let some expert olive merchants be brought in.”

Several olive dealers, the most expert in the city, had been sent for, and they now came forward.

The lad asked these real merchants the same questions he had asked of the feigned merchants the night before. “How long,” said he, “is it possible to keep olives good?”

And the merchants answered, as had the boys, “Not more than three years, for no matter how carefully they have been packed, after that time they lose both color and flavor.”

“Look in that jar,” said the lad, “and tell us how long you think those olives have been kept there.”

The merchants examined the olives with the greatest care, and then they all agreed that the olives were of that year’s growth and quite fresh.

“And do you not think it possible they may have been kept a year or so?”

“No, it is not possible,” answered the merchants. “We know, of a surety, as we have already said, that these olives are of this year’s growth, and have only recently been packed in the jar.”

When Ali Cogia heard this he gave a cry of surprise, but Abul Hassan was silent; his face grew as pale as ashes, and his legs failed under him, for he

knew that the merchants, in saying this, had pronounced sentence against him.

But the lad turned to the Caliph and begged that he might now be allowed to hand over the case to him. “When I pronounced sentence last night, it was but in play,” said he. “But this is not play. A man’s life is at stake, and I dare not pronounce sentence upon him.”

To this request the Caliph agreed. “Abul Hassan, you have condemned yourself,” he said. He then bade the guards take Abul Hassan away and execute him according to the law.

Before the wretched man was hanged, however, he confessed his guilt and told where he had hidden the thousand pieces of gold that belonged to Ali Cogia.

After Abul had been led away the Caliph caressed and praised the lad for conducting the case so wisely and with so much judgment.

“As for you,” said he to the Cadi, “you have not shown the wisdom I demand from my judges. Learn from this child that such cases are not to be dismissed lightly, but to be inquired into with judgment and care. Otherwise it may go ill with you.”

The Cadi retired, full of shame, but the Caliph ordered that a hundred pieces of gold should be given to the boy and that he should be sent home to his mother with honor.

OH! A COSSACK STORY

There was once a man who had one son, and he was so lazy that he would not work at all. The father apprenticed him to a tailor, but the lad went to sleep between the stitches. He apprenticed him to a cobbler and the lad only sat and yawned instead of driving pegs. What to do with him the man did not know.

"Come," said the father one day, "we will go out into the wide world. It may be that somewhere or other we will find a master who can make you work."

The lad was very good-natured. "Very well," said he, "I am willing"; and he arose and stretched himself and yawned, and then he was ready to set out.

The father put on his cap and took a staff in his hand, and then he was ready, too.

The two of them journeyed along together, in step and out of step, and after a while they came to a deep wood. When they were well into it, the father grew so weary that he had to sit down and rest.

"Oh! what have I done that I should have such a lazy son!" he cried.

At once a little old, wrinkled, weazened man, all dressed in green, with a green face, green hair, and a green beard stood before them.

"Why did you call me," said he, "and what do you want?"

"I did not call you," answered the man.

"But you did call me, for I heard you. Did not you call 'Oh'? And that is my name."

"I said, 'Oh, what have I done to have such a lazy son,'" replied the man, "but I did not call you, for I did not know that was your name."

The Green one looked closely at the lad. "Is he so lazy?" he asked. "He looks a stout, healthy fellow."

“That is the worst of it,” answered the father. “He is so stout and healthy that he eats me out of house and home, and not one stroke will he do to pay for it. I have tried to apprentice him to different masters, but they soon weary of him and drive him out.”

“Very well; I will take him as an apprentice myself,” answered the little man. “Leave him here with me for a year. Come back at the end of that time, and if you know him again and are able to choose him out from among my other apprentices, then you shall take him home with you, but if not, then he shall serve with me a year longer.”

Very well, the father was willing to agree to that. It would only be for a year, for of course he would recognize his own son anywhere. So he left the lad with Oh and went on home again.

Oh took the lad down into the country that lies beneath this earth, and the way was not long. There everything was green. Oh’s house was made of green rushes. His wife was green and his daughters were green and his dog was green, and when they gave the lad food to eat, it was green also.

The oldest daughter would have been a beauty if she had not been green all over—eyes, hair, and all. As soon as she saw the lad she loved him and would have been glad to have him for a husband, but he had no fancy for her.

“When I marry,” said he, “it shall be some girl who is good red and white flesh and blood like myself.”

“Never mind,” said Oh. “After you have lived here for a while you will be glad enough to have her for a wife.”

The lad lived down in the under country for a year, and Oh taught him much magic, and he was very useful to the old Green One.

But at the end of the year the father came back in search of his son. He stopped at the very same spot in the forest where he had stopped before and cried out in a loud voice, “Oh! Oh! I would like to see my son.”

At once Oh appeared before him. “Come with me,” he said, “but remember our bargain. If you know your son when you see him he is yours again, but if

you do not know him, then he must stay with me and serve me still another year."

The man was very willing to agree, for it would be a strange thing if he did not know his own son when he saw him.

Oh led him down the short way to the land that is under this, and when he got there the man stared about him in wonder. Never had he seen so many green things in all his life before.

Oh took a handful of corn and scattered it about, calling as he did so. Then a great number of cocks that were pecking about the place came running and began to pick up the corn.

"Tell me now, which of these is your son?" asked Oh, "for one of them is he."

The man stared and scratched his head and stared again, but he could not tell, for one cock was just like another. He had to own that he could not tell which was his son.

"Very well," said Oh. "Then you will have to go home without him. Come back at the end of another year, and then if you know him from his mates you shall take him home with you, but if not then he shall stay with me a twelvemonth longer."

That did not suit the man at all, but he could not say no, for that was what the bargain had been.

At the end of the year the man came back to the forest again and called upon Oh, and Oh was quickly before him.

"Come along," said Oh. "You surely ought to know your son when you see him. If you do he shall go home with you, and I shall not say no to it, but if not then he shall stay with me a year longer."

When the man heard this he was troubled, for he feared the Green One meant to play some trick on him as he had before, and he wanted his son home again, lazy or not. Moreover the lad's mother was grieving for him.

Oh led the man down to the underworld and over to a field where a flock of rams was grazing.

“All these are my servants,” said Oh, “and one of them is your son. Look well and tell me which is he, for unless you can choose him out he must stay here with me.”

The man looked and looked, but he could not tell which of the rams was his son, for they all looked alike to him, so he had to go home without him.

When the lad’s mother heard of this second trick the Green One had played on her husband she wept bitterly. “If we cannot find some way to get round him, we will never have the lad back again,” she said.

“That is true,” said the man; “but if our son looks like a cock, how can I tell him from other cocks; and if he looks like a ram, how can I tell him from other rams?”

Well, time slipped by, and the man and his wife grew poorer and poorer, for they were growing old, and they needed a young body in the house to work for them.

When it was about time for the man to set out for Oh’s house his wife said to him, “See now! we have nothing left in the house but a small loaf and a bit of honeycomb. But we can do better than fill our stomach with them. Do you take them to the old Wise Woman who lives over beyond the hill. Tell her they are a gift, and then ask her what we can do to meet the tricks of the little old Green One.”

The man did as his wife bade him, though he was hungry and would have been glad of a bit of the bread himself.

The Wise Woman was pleased with the gift, and thanked the man kindly. Then the man told her all his troubles and asked her how he was to get his son back again from Oh.

“Listen!” said the old woman. “Oh would gladly keep your son with him as a husband for his daughter, and if you do not bring the lad away with you this time, you will never have him back. This time Oh will show you a flock of

doves, and one of them will be your son. Look closely at them, and the one that has tears in its eyes is he, for only a human soul can weep."

The father thanked the old woman and hurried back home again, and very soon after it was time to set out for Oh's house.

The man travelled along till he came to the wood and the place where he had come twice already, and he stood there and cried, "Oh! Oh!"

Then Oh appeared before him. "Here I am," said Oh, "ready and waiting for you. This time, as before, I tell you that if you know your son when you see him you shall take him away with you, but if, this time, you do not know him, then he is mine forever."

"Very well," said the man, "that is a bargain."

Then Oh took him down to the underworld. He called to a flock of doves that was perched on the roof and scattered a handful of peas on the ground for them. The doves flew down all about them and began to peck up the peas; but one dove would not eat but sat mournfully on a low bough and looked at them, and its eyes were full of tears.

"This one is my son," cried the man, pointing to the dove that wept.

As soon as he said this the dove changed its shape and became a young man, and this was the son, though he had become so fine and tall and handsome in these three years that his father could scarcely recognize him.

Then Oh was in a fine rage. He danced with fury and tore his beard.

"Very well," he cried, "he is yours now, but you shall not keep him long, and when I once get him back again he is mine forever."

But the lad paid no heed to his threats. He and his father were soon on the upper earth again, and they set out for home, one foot before the other.

On the way the father told the lad how badly it had gone with him and the mother in the past years; of how poor they were, and of how their hut was tumbling to pieces, and how their cow had died.

“Never mind,” said the lad. “I learned quite a bit of magic from the Green One, and that should help us out now. Do you hear the huntsmen winding their horns farther on in the open?”

Yes, the father heard them.

“I will turn myself into a greyhound,” said the lad. “The hunt is coming this way, and when the huntsmen see me they will want to buy me. Ask them three hundred dollars for me; no more, no less, but when they take me do not leave the leash on me, whatever you do. Take it off and put it in your pocket, and then all will be well with me. Fail to do this, and misfortune will surely overtake me.”

The father promised to do as the son said, and then the lad turned himself into a greyhound, and he was so sleek and handsome that the man could not admire him enough; but about his neck was an old, worn leash that did not look as though it were worth a penny. It seemed a pity to leave it on the neck of such a handsome dog.

The man went on a little further and then he came to where a grand nobleman and his friends were hunting a hare. They had a pack of dogs with them but the hare had outrun them.

When the nobleman saw the man and the greyhound he stopped his horse.

“That is a fine greyhound you have there.”

“Yes, it is,” answered the man.

“Do you think it could course down the hare we are chasing?”

Yes, the man was sure it could.

“Then let me have it and I will pay you a good price for it.”

Very well, he could have it for three hundred dollars, but that was without the leash; the leash was not for sale.

The nobleman laughed aloud, “when the dog is mine,” he said, “he shall have a golden leash, for that one you have is fit for nothing but the ash heap.”

The nobleman then paid the man three hundred dollars and unfastened the leash from the dog's neck.

Away he flew like the wind and soon caught the hare. But when the hunters reached the spot where the hare lay they could see nothing of the dog. Only a tall and handsome youth stood there, and he was flushed and hot as though he had been running.

"Have you seen my greyhound, a sleek and handsome dog?" asked the nobleman.

No, the youth had not seen any dog.

The nobleman called and whistled, and he and his huntsman hunted far and near, but they never found the greyhound.

As for the lad he set out on the road his father had taken and soon caught up with him.

"That was a very pretty trick," said the father; "but after all three hundred dollars is not much. It will barely buy us a cow and clothes and put a new roof on the hut."

"Yes, but that is not the only trick I know," answered the son. "Look at the hill over yonder and tell me what you see."

The father looked. "I see a company of fine ladies and gentlemen," answered the father, "and they are flying their falcons."

"I will change myself into a falcon, and when you have come to where they are you shall loose me, and I will strike down a quail. Then they will want to buy me. Sell me for three hundred dollars, no more, no less. But whatever you do take off my hood and keep it, or misfortune will surely overtake us."

The father promised he would do this, and then the lad turned himself into a falcon and perched upon his father's hand.

Presently the father came up to where the ladies and gentlemen were at their sport. They loosed their falcons, and the falcons flew after the quail, but always they failed to strike, and the quail escaped.

“That is poor sport,” said the man. “I can show you better.”

He took off the hood and cast his falcon at the quail, and it quickly struck down its prey.

The gentlemen and ladies were astonished at the quickness of the falcon and at the beauty of its feathers.

“Sell us the bird,” they said.

Yes, the man was willing to do that, but his price was three hundred dollars without the hood; the hood was not for sale for love nor money.

All the fine folk began to laugh. “What do we want with that old hood?” they cried. “We will give the bird a hood that is worthy of a king.”

So the man took the three hundred dollars and the hood and went on his way.

The one who had bought the falcon cast it at a quail, and it struck down its prey as before, but when the hunters reached the place where the birds had fallen they saw no falcon, but only a handsome young man who stood there looking down at the dead quail.

“What became of the falcon that was here?” they asked.

But the youth had seen no falcon.

He set out and soon overtook his father, who had not gone far. “And now art thou content?” he asked.

“Six hundred dollars is not a fortune,” answered the man. “Since you have done so well you might have done better.”

“Very well,” answered the son. “We are now coming to a town where they are holding a fair. I will change myself into a horse, and you shall take me there and sell me for a thousand dollars,—no more, no less. But heed what I say. Do not sell the halter whatever you do, or evil will surely come of it.”

“Very well,” said the father. “I will remember.”

The son then changed himself into a coal-black horse. His skin was like satin, his eyes like jewels, and when he moved, his hoofs scarcely seemed to touch the ground. But around his neck was an old leather halter that was scarcely fit for an old farm nag.

The father led the horse on to where the fair was being held, and at once a crowd gathered around him, all bidding for the horse. Some offered him more and some less.

“The price is a thousand dollars,” said the father, “no more, no less. But that is without the halter.”

Then the people all laughed. “Who wants the halter?” they cried. “What we offer is for the horse alone. The halter we would not take as a gift.”

Then a rough looking, black-haired gypsy elbowed his way through the crowd. He was really the Green One who had taken on this form, though this the man did not know.

“I will give you two thousand,” he cried. “One thousand for the horse and one thousand for the halter, but I will not have one without the other.”

When the crowd heard this they laughed louder than ever. They thought the gypsy was crazy to offer such a price.

As for the father he stood there gaping and he did not know what to do.

“The price of the horse is a thousand dollars,” he said.

“And a thousand for the halter,” said the gypsy.

Well, two thousand dollars seemed a fortune to the man. Moreover he did not see what harm it could do to sell the halter too.

So he let the gypsy have the horse and the halter as well, and the gypsy paid him two thousand dollars and led the horse away.

And now the lad could not change himself back into his human shape, because the halter held him, and this Oh knew very well.

He led the horse back to the forest and down to the world that is under this. “Now I have you again,” he said, “and this time you shall not escape me.”

Then he called to his youngest daughter and bade her take the horse down to the river to drink.

When she had brought the horse to the river bank it said to her. “Loosen, I pray of thee, the halter, that I may drink more easily.”

Then the girl, who was a stupid wench, loosened the halter. At once the lad slipped out of it and changed himself into a perch and fled away down the river.

But the Green One knew what had happened. He rushed down to the river and changed himself into a pike and pursued after the perch.

On and on they went, but the pike swam faster than the perch and was just about to catch it when the perch sprang clear out of the water.

The daughter of the Tsar was walking by the river, and she was such a beauty that it made the heart ache to look at her. On her arm she carried a basket.

As the perch leaped he changed himself into a ruby ring and fell into the basket.

The damsel was very much astonished to see the ring in her basket. She did not know where it had come from. She looked up, and she looked down, but she could see no one who could have thrown the ring.

Then she took it up and slid it upon her finger, and at once she loved it as she had never loved anything in all her life before.

She carried it to her father and said to him, “Look what a pretty ring I have found!”

“Yes,” answered her father, “but where did you find it?”

“I found it in my basket, but how it came there I do not know.”

The Tsaritsa’s mother also admired the ring very much. Never had they seen such a brilliant and flashing ruby before.

Now at first, after the perch leaped out of the river and into the Tsaritsa’s basket, Oh did not know what had become of him. He was obliged to go

home and get out his magic books, and then he soon learned where the lad was.

He then changed himself into a venerable merchant, clothed in velvet robes and with a long white beard. He broke a stick from an ash tree and changed it into a horse, and mounted on it and rode away to the Tsar's palace.

Then he asked to speak with the Tsar, and so old and venerable did he look that they would not refuse him, but brought him before the Tsar.

"What dost thou want, old man?" asked the Tsar.

"Your majesty," answered the Green One, "I have had a great loss. I was crossing the river in a boat, and I had with me a very handsome ruby ring that I was carrying with me to my master, who is also a Tsar. Unfortunately I lost the ring overboard, and I thought it might perchance have washed up on the shore and have been picked up by one of thy servants."

"What was thy ring like?" asked the Tsar.

Then the pretended merchant described the Tsaritsa's ring exactly.

The Tsar sent for his daughter, and she came with the ring on her finger, for she would not take it off, either night or day.

"Let me see thy ring," said the Tsar.

He took her hand in his and examined the ring carefully, and it was in every respect exactly as the Green One had described it.

"Is this thy ring?" the Tsar asked of the merchant.

"Yes, your majesty, it is."

"Then," said the Tsar to his daughter, "it is right that thou shouldst return it to him."

The Tsaritsa wept and implored. She offered the merchant her pearls and every other gem she had if he would but let her keep the ring, but he refused.

“Very well, then, it shall be neither thine nor mine,” cried the Tsaritsa, and she drew the ring from her finger and dashed it against the wall.

At once the ring changed into a hundred millet seeds and was scattered all over the floor.

But the Green One as quickly changed himself into a cock and ran about this way and that, pecking up the millet seeds and swallowing them. Ninety-nine millet seeds he found and ate, but the hundredth he did not find, because it had fallen beside the Tsaritsa’s foot, and the hem of her robe covered it.

As soon as the cock had swallowed the ninety-ninth seed he sprang upon the window sill, and stretched his neck and crowed with triumph.

But the hundredth seed was really the lad, and in that moment he changed himself back into his human form, and before the cock knew what had happened, he caught hold of it and wrung its neck and that was the end of Oh and his magic.

As for the Tsaritsa, no sooner had she seen the lad than her heart went out to him, and she loved him even better than she had her ring, and she declared that he and he only should be her husband.

The Tsar did not know what to say to that, for it did not seem fitting that his daughter should marry a common man. But the Tsaritsa begged and plead with him till he could no longer withstand her.

So she and the lad were married with great pomp and magnificence.

His old father and mother were bidden to the wedding, and they could hardly believe their eyes when they saw their son stand there in those costly robes with a crown upon his head and the Tsaritsa beside him as his bride.

The old people were given a house to live in and plenty of money to spend, and they all lived in peace and happiness forever after.

THE TALKING EGGS. A STORY FROM LOUISIANA

There was once a widow who had two daughters, one named Rose and the other Blanche.

Blanche was good and beautiful and gentle, but the mother cared nothing for her and gave her only hard words and harder blows; but she loved Rose as she loved the apple of her eye, because Rose was exactly like herself, coarse-looking, and with a bad temper and a sharp tongue.

Blanche was obliged to work all day, but Rose sat in a chair with folded hands as though she were a fine lady, with nothing in the world to do.

One day the mother sent Blanche to the well for a bucket of water. When she came to the well she saw an old woman sitting there. The woman was so very old that her nose and her chin met, and her cheeks were as wrinkled as a walnut.

“Good day to you, child,” said the old woman.

“Good day, auntie,” answered Blanche.

“Will you give me a drink of water?” asked the old woman.

“Gladly,” said Blanche. She drew the bucket full of water, and tilted it so the old woman could drink, but the crone lifted the bucket in her two hands as though it were a feather and drank and drank till the water was all gone. Blanche had never seen any one drink so much; not a drop was left in the bucket.

“May heaven bless you!” said the old woman, and then she went on her way.

And now Blanche had to fill the bucket again, and it seemed as though her arms would break, she was so tired.

When she went home her mother struck her because she had tarried so long at the well. Her blows made Blanche weep. Rose laughed when she saw her crying.

The very next day the mother became angry over nothing and gave Blanche such a beating that the girl ran away into the woods; she would not stay in the house any longer. She ran on and on, deeper and deeper into the forest, and there, in the deepest part, she met the old woman she had seen beside the well.

“Where are you going, my child? And why are you weeping so bitterly?” asked the crone.

“I am weeping because my mother beat me,” answered Blanche; “and now I have run away from her, and I do not know where to go.”

“Then come with me,” said the old woman. “I will give you a shelter and a bite to eat, and in return there is many a task you can do for me. Only, whatever you may see as we journey along together you must not laugh nor say anything about it.”

Blanche promised she would not, and then she trudged away at the old woman’s side.

After a while they came to a hedge so thick and wide and so set with thorns that Blanche did not see how they could pass it without being torn to pieces, but the old hag waved her staff, and the branches parted before them and left the path clear. Then, as they passed, the hedge closed together behind them.

Blanche wondered but said nothing.

A little further on they saw two axes fighting together with no hand to hold them. That seemed a curious thing, but still Blanche said nothing.

Further on were two arms that strove against each other without a sound. Still Blanche was silent.

Further on again two heads fought, butting each other like goats. Blanche looked and stared but said no word. Then the heads called to her. “You are a good girl, Blanche. Heaven will reward you.”

After that she and her companion came to the hut where the old woman lived. They went in, and the hag bade Blanche gather some sticks of wood and build a fire. Meanwhile she sat down beside the hearth and took off her head. She put it in her lap and began to comb her hair and twist it up.

Blanche was frightened, but she held her peace and built the fire as the old woman had directed. When it was burning the old woman put back her head in place, and told Blanche to look on the shelf behind the door. “There you will find a bone; put it on to boil for our dinners,” said she.

Blanche found the bone and put it on to boil, though it seemed a poor dinner.

The old woman gave her a grain of rice and bade her grind it in the mortar. Blanche put the rice in the mortar and ground it with the pestle, and before she had been grinding two minutes the mortar was full of rice, enough for both of them and to spare.

When it was time for dinner she looked in the pot and it was full of good, fresh meat. She and the old woman had all they could eat.

After dinner was over the old woman lay down on the bed. “Oh, my back! Oh, my poor back! How it does ache,” groaned she. “Come hither and rub it.”

Blanche came over and uncovered the old crone’s back, and she was surprised when she saw it; it was as hard and ridgy as a turtle’s. Still she said nothing but began to rub it. She rubbed and rubbed till the skin was all worn off her hand.

“That is good,” said the old woman. “Now I feel better.” She sat up and drew her clothes about her. Then she blew upon Blanche’s hand, and at once it was as well as ever.

Blanche stayed with the old woman for three days and served her well; she neither asked questions nor spoke of what she saw.

At the end of that time her mistress said to her, “My child, you have now been with me for three days, and I can keep you here no longer. You have served me well, and you shall not lack your reward. Go to the chicken-house and look in the nests. You will find there a number of eggs. Take all that say to you, ‘Take me,’ but those that say, ‘Do not take me,’ you must not touch.”

Blanche went out to the chicken-house and looked in the nests. There were ever so many eggs; some of them were large and beautiful and white and shining and so pretty that she longed to take them, but each time she stretched out her hand toward one it cried, “Do not take me.” Then she did not touch it. There were also some small, brown, muddy-looking eggs, and these called to her, “Take me!” So those were the ones she took.

When she came back to the house the old woman looked to see which ones she had taken. “You have done what was right,” said she, “and you will not regret it.” She then showed Blanche a path by which she could return to her own home without having to pass through the thorn hedge.

“As you go throw the eggs behind you,” she said, “and you will see what you shall see. One thing I can tell you, your mother will be glad enough to have you home again after that.”

Blanche thanked her for the eggs, though she did not think much of them, and started out. After she had gone a little way she threw one of the eggs over her shoulder. It broke on the path, and a whole bucket full of gold poured out from it. Blanche had never seen so much gold in all her life before.

She gathered it up in her apron and went a little farther, and then she threw another egg over her shoulder. When it broke a whole bucket full of diamonds poured out over the path. They fairly dazzled the eyes, they were so bright and sparkling.

Blanche gathered them up, and went on farther, and threw another egg over her shoulder. Out from it came all sorts of fine clothes, embroidered and set all over with gems. Blanche put them on, and then she looked like the most beautiful princess that ever was seen.

She threw the last egg over her shoulder, and there stood a magnificent golden coach drawn by four white horses, and with coachman and footman all complete. Blanche stepped into the coach, and away they rolled to the door of her mother's house without her ever having to give an order or speak a word.

When her mother and sister heard the coach draw up at the door they ran out to see who was coming. There sat Blanche in the coach, all dressed in fine clothes, and with her lap full of gold and diamonds.

Her mother welcomed her in and then began to question her as to how she had become so rich and fine. It did not take her long to learn the whole story.

Nothing would satisfy her but that Rose should go out into the forest, and find the old woman, and get her to take her home with her as a servant.

Rose grumbled and muttered, for she was a lazy girl and had no wish to work for any one, whatever the reward, and she would rather have sat at home and dozed; but her mother pushed her out of the door, and so she had to go.

She slouched along through the forest, and presently she met the old woman. "Will you take me home with you for a servant?" asked Rose.

"Come with me if you will," said the old woman, "but whatever you may see do not laugh nor say anything about it."

"I am a great laugher," said Rose, and then she walked along with the old woman through the forest.

Presently they came to the thorn hedge, and it opened before them just as it had when Blanche had journeyed there. "That is a good thing," said Rose. "If it had not done that, not a step farther would I have gone."

Soon they came to the place where the axes were fighting. Rose looked and stared, and then she began to laugh.

A little later they came to where the arms were striving together, and at that Rose laughed harder still. But when she came to where the heads were

butting each other, she laughed hardest of all. Then the heads opened their mouths and spoke to her. “Evil you are, and evil you will be, and no luck will come through your laughter.”

Soon after they arrived at the old woman’s house. She pushed open the door, and they went in. The crone bade Rose gather sticks and build a fire; she herself sat down by the hearth, and took off her head, and began to comb and plait her hair.

Rose stood and looked and laughed. “What a stupid old woman you are,” she said, “to take off your head to comb your hair!” and she laughed and laughed.

The old woman was very angry. Still she did not say anything. She put on her head and made up the fire herself. Rose would not do anything. She would not even put the pot on the fire. She was as lazy at the old woman’s house as she was at home, and the old crone was obliged to do the work herself. At the end of three days she said to Rose. “Now you must go home, for you are of no use to anybody, and I will keep you here no longer.”

“Very well,” said Rose. “I am willing enough to go, but first pay me my wages.”

“Very well,” said the old woman. “I will pay you. Go out to the chicken-house and look for eggs. All the eggs that say, ‘Take me’, you may have, but if they say, ‘Do not take me’, then you must not touch them.”

Rose went out to the chicken-house and hunted about and soon found the eggs. Some were large and beautiful and white, and of these she gathered up an apronful, though they cried to her ever so loudly, “Do not take me.” Some of the eggs were small and ugly and brown. “Take me! Take me!” they cried.

“A pretty thing if I were to take you,” she cried. “You are fit for nothing but to be thrown out on the hillside.”

She did not return to the hut to thank the old woman or bid her good-by but set off for home the way she had come. When she reached the thorn thicket it had closed together again. She had to force her way through, and the

thorns scratched her face and hands and almost tore the clothes off her back. Still she comforted herself with the thought of all the riches she would get out of the eggs.

She went a little farther, and then she took the eggs out of her apron. “Now I will have a fine coach to travel in the rest of the way,” said she, “and gay clothes and diamonds and money,” and she threw the eggs down in the path, and they all broke at once. But no clothes, nor jewels, nor fine coach, nor horses came out of them. Instead snakes and toads sprang forth, and all sorts of filth that covered her up to her knees and bespattered her clothing.

Rose shrieked and ran, and the snakes and toads pursued her, spitting venom, and the filth rolled after her like a tide.

She reached her mother’s house, and burst open the door, and ran in, closing it behind her. “Look what Blanche has brought on me,” she sobbed. “This is all her fault.”

The mother looked at her and saw the filth, and she was so angry she would not listen to a word Blanche said. She picked up a stick to beat her, but Blanche ran away out of the house and into the forest. She did not stop for her clothes or her jewels or anything.

She had not gone very far before she heard a noise behind her. She looked over her shoulder, and there was her golden coach rolling after her. Blanche waited until it caught up to her, and then she opened the door and stepped inside, and there were all her diamonds and gold lying in a heap. Her mother and Rose had not been able to keep any of them.

Blanche rode along for a long while, and then she came to a grand castle, and the King and Queen of the country lived there. The coach drew up at the door, and every one came running out to greet her. They thought she must be some great Princess come to visit them, but Blanche told them she was not a Princess, but only the daughter of a poor widow, and that all the fine things she had, had come out of some eggs an old woman had given her.

When the people heard this they were very much surprised. They took her in to see the King and Queen, and the King and Queen made her welcome. She

told them her story, and they were so sorry for her they declared she should live there with them always and be as a daughter to them.

So Blanche became a grand lady, and after a while she was married to the Prince, the son of the old King and Queen, and she was beloved by all because she was so good and gentle.

But when Blanche's mother and sister heard of the good fortune that had come to her, and how she had become the bride of the Prince, they were ready to burst with rage and spite. Moreover they turned quite green with envy, and green they may have remained to the end of their lives, for all that I know to the contrary.

THE FROG PRINCESS. A RUSSIAN STORY

There was once a Tsar[1] who had three sons, and they were all dear to him, but the youngest, Ivan, was the dearest of them all.

When the Princes grew to manhood the Tsar began to talk and talk to them about getting married, but it so happened not one of the Princes had ever seen the girl he wished to have for a wife. There were many in the kingdom whom they might well have loved, but not one of them meant more to any of the Princes than another.

"Very well, then," said the Tsar at last, "we will leave it to chance. Take your bows and arrows and come with me into the courtyard. You shall each shoot an arrow, and in whatever places your arrows fall, there shall you take your brides."

The Princes were not greatly pleased with this plan, but still they dared not say no to their father. They took their bows and went with him into the courtyard.

First the eldest son shot his arrow, and he aimed it toward the east, where the sun rises. The arrow fell upon the balcony of a great nobleman's house.

Well and good! The nobleman had a daughter, and she was so stately and handsome that the Prince was very glad to take her for a wife.

Then the second Prince shot an arrow and aimed it toward the west, where the sun is in its glory. He was no less lucky than his brother, for his arrow fell into the court of a rich merchant, and he also had a daughter who was a beauty. So the second son took her for a bride, and he was well content.

Last of all Prince Ivan shot his arrow, and he aimed neither toward the east nor the west, but straight up into the sky above him. Then a sudden gust of wind arose and caught the arrow and blew it away so that it fell in a great

[1] King

swamp. In this swamp were no rich nor beautiful ladies, but only a poor, green, croaking frog.

When the young Prince Ivan saw where his arrow had fallen he was in despair. “How can I marry a frog,” said he, “and have her rule with me as my Princess?”

“It is a great pity,” said the Tsar; “nevertheless what I have said I have said, and where your arrow fell there must you take your bride.”

So Prince Ivan was married to the frog, and the Tsar built a castle on the edge of the swamp for them to live in.

Now the Tsar was growing old, and he began to consider in his mind to which of his sons he would leave his kingdom. Gladly would he have left it to his youngest son, who was his favorite, but it did not seem right that a frog should ever rule over the kingdom as Queen.

At last he called the three Princes before him and said, “My sons, to-morrow let your wives bake me some soft white bread. I will eat of it, and in this way I will know which of you has the cleverest wife, and he who has the cleverest wife shall inherit my kingdom.”

After they had heard him the three Princes went away to their own homes, and Prince Ivan was very sad.

“What ails you, my dear husband,” said the frog, “that you hang your head and are so downcast?”

“It is no wonder I am downcast,” answered Prince Ivan. “My father has commanded that you shall make him a loaf of soft white bread to-morrow, and well I know that your webby fingers can never make bread that he would taste or even so much as look at.”

“Do not be too sure of that,” answered the frog. “Sleep in peace, and I promise that to-morrow I will provide a loaf that even the Tsar will be glad to eat of.”

The Prince did not believe this, but grief is heavy, so no sooner was he in bed than he fell into a deep sleep.

Then the frog arose from beside him and went into a far-off room and took off her frog-skin; for she was really a Princess who had been enchanted. She combed her hair and washed herself and then she went out on the balcony of the castle and cried, “Nurses dear, nurses dear, bring me a loaf of bread such as I used to have in the palace of my own dear father, the King.”

After she had called this three times three crows appeared, carrying among them a fine napkin embroidered with gold, and in this napkin was a loaf of bread. They laid the napkin before the Princess and bowed three times, croaking solemnly, and then they flew away again into the night.

The Princess took up the bread and went back into the room and put on her frog-skin again; after that she returned to her chamber and lay down beside her husband.

The next day when the Prince was ready to set out for the Tsar’s palace, the frog brought him the loaf of bread still wrapped in the napkin.

“Take this, dear husband,” said she, “and carry it to your father, the Tsar, but do not open it on the way lest the dust should spoil the fineness of the bread.”

The Prince took the loaf and rode away with it, but he could not forbear from peeping into the napkin to see what was there, and what he saw filled him with admiration and wonder. Quickly he rode on his way, and soon reached the Tsar’s palace.

The two older brothers were there, and each brought a loaf of fine white bread that his wife had made.

When Prince Ivan entered his brothers could not forbear from smiling. “Come!” said they, “show us quickly what kind of bread the Frog Princess has made. Does it smell of reeds and rushes?”

The young Prince made no answer but gave what he carried to his father.

When the Tsar saw the fineness of the napkin and the beautiful embroidery upon it he was very much surprised. But he was still more surprised when he opened the napkin and saw what it contained. Never before had he seen such bread. Not only was it soft and light and fine, but it was molded along

the sides in cunning scenes, castles and cities, moats and bridges, and upon the top was the imprint of the royal eagle, perfect even to the claws and feathers.

The Tsar could not admire it enough. Still he was not willing to leave the kingdom to Prince Ivan and so make a queen of a frog.

“This is very beautiful, but a loaf of bread is soon eaten and forgotten,” said he. “I now wish each one of you to bring me a carpet to lay before my throne, and he who brings me the finest carpet, him will I make my heir.”

The Princes returned to their own homes, and the youngest one was very sad and sorrowful.

“What ails you, my dear husband?” asked the frog. “Why are you so downcast, and why do you hang your head. Was not the Tsar pleased with the bread you carried to him?”

“He was well pleased,” answered the Prince; “but now he has commanded each one of us to bring him a carpet, and to him who brings the finest carpet he will leave his kingdom. No wonder I am sad, for where, in this swamp, can I find a carpet such as I require?”

“Do not trouble yourself about that,” answered the frog. “Do you go and lie down and go quietly to sleep. I will supply you such a carpet as you need.”

The Prince did not believe her, but because grief is heavy he lay down and soon fell into a deep sleep.

Again as before the frog stole away to a distant chamber and laid aside her frog-skin. Then she went out on the balcony and cried aloud three times; “Nurses dear, nurses true, bring me a carpet such as lay before my bed in my own home.”

At once the three crows appeared, carrying among them a carpet rolled up and covered with a piece of embroidered velvet. They laid the roll before the Princess, bowed three times, and then flew away again.

The Princess carried the carpet back into the chamber and put on her frog-skin again, and then she went back and lay down quietly beside the Prince.

The next morning when the Prince was ready to set out, the frog brought the roll of carpet to him.

“Here,” said she; “carry this to your father, but do not open it upon the way lest the dust spoil its beauty.”

The Prince took the carpet and rode away. When he reached the Tsar’s palace his two brothers were already there, and each had brought with him a piece of carpet so fine and rich that it was difficult to say which of the two was the more beautiful.

When the older brothers saw Ivan they began to laugh. “Come!” said they. “Let us see what kind of a carpet he has brought from his swamp home. No doubt it is very wonderful.”

The Prince laid the roll of carpet upon the floor and opened it out and when they saw it every one was struck with wonder. The elder Princes had not a word to say. Never before had they seen such a carpet. Not only was it as thick and soft as eiderdown, but it shone with wondrous colors that changed as one looked at them, and it was embroidered with gold in strange designs.

The Tsar was filled with admiration. All the same he still was unwilling to have a frog reign in his kingdom.

“This is all very well,” said he, “and never before have I seen such a beautiful carpet. But now I wish you all to appear before me to-morrow with your wives. Let the Princesses wear their most beautiful dresses and their finest jewels, and whichever of you has the wife best fitted to be Queen, to him will I leave the kingdom.”

When the Prince Ivan heard this he was in despair. How could he ever bring the frog to court and present her to the Tsar as though she were a beautiful Princess?

When he went home the frog at once asked him why he was so sad and woebegone. “Is not the kingdom to be yours?” she asked.

“No,” answered the Prince, “for now my father, the Tsar, has demanded something else of us.” He then told her how the Tsar had bidden him and his

brothers bring their wives to court, and had said that whichever of the Princesses was the finest and most beautiful should reign as Queen, and her husband should be the Tsar.

“Do not trouble over that,” said the frog. “Only go to bed and sleep quietly. The kingdom shall still be yours.”

Then the Prince went to bed, but he only closed his eyes and pretended to go to sleep, for he had grown very curious as to how the frog had been able to provide him with the wonderful loaf and the carpet.

The frog kept very still until she thought the Prince was asleep. Then she arose quietly from his side and slipped away, but the Prince also arose and followed her without her being aware of it. She went to the far-off chamber, and there she laid aside her frog-skin; and when the prince saw her in her human form he was amazed at her beauty, and his heart melted within him for love of her, for her hair was like spun gold, her eyes as blue as the sky, and her skin as white as milk. Never had he seen such a beauty.

The Princess went out on a balcony as she had before, and cried aloud three times, “Nurses dear, nurses true, bring me fine clothes and jewels to wear, richer than ever were seen before.”

At once the three crows appeared, carrying with them jewels and fine robes all encrusted with gems and embroidery. These they laid at the Princess’s feet and bowed three times, croaking hoarsely, and then they flew away.

The Princess took the robes and jewels back into the chamber to hide them, and while she was doing this Prince Ivan returned to his bed and lay down and closed his eyes as though he were asleep. When the frog came back she looked at him carefully, but he kept so still she never guessed that he had stirred from where he lay.

The next morning the frog bade Ivan ride away alone to the palace of the Tsar. “I will follow you,” she said, “and when you hear a great noise, say, ‘That is my little Froggie, driving up in her basket made of rushes.’”

The Prince promised to do this and then he rode away to the palace of the Tsar.

His brothers were already there, and their two wives were with them, both so handsome and so magnificently dressed that each looked finer than the other.

When Ivan came in they all began to laugh. “Where is thy dear frog?” they asked. “Is she still asleep among her reeds and rushes, or is she too hoarse to come?”

Even as they spoke there was a great noise outside,—a roaring and rumbling like thunder.

The palace shook until it seemed as though it would fall about their ears. Every one was terrified. Only Prince Ivan was calm.

“There is my little Froggie now,” he said; “she is driving up in her little basket of rushes.”

At once the noise ceased, the doors were flung open, and a magnificent Princess swept into the room. Never was such a beauty seen before. Her golden hair fell almost to the floor and was bound about with jewels. Her robes were stiff with embroidery and gems. The other Princesses paled before her as stars pale before the rising moon.

Prince Ivan took her by the hand and led her to the Tsar. “This is my dear Princess,” said he, “and surely it is she and she only who should reign over this land.”

Well, there were no two ways to that. The Tsar could hardly contain himself for joy over the beauty of Prince Ivan’s bride. A great feast was spread, and the Tsar himself led the Princess to the table. She sat at his right hand and drank from his jewelled cup, and all was joy and merriment. Only the older brothers and their wives were sad, for they knew they had missed all chance of gaining the kingdom.

Now while they were still at the table, all eating and drinking, Prince Ivan arose and made some excuse for leaving the room. He went quietly and mounted his horse and rode back to his own castle.

There he made haste to the room where his wife had left her frog-skin. He hunted about until he found it, and then he threw it into the fire, for he did not intend that she should ever hide herself away in it again.

At once a clap of thunder sounded, and the Princess stood before him. Her eyes were streaming with tears, and she wrung her hands in grief.

“Alas and woe is me!” she cried. “Why did you burn my frog-skin? A little longer, and I would have been free. Now I must go away and leave you forever.”

“But where are you going?” cried the Prince in despair. “Wherever it is I will follow and find you.”

“Seek me beyond the seven mountains, beyond the seven seas, in the kingdom of Koshchei the Deathless, for it is in his house I will be,” answered the Princess. Then she turned into a great white swan and flew out through the window and far, far away; so far the Prince could no longer see her.

Then Prince Ivan was filled with grief; and he neither stayed nor tarried but set out at once in search of his Princess.

He journeyed on and journeyed on a short way and a long way, and then he met an old man with a grey beard that hung down far below his belt.

“Good day, good youth,” said the old man.

“Good day, grandfather,” answered Ivan.

“Whither do you journey with so sad a face?” asked the stranger.

“I journey over land and over sea in search of the kingdom of Koshchei the Deathless,” answered Ivan.

“Then you have a long journey before you,” said the old man. “But why do you seek the kingdom of Koshchei the Deathless, that terrible man?”

“I seek it that I may find what is lost.” Then Ivan told the old man his story, all about his frog bride and how she had turned into a Princess,—how he had burned the frog-skin and how she had flown away as a swan, and that now life would be nothing but a burden to him until he could find her again.

The old man shook his head. “Alas! alas! You should never have burned the frog-skin!” he said. He then told Ivan that the name of the Princess was Vasilisa the Fair. “Her mother was the sister of Koshchei the Deathless,” said the stranger, “and when she was born it was foretold that before she was eighteen Koshchei should lose his life because of her. It was for this reason that he changed her into a frog and set her in the midst of the lonely swamp. In a month and a day from now the Princess would have been eighteen, and the danger to Koshchei would have been over. Then he would have allowed her to lay aside her frog-skin and take back her human shape. But now he is angry and has carried her away to his castle, and only by the grace of Heaven will you be able to find her and set her free.”

The old man then gave Prince Ivan a little ball. “Take this,” he said, “and roll it before you as you go. It will show you which way to travel, and with its help you may reach the kingdom of Koshchei.”

Ivan took the ball and thanked the old man and journeyed on. He rolled the ball before him, and in whichever direction it rolled he followed.

He went along and went along, until after a while he came to a forest, and there he saw a bear.

Prince Ivan would have shot it, but the bear cried to him, “Do not shoot me, Prince. Take me with you as a servant, and the time may come when I can help you.”

“Very well,” said the Prince. “Come with me”; so he journeyed on with the bear at his heels.

Presently he saw a wild duck and would have shot it, but the duck called to him, “Do not shoot me, dear Prince. Take me with you, and I will be a faithful servant. The time may come when you will need me.”

“Very well,” answered the Prince. “You also may come with us as a companion.”

So the Prince journeyed along with the bear at his heels and the duck flying overhead.

After a while they came to the edge of a river, and there lay a great fish, gasping out its life in the sunlight.

“Now at last I shall have a good meal,” said the Prince.

But the fish cried to him in a human voice, “Throw me back into the river, Prince, that I may live. The time may come when I can do you a good turn also.”

So the Prince had mercy on the fish and threw it back into the water.

After that he and his companions traveled on a long way. They journeyed over seven mountains and crossed seven seas, and so they came at last to the kingdom of Koshchei the Deathless.

There the Prince saw a little hut. It stood on hen’s legs and turned this way and that, whichever way the wind blew. There was no getting at the door. Then the Prince cried, “Little hut, stand the way my mother built you with your back away from me and your door before me.”

At once the hut whirled round and stood with the open door in front of him.

Prince Ivan entered in, and saw a bony-legged Baba Yaga lying on the stove with her grey hair over her face.

“Who are you? And what seek you here in the kingdom of Koshchei the Deathless?” she cried.

“Do not ask questions but rise up and give me food and drink,” said the Prince; “for I am both hungry and thirsty.”

The Baba Yaga arose and served him food and drink. He ate and gave part to the bear and the duck. Then he told the Baba Yaga why he had come there—that he was wandering in search of his dear wife, Vasilisa the Fair.

The old witch shook her head. “It will be a hard thing to rescue her,” she said. “Koshchei is very powerful. Only in one way can you overcome him. Not far from here stands a tree. It is as hard as rock, so that no ax can dent it, and so smooth that none can climb it. On the top of it is a nest. In the nest is an egg. A duck sits over the egg to guard it. In that egg is a needle, and only with that needle can you kill Koshchei the Deathless.”

The Baba Yaga then led Prince Ivan to the door and pointed out to him where the tree grew, and Prince Ivan hurried on toward it, with his two faithful servants, the bear and the duck.

But when he reached the tree he looked at it with despair. It was indeed very smooth and high,—as smooth as glass, and when he tried his hunting knife upon it the knife bent and crumpled in his hand.

“Master, now is the time that I can help you,” said the bear. He went to the tree and clasped it and shook it, so that its roots cracked, and it fell with a mighty noise.

At once the duck that was guarding the egg caught it up in its claws and flew away with it. But Ivan’s duck pursued so fiercely that the other was forced to drop the egg in order to defend itself.

Unfortunately they had both flown over a river, and into this river the egg dropped and was lost to sight.

Ivan sat down upon the bank of the river and wept. “Alas, alas!” he cried. “Now truly is my dear wife lost to me, for never can I recover the egg from the river.”

Hardly had he spoken when the fish he had thrown back into the river appeared, bearing the egg in its mouth.

Now Ivan’s grief was turned to rejoicing. He broke the egg and took out the needle. Then, with the little ball to lead him, he soon made his way to Koshchei’s palace.

The Deathless One rushed out to meet him, but Ivan attacked him with the point of the needle. It was in vain Koshchei tried to protect himself. Ivan drove the needle into him deeper and deeper, and presently Koshchei sank down dead before him, no better than a lump of clay.

Prince Ivan strode across him and on into the castle. From room to room he went, and in the deepest dungeon he found the Princess Vasilisa, his own dear wife. She threw herself into his arms, weeping with joy.

Then they went to Koshchei's treasure room and took from it all the most precious jewels,—all that the faithful bear could carry they loaded upon his back and carried away with them.

After that they journeyed back to their own kingdom, and if any one was glad to see them it was the Tsar himself.

He built for them a castle close to his own, where they could not even see the swamp. There Ivan and his frog princess lived in the greatest love and happiness, and after the old Tsar's death they themselves ruled over the kingdom as the Tsar and Tsaritsa.

THE MAGIC TURBAN, THE MAGIC SWORD AND THE MAGIC CARPET. A PERSIAN STORY

There were once two brothers, the sons of a rich merchant, and when he died he left all his estate to be divided between them equally. This was done, and the elder at once set about trading and improving his condition, so that very soon he became twice as rich as he had been.

But the younger son had no luck. Everything he undertook failed. Moreover, he never had the heart to say no to a friend in need. So before long he was left with not a penny in his purse or a roof over his head.

In his distress he went to his elder brother and asked help of him.

"How is this?" said the elder. "Our father left the same to both of us, and I have prospered in the world and have now become a rich man, but you have not even a roof to shelter your head or a bite to eat."

"Well, that's a long tale," said the younger, "and what is done is done. But give me another chance, and it may be that this time I will succeed in the world."

After they had talked a long time the elder brother consented to give him fifty dollars, but if he wasted that the way he had the rest of his property, he was not to come back again.

The younger brother took the money and went off with it, but it was not long before it had slipped through his fingers just the way his other money had. Before long he was back at his brother's door, asking for help again.

The older brother scolded and reproached him. He was a spendthrift and a waster. But in the end he gave him another fifty dollars, and bade him be off, and not dare to return again.

The younger brother went off with the fifty dollars and this time he was sure he would succeed with it. But his luck was still no better than it had been before. Soon it was all gone, and back he came to his brother's house.

So it went on. The older brother could not rid himself of him. At last the elder brother, seeing there would be no peace for him as long as he remained where he was, made up his mind to sell all his possessions and take the money and journey to a far land without telling his younger brother anything about it.

This he did, but somehow or other the younger one got wind of it. He found what ship his brother was to sail on, and then he crawled aboard at night, when nobody was watching, and hid himself among the cargo.

The next day the ship set sail. Soon they were out at sea. Then the elder brother came out on deck and strutted up and down, and he rejoiced at heart that he had shaken off the younger lad and with good luck might never see him again.

But just as he thought this, whom should he see but the lad coming across the deck to meet him and give him greeting.

The elder was a sick and sorry man. It seemed there was no ridding himself of his brother. At the first port they touched he left the ship, and his brother got off with him, for he had no idea of being left behind.

The elder brother stood there on the shore and looked about him. Then he said, “Listen, now! It is a long way to the town. Do you stay here while I go on farther, beyond yon spit of land, and see whether I can find a dwelling where I can buy us a couple of horses; for I have no wish to journey on foot.”

The younger brother was for going along too, but to this the elder would not consent. No, no; the lad was to stay there and watch a box that the elder brother had brought along. (The box had nothing in it, but this the younger brother did not know.)

So the elder brother set out and soon was out of sight, and the younger one sat on the box and kicked his heels and waited, and waited and waited and waited; but his brother never did come back.

Then the lad knew the older one had made a fool of him. He looked in the box and found it empty. So off he set to see whether he could make his own way in the world and no thanks to any one.

He journeyed on a short way and a long way, and so he came to a place where three men were quarreling together fiercely, and the things they were quarreling over were an old turban, a piece of carpet, and a sword.

As soon as they saw the lad they stopped quarreling and ran and caught hold of him. “You shall decide! You shall decide!” they shouted all together.

“What is it you wish me to decide?” asked the lad.

Then the men told him they were three brothers, and that when their father died he had left them these three things,—the turban, the carpet, and the sword. Whoever placed the turban on his head would at once become invisible. Whoever sat on the carpet had only to wish himself wherever he would be, and the carpet would carry him there in a twinkling, and the sword would cut through anything, and no magic could stand against it.

“These things should belong to me, because I am the eldest,” cried one of the men.

“No, I should have them because I am the strongest and stoutest,” said the second.

“But I am the youngest and weakest and need them most,” cried the third. They then began to quarrel again and even came to blows.

“Stop, stop,” cried the lad. “You said that I should decide this matter for you, so why quarrel about it? But before I decide I must try the things and see whether what you have told me is really so.”

To this the brothers agreed. First they gave him the sword, and the lad took it in his hand and aimed a blow at a rock near by, and the sword cut through the rock as smoothly and easily as though it had been a piece of cheese.

“Now give me the turban,” said the lad.

The brothers gave him the turban, and he placed it upon his head and at once became invisible!

“Now the carpet.”

The brothers spread out the carpet on the ground, and the lad seated himself upon it with the turban still upon his head and the sword in his hand! Then he wished himself far away in some place where the brothers would never find him.

Immediately he found himself in the outskirts of a large city. He stepped from the carpet and rolled it up and took the turban from his head and looked about him. He had no idea of going back to return the things to the brothers, and if they waited for him they waited a long time. “It will teach them not to quarrel but to live at peace with each other,” said the lad to himself. Then he made his way to the nearest house, for he was hungry and meant to ask for a bite to eat.

He knocked, and an old woman opened the door, and she was so old that her chin and her nose met.

“Good day, mother,” said the lad.

“Good day to you,” answered the crone.

“Will you give me a bite to eat, for the love of charity?”

Yes, the crone would do that. She gave him a bite and a sup and a bit over, and while he was eating and drinking she sat and talked with him.

“What is the news here in the city?” asked the lad.

“Oh the same news as ever.”

“And what is that? For I am a stranger here and know no more of yesterday or the week before than of to-day.”

“Then I will tell you. Over yonder lies the castle, and the King lives there. He has only one daughter, and she is a beauty, you may believe. Every night the Princess disappears from the castle, and where she goes no one can tell but herself, and she will not. So the King has offered a reward to any one who will find out. The half of his kingdom he offers and the hand of the Princess as well, if only any one can tell him where she goes.”

“That is a good hearing,” said the lad. “I have a mind to try for that prize myself.”

“No, but wait a bit,” said the old woman. “There is another side to the story, for if you try and fail your head will be lifted from your shoulders with a sharp sword, and you are too fine a young man to lose your life in that way.”

But the lad was determined to try. In vain the old woman warned and entreated him. He thanked her for the meal he had eaten, and then off he set for the palace. There he told the errand that had brought him and after that it did not take long for him to get to see the King.

“So you think you can find out where the Princess goes at night,” said the King.

Yes, the lad thought he could.

Very well, then, he might have a try at it, but he must remember that if he tried and failed his head would be cut from his shoulders with a sharp sword.

Yes, the lad understood that, and he was ready to take the risk.

So that night he was taken to the door of a room in a high tower, and the room was of iron and had only one door and one window. Into this room the Princess was put every night, and it would be the duty of the lad to watch at the door and see either that she did not leave it, or where she went.

Presently the Princess came upstairs and passed by the lad without so much as a glance, but his heart leaped within him, she was so beautiful.

She opened the door to go in, and the lad put on his turban of darkness and slipped in after her, but the Princess did not know that because he was invisible. She closed the door tight and sighed three times, and then a great black demon stood before her, and he was terrible to look upon, he was so huge and ugly.

“Oh, my dear Lala,” said the Princess, “let us be off at once. I do not know why, but I feel so frightened, just as though some misfortune were about to come upon me.”

“That is nonsense,” said the demon. “But do you seat yourself upon my head, and we will be off at once.”

The demon wore a buckler upon his head, and now he stooped, and she seated herself upon it, but the lad was quick and sprang up and took his place beside her.

“Ai! Ai!” cried the demon, “but you are heavy to-day, Princess.”

“I do not know what you mean,” answered the Princess. “I am no heavier and no lighter than I was last night.”

Then the demon flew out through the window and away through the night so fast that the lad had much ado to keep from falling off.

After a while they came to a garden the like of which the lad had never seen before and never expected to see again, for the leaves of the trees were of silver, and the branches were of gold, and the fruits were emeralds and rubies.

As they passed through it the lad stretched out his hand and broke off a twig and put it in his bosom. Then all the trees in the garden began to sigh and moan.

“Child of man! Child of man! why do you break and torture us?”

The Princess shuddered. “Some one besides ourselves is here in the garden,” she cried.

“That cannot be, or we would see him,” answered the demon, but he was frightened and flew on faster than before.

Presently they came to another garden and it was even more wonderful than the first, for here the trees were of diamonds, and the fruits of every kind of precious stones you can think of.

As they passed through it the lad stretched out his hand and broke off a twig. Then all the trees began to sigh and moan.

“Child of man! Child of man! Why do you break and torture us?” they cried.

“Oh, my dear Lala, what did I tell you?” asked the Princess. “I am afraid”; and she trembled all over her body.

The demon answered nothing, but he flew on even faster than ever.

Soon after they came to a magnificent palace, and the demon flew in through a window and alighted. Then the Princess and the lad leaped down from the buckler, and the demon was glad to have the weight off him. After that he vanished.

The Princess opened a door and went into another room, with the lad close behind her, and there was the King of all the demons, and he was so huge and black that the demon Lala was nothing to him.

“My dearest dear one, why are you so late to-night?” asked he of the Princess.

“I do not know what was the matter,” answered the fair one, “but something is terribly wrong”; and she told him all that had happened.

The Demon laughed at her. “You are nervous,” said he. “But come! You have not kissed me yet.”

He came close to the Princess to kiss her, but the lad stepped between them and gave the Demon such a push that he almost fell over; at the same time he himself gave the Princess a kiss upon the cheek.

“Why do you push me away?” cried the Demon, and he was very angry.

The Princess began to tremble again. “I did not push you,” said she. “Moreover, some one kissed me on the cheek. I am sure somebody is in the room with us.”

The King Demon looked all around, but he could see nobody. Then he called a slave to bring the Princess the jeweled slippers she always wore when she came to his palace.

The slave brought the slippers on a golden cushion, and they were crusted over with pearls and precious stones. He knelt before the Princess, and she took one and put it on, but at the same time the lad took the other and

slipped it in his bosom. The Princess and the Demon did not know what had become of it. They hunted everywhere, but they could not find it.

“There, now! See how careless you are,” said the Demon; and he bade the slave bring another pair of slippers.

This the slave did, but it was the same with this pair as with the others. While the Princess was putting on one slipper the lad took the other and hid it in his bosom. The Princess and the Demon and the slave all looked for it, but they could not find it.

At that the Princess flew into a passion and threw both the slippers away from her.

“I do not care,” said she; “and now I will not wear any slippers at all.”

“Never mind!” answered the Demon. “We will have a sherbet together, and after that we will eat.”

He clapped his hands, and another slave appeared, bearing two crystal goblets full of sherbet. The Princess took one goblet and the Demon the other. Just as they were about to drink the lad smote the crystal goblet from the Princess’s hand so that it fell upon the marble floor and was shattered, and all the sherbet was spilled.

The lad picked up a splinter of the crystal and hid it in his bosom with the golden twig, the diamond twig, and the two slippers. But the Princess shook and trembled until she could hardly stand, and even the Demon was troubled.

“Why did you cast the goblet on the floor?” he asked.

“I did not,” answered the Princess, “but some one struck it from my hand”; and she began to weep.

The Demon comforted her and bade other slaves bring in the feast that had been prepared for him and the Princess.

Quickly the slaves brought it and placed it before them. The lad had never seen such a feast. All the dishes were of gold and were carved to represent scenes in demon life, and the handles were set thick with precious stones

and enamelled in strange colors. There were all sorts of delicious things to eat, so that the lad's mouth watered at the smell of them.

The Demon and the Princess sat down to eat, but it was small good the Princess got of the feast, for every time the Demon put anything on her plate the lad snatched it away and ate it, and the Princess was left hungry. The lad also took one of the golden forks and one of the golden spoons and hid them in his bosom.

"What did I tell you," cried the Princess. "Something is wrong! Something is *terribly* wrong."

"Yes, I can see that myself," said the King Demon. "You had better go on home again, for we will get no pleasure out of this night, and that I can easily see."

Lala was called, the Princess mounted the buckler in haste, and away the Demon flew with her. But this time the lad did not fly with them.

He waited until they were gone, and then he drew the Sword of Sharpness and smote the King Demon's head from his shoulders.

At once a clap of thunder sounded; the castle rocked, and the walls crumbled about him. The trees in the gardens were withered, and a thick darkness fell, while all about him sounded cries and groans.

But the lad seated himself upon the carpet and wished himself back at the door of the room in the tower, and there he was in a twinkling, long before Lala had flown in through the window with the Princess, even though he flew as swiftly as the wind.

The lad took off the Turban of Darkness, and rolled up the carpet, and lay down and closed his eyes as though he were asleep.

Presently the Princess opened the door and peered out. There lay the lad, snoring and with his eyes closed. The Princess drew a sharp needle and ran it into the lad's heel, but he never flinched, so she felt sure he was asleep.

"Thou fool!" said she scornfully. "Sleep on, and to-morrow thou shalt pay the penalty."

Then she went back into the room and closed the door.

The next day the Princess called the guards and bade them carry the lad away and cut the head from his shoulders.

“Wait a bit,” said the lad. “Do not be in such a hurry. First we must appear before thy father the King; he must decide in this case, and it may be I have something to tell him that will be worth the hearing.”

The Princess could not refuse this, so she and the lad were brought before the King, and the lad began to tell his story. When he came to the part where the great black Demon had come and flown away with the Princess she turned first as red as blood and then as pale as death.

“It is not true!” she cried, but the King bade her be silent.

Then the lad told how they had flown through the gardens. “It is all a wicked lie,” moaned the Princess, but the lad drew forth the twigs he had broken from the trees and showed them to the King as proof of his truth.

After that the lad told of how they had entered the castle, and how the King Demon had tried to kiss the Princess, and of the shattered goblet and the uneaten feast, and he had the splinter of crystal and the spoon and fork to show, so the King knew it was all true, and the Princess looked as though she wished she were dead.

Last of all he told how the Princess had returned on the Demon’s buckler, and how he had remained behind and cut off the King Demon’s head, and how the castle had fallen and the gardens had withered, and all had become darkness and confusion.

When the Princess heard this she gave a shriek of joy. “Then you have saved me!” she cried. “Never again need I fly forth at night at the will of the Demon nor be his slave!”

Then it was her turn to tell her story. She told how one time the King Demon had seen her walking in the palace gardens and had fallen in love with her, and how he had used his magic to gain power over her. She told how she hated him and feared him, but how against her will he had forced her to come to visit him every night in his castle and had sent the demon Lala to

fetch her. But now that the King Demon was dead, she was free, and it was the lad who had saved her.

When the King, her father, heard this, he marveled greatly. Glad was he that such a brave lad was to be his son-in-law, for that was his promise. The lad and the Princess were betrothed then and there, and the King gave orders that a grand wedding feast should be prepared, for they were to be married as soon as possible. All the good folks far and near were invited to come to the feast.

The lad's elder brother was invited with the rest, but he never dreamed that the brave lad who was to marry the Princess was his own younger brother.

He came to the palace on the feast day and took his place at the table with the other guests, and then he looked up at the three thrones where the King and the Princess and the lad were sitting, and there it was his own younger brother who sat there.

When the man saw that he was afraid, for he remembered how he had deserted the lad on the seashore to live or die as fate willed, and he feared he might be punished for it.

But the younger brother bore him no grudge, but was grateful to him for what he had done. As soon as he saw the elder one there among the guests, he sent a servant for him and placed him in the seat of honor and called him brother.

So all was happiness and rejoicing. Everybody was happy, but the lad and the Princess were happiest of all, because they loved each other and had just been married.

THE THREE SILVER CITRONS. A PERSIAN STORY

There was once a King who had three sons, and he loved them all equally, one no more than the other.

When he had grown old and felt his strength leaving him, he called the three Princes before him.

“My sons,” said he, “I am no longer young, and soon the time will come when I must leave you. I have it in mind to give the kingdom to one or the other of you now and not to leave it for you to quarrel over after I have gone. You have reached a time of life when you should marry. Go forth into the world and seek, each one of you, a bride for himself. He who brings home the most beautiful Princess shall have the kingdom.”

The three Princes were well content with what their father said. At once the two elder ones made ready to set out; but the youngest one said he would wait a bit. “It is not right,” said he, “that our father should be left alone in his old age. I will wait until my brothers return, and then I too will start out to try my fortune in the world.”

That was good hearing for the older Princes, for they had always been a bit jealous of their younger brother and were just as well pleased not to have him with them.

Before they set out they packed a bag full of food to carry with them, for they had no wish to starve by the wayside. They took baked meats and boiled meats, and little cakes and big cakes, and fine white bread, and wine to drink.

Well, off they set, and on they went, a short way and a long way, until they came to the edge of a forest, and there they sat down in the shade to eat; and when they spread the food out before them it made a fine feast I can tell you.

Just as they were about to begin an old woman came hobbling out of the forest. She was so old that her nose and her chin met and she was so bent that she could barely get along even with the help of the crutch she had.

“Good masters, give me a bite and a sup, I beg of you,” she said. “It is a hundred years since I have tasted anything but black bread.”

“If you have lived on black bread that long you can live on it a little longer,” said one of the Princes, and then they both laughed. However, they bade the old crone come back there after they had gone, and it might be she would find some broken bits lying round, and those she might have if she cared to gather them up.

Then the Princes went on eating and drinking, and after they had finished they journeyed on again.

Presently they came to a cross roads, and there they separated; one went east and one went west. The eldest Prince took the east road, and soon it brought him to a castle, and in this castle lived a Princess who was as pretty as a picture. It was not long before the Prince won her to be his wife, for he was a stout and comely lad, and as soon as they were married he set out for home, taking his bride with him.

As it happened with the eldest Prince, so it did with the second brother. He also found a castle and a Princess, and won her to be his bride, and brought her home with him to his father’s house; and when the two Princesses met it was hard to choose between them, they were both so pretty. It seemed as though the kingdom would have to be divided between the elder brothers and their pretty brides.

But first it was only right that the youngest Prince should have a chance, so now that his brothers had returned he was ready to set out into the wide world and see what sort of a beauty he could pick up. His brothers laughed at him, for they had never had much of an opinion of his wit, even though they were jealous of him.

“Only see that she has two eyes and a stout pair of hands,” said they. “Our Princesses will find something for her to do about the palace, no doubt, and

as for you, you shall always have a warm place in the chimney corner where you can sit."

The youngest Prince answered never a word, but he put some food in a scrip and off he set.

He journeyed on and on, a short way and a long way, and then he too came to the forest and sat down in the shade to eat, as his brothers had done before him.

Presently the old crone came hobbling out from the forest, and she was more bent and hideous than ever.

"Good youth, give me a bite and sup, I beg of you," she said. "It is a hundred years since I have tasted anything but black bread."

"Then it is high time you had something else to eat," said the Prince, and he gave her the best of all he had, both food and wine.

The old woman ate and drank, and by the time she finished there was little enough left for the Prince. Then she drew out from her sleeve a pretty little pipe and gave it to him. "Take this," she said, "and if there is anything you wish for play a tune upon the pipe, and it may help you to find it."

After that she disappeared into the forest again.

The Prince hung his scrip over his shoulder, and then he was ready to set out, but first he thought he might as well see what the pipe was good for. He set it to his lips and blew a tune.

Immediately a score of little black Trolls with long noses appeared before him. "Master, here we are!" they cried. "What would you have of us?"

"I did not know I was your master," thought the Prince, but what he said was, "What I want is the prettiest Princess in twelve kingdoms for a bride, and if you can get me such a one I'll thank you kindly."

"We know where to find such a Princess, and we can show you the way," said the oldest and blackest of the Trolls, "but we ourselves cannot touch her. You will have to win her for yourself."

Well, that suited the Prince, and if they would only show him the Princess he would do his best to get her. So off they set, and presently they came to a high mountain, and it belonged to the King of the Trolls. The Prince blew upon the pipe again, and the mountain opened before him. He went in, and there he was in a great chamber, where the Troll kept the three daughters of three Kings whom he had taken captive and brought there, and they were so beautiful that their beauty lighted the whole place so there was no need of lamps.

When the girls saw the Prince they were terrified and began to run about this way and that, looking for a place to hide; but they could find no place, for the chamber was quite smooth and bare. Then they changed themselves into three silver citrons and rolled about this way and that, all over the room.

The Prince was terribly distressed that the girls had changed into citrons, for they were so lovely that he would have been glad to have any one of them for a wife.

However, he took up the citrons and hid them in his bosom, and then, as there seemed nothing better to do, he set out for home again, for after having seen three such beauties as that he would never be satisfied with any one else.

After a while as he journeyed he came to the wood where he had seen the old crone before, and there she was, waiting for him.

“Well, and did you get what you set out to search for?” she asked.

“I did and I didn’t,” answered the Prince;—and then he told her the whole story and showed her the three citrons that he still carried in his bosom. “They are three beauties, I can tell you,” said he, “but of what use are they as long as they remain as citrons?”

“I may be able to help you again,” said the old hag. She then gave him a silver knife and a little golden cup. “Keep the citrons until you come to a running stream. Then take one,—whichever one you please,—and cut it open with this knife. At once one of the Princesses will appear. She will ask

you for a drink of water. Give it to her immediately in this golden cup, and after that she will remain with you and you can have her for your wife."

The Prince was delighted. He took the knife and cup and thanked the old woman gratefully, and then she again disappeared in the shadow of the forest.

The Prince journeyed on until he came to a running stream, and it was not so very far from his father's palace. Then he got out the knife and the cup and one of the citrons. He cut the citron, and at once one of the Princesses appeared before him. If she had looked a beauty when he saw her in the mountain she was ten times lovelier, now that he saw her in the light of day. The Prince could only gape and gape at her.

"Give me a cup of water to drink," demanded the Princess; but the Prince was so busy staring at her that he did not move, and in a moment the Princess vanished from before him, and where she went he could not tell. He was filled with grief over the loss of her, but she was gone, and that was all of it.

Then the Prince took out the second citron. "This time I will be ready for her," he thought. He took his knife and cut the second citron. At once the second Princess appeared before him.

"Give me a cup of water to drink," she demanded. But again the Prince was so overcome by her beauty that he could no more move than if he had been rooted to the ground, and the next moment she too disappeared from before his eyes.

The Prince was in despair. He ran this way and that way, calling aloud and trying to find her, but she had vanished like the fading of a breath.

And now there was only one other citron left, and the Prince trembled at the thought of opening it, for he was afraid he would lose this third Princess as he had the others. At last he drew it from his bosom and prepared to cut it, but first he filled the golden cup and set it ready to his hand. Then he seized the knife and with one stroke divided the citron in two.

At once the third Princess stood before him, and though the others had been beautiful she exceeded them in beauty as the full moon exceeds the stars in splendor.

“Give me a cup of water,” said she; and this time the Prince was ready. Almost before she could speak he had caught up the golden cup and presented it to her.

The Princess took the cup and drank, and then she smiled upon him so brightly that he was dazzled.

“Now I am yours, and you are mine,” said she, “and where you go I will follow, for I have no one in all the wide world but you.”

The Prince was almost wild with happiness. He kissed her hands and looked with joy upon her face.

But she was dressed only in a linen shift.

The Prince took off his cloak and wrapped it about her. “Climb up into a tree,” said he, “and hide yourself among the branches, and I will go to the castle and bring you from thence robes and jewels and all things fitting for such a beautiful Princess to wear.”

To this the Princess agreed. The Prince helped her to climb up among the branches of a tree that overhung the water, and then he hastened away to the castle.

The beauty sat there among the leaves waiting for his return, and the time of waiting was long, for when the Prince reached the castle he was obliged to stay and tell the whole story to his father before the King would permit him to return with the robes and jewels he had promised to bring to his bride.

Meanwhile an ugly kitchen wench who worked in the castle came to fetch water from the spring, for every day the Princesses required it for their baths. The girl had brought with her an earthen jar to hold the water.

As she leaned over the stream to fill the jar she looked down into the water and saw the face of the Princess reflected there, as she peered out from the leaves above.

The servant wench, whose name was Lucy, thought it was the reflection of her own face that she saw. She gazed upon it with wonder and joy. “Ah! Ah!” she cried. “What a beauty I am; why did no one ever tell me so? Not even the two Princesses are as beautiful as I.” She knelt there, staring and staring at the reflection. Then in a rage she sprang to her feet.

“And they send me to draw water for them! Me, who ought to sit on a throne above them all. But I’ll no longer be their slave. I’ll break their water jar to pieces, and if they send me with others I’ll break them too!”

With that she threw down the jar with such violence that it was broken into bits, and then she stamped about with rage.

The sight amused the Princess so that she laughed aloud. The servant wench looked up and saw the lovely face peering out at her from among the green leaves; it was the same beautiful face she had seen reflected in the water.

“Who are you? What are you doing up there among the leaves?” she asked in a thick voice.

“I am the promised bride of the Prince who has just gone up to the castle,” answered the beauty. “He has gone to fetch fine robes and jewels that I may dress myself properly before I appear before his father.”

When she said this an evil thought came into the servant wench’s head.

“Come down,” said she, “and I will dress your hair for you; I have often done this for the other Princesses, and I can arrange it so that you will look even more beautiful when the Prince returns.”

The Princess was nothing loath. She had no thought of evil. She climbed down from the tree and sat herself upon a rock, while Lucy looped and pinned her hair in place and wove a crown of flowers to place upon it. “Come now, and see how beautiful you are,” said the servant.

She led the Princess to the place where the stream was deepest, and then, when the beauty stooped to look at herself in the water, Lucy pushed her in. After that she stripped herself to her shift, and hid her clothes under a rock, and climbed up into the tree. There she sat among the leaves, peering out just as the Princess had done.

Presently the Prince returned, bringing with him all sorts of beautiful clothes and gifts for his Princess bride. What was his amazement to see, instead of the beauty he left in the tree, the ugly face of the servant wench smiling down at him from among the leaves.

“What are you doing there?” he cried. “And what have you done with the Princess?”

“Alas,” said the servant maid, pretending to weep, “I am the Princess. After you left me a wicked enchantress came by this way and changed me into this shape.”

The Prince was filled with grief and horror at these words. However, he believed her and could not find it in his heart to punish her for a misfortune she could not help. He showed her the robes and jewels he had brought, and the servant wench made haste to come down and dress herself in them. When she had done this she looked more hideous than ever. The Prince could hardly bear to look at her, his grief and shame were so great. Nevertheless he took her by the hand and led her back to the castle.

There the King was waiting full of impatience to see the bride of his youngest son, this most beautiful Princess in all of twelve kingdoms. But when the Prince brought the ugly servant wench before him he could hardly believe his eyes.

“This a beauty!” he cried. “Are you a fool or do you take me for one? It is an insult to bring me such a creature for a daughter-in-law.”

The older Princes and their brides did not try to hide their scorn or laughter, but the servant sank on her knees, weeping, and repeated to the king the same story she had told the Prince. She assured him that she had been as beautiful as the day when she had climbed up into the tree and would be so still if the wicked enchantress had not passed by and bewitched her.

The King frowned and stroked his beard. “Yours is a sad case,” said he, “and since the Prince has given his word to marry you, marry you he must. Perchance sometime your beauty may return.”

He then gave orders that Lucy should be shown to the apartments prepared for the Princess and that she should be waited on and served just as though she were the beauty his son had promised him.

But the heart of the Prince was like a stone in his bosom, and he could not bear to look upon the ugly one who was to be his bride.

Now when the Princess had been pushed into the water she had not been drowned, as Lucy thought. Instead she changed into a beautiful silver fish that swam about in the stream or hid under a grassy bank.

Now there was another servant who came down to the stream for water instead of Lucy, and one day when this servant dipped the jar into the water the fish swam into it, and she carried it back to the castle with her.

It was so pretty that she showed it to the Prince, hoping it might cheer him for a moment.

No sooner had the Prince looked upon the fish than he grew quite light and happy. He would not let the servant take the fish away but kept it with him in a crystal bowl and now he no longer grieved so bitterly about his bride.

Lucy did not know why the Prince had grown happier. She thought perhaps he had begun to love her. But when she found that he scarcely ever came to see her, but spent all his time watching the fish, she became very angry.

She bribed a servant to steal the fish from the Prince’s room and bring it to her. Then she had a fire built and threw the fish into it to burn.

No sooner did the flames touch the fish, however, than it changed into a beautiful silver bird and flew out of the window.

The false Princess was frightened. “There is some magic here,” thought she, “and magic that will prove my ruin.”

And now the silver bird sat on a branch outside the Princess's window and sang and sang. The Prince heard it, and his heart was filled with joy, he knew not why, and he forgot the fish that had disappeared from the bowl.

Lucy also heard it and was more frightened than ever. She sent for the servant who had stolen the fish and bribed him to set a net to catch the bird. This he did one day when the Prince was away, and then he brought the bird to the false Princess. But she shuddered at sight of it as though she were cold, and bade him take it outside and wring its neck.

This the servant was loath to do, but he dared not disobey her. He carried the bird outside and did as she commanded, and three drops of blood fell on the ground just below the Prince's window.

The next morning when the Prince awoke he saw with amazement that a beautiful citron tree was growing outside of his window. Its trunk was silver, and its leaves were silver, and on the branch nearest his window hung three silver citrons, and they were exactly like the silver citrons he had brought from the Troll's home under the mountain.

The Prince saw them hanging there, and his heart was filled with joy and hope as he looked at them. He reached out and plucked them and hid them in his bosom. Then he took the silver knife and the golden cup and hastened down to the stream where he had opened the citrons before.

He cut the first citron, and at once the first Princess appeared and asked him for a drink of water, but he scarcely looked at her, and she fled away.

He cut the second citron, and the second Princess appeared and demanded water, but he never stirred, and she too vanished.

Then he filled the golden cup with water and with a trembling hand cut the third citron.

Immediately the third Princess appeared. "Give me of the water to drink," said she.

At once the Prince handed her the golden cup. She drank deeply, and then she smiled upon him, and it was his own dear love who stood before him more beautiful than ever.

The Prince could hardly believe in his good fortune. But the Princess told him all that had happened to her—how Lucy had pushed her into the water, and how she had been changed first into a fish, and then into a bird, and then into a citron as she had been before. The Prince could not wonder and marvel enough. He took her by the hand and led her up to the castle, and her golden hair fell all about her so that she seemed to be clothed in a shimmering golden mantle.

When she appeared before the King he was amazed at the beauty of her, and when the Prince told him that this was his true bride and not the other, his happiness knew no bounds. The whole palace resounded with rejoicings. Only Lucy was so terrified that she ran and jumped out of a window and broke her neck.

But the kingdom was given to the youngest Prince, and he and the Princess reigned there in peace and happiness as long as they lived.

THE MAGIC PIPE. A NORSE TALE

There was once three brothers, all the sons of the same father and mother.

The two elder were hard-working, thrifty lads, who had no care except as to how they might better themselves in the world. But the youngest, whose name was Boots, was not thrifty at all. He was a do-nothing and was quite content to sit in the chimney corner and warm his shins and think about things.

One day the eldest son came to his father and said, "I have it in mind to go over yonder to the King's castle and take service there, for I hear the King has need of a herdsman to take care of his hares for him. The wages are six dollars a week, and if any one can keep the herd together and bring them safe home every night without losing one of them the King will give him the Princess for a wife."

The father was pleased when he heard this. Six dollars a week was fair pay, and it would be a fine thing if the lad could win the Princess for his wife. At any rate it was worth trying for.

So the eldest son cocked his hat over one ear, and off he set for the palace.

He had not gone so very far when he came to the edge of a forest, and there was an old crone with a green nose a yard long, and it was caught in a crack of a log. She was dancing and hopping about, but for all her dancing and hopping she got no farther than that one spot, for her nose held her there.

The lad stopped and stared at her, and she looked so funny to his mind that he laughed and laughed till his sides ached.

"You gawk!" screamed the old hag. "Come and drive a wedge in the crack so I can get my nose out. Here I have stood for twice a hundred years, and no Christian soul has come to set me free."

"If you have stood there twice a hundred years you might as well stay a while longer. As for me, I'm expected at the King's palace, and I have no

time to waste driving wedges," said the lad, and away he went, one foot before the other, leaving the old crone with her nose still in the crack.

When the lad came to the palace, he knocked at the door and told the man who opened it that he had come to see about the place of herdsman. When the man heard this he brought the lad straight to the King, and told him what the lad had come for.

The King listened and nodded his head. Yes, he was in need of a herdsman and would be glad to take the lad into his service, and the wages were just as the youth thought, with a chance of winning the Princess to boot. But there was one part of the bargain that had been left out. If the lad failed to keep the herd together and lost so much as even one small leveret, he was to receive such a beating as would turn him black and blue.

That part of the bargain was not such pleasant hearing as the rest of it. Still the lad had a mind to try for the Princess. So he was taken out to the paddock where the hares were, and a pretty sight it was to see them hopping and frisking about, hundreds and hundreds of them, big and little.

All morning the hares were kept there in the paddock with the new herdsman watching them, and as long as that was the case everything went well. But later on the hares had to be driven out on the hills for a run and a bite of fresh grass, and then the trouble began. The lad could no more keep them together than if they had been sparks from a fire. Away they sped, some one way and some another, into the woods and over the hills,—there was no keeping track of them. The lad shouted and ran and ran and shouted till the sweat poured down his face, but he could not herd them back. By the time evening came he had scarce a score of them to drive home to the palace.

And there on the steps stood the King with a stout rod in his hands, all ready to give the lad a beating. And a good beating it was, I can tell you. When the King had finished with him he could hardly stand. Home he went with only his sore bones for wages.

Then it was the second brother's turn. He also had a mind to try his hand at keeping the King's hares, with the chance of winning the Princess for a wife.

Off he set along the same road his brother had taken, and after a while he came to the place where the old crone was dancing about with her long, green nose still caught in the crack of a log. He was just as fond of a good laugh as his brother was, and he stood for a while to watch her, for he thought it a merry sight. He laughed and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, and the old hag was screaming with rage.

"You gawk! Come and drive a wedge into the crack so that I can get my nose out," she bawled. "Here I have been for twice a hundred years and no Christian soul has come to set me free."

"If you have been there that long it will not hurt to stay a bit longer," said the youth. "I'm no woodsman, and besides that I'm on my way to the King's palace to win a Princess for a wife." And away he went, leaving the old woman screaming after him.

After a while the second brother came to the palace, and when the servants heard why he had come they were not slow in bringing him before the King. Yes, the King was as much in need of a herdsman for his hares as ever, but was the lad willing to run the risk of having only a beating for his pains?

Yes, the lad was willing to run that risk, for he was almost sure he could keep the herd together, and it was not every day one had a chance of winning a Princess for a wife.

So they took him out to the paddock where the hares were. All morning he herded them there as his brother had done before him, and that was an easy task. But it was in the afternoon that the trouble began. For no sooner did the fresh wind of the hillside ruffle up their fur than away they fled, this way and that, kicking up their heels behind them. It was in vain the lad chased after them and shouted and sweated; he could not keep them together. In the end he had scarcely threescore of them to drive back to the palace in the evening.

And the King was waiting for him with a cudgel in his hands, and if the lad did not get a good drubbing that day, then nobody ever did. When the King finished with him he was black and blue from his head to his heels, and that is all he got for trying to win a Princess for a wife.

Now after the second son had come home again with his doleful tale, Boots sat and thought and thought about what had happened. After a while, however, he rose up and shook the ashes from his clothes and said that now it was his turn to have a try at winning the Princess for his wife.

When the elder brothers heard that they scoffed and hooted. Boots was no better than a numskull anyway, and how could he hope to succeed where they had failed.

Well, all that might be true or it might not, but at any rate he was for having a try at this business, so off he set, just as the other two had before him.

After a while he came to the log where his brothers had seen the hag with her nose caught in the crack, and there she was still, for no one had come by in the meantime to set her free. He stood and stared and stared, for it was a curious sight.

"Oh, you gawk! Why do you stand there staring?" cried the old hag. "Here I have been for twice a hundred years, and no Christian soul will take the trouble to set me free. Drive a wedge into the crack so that I may get my nose out."

"That I will and gladly, good mother," said the youth. "Two hundred years is a long time for one to have one's nose pinched in a crack."

Quickly he found a wedge and drove it into the crack with a stone, and then the old hag pulled her nose out.

"Now you have done me a good turn, and I have it in mind to do the same for you," she said. With that she took a pretty little pipe out of the pocket of her skirt. "Do you take this," she said, "and it will come in handy if you're on your way to the King's palace. If you blow on the right end of the whistle the things around you will be blown every which way as if a strong wind had struck them, and if you blow on the wrong end of it they will be gathered together again. And those are not the only tricks the pipe has, for if any one takes it from you, you have only to wish for it, and you can wish it back into your fingers again."

Boots took the pipe and thanked the old hag kindly, and then he bade her good-by and went on his way to the King's palace.

When the King heard what Boots had come for, he was no less ready to take him for a herdsman than he had been to take his brothers. "But, mind you, you shall have a drubbing that will make your bones ache if you come back in the evening with even the smallest leveret missing from the herd," said the King.

Yes, that was all right. The lad was ready to take the risk, so all morning Boots herded the hares in the paddock, and in the afternoon he took them out to the hills, as the bargain was. There the hares could no longer be kept in a herd. They kicked up their heels and away they went, every which way.

So that was the game, was it? Boots was very willing to play it, too. He took out his pipe and blew a tune on the right end of it, and away the hares flew faster than they had intended, as though a strong wind had blown them. Presently there was not one left on the hill. Then the lad lay down in the sun and fell asleep.

When he awoke it was toward evening and time to be bringing the hares back to the castle, but not one of them was in sight.

Then Boots sat up, and shook the hair out of his eyes and blew on the wrong end of the pipe. Immediately there was the whole herd before him, drawn up in ranks just like soldiers. Not even one of the smallest leverets was missing.

"That is well," said Boots. "And now we'll be going home again."

Off he set for the palace, driving the hares before him, and as soon as he came near enough he could see the King standing on the steps waiting for him with a stout cudgel in his hand,—for he had no thought but that Boots would fail in his task.

When he saw the whole herd come hopping home, as tame as sheep, and turning into the paddock, he could hardly believe his eyes. He hurried after and began to count them. He counted them over and over again, and not one was missing.

Well, Boots had brought them all back safely that time, but the question was whether he could do it again.

Boots thought he could. Indeed, he was sure he could. So the next afternoon he set out for the hills, whistling merrily as he tramped along with the hares hopping before him.

That day things happened just as they had before. As soon as the hares began to stray Boots took his pipe and blew them away as though they were so much chaff. He lay down and slept until it was time to take them home again, and then he blew them together with the wrong end of the pipe.

When the King found the lad had brought the whole herd home again for the second time he was greatly troubled, for he had no mind to give the Princess to Boots for a bride. So the third day he bade the Princess go out to the hills and hide herself among the bushes and watch and see how it was that Boots managed to keep the hares together.

This the Princess did. She hid back of the bushes; she saw Boots come tramping up the hill with the hares frisking before him; she saw him blow them away with his pipe as though they had been so many dry leaves in the wind, and then, after he had had a nap, she saw him blow them together again.

Then the Princess must and would have that pipe. She came out from the bushes and offered to buy it. She offered ten dollars for it.

“No.”

“Fifty!”

“No!”

“A hundred!”

“No.” Boots had no wish to sell, but as it was the Princess, and as she seemed so set and determined on having it, he would tell her what he would do; he would sell the pipe for a hundred dollars if she would give him a kiss for every dollar she paid.

The Princess did not know what to say to that. It was not becoming that a Princess should kiss a herdsman; still she wanted the pipe and as that was the only way to get it she at last agreed. She paid the lad a hundred bright silver dollars, and she also gave him a hundred kisses out there on the hillside, with no one to look on but the hares.

Then she took the pipe and hastened home with it.

But small good the pipe did her. Just as she reached the palace steps the pipe slipped out of her fingers as though it had been buttered, and look as she might she could not find it again.

That was because the lad had wished it back to himself. At that very moment he was on his way home with the pipe in his pocket and the hares hopping before him in lines like soldiers.

When the King heard the story he thought and pondered. The Princess had told him nothing of the kisses. He thought she had bought the pipe for a hundred dollars, so the next day he sent the Queen out to the hillside with two hundred dollars in her pocket.

"The Princess is young and foolish," said he. "She must have lost the pipe on the hillside, and no doubt the lad has it back by this time. Do you go out and see if you can buy it from him and if you once have your fingers on it you'll not lose it, I'll wager."

So the Queen went out to the hillside and hid herself in the bushes, and she saw Boots blow the hares away and lie down to sleep and afterward blow them together again in a twinkling.

Then she came out from the bushes and offered to buy the pipe. At first the lad said no, and again no, and then no for the third time, but in the end he sold the pipe to the Queen for two hundred dollars and fifty kisses to go with them, and the Queen hoped the King would never hear of it. She took the pipe and hastened home with it, but she fared no better than the Princess, for just before she reached the palace the pipe disappeared from her fingers, and what had become of it she did not know.

When the King heard that he was a wroth and angry man. Now he himself would go out to the hill and buy the pipe, for there was no trusting the womenfolk. If he once had the pipe in his hands there would be no losing it again, and of that he felt very sure. So he mounted his old mare Whitey and rode over to the hillside. There he hid himself among the bushes, and he hid old Whitey there with him, and he watched until he had seen all that the others had told him about. Then he came out and tried to strike a bargain with the lad. But this time it seemed as though Boots would not sell the pipe,—neither for love nor money. The King offered him three hundred dollars, and four hundred dollars, and five hundred dollars for it, and still Boots said no.

"Listen!" said Boots suddenly. "If you'll go over there in the bushes and kiss old Whitey on the mouth five-and-twenty times, I'll sell you the pipe for five hundred dollars, but not otherwise."

That was a thing the King was loath to do, for it ill befitted a king to kiss an old horse, but have the pipe he must and would; and besides there was nobody there to see him do it but Boots, and he did not count. "May I spread a handkerchief between old Whitey's mouth and mine before I do it?" asked the King.

Yes, he might do that.

So the King went back into the bushes and spread his handkerchief over old Whitey's mouth and kissed her through it five-and-twenty times. Then he came back and the lad gave him the pipe, and the King mounted and rode away with it, and he was well pleased with himself for his cleverness, and he held the pipe tight in one hand and the bridle in the other. "No danger of my losing it as the Queen and the Princess did," thought he. But scarcely had the King reached the palace steps when the pipe slipped through his fingers like water, and what became of it he did not know.

But when Boots drove the hares home that evening he had the pipe safely hidden away up his sleeve, though nobody knew it.

And now how about the Princess? Would the King keep his promise and give her to the herdsman for a wife?

But that was a thing the King and Queen could not bear to think of.

They put their heads together and talked and talked, and the more they talked the more unwilling they were to have a herdsman in the family. So in the end this is what they said. The Princess was a very clever girl, and she must have a clever lad for a husband. If Boots could tell bigger stories than the Princess then he should have her for a wife, but if she could tell bigger stories than he, then he should have three red strips cut from his back and be beaten all the way home.

To this Boots agreed.

Then the Princess began. "I looked out of my window," said she, "and there was a tree that grew straight up to the sky, and the fruit of it was diamonds and pearls and rubies. I reached out and picked them and made myself such a necklace as never was, and I might have it yet only I leaned over the well to look at myself in the waters, and the necklace fell off, and there it lies still at the bottom of the well for any one who cares to dive for it."

"That is a pretty story!" said Boots; "but I can tell a better. When I was herding hares the Princess came up on the hill and gave me a hundred bright silver dollars and a hundred kisses as well, one for every dollar."

Then the King scowled till his brows met, and the Princess grew as red as fire. "Oh, what a story!" cried she.

Then it was her turn again.

"I went to see my god-mother, and she took me for a ride in a golden coach drawn by six fleas, and the fleas were as big as horses, and they went so fast we were back again a day before we started."

"That's a good story," said Boots, "but here's a better. The Queen came out on the hillside and made me a present of two hundred dollars, and she kissed me over and over again; fifty kisses she gave me."

"Is that true?" said the King to the Queen; and his face was as black as thunder.

"It's a great wicked story," cried the Queen, "and you must know it is."

Then the Princess tried again. “I had six suitors, and I cared for one no more than another, but the seventh one was a demon, and he would have had me whether or no. He would have flown away with me before this, but I caught his tail in the crack of the door, and he howled most horribly. There he is still, if you care to look, unless he has vanished in a puff of smoke.”

“Now it is my turn,” said Boots, “and you may believe this or not, but it’s mostly true. The King came up on the hillside and kissed the old white mare twenty-five times. I was there and I saw. He kissed her twenty-five times, and he gave me five hundred dollars not to tell.”

When Boots told this right out before every one, the King was so ashamed he did not know which way to look. “There’s not a word of it true. It’s the biggest story I ever heard,” said he.

“Very well, then I have won the Princess,” said Boots. “And when shall we be married?”

And married they were that day week, for the King and Queen could no longer refuse to give Boots the Princess for a wife.

The Princess was willing, too, for Boots was a handsome, fine-looking lad. They had a great feast at the wedding, with plenty of cake and ale flowing like water. I was there, and I ate and drank with the best of them.

Pfst! There goes a mouse. Catch it and you may make a fine big cloak of its skin,—and that’s a story, too.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH. A HINDU STORY

There was once a Rajah who was both young and handsome, and yet he had never married. One time this Rajah, whose name was Chundun, found himself obliged to make a long journey. He took with him attendants and horsemen, and also his Wuzeer. This Wuzeer was a very wise man,—so wise that nothing was hid from him.

In a certain far-off part of the kingdom the Rajah saw a fine garden, and so beautiful was it that he stopped to admire it. He was surprised to see growing in the midst of it a small bingal tree that bore a number of fine bingals, but not a single leaf.

"This is a very curious thing, and I do not understand it," said Chundun Rajah to his Wuzeer. "Why does this tree bear such fine and perfect fruit, and yet it has not a single leaf?"

"I could tell you the meaning," said the Wuzeer, "but I fear that if I did you would not believe me and would have me punished for telling a lie."

"That could never be," answered the Rajah; "I know you to be a very truthful man and wise above all others. Whatever you tell me I shall believe."

"Then this is the meaning of it," said the Wuzeer. "The gardener who has charge of this garden has one daughter; her name is Guzra Bai, and she is very beautiful. If you will count the bingals you will find there are twenty-and-one. Whosoever marries the gardener's daughter will have twenty and one children,—twenty boys and one girl."

Chundun Rajah was very much surprised at what his Wuzeer said. "I should like to see this Guzra Bai," said he.

"You can very easily see her," answered the Wuzeer. "Early every morning she comes into the garden to play among the flowers. If you come here early and hide you can see her without frightening her, as you would do if you went to her home."

The Rajah was pleased with this suggestion, and early the next morning he came to the garden and hid himself behind a flowering bush. It was not long before he saw the girl playing about among the flowers, and she was so very beautiful the Rajah at once fell in love with her. He determined to make her his Ranee, but he did not speak to her or show himself to her then for fear of frightening her. He determined to go to the gardener's house that evening and tell him he wished his daughter for a wife.

As he had determined, so he did. That very evening, accompanied only by his Wuzeer, he went to the gardener's house and knocked upon the door.

"Who is there?" asked the gardener from within.

"It is I, the Rajah," answered Chundun. "Open the door, for I wish to speak with you."

The gardener laughed. "That is a likely story," said he. "Why should the Rajah come to my poor hut? No, no; you are some one who wishes to play a trick on me, but you shall not succeed. I will not let you in."

"But it is indeed Chundun Rajah," called the Wuzeer. "Open the door that he may speak with you."

When the gardener heard the Wuzeer's voice he came and opened the door a crack, but still he only half believed what was told him. What was his amazement to see that it was indeed the Rajah who stood there in all his magnificence with his Wuzeer beside him. The poor man was terrified, fearing Chundun would be angry, but the Rajah spoke to him graciously.

"Do not be afraid," said he. "Call thy daughter that I may speak with her, for it is she whom I wish to see."

The girl was hiding (for she was afraid) and would not come until her father took her hand and drew her forward.

When the Rajah saw her now, this second time, she seemed to him even more beautiful than at first. He was filled with joy and wonder.

"Now I will tell you why I have come here," he said. "I wish to take Guzra Bai for my wife."

At first the gardener would not believe him, but when he found the Rajah did indeed mean what he said he turned to his daughter. “If the girl is willing you shall have her,” said he, “but I will not force her to marry even a Rajah.”

The girl was still afraid, yet she could not but love the Rajah, so handsome was he, and so kind and gracious was his manner. She gave her consent, and the gardener was overjoyed at the honor that had come to him and his daughter.

Chundun and the beautiful Guzra Bai were married soon after in the gardener’s house, and then the Rajah and his new Ranee rode away together.

Now Chundun Rajah’s mother, the old Ranee, was of a very proud and jealous nature. When she found her son had married a common girl, the daughter of a gardener, and that Chundun thought of nothing but his bride and her beauty, she was very angry. She determined to rid herself of Guzra Bai in some way or other. But Chundun watched over his young Ranee so carefully that for a long time the old Queen could find no chance to harm her.

But after a while the Rajah found it was again necessary for him to go on a long journey. Just before he set out he gave Guzra Bai a little golden bell. “If any danger should threaten or harm befall you, ring this bell,” said he. “Wherever I am I shall hear it and be with you at once, even though I return from the farthest part of my kingdom.”

No sooner had he gone than Guzra Bai began to wonder whether indeed it were possible that he could hear the bell at any distance and return to her. She wondered and wondered until at last her curiosity grew so great that she could not forbear from ringing it.

No sooner had it sounded than the Rajah stood before her. “What has happened?” he asked. “Why did you call me?”

“Nothing has happened,” answered Guzra Bai, “but it did not seem to me possible that you could really hear the bell so far away, and I could not forbear from trying it.”

“Very well,” said the Rajah. “Now you know that it is true, so do not call me again unless you have need of me.”

Again he went away, and Guzra Bai sat and thought and thought about the golden bell. At last she rang it again. At once the Rajah stood before her.

“Oh, my dear husband, please to forgive me,” cried Guzra Bai. “It seemed so wonderful I thought I must have dreamed that the bell could bring you back.”

“Guzra Bai, do not be so foolish,” said her husband. “I will forgive you this time, but do not call me again unless you have need of me.” And he went away.

Again and for the third time Guzra Bai rang the bell, and the Rajah appeared.

“Why do you call me again?” he asked. “Is it again for nothing, or has something happened to you?”

“Nothing has happened,” answered Guzra Bai, “only somehow I felt so frightened that I wanted you near me.”

“Guzra Bai, I am away on affairs of state,” said the Rajah. “If you call me in this way when you have no need of me, I shall soon refuse to answer the bell. Remember this and do not call me again without reason.”

And for the third time the Rajah went away and left her.

Soon after this the young Ranee had twenty and one beautiful children, twenty sons and one daughter.

When the old Queen heard of this she was more jealous than ever. “When the Rajah returns and sees all these children,” she thought to herself, “he will be so delighted that he will love Guzra Bai more dearly than ever, and nothing I can do will ever separate them.” She then began to plan within herself as to how she could get rid of the children before the Rajah’s return.

She sent for the nurse who had charge of the babies, and who was as wicked as herself. “If you can rid me of these children, I will give you a lac of gold pieces,” she said. “Only it must be done in such a way that the Rajah will lay all the blame on Guzra Bai.”

“That can be done,” answered the nurse. “I will throw the children out on the ash heaps, where they will soon perish, and I will put stones in their places. Then when the Rajah returns we will tell him Guzra Bai is a wicked sorceress, who has changed her children into stones.”

The old Ranee was pleased with this plan and said that she herself would go with the nurse and see that it was carried out.

Guzra Bai looked from her window and saw the old Queen coming with the nurse, and at once she was afraid. She was sure they intended some harm to her or the children. She seized the golden bell and rang and rang it, but Chundun did not come. She had called him back so often for no reason at all that this time he did not believe she really needed him.

The nurse and the old Ranee carried away the children, as they had planned, and threw them on the ash heaps and brought twenty-one large stones that they put in their places.

When Chundun Rajah returned from his journey the old Ranee met him, weeping and tearing her hair. “Alas! alas!” she cried. “Why did you marry a sorceress and bring such terrible misfortune upon us all!”

“What misfortune?” asked the Rajah. “What do you mean?”

His mother then told him that while he was away Guzra Bai had had twenty-one beautiful children, but she had turned them all into stones.

Chundun Rajah was thunderstruck. He called the wicked nurse and questioned her. She repeated what the old Ranee had already told him and also showed him the stones.

Then the Rajah believed them. He still loved Guzra Bai too much to put her to death, but he had her imprisoned in a high tower, and would not see her nor speak with her.

But meanwhile the little children who had been thrown out on the ash heap were being well taken care of. A large rat, of the kind called Bandicote, had heard them crying and had taken pity on them. She drew them down into her hole, which was close by and where they would be safe. She then called twenty of her friends together. She told them who the children were and

where she had found them, and the twenty agreed to help her take care of the little ones. Each rat was to have the care of one of the little boys and to bring him suitable food, and the old Bandicote who had found them would care for the little girl.

This was done, and so well were the children fed that they grew rapidly. Before long they were large enough to leave the rat hole and go out to play among the ash heaps, but at night they always returned to the hole. The old Bandicote warned them that if they saw anyone coming they must at once hide in the hole, and under no circumstances must any one see them.

The little boys were always careful to do this, but the little girl was very curious. Now it so happened that one day the wicked nurse came past the ash heaps. The little boys saw her coming and ran back into the hole to hide. But the little girl lingered until the nurse was quite close to her before she ran away.

The nurse went to the old Ranee, and said, "Do you know, I believe those children are still alive? I believe they are living in a rat hole near the ash heap, for I saw a pretty little girl playing there among the ashes, and when I came close to her she ran down into the largest rat hole and hid."

The Ranee was very much troubled when she heard this, for if it were true, as she thought it might be, she feared the Rajah would hear about it and inquire into the matter. "What shall I do?" she asked the nurse.

"Send out and have the ground dug over and filled in," the nurse replied. "In this way, if any of the children are hidden there, they will be covered over and smothered, and you will also kill the rats that have been harboring them."

The Ranee at once sent for workmen and bade them go out to the rat holes and dig and fill them in, and the children and the rats would certainly have been smothered just as the nurse had planned, only luckily the old mother rat was hiding near by and overheard what was said. She at once hastened home and told her friends what was going to happen, and they all made their escape before the workmen arrived. She also took the children out of the hole and hid them under the steps that led down into an old unused

well. There were twenty-one steps, and she hid one child under each step. She told them not to utter a sound whatever happened, and then she and her friends ran away and left them.

Presently the workmen came with their tools and began to fill in the rat holes. The little daughter of the head workman had come with him, and while he and his fellows were at work the little girl amused herself by running up and down the steps into the well. Every time she trod upon a step it pinched the child who lay under it. The little boys made no sound when they were pinched, but lay as still as stones, but every time the child trod on the step under which the Princess lay she sighed, and the third time she felt the pinch she cried out, "Have pity on me and tread more lightly. I too am a little girl like you!"

The workman's daughter was very much frightened when she heard the voice. She ran to her father and told him the steps had spoken to her.

The workman thought this a strange thing. He at once went to the old Ranee and told her he dared no longer work near the well, for he believed a witch or a demon lived there under the steps; and he repeated what his little daughter had told him.

The wicked nurse was with the Ranee when the workman came to her. As soon as he had gone, the nurse said: "I am sure some of those children must still be alive. They must have escaped from the rat holes and be hiding under the steps. If we send out there we will probably find them."

The Ranee was frightened at the thought they might still be alive. She ordered some servants to come with her, and she and the nurse went out to look for the children.

But when the little girl had cried out the little boys were afraid some harm might follow, and prayed that they might be changed into trees, so that if any one came to search for them they might not find them.

Their prayers were answered. The twenty little boys were changed into twenty little banyan trees that stood in a circle, and the little girl was changed into a rose-bush that stood in the midst of the circle and was full of red and white roses.

The old Ranee and the nurse and the servants came to the well and searched under every step, but no one was there, so went away again.

All might now have been well, but the workman's mischievous little daughter chanced to come by that way again. At once she espied the banyan trees and the rose-bush. "It is a curious thing that I never saw these trees before," she thought. "I will gather a bunch of roses."

She ran past the banyan trees without giving them a thought and began to break the flowers from the rose-tree. At once a shiver ran through the tree, and it cried to her in a pitiful voice: "Oh! oh! you are hurting me. Do not break my branches, I pray of you. I am a little girl, too, and can suffer just as you might."

The child ran back to her father and caught him by the hand. "Oh, I am frightened!" she cried. "I went to gather some roses from the rose-tree, and it spoke to me;" and she told him what the rose-tree had said.

At once the workman went off and repeated to the Ranee what his little daughter had told him, and the Queen gave him a piece of gold and sent him away, bidding him keep what he had heard a secret.

Then she called the wicked nurse to her and repeated the workman's story. "What had we better do now?" she asked.

"My advice is that you give orders to have all the trees cut down and burned," said the nurse. "In this way you will rid yourself of the children altogether."

This advice seemed good to the Ranee. She sent men and had the trees cut down and thrown in a heap to burn.

But heaven had pity on the children, and just as the men were about to set fire to the heap a heavy rain storm arose and put out the fire. Then the river rose over its banks, and swept the little trees down on its flood, far, far away to a jungle where no one lived. Here they were washed ashore and at once took on their real shapes again.

The children lived there in the jungle safely for twelve years, and the brothers grew up tall and straight and handsome, and the sister was like the new moon in her beauty, so slim and white and shining was she.

The brothers wove a hut of branches to shelter their sister, and every day ten of them went out hunting in the forest, and ten of them stayed at home to care for her. But one day it chanced they all wished to go hunting together, so they put their sister up in a high tree where she would be safe from the beasts of the forest, and then they went away and left her there alone.

The twenty brothers went on and on through the jungle, farther than they had ever gone before, and so came at last to an open space among the trees, and there was a hut.

“Who can be living here?” said one of the brothers.

“Let us knock and see,” cried another.

The Princes knocked at the door and immediately it was opened to them by a great, wicked-looking Rakshas. She had only one red eye in the middle of her forehead; her gray hair hung in a tangled mat over her shoulders, and she was dressed in dirty rags.

When the Rakshas saw the brothers she was filled with fury.

She considered all the jungle belonged to her, and she was not willing that any one else should come there. Her one eye flashed fire, and she seized a stick and began beating the Princes, and each one, as she struck him, was turned into a crow. She then drove them away and went back into her hut and closed the door.

The twenty crows flew back through the forest, cawing mournfully. When they came to the tree where their sister sat they gathered about her, trying to make her understand that they were her brothers.

At first the Princess was frightened by the crows, but when she saw there were tears in their eyes, and when she counted them and found there were exactly twenty, she guessed what had happened, and that some wicked

enchantment had changed her brothers into this shape. Then she wept over them and smoothed their feathers tenderly.

After this the sister lived up in the tree, and the crows brought her food every day and rested around her in the branches at night, so that no harm should come to her.

Some time after this a young Rajah came into that very jungle to hunt. In some way he became separated from his attendants and wandered deeper and deeper into the forest, until at length he came to the tree where the Princess sat. He threw himself down beneath the tree to rest. Hearing a sound of wings above him the Rajah looked up and was amazed to see a beautiful girl sitting there among the branches with a flock of crows about her.

The Rajah climbed the tree and brought the girl down, while the crows circled about his head, cawing hoarsely.

“Tell me, beautiful one, who are you? And how come you here in the depths of the jungle?” asked the Rajah.

Weeping, the Princess told him all her story except that the crows were her brothers; she let him believe that her brothers had gone off hunting and had never returned.

“Do not weep any more,” said the Rajah. “You shall come home with me and be my Ranee, and I will have no other but you alone.”

When the Princess heard this she smiled, for the Rajah was very handsome, and already she loved him.

She was very glad to go with him and be his wife. “But my crows must go with me,” she said, “for they have fed me for many long days and have been my only companions.”

To this the Rajah willingly consented, and he took her home with him to the palace; and the crows circled about above them, following closely all the way.

When the old Rajah and Ranee (the young Rajah's father and mother) saw what a very beautiful girl he had brought back with him from the jungle they gladly welcomed her as a daughter-in-law.

The young Ranee would have been very happy now in her new life, for she loved her husband dearly, but always the thought of her brothers was like a weight upon her heart. She had a number of trees planted outside her windows so that her brothers might rest there close to her. She cooked rice for them herself and fed them with her own hands, and often she sat under the trees and stroked them and talked to them while her tears fell upon their glossy feathers.

After a while the young Ranee had a son, and he was called Ramchundra. He grew up straight and tall, and he was the joy of his mother's eyes.

One day, when he was fourteen years old, and big and strong for his age, he sat in the garden with his mother. The crows flew down about them, and she began to caress and talk to them as usual. "Ah, my dear ones!" she cried, "how sad is your fate! If I could but release you, how happy I should be."

"Mother," said the boy, "I can plainly see that these crows are not ordinary birds. Tell me whence come they, and why you weep over them and talk to them as you do?"

At first his mother would not tell him, but in the end she related to him the whole story of who she was, and how she and her brothers had come to the jungle and had lived there happily enough until they were changed into crows; and then of how the Rajah had found her and brought her home with him to the palace.

"I can easily see," said Ramchundra, when she had ended the tale, "that my uncles must have met a Rakshas somewhere in the forest and have been enchanted. Tell me exactly where the tree was—the tree where you lived—and what kind it was?"

The Ranee told him.

"And in which direction did your brothers go when they left you?"

This also his mother told him. “Why do you ask me these questions, my son?” she asked.

“I wish to know,” said Ramchundra, “for sometime I intend to set out and find that Rakshas and force her to free my uncles from her enchantment and change them back to their natural shapes again.”

His mother was terrified when she heard this, but she said very little to him, hoping he would soon forget about it and not enter into such a dangerous adventure.

Not long afterward Ramchundra went to his father and said, “Father, I am no longer a child; give me your permission to ride out into the world and see it for myself.”

The Rajah was willing for him to do this and asked what attendants his son would take with him.

“I wish for no attendants,” answered Ramchundra. “Give me only a horse, and a groom to take care of it.”

The Rajah gave his son the handsomest horse in his stables and also a well-mounted groom to ride with him. Ramchundra, however, only allowed the groom to go with him as far as the edge of the jungle, and then he sent him back home again with both the horses.

The Prince went on and on through the forest for a long distance until at last he came to a tree that he felt sure was the one his mother had told him of. From there he set forth in the same direction she told him his uncles had taken. He went on and on, ever deeper and deeper into the forest, until at last he came to a miserable looking hut. The door was open, and he looked in. There lay an ugly old hag fast asleep. She had only one eye in the middle of her forehead, and her gray hair was tangled and matted and fell over her face. The Prince entered in very softly, and sitting down beside her, he began to rub her head. He suspected that this was the Rakshas who had bewitched his uncles, and it was indeed she.

Presently the old woman awoke. “My pretty lad,” said she, “you have a kind heart. Stay with me here and help me, for I am very old and feeble, as you see, and I cannot very well look out for myself.”

This she said not because she really was old or feeble, but because she was lazy and wanted a servant to wait on her.

“Gladly will I stay,” answered the lad, “and what I can do to serve you, that I will do.”

So the Prince stayed there as the Rakshas’ servant. He served her hand and foot, and every day she made him sit down and rub her head.

One day, while he was rubbing her head and she was in a good humor he said to her, “Mother, why do you keep all those little jars of water standing along the wall? Let me throw out the water so that we may make some use of the jars.”

“Do not touch them,” cried the Rakshas. “That water is very powerful. One drop of it can break the strongest enchantment, and if any one has been bewitched, that water has power to bring him back to his own shape again.”

“And why do you keep that crooked stick behind the door? To-morrow I shall break it up to build a fire.”

“Do not touch it,” cried the hag. “I have but to wave that stick, and I can conjure up a mountain, a forest, or a river just as I wish, and all in the twinkling of an eye.”

The Prince said nothing to that, but went on rubbing her head. Presently he began to talk again. “Your hair is in a dreadful tangle, mother,” he said. “Let me get a comb and comb it out.”

“Do not dare!” screamed the Rakshas. “One hair of my head has the power to set the whole jungle in flames.”

Ramchundra again was silent and went on rubbing her head, and after a while the old Rakshas fell asleep and snored till the hut shook with her snoring.

Then, very quietly, the Prince arose. He plucked a hair from the old hag's head without awakening her, he took a flask of the magic water and the staff from behind the door, and set out as fast as he could go in the direction of the palace.

It was not long before he heard the Rakshas coming through the jungle after him, for she had awakened and found him gone.

Nearer and nearer she came, and then the Prince turned and waved the crooked stick. At once a river rolled between him and the Rakshas.

Without pause the Rakshas plunged into the river and struck out boldly, and soon she reached the other side.

On she came again close after Ramchundra. Again he turned and waved the staff. At once a thick screen of trees sprang up between him and the hag. The Rakshas brushed them aside this way and that as though they had been nothing but twigs.

On she came, and again the Prince waved the staff. A high mountain arose, but the Rakshas climbed it, and it did not take her long to do this.

Now she was so close that Ramchundra could hear her panting, but the edge of the jungle had been reached. He turned and cast the Rakshas' hair behind him. Immediately the whole jungle burst into fire, and the Rakshas was burned up in the flames.

Soon after the Prince reached the palace and hastened out into the garden. There sat his mother weeping, with the crows gathered about her. When she saw Ramchundra she sprang to her feet with a scream of joy and ran to him and took him in her arms.

"My son! my son! I thought you had perished!" she cried. "Did you meet the Rakshas?"

"Not only did I meet her, but I have slain her and brought back with me that which will restore my uncles to their proper shapes," answered the Prince.

He then dipped his fingers into the jar he carried and sprinkled the magic water over the crows. At once the enchantment was broken, and the twenty Princes stood there, tall and handsome, in their own proper shapes.

The Ranee made haste to lead them to her husband and told him the whole story. The Rajah could not wonder enough when he understood that the Princes were his wife's brothers, and were the crows she had brought home with her.

He at once ordered a magnificent feast to be prepared and a day of rejoicing to be held throughout all the kingdom.

Many Rajahs from far and near were invited to the feast, and among those who came was the father of the Ranee and her brothers, but he never suspected, as he looked upon them, that they were his children.

Before they sat down to the feast the young Ranee said to him, "Where is your wife Guzra Bai? Why has she not come with you? We had expected to see her here?"

The Rajah was surprised that the young Ranee should know his wife's name, but he made some excuse as to why Guzra Bai was not there.

Then the young Rajah said, "Send for her, I beg of you, for the feast cannot begin till she is here."

The older Rajah was still more surprised at this. He could not think any one was really concerned about Guzra Bai, and he feared the young Rajah wished, for some reason, to quarrel with him. But he agreed to send for his wife, and messengers were at once dispatched to bring Guzra Bai to the palace.

No sooner had she come than the young Ranee began to weep, and she and the Princes gathered about their mother. Then they told the Rajah the whole story of how his mother and the nurse had sought to destroy Guzra Bai and her children, and how they had been saved, and had now come to safety and great honor.

The Rajah was overcome with joy when he found that Guzra Bai was innocent. He prayed her to forgive him, and this she did, and all was joy and happiness.

As for the old Ranee, she was shut up in the tower where Guzra Bai had lived for so many years, but the old nurse was killed as befitted such a wicked woman.

LIFE'S SECRET. A STORY OF BENGAL

In a far-off country there once lived a great Rajah who had two wives, one named Duo and the other Suo. Both these Ranees were beautiful, but Duo was of a harsh and cruel nature, while Suo was gentle and kind to all.

Though the Rajah had been married to his Ranees for some time they neither of them had any children, and this was a great grief to every one. Daily prayers were offered up in the temples for the birth of a son to the Rajah, but the prayers remained unanswered.

One day a beggar, a holy man who had vowed to live in poverty, came to the palace asking for alms. Duo would have had him driven away, but Suo felt compassion for him. She gave him the alms he asked and bade him sit in the cool of the courtyard to rest.

The beggar thanked her and ate the food she gave him. Just before he left, he asked to speak to her in private. This favor Suo granted him. She stepped aside with him, and as it so happened this brought them directly under the windows of Duo's apartments.

"Great Ranee, you have been very kind to me," said the beggar, "and I wish to reward you. I know that for years you have desired to have a son, but that this wish has not been granted. Now listen! In the midst of the jungle over beyond the city there grows the most wonderful tree in all the world. Its trunk is silver, and its leaves are of gold. Once in every hundred years this tree bears a single crimson fruit. She who eats this fruit, whosoever she may be, shall, within a year, bear a son. This is that hundredth year,—the year in which the tree bears fruit, and I have gathered that fruit and have it here."

So saying, the beggar drew from among his rags a piece of silk embroidered with strange figures. This he unfolded, and showed to the Ranee, lying within it, a strange fruit such as she had never seen before. It was pear shaped, and of such a vivid red that it seemed to pulse and glow with light.

Suo looked at it with wonder and awe.

“If you wish to have it, it is yours,” the beggar continued. “But I must tell you one other thing. Whoever eats this fruit shall indeed bear a son, but he will not be as other children. His life will not be altogether within himself as with other people; it will be bound up with an object quite outside of himself. If this object should fall into the hands of an enemy that enemy could, by willing it, bring upon him misfortune or even death, and this no matter how closely the child was watched and guarded. And now, knowing this, do you still wish to eat the fruit?”

“Yes, yes!” cried Suo.

“Then I will tell you what this object is and where it is to be found,” said the beggar. He drew still closer to the Ranee and whispered in her ear, but though what he told her was so important Suo paid but little attention to it; she thought only of the fruit, and the happiness that might come to her if she ate it.

Now all the while the beggar had been talking to Suo, Duo had been seated at her window just above them, and she overheard all that was said. Only when the beggar came closer to Suo and whispered in her ear Duo could not hear what he said, though she leaned out as far as she could and strained her ears to listen. So, though she had learned that if Suo had a child its life would depend on some object outside of itself, she did not learn what that object was.

The beggar now gave the fruit to Suo, and she took it and ate all of it. Not one seed or bit of rind did she miss. After that she went back to her own apartments to dream upon the joy that might be coming to her.

Within the year, even as the beggar had promised, Suo bore a child, and this child was so large and strong and handsome that he was the wonder of all who saw him.

The Rajah was wild with joy. He could scarcely think or talk of anything but his son, and he showered gifts and caresses upon the happy mother. Duo was quite forgotten. He never even went near her apartments, and her heart was filled with jealousy and hatred toward Suo and the little prince Dalim Kumar,—for so the child was named. Nothing would have given her

more joy than to be able to injure them and bring sorrow and misfortune upon them.

Now as Dalim Kumar grew older he became very fond of a flock of pigeons that his father had given him, and he spent a great deal of time playing with them in the courtyard. They were so tame they would come at his call and light upon his head and shoulders. Sometimes they flew in through the windows of Duo's apartments which overlooked the courtyard. Duo scattered peas and grain on the floor for them, and they came and ate them. Then one day she caught two or three of them.

Soon after Dalim Kumar missed his pigeons and began calling them.

Duo leaned from her window. "Your pigeons are up here," she cried. "If you want them you must come up and get them."

Suo had forbidden her son to go to Duo's apartments, but he quite forgot this in his eagerness to regain his pets, and he at once ran up to the Ranee's apartments.

Duo took him by the wrist and drew him into her room. "You shall have your pigeons again," said she, "but first there is something you must tell me."

"What is it?" asked Dalim Kumar.

"I wish to know where your life lies and in what object it is bound up."

Dalim Kumar was very much surprised. "I do not know what you mean," said he. "My life lies within me, in my head and my body and my limbs, as it is with every one."

"No, that is not so," said Duo. "Has your mother never told you that your life is bound up in something outside of yourself?"

"No, she has never told me that, and moreover I do not believe it."

"Nevertheless it is so," said Duo. "If you will find out what this thing is and come and tell me you shall have your pigeons again, and if you do not do this I will wring their necks."

Dalim Kumar was greatly troubled at the thought of harm coming to his pigeons. “No, no! You must not do that,” he cried. “I will go to my mother and find out what she knows, and if there is indeed truth in what you say I will come back at once and tell you the secret. But you must do nothing to my pigeons while I am gone.”

To this Duo agreed. “There is another thing you must promise,” said she. “You must not let your mother know I have asked you anything about your life. If you do I will wring your pigeons’ necks even though you tell me the secret.”

“I will not let her know,” promised the boy, and then he hastened away to his mother’s apartments. When he came to the door he began to walk slowly and with dragging steps. He entered in and threw himself down among some cushions and closed his eyes.

“What ails you, my son?” asked his mother. “Why do you sit there so quietly instead of playing about?”

“Nothing ails me now,” answered the boy, “but there is something that I wish to know, and unless you tell me I am sure I shall be quite ill.”

“What is it that you wish to know, my darling?”

“I wish to know where my life lies, and in what it is bound up,” answered the boy.

When Suo heard this she was very much frightened.

“What do you mean?” she cried. “Who has been talking to you of your life?”

Then Dalim said what was not true, for he feared that harm might come to his pigeons. “No one has been talking to me,” said he, “but I am sure that my life lies somewhere outside of me, and if you will not tell me about it I will neither eat nor drink, and then perhaps I may die.”

At last Suo could withstand him no longer. “My son,” she said, “it is as you have guessed. You are not as other children. Your life is bound up in some object outside of yourself, and if this object should fall into the hands of an

enemy the greatest misfortunes might come upon you, and perhaps even death."

"And what is this object?" asked the boy.

Again Suo hesitated. Then she said:

"The beggar told me that under the roots of that same tree that bore the fruit lies buried a golden necklace, and it is with that necklace that part of your life is bound up."

Now that Dalim Kumar knew the secret he was content, and smiled upon his mother and caressed her, and ate some of the sweetmeats she had prepared for him. Then he ran away to get his pigeons.

Duo was waiting for him impatiently. "Have you found out the secret of your life?" she demanded.

"Yes," answered the Prince. "It is bound up in a golden necklace that lies buried under the roots of a tree over in the jungle,—a tree with a silver trunk and golden leaves. And now give me my pigeons."

Duo was very willing to do this; she had no longer any use for them. She placed the cage in which she had put them in his hands and pushed him impatiently from the room.

As soon as the boy had gone the Ranee sent for a man upon whom she could depend and told him what she wished him to do. She wished him to go into the jungle and search until he found a tree with a silver trunk and golden leaves. He was then to dig down about its roots until he found a golden necklace that lay buried there. This necklace he was to bring to her, and in return for his services she would give him a lac of gold mohurs.

The man willingly agreed to do as she wished and at once set out into the jungle. After searching for some time he at last found the tree and began to dig about its roots.

Now at the very time this happened Dalim Kumar was with his mother playing about in her apartment. But no sooner did the man in the jungle

begin to dig about the tree than the boy gave a cry and laid his hand upon his heart. At the same time he became very pale.

“What is the matter, my son?” cried his mother anxiously. “Are you ill?”

“I do not know what is the matter,” answered the Prince, “but something threatens me.”

His mother put her arm about him, and at the very moment she did so the man who had been digging found the necklace and picked it up, and at that the young Prince sank back senseless in his mother’s arms.

The Ranee was terrified. She sent at once for the Rajah, and physicians were called in, but none of them could arouse the child nor could they tell what ailed him. He lay there among the cushions where they had placed him still breathing, but unconscious of all around him.

And so the boy lay all the while that the man with the necklace hidden in his bosom was on his way back from the jungle. But when he reached the apartments of Duo and gave the necklace into the hands of the evil Ranee, the breath went out from the Prince’s body, and he became as one dead.

The Rajah was in despair. His grief was now as great as his joy had been when the child was born. He had a magnificent temple built in the most beautiful of all his gardens, and in this temple the body of Dalim Kumar was laid. After this was done the Rajah commanded that the gates of the garden should be locked, and that no one but the gardeners should ever enter there on pain of death.

This command was carried out. The garden gates were kept locked, and no one entered but the men who went there in the daytime to prune the trees and water the flowers and keep the place in order. Not even Suo might go into the garden to mourn beside the body of her son.

But though every one believed Dalim Kumar to be dead, such was not really the case. All day, while Duo wore the necklace, he lay without breath or sign of life, but in the evening, when the Ranee took the necklace off, he revived and returned to life. And this happened every night, for every night the Rajah came to visit Duo, and just before he came she always took the

necklace off and hid it. She feared if he saw it he might wonder and question her about it.

The wicked Ranee was now satisfied and happy. She believed she had destroyed the young Prince, and with him the Rajah's love for Suo. For the Rajah now never went to Suo's apartments. He neither saw her nor spoke of her, for she only reminded him of his grief for his son.

Now the first time that Dalim Kumar awoke in the temple he was very much surprised to find himself alone in a strange place, and with no attendants around him. He arose and went out into the garden, and then at once he knew where he was, though the temple was new to him. He went to one gate after another of the garden, intending to go and return to the palace, but he found them all locked. The gardeners had gone away for the night, and before going they had securely fastened the gates, according to the Rajah's orders. The young prince called and called, but no one heard or answered. Feeling hungry, he plucked some fruit and ate it, and after that he amused himself as best he could, playing about among the trees and flowers.

Toward morning he felt sleepy and returned to the temple. He lay down upon the couch, and later on, when Duo again put on the necklace, his breath left him, and he became as one dead.

As it had been that night, so it was also in the many nights that followed. In the evening the Prince revived and came out to play among the flowers, but with the coming of day he returned to the temple and lay down on the couch, and all appearance of life left him. After a time he became used to the strange life he led, and no longer wondered why he was left there alone and why no one came to seek him.

So year after year slipped by, and from a child the Prince became a youth, and in all that time he had seen no one, for the gardeners had always gone away before he returned to life.

Now there lived at this time, in a country far away, a woman who had one only child, a daughter named Surai Bai. This girl was so beautiful that she

was the wonder of all who saw her. Her hair was as black as night, her eyes like stars, her teeth like pearls, and her lips as red as ripe pomegranates.

When this child was born it was foretold to her mother that she would sometime marry a Prince who was both alive and dead. This prophecy frightened the mother so much that as soon as her daughter was of a marriageable age she left her own country and journeyed away into a far land, taking the girl with her. She hoped that if she went far enough she might escape the fate that had been foretold for the child.

Journeying on from one place to another, she came at last to the city where Dalim Kumar's father reigned, and where the garden was, and the temple where the young prince lay.

It was toward evening when the mother and daughter reached the city, and it was necessary for them to find some shelter for the night. Surai Bai was weary, and her mother bade her sit down and rest by the gate of one of the palace gardens while she went farther to seek a lodging. As soon as she had found a place where they could stay she would return for the girl.

So Surai Bai seated herself beside the gate, and there her mother left her. But the mother had not been gone long when some noise farther up the street frightened the girl. She looked about for a place to hide, and it occurred to her that she might go into the garden and wait there. She tried the gate and found it unfastened, for by some chance one of the gardeners had forgotten to lock it that evening when he went away.

Surai Bai pushed the gate open and stepped inside, closing it behind her. When she looked about her, she was amazed at the beauty of the garden. The fruit trees were laden with fruits of every kind. There were winding paths and flowers and fountains, and in the midst of the garden was a temple shining with gold and wondrous colors.

Though daylight had faded the moon had arisen, and the garden was full of light. Surai Bai went over close to the temple, wishing to examine it, but just as she reached the foot of the steps that led up to it a young man appeared above her at the door of the temple. It was Dalim Kumar, who had aroused again to life and was coming forth to breathe the air of the garden.

When he saw Surai Bai he stood amazed, not only at her beauty, which was so great, but because hers was the first face he had ever seen in the years he had spent in the garden. As for Surai Bai, never before had she beheld a youth so handsome, or with such a noble air, and as the two stood looking at each other they became filled with love for one another.

Presently Dalim Kumar came down the steps of the temple and took Surai Bai's hand.

"Who are you, beautiful one?" he asked. "Whence come you, and what is your name?"

"My name is Surai Bai," answered the girl, "and I come from another country far away. My mother left me sitting by the gate while she went to find a lodging for us, but some noise frightened me, and I ran in here to hide."

"That is a strange thing," said the Prince. "In all the years I have been living here, the gates have never been unlocked before."

"But do you live here alone?" asked the girl.

"Yes, all alone. Yours is the first face I have seen for years, and yet I am a Prince, and the son of a great Rajah."

"Then why are you here?"

"I am here because my life was bound up in a golden necklace that lay buried under the roots of a tree in the jungle. I told the secret to a Ranee who was my enemy, though I did not know it at the time. She must in some way have gained possession of the necklace, and now she is using it for my harm. All day I lie there in the temple as though dead; no sound reaches me, nothing arouses me; only at night can I arise and come forth. I, a great prince, am as one both dead and alive."

When Dalim Kumar pronounced these words Surai Bai could not refrain from giving a loud cry. She was overcome with amazement and confusion.

The Prince at once wished to know what had moved her so. “Why do you cry out and change color?” he asked. “And why do you tremble and look at me so strangely?”

At first Surai Bai would not tell him, but he was so urgent in his questioning that finally she was obliged to recount to him the prophecy made at the time of her birth;—that it had been foretold of her that she was to marry a Prince who was both alive and dead.

Dalim Kumar listened to her attentively. “That is a strange thing,” said he. “I do not suppose in all the world there is another prince beside myself who is both alive and dead. If this saying is true, it must be that I am the one you are to marry. If so, I am very happy, for already I love you, and if you will stay here with me we will be married by the ceremony of Grandharva, and I will be a true and loving husband to you.”

To this Surai Bai willingly consented, for already she loved the prince so dearly that she felt she could not live without him. That very night she and the Prince presented each other with garlands of flowers, for that is the ceremony of Grandharva, and so they became man and wife.

After that they lived together in great happiness, and nothing could exceed their love for each other. By day, while Dalim Kumar lay lifeless in the temple, his bride slept also, and at evening they awoke and talked together and walked through the garden.

But after a while a son was born to the young couple, and after that Surai Bai was no longer gay and happy. Her look was sad, and often she stole away from Dalim Kumar to weep in secret.

The Prince was greatly troubled by this. At first he forbore to question her, but one day he followed her and finding her in tears, he said, “Tell me, why are you sad and downcast? Have you wearied of this garden, and are you lonely here; or is it that you no longer love me?”

“Dalim Kumar,” answered the girl, “I love you as dearly as ever, and I am never lonely with you. As long as we had no child I was content to stay here in the garden and see no one. But now that we have a son I wish him to be

seen by your people, and I wish them to know that he is the heir to the kingdom."

At this Dalim Kumar became very thoughtful. "My dear wife," said he, "you are right. Our son should be known as my heir; but every one believes I died long ago when I was a child. If you went out among them with the boy and told them he was my son, they would laugh at you, and either think you were an impostor or that you were crazy. If we could but gain possession of the necklace, then I could go out from the garden with you, and if I showed myself to my people they would be obliged to believe."

"That is what I have thought also," said Surai Bai, "and it has been in my mind to ask you to give me permission to leave the garden for a while. If you will do this I will try to gain entrance to the palace and the apartments of Duo. Then possibly I can find where she keeps the necklace at night, and I may be able to get possession of it."

Dalim Kumar eagerly agreed to this plan, and the very next day, while he lay unconscious in the temple, Surai Bai took the child and managed to steal out through one of the gates without being seen by any of the gardeners.

She at once sought out a shop in the city and bought for herself the dress of a hairdresser; then, leading the child by the hand she made her way to the palace. She told the attendants there that she was very skillful in dressing the hair, and if they would take her to the Ranees she was sure she could please them.

After some hesitation the attendants agreed to do this, and led the way first to the apartments of Suo. When Surai Bai entered the room and saw her husband's mother sitting there thin and pale and grief-stricken, her heart yearned over her. But Suo would not so much as look at the pretended hairdresser. "Why do you bring her here?" she asked. "I have no wish to look beautiful. My son is dead and my husband no longer loves me nor comes to me. Take her away and leave me alone with my sorrow."

The attendants motioned to Surai Bai to come away, and they led her across the palace to the apartments of Duo.

Here all was bright and joyous. The beautiful Duo lay among the cushions, smiling to herself and playing with the necklace that hung about her neck. When she heard that the young woman they had brought to her was a skilled hairdresser, she sat up and beckoned Surai Bai to approach.

“Come!” said she. “Let us see how well you can dress my hair. The Rajah will be here before long, and I must be beautiful for him.”

Surai Bai at once came behind Duo and began to arrange her hair. The child meanwhile kept close by her side. When Surai Bai had almost finished she managed to loosen the clasp of the necklace so that it slipped from Duo’s neck and fell upon the floor.

This was as the pretended hairdresser had planned, and she had explained to her son beforehand that when the necklace fell he must pick it up and hold it tight, and yield it to no one. So now, no sooner did the necklace slip to the floor, than the child picked it up and twisted it tight around his fingers.

Duo was frightened. “Give me my necklace,” cried she, and reaching over she tried to take it from the boy, but at this he began to scream so loudly that it seemed as though the whole palace must be aroused by his cries.

Duo drew back alarmed and bade the child be quiet. Then she turned to the pretended hairdresser. “Make him give me the necklace again,” she demanded.

Surai Bai pretended to hesitate. “If I try to take it from him now,” she said, “he might break it. Have patience, and let him keep it for a while; he will soon tire of it. Then I can take it from him and bring it to you.”

To this Duo was obliged to agree. It was growing late and she feared at any moment now the Rajah might come in and that he might notice the necklace in the child’s hands and ask questions about it.

“Very well,” she said. “Let him keep it for the present, but bring it back to me the first thing in the morning. If you neglect to do this you shall be severely punished,—you and the child also.”

The pretended hairdresser made a deep obeisance, and then departed, carrying the child who still held the necklace tightly clutched in his hands.

As soon as Surai Bai was outside of the palace she hastened away to the garden and found Dalim Kumar awaiting her at the gate.

“I know you have the necklace,” he cried to her, “for I aroused while it was still day, and with such a feeling of life and joy as I have never felt before.”

“Yes, it is here,” said Surai Bai, and she took the necklace from the child and held it out to him.

Dalim Kumar gave a cry of joy. His hands trembled with eagerness as he grasped the necklace. “Oh, my dear wife,” he cried, “you have saved me. I have now again become as other men and can claim what is my own. Come! Let us return to the palace and to my father and mother.”

So, with the child on his arm, and leading Surai Bai by the hand, the Prince hastened back to the palace. But when he entered the gates no one knew him, for when they had last seen him he had been only a boy.
They wondered to see a stranger enter in like a master, but his air was so noble, and his appearance so handsome that no one dared to stop him.

Dalim Kumar went at once to his mother’s apartments, and though no one else had known him, she recognized him at once, even though he had become a man. She knew not what miracle had brought him back, but she fell upon his neck and kissed him, and wept aloud, so that all in the palace heard the sound of her weeping.

The Rajah was sent for in haste, and when he came Dalim Kumar quickly made himself known to his father. The Rajah’s joy was no less than the Ranee’s over the return of his son.

Soon the news spread through all the palace, and there was great rejoicing. But Duo was filled with fear. She knew not what punishment would fall upon her for her evil doings, but she guessed the wrath of the Rajah would be great. So she fled away secretly and in haste, and for a long time she wandered about from place to place, miserable and afraid, and at last died in poverty as she deserved.

But Dalim Kumar and his young wife lived in happiness forever after, and when the old Rajah died Dalim Kumar became Rajah in his stead, and his own son ruled after him as Surai Bai and he had desired.

DAME PRIDGETT AND THE FAIRIES

Dame Pridgett was a fat, comfortable, good-natured old body, and her business in life was to go about nursing sick folk and making them well again.

One day she was sitting by the window, rocking herself and resting after a hard week of nursing. She looked from the window, and there she saw a queer-looking little man come riding along the road on a great fiery, prancing black horse. He rode up to her door and knocked without getting off his horse, and when Dame Pridgett opened the door he looked down at her with such queer pale eyes he almost frightened her.

"Are you Dame Pridgett?" he asked.

"I am," answered the dame.

"And do you go about nursing sick people?"

"Yes, that is my business."

"Then you are the one I want. My wife is ill, and I am seeking some one to nurse her."

"Where do you live?" asked the dame, for the man was a stranger to her, and she knew he was not from thereabouts.

"Oh, I come from over beyond the hills, but I have no time to talk. Give me your hand and mount up behind me."

Dame Pridgett gave him her hand, not because she wanted to, but because, somehow, when he bade her do so she could not refuse. He gave her hand a little pull, and she flew up through the air as light as a bird, and there she was sitting on the horse behind him. The stranger whistled, and away went the great black horse, fast, fast as the wind;—so fast that the old Dame had much ado not to be blown off, but she shut her eyes and held tight to the stranger.

They rode along for what seemed a long distance, and then they stopped before a poor, mean-looking house. Dame Pridgett stared about her, and she did not know where they were. She knew she had never seen the place before. In front of the house were some rocks with weeds growing among them, and a pool of muddy water, and a few half-dead trees. It was a dreary place. Two ragged children were playing beside the door with a handful of pebbles.

The little man lighted down and helped the old dame slip from the horse; then he led the way into the house. They passed through a mean hallway and into a room hung round with cobwebs. The room was poorly furnished with a wooden bed, a table and a few chairs. In the bed lay a little, round-faced woman with a snub nose and a coarse, freckled skin, and in the crook of her arm was a baby so small and weak-looking the nurse knew it could not be more than a few hours old.

“This is my wife,” said the stranger. “It will be your duty to wait on her and to wash and dress the child.”

The baby was so queer looking that Dame Pridgett did not much care to handle it, but still she had come there as a nurse, and she would do what was required of her.

The little man showed her where the kitchen was, and she heated some water and then went back to the bedroom and took up the baby to wash it. But so strange it all seemed, and she felt so shaken up by her ride that she was awkward in handling the child, and as she bent her head over it, it lifted its hand and gave her such a box on the ear that her head rang with it.

The old dame cried out and almost let the babe fall, she was so thunderstruck.

“What is the matter?” asked the woman from the bed. Then she slipped her hand under her pillow and drew out a box of salve. “Here! Rub the child’s eyes with a bit of this,” she said, “but be sure you do not get any of it on your own eyes, or it will be a bad thing for you,—scarce could be a worse.”

The nurse took a bit of the salve on her forefinger and rubbed the baby's eyes with it, and then the mother bade her go and wash off any particle of salve that might be left on her finger.

All day Dame Pridgett waited on the mother and child, and when night came she was shown into a room next to theirs where she was to sleep.

The following day the dame was again kept busy with the mother and child. She washed the baby and rubbed the salve on its eyelids as before, and again the mother warned her not to let the least particle of salve touch her own eyes, or it would be the worse for her.

Food was set out for the nurse in a small room beyond her own. She did not know whence it came, nor who prepared it, but she was hungry and ate heartily of it, though it had a strange taste she did not like. The two ragged children came in and ate with her. They did not speak, but stared at her from under their matted hair. The little man she did not see again for some time.

So day followed day, and it was always the same thing over and over for Dame Pridgett, and every day after she had washed the child she rubbed salve on its eyelids. Soon its eyes, that had at first been dull, grew so bright and strong they sparkled like jewels. Dame Pridgett thought it must be a very fine salve. She would have liked to try some of it on her own eyes, for her sight was somewhat dim, but the mother watched her so closely that she never had a chance to use it.

Now, every day, after Dame Pridgett had washed the baby, she left the basin on a chair beside her while she rubbed the salve on the child's eyes. One day she managed to upset the basin with her elbow as though by accident, though really by design. She gave a cry and bent over to pick up the basin, and as she did so, unseen by her mistress, she rubbed her right eye with the finger that still had some salve left on it.

When Dame Pridgett straightened up and looked about her she could hardly keep from crying out again at what she saw. The room and everything in it looked different. Instead of being poor and mean, it was like a chamber in a castle. Where there had been cobwebs were now shimmering silken hangings. The bed and all the furniture was of gold, magnificently carved.

The sheets and pillow cases were of silk, and instead of a coarse, snub-nosed little woman, there among the pillows lay the most exquisite little lady the old dame had ever set eyes on; her skin was as fine as a rose leaf, her hair like spun gold, her lips like coral, and her eyes as bright as stars. The babe, also, from being a very ordinary looking child, had become the most exquisite little elfin creature that ever was seen.

Dame Pridgett managed somehow to keep quiet and hide her amazement, but now she knew very well that it was to fairyland she had come, and that these were fairy folk.

She made some excuse to go to the window and look out. The change outside was no less wonderful than that within. The muddy pool she now saw was a shining lake; the rocks were grottoes; the trees were covered with leaves and shining fruit, and the weeds were beds of flowers of wondrous colors, such as she had never seen before. As for the ragged children, she saw them now as fairy children clothed in the finest of laces and playing, not with pebbles, but with precious jewels so brilliant that they fairly dazzled the eyes.

Dame Pridgett managed to keep her mouth shut and acted in such a way that the fairies never suspected she had used the magic ointment, and could now see them as they were. But it was only with the right eye, the one she had touched with the salve, that she could see thus. When she closed that eye and looked with the other, everything was just as it had been before, and seemed so mean and squalid it was difficult to believe it could appear otherwise.

So time went on until the fairy lady was well again and had no need of a nurse to care for her. Then one day the little man came again on his black steed and called the old dame out to him.

“You have served us well,” said he, “and here is your reward,” and he placed a purse of gold pieces in her hand. Then he caught hold of her and lifted her up behind him on to the horse, and away they went, swifter than the wind. Dame Pridgett had to shut her eyes to keep from growing dizzy and falling off. So it was that when she reached home she knew no more of the way she had come than she knew of the way she had gone.

But this was not the last Dame Pridgett saw of the fairy folk. The little man on the black steed came to her house no more, but there were other little people about in the world who were now visible to her salve-touched eye. Sometimes as she came through the wood she would see them busy among the roots of the trees, setting their houses in order, or bartering and trading in their fairy markets; or on moonlight nights she would look out and see them at play among the flowers in her garden; or she would pass them dancing in fairy rings in the pastures or meadow lands, but she never told a soul of what she saw, nor tried to speak to the wee folk, and they were so busy about their own affairs that they paid no attention to her and never guessed she could see them.

And then at last came a day (and a sad day it was for Dame Pridgett) when she again met the little man who had come for her on the great black horse.

She had gone to market to buy the stuff for a new apron and was walking along, thinking of nothing but her purchase, when suddenly she saw the little man slipping about among the market people, never touching them and unseen by any. He was peeping into the butter firkins, smelling and tasting, and wherever he found some very good butter he helped himself to a bit of it and put it in a basket he carried on his arm.

Dame Pridgett pressed up close to him and looked into his basket, and there in it was a dish almost full of butter. When the good dame saw that, she was so indignant that she quite lost all prudence.

“Shame on you,” she cried to the little man. “Are you not ashamed to be stealing butter from good folk who are less able to buy than yourself.”

The little man stopped and looked at her. “So you can see me, can you?” he said.

“Yes, to be sure I can,” said the old dame boldly.

“And how does that happen?” asked the little man smoothly, and without any show of anger.

“Oh, when I was nursing your good lady, I managed to rub a bit of her salve on one of my eyes, and that is how I can see you.”

“And which eye did you rub with the salve?”

“My right eye.”

“And it is only with your right eye you see me?”

“Only with my right eye.”

When the little man heard that, quick as a flash he pursed up his lips and blew into her right eye, and he blew so hard he blew the sight right out of it. The old dame blinked and winked and rubbed her eye with her fingers. The little man had vanished from before her. She could see everything else, but what she saw was with her left eye only, and she could see no fairies with it for it had not been touched with salve.

So that was the end of it for Dame Pridgett, as far as the wee folk were concerned, for she never got back the sight of her right eye; only she still had the purse of gold pieces left, and that was enough to comfort the old dame for a great deal.