



OLD  
HUNGARIAN  
FAIRY TALES

BARONESS  
ORCZY



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AND BARONESS ORCZY

# Old Hungarian Fairy Tales



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by

Baroness Orczy

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## **Uletka and the White Lizard**

### *"Uletka a kilencz törptéknél."*

IN a certain country there dwelt a prince whose name was Elkàbo. He had a dear little daughter called Uletka, who was a most sweet child. She and her father lived quite alone in an old castle with four towers, that stood in a beautiful glade in the centre of a great forest.

Uletka was a most dainty and lovely little maid, her wings — she had wings, being related to a fairy — had grown quite strong, and glistened in the sunshine, reflecting all the colours of the rainbow. So sweet and graceful was little Uletka, that perhaps you would imagine she had no faults. Unfortunately she had one, which a wicked and revengeful fairy, who was offended with Nastia, her mother, had endowed her with, and this was the dreadful fault of Curiosity.

This wicked fairy, whose name was Mutà, had done even worse than this. She it was who had lured poor Nastia to destruction. In the forest was a great lake, overshadowed by trees, and covered over with water-lilies and lotus, while round its edge grew tall rushes. One day, when Nastia was walking by the shore of this lake, Mutà hid herself in the water, and calling out for help, pretended she was in danger of drowning. Nastia crept out on the great leaves of the water-lilies and grasped Mutà's hands, whereupon the spiteful fairy dragged her down to the bottom. Poor Nastia could not swim, besides which, Mutà held both her hands. She tried to struggle and to call for help, but it was useless, and thus she drowned. Prince Elkàbo, her husband, and all the neighbours, searched for her everywhere, and when they reached the edge of the lake they saw her body floating far off among the lotus flowers. As they watched she slowly changed into a most beautiful snow-white water-lily.

Elkàbo wept bitterly, and even the birds ceased to sing. A kingfisher, who was sitting on a flag-leaf, cried out to him that it was the work of the wicked fairy, Mutà. Then Elkàbo mounted his horse and quickly sought audience of the Queen of the Fairies, who lived at

the furthest end of the country in a palace of crystal that had been erected among the mountains. He told her and all her courtiers, wise men and magicians, what misfortune had befallen him. Mutà's evil deed excited general indignation throughout the court, and the Queen ordered that the fairy should be transformed into a white lizard, which her head magician immediately proceeded to do. Then Her Majesty decreed that if Elkàbo could catch the lizard, he might be allowed to retain it captive until his little daughter, Uletka, who was then a baby, should release it with her own hands. In the event of this happening not even the Fairy Queen herself could prevent Mutà from resuming her natural form, together with her evil powers.

So Elkàbo returned home and searched day and night, travelling far and wide, until, at last, far away in Japan, he found the white lizard, hidden away under a cluster of orchids. He captured it and fastened it in a little cage made of silver wire, and every day he fed it himself, and would let no one else come near it. But as time went on Elkàbo grew afraid that Uletka might open the cage, as she was such a very inquisitive little girl. So he built a small tower near the edge of the lake, and there hung the cage, and every day he went down to the tower and fed the lizard with his own hands. The key of the tower he always wore suspended from his neck by a little gold chain, and no one but himself knew the secret of the tower by the lake.

Now Uletka was excessively curious, and often she would wander round the tower and turn the handle of the door, and fret because she always found it locked. She dared not ask her father any more about it, for she had done so once, and then she thought that she never had seen her dear, kind father so angry before.

At last, one day, Elkàbo was obliged to go on a journey, and as Uletka was getting quite a big girl, he felt he could safely entrust her with the key of the tower. He was going to be away two or three days, and told her that in the meanwhile she must go up every day to the tower and take with her a small bowl of bread. Uletka promised to obey her father implicitly, and really meant to keep her promise.

Nevertheless, no sooner had Elkàbo departed than Uletka, unable to check her curiosity, started off to see the wonderful lizard in the tower by the lake. She opened the door with a trembling hand, and there, in a cage made entirely of silver wire, was the loveliest lizard she had ever seen. It ran up and down the cage and played with a straw that Uletka held out. She was quite enchanted, and remained a long time watching it play.

"What a lovely fairy you are," the lizard said suddenly.

Uletka was not at all astonished at hearing the lizard talk. It was so very pretty, that she at once knew it must be a fairy in disguise.

"Oh! I am not a fairy," said Uletka, modestly. "I am only a little girl, and am living with my father, Prince Elkàbo, at the palace yonder."

"How funny," said the lizard, "I made sure you were a fairy, you had such pretty wings; I am a fairy you know, my name is Mutà. What is yours?"

"My name is Uletka."

"What a pretty name," said the wily lizard. "I am sure I could easily make you into a fairy if I only had my magic cloak here. I would throw it over your shoulders, and you would become one immediately, and have the power to appear or disappear at will, turn into a tiny mouse, or a monstrous giant, and, in fact, go anywhere, and see everything just as you chose."

"Oh!" said Uletka, excitedly, "tell me where our magic cloak is, I will fetch it for you. I do so long to be a fairy. Do you really think I could become one?"

"There is no doubt about it," said the lizard; "my cloak would soon turn a pretty little girl like you into a fairy. Dear me, dear me, if I only could get out, I know exactly where to find it, together with the necessary wand. Hobo, the king of the gnomes, once hid it in a rose-bush, out of spite, and changed me into a lizard, and locked me up in a cage, so that I should not be able to get at it. But I know where it is, and if you will help me to get out you shall become a great and powerful fairy."



In one moment Uletka quite forgot her promise to her father, and only thought of the delights of becoming a real fairy, and being able to go where she liked, and see and know everything. She opened the cage, and the lizard jumped out. In an instant it changed into a fairy, with raven hair, and great flashing eyes, dressed in a garment of black gauze, all covered over with golden stars. She turned on Uletka, tore her pretty clothes, and broke her dainty wings. Laughing at her for her vanity and curiosity in thinking she could ever become a fairy, she drove her along into the forest, right to the other side of the lake, all among the dark trees, where she had never been before; then the wicked fairy vanished, and left her lying on the ground, weeping bitterly.

After poor little Uletka had been there some time she thought she heard her name softly whispered by the wind; then it sounded more distinctly, breathed in a sweet, sad voice, like a flower sighing. Uletka stalked gently towards the sound, and it grew louder and louder, until it seemed as if the trees murmured her name, one to another, and as she reached again the enchanted lake the voice rose from the waters, calling "Uletka! Uletka!"

As she stood listening, spellbound, the petals of a magnificent water-lily unfolded, and disclosed a fairy form of exquisite beauty, the spirit of her mother — Nastia. She beckoned to Uletka to approach, which the little girl did, stepping on the great flat leaves of the lilies. Nastia then told her to go into the forest, past the silver poplars and the enchanted palm-tree, till she found a great beech standing all alone. There she would find friends, and be safe from the power of the cruel Mutà, who otherwise would be certain to pursue her.

Uletka then knelt on the lily-leaves, and kissed her mother among the silver petals, then slowly saw them fold, hiding her mother from her view.

Away she sped, quickly past the poplars and the enchanted palm tree, till she was so tired and her feet so sore that she could hardly walk, but at last she came up to the tall solitary beech, standing

towering above all the other trees of the forest. She went round it, and there in the very centre of the trunk, she discovered a little door. She knocked, but no one came; only the squirrels chattered together and called, "Who is that knocking at the Gnomes' door? whilst a blackbird echoing, said, "Yes; who can that be knocking at the Gnomes' door?"

At last, Uletka, tired of knocking, turned the little handle and went in. There, right in the very heart of the tree was a room with nine little chairs, and a table carved out of the wood of the tree, and on the table were dishes and spoons of wood, and a great feast of nuts, berries and other kinds of fruit, and large bowls full of delicious honey.

So, as Uletka was very hungry, she sat down and ate some honey and nuts, after which, feeling much better, she lay down on the floor and fell asleep....

When she awoke she was surrounded by a number of little men, with funny faces all laughing and looking at her; some of them were pulling her hair and saying, "Yes, yes, we know you; you are Uletka, you have let the wicked fairy, Mutà, escape. If she finds you she will kill you, but you are quite safe with us, therefore with us you must stay."

And the birds outside sang in chorus, "Yes, yes; it is little Uletka, Prince Elkàbo's child!" and then twittered all the more to show their gratification at her safety.

Uletka stayed with the Gnomes in the tree. Mutà could not hurt her there, for it belonged to Hobo, the King of the Gnomes, who reigned supreme in the forest. Every day the little Gnomes gathered nuts and acorns for their dinner. The shells of these they cut into cups and goblets. Sometimes the grass-elves would come and dine with them, and after dinner they all danced round the tree in the moonlight, while the white owl on the tree-top called "te-whit, te-whoo! te-whit, te-whoo!"

The little Gnomes manufactured a chair for Uletka, and carved a plate for her out of the shell of a hazelnut. They made her a spoon of

white fir-wood, and wove garments for her out of cobwebs. She lived in the tree with the good little fellows, and made their garments from the fibres of dead leaves, which looked like the finest lace, using the thorn of a wild rose for a needle. Every day she laid the table for their dinner, and did all the house-work. She was kept busy all the day, though sometimes she would lie in the grass and talk to the violets who smiled and nodded their dainty heads. She was good friends with every one in the forest; even the tall fox-glove nodded to her as she ran past him. The squirrel who lived at the top of the tree would crack nuts for her. A green and gold beetle was her particular friend. He would carry her on his back as he flew about the wood. But the blackbird loved her most of all, and sat and sang to her all day.

The good little Gnomes were continually trying to invent new games and pastimes in order to distract her thoughts. They composed new music, which they played on their funny little instruments made of wood, with fibres for strings, and danced new dances for her all day long. They also built her a most beautiful little summer house, thatched with rose leaves, where she could rest after having seen to the wants of her kind protectors. But poor little Uletka was not happy, for she could not help thinking of her poor mother and father, who would no doubt be so anxious and lonely without her, and she bitterly repented her curiosity which had placed her in this fearful position. She also thought of the wicked old fairy Mutà, who had been so cruel to her and caused her all this pain; and then she would cry bitterly, and wonder whether she would ever see her beautiful home with the four towers.

As her kind protectors did everything they could to make her feel contented, she did not let them see that she was pining for her home, as she knew that if they thought she was not happy, they would be quite miserable.

One day King Hobo called together a lot of his subjects and told them that early in the morning he intended starting on a grand beechnut hunting expedition in a distant part of the wood, where he

had never been before, and commanded them to get ready so as to make an early start. Uletka was up betimes to see her little friends start, and promised to have a nice supper ready for them on their return.

King Hobo led his little army deep into the forest, and soon all were busy looking for the nuts. Suddenly one of them called out: — "Oh, I have found such a beautiful stone, but it is so large I cannot move it, come and help me!" Some friends ran up to help him and after much digging, puffing and blowing they managed to dig it up. When Hobo saw it he exclaimed, "Why, that is a Diamond, and the largest I have ever seen. We will carry it home and give it to Uletka." — But the diamond was so heavy that it took two of the strongest gnomes to carry it.

As it was the largest diamond ever discovered they held a great feast in honour of the event. The tables, covered with the good things prepared by Uletka, were spread all round the pine trees, and invitations were at once sent out to all their friends.

Among the guests who came were the frogs from the pond by the willows, who were accompanied by their fat cousins, old Mr. and Mrs. Toad, a lot of grass-elves and little wood goblins; then there also came the large family of mice and the squirrels, all the birds and beetles, to say nothing of all the moths, the butterflies, the bees and the ants.

After every one had satisfied their hunger (and very little was left on the tables) a great concert was held, at which all the birds sang, but Uletka's friend, the black-bird, sang louder than any of the others to try and cheer her up, for he saw she did not feel quite happy. Then King Hobo asked Uletka to dance with him, the Gnomes keeping time by clapping their wooden cymbals. And so they kept up the gaiety until the bats and the white owl came out, when every one hurried off home, especially the mouse family, who were afraid that the owl might take a liking to one of them for supper. So soon everything was quiet in the forest and no one could guess that just

before there had been such goings on under the pine trees.

Yet, in spite of all this gaiety, Uletka's sadness daily increased. She seemed to long more intently than ever for her home. At last her friend the blackbird, could not help noticing this, and determined, if possible, to help the little girl to whom he was so attached; so, one day, he flew to the palace of the Fairy Queen, far away beyond the great mountains.

And as her Majesty was sitting at supper with all her court the blackbird arrived, and humbly begged she would graciously hear his request. Then he told her that he had a very dear little friend, Uletka, the daughter of Prince Elkàbo. She was so sweet, so loving, and so winning that all the birds and beasts in the forest were in love with her, and entirely devoted themselves to making her happy. But Uletka was a dear affectionate little girl, and although she was made so much of, as the guest of Hobo, King of the Gnomes, and was worshipped there almost like a queen, yet she could not manage to be happy, for she loved her father dearly, and knew he was longing for her company again. He (the blackbird) could not bear to see his little friend pining away like this, and had come to beg Her Majesty, the Queen of the Fairies, to help him.

Prince Repto, the Queen's son, heard the blackbird's story with wonder and delight, he thought he never heard anything so beautifully romantic. Immediately he begged his royal mother to allow him to go off with the blackbird, and bring little Uletka home with him, and make her his wife. The queen, who was very kind-hearted, and quite genuinely interested in Uletka, and in frustrating the wicked Mutà's plans, readily gave her consent, and Prince Repto, accompanied by the blackbird, started off for the kingdom of Hobo and his gnomes.

When he arrived it was late at night, the moon was shining brightly, and there, at the foot of the pine-tree he suddenly caught sight of Uletka. She was sitting on a large toadstool, while all the little gnomes were dancing round her, to the tune of harps played by the grass-elves, and the tinkling of the blue bells. Prince Repto had never

seen such a beautiful princess before, and at once fell in love with her. Just at that moment Uletka looked up and saw the Prince, she gave a little cry in which fear and admiration were mingled at seeing such a handsome stranger. "Do not be alarmed, Princess," said Prince Repto, advancing and doffing his cap, "I have come to your aid," and then seating himself on a little toadstool at her feet he told her who he was, and how if she would consent he would marry her, when she would be one of the highest in Fairyland, and live with him in a palace of gold, where the wicked Mutà would be powerless to harm her.

This was rather premature for the first meeting, and Uletka was a little startled; but the Prince looked so very handsome, and was dressed so charmingly, the prospect also was so dazzling, that she did not hesitate long, more especially as it was so natural for her to love him, when, in addition to all these good qualities, he had taken so much trouble to win her. She therefore soon consented, much to the delight of the Prince and all the gnomes.

Prince Repto gave Hobo a crown of gold, and made him king of all the woods in the world, to reward him for his kindness to Uletka; all the gnomes clapped their hands, which sounded like twigs crackling, and the elves played a tune of joy, and sang a love-song. There never was such rejoicing in the forest. And although it was long after their usual bedtime, all the birds stayed up and sang the most beautiful songs, so glad were they that dear little Uletka would at last be free from trouble; the nightingale and lark had a special duet together, which was the most beautiful music that is possible. But the sweetest song of all and the one that Uletka enjoyed the most, was the one that was sung by her little friend the blackbird, who had been the happy means of bringing her this good fortune. And in after years the blackbird was always a welcome guest in Uletka's home.

The next morning when the sun was shining brightly, the prince brought a beautiful coach made of a sea-shell; it was drawn by six white doves; he placed Uletka in it, then sat beside her, and all the

gnomes gave a loud cheer as the coach rose high in the air, bearing the happy pair to the fairy kingdom beyond the trees. On the way they stopped, so that Uletka might kiss her dear father, who still dwelt in the castle with the four towers. They took him with them to Fairyland, where there were more festivities and rejoicings in honour of the wedding, and Repto and Uletka have lived happily together ever since. Hobo and the gnomes, and the frogs, and the squirrels, and the blackbird often go to see them, but nothing more has been heard of the wicked fairy Mutà.

## **The Suitors of the Princess Fire-Fly**

FAR, very far away, and long, very long ago, when all the world was inhabited by the fairies, there lived a great and mighty king called Fire-fly. Now do not run away with the idea that this Fire-fly was in any way like the little glowing insects that are read about in Natural History books. True, he had wings like those flies nowadays, and also a body something like theirs, but he was a fairy fly, and wore a most beautiful crown on his head, which at night shone as brilliantly as the stars. Then this Fire-fly had a most gorgeous palace, which lay right in the middle of a wide river. This palace consisted of one magnificent lotus flower, and a more exquisite dwelling-place it would be impossible to see. His dearest and most precious treasure was his daughter, a most lovely princess. The king was so proud and fond of her that he would not allow any one even to look at her, but kept her hidden inside the pink petals of his beautiful lotus palace, and there the princess grew up more and more lovely every day, till her fame spread far and wide, and all the flies and moths and beetles of the neighbouring kingdoms got out their finest wings in order to go to woo and win this incomparable Fire-fly miss.

But the princess was very proud and very vain of her own beauty, and she said to her mother one day: "It is quite useless for either Dragon-fly or Stag-beetle, or, in fact, any of them to try and woo me, for I will not marry any one unless he perform some perilous task which I will impose upon him. Then if he fails, and dies in the attempt, I shall be thankful to have escaped being married to so foolish and careless a being; or if he should not dare to attempt the task, it will be a proof that he values his life higher than his love, and is therefore not worth having."

As this beautiful princess was very much spoilt at home, her mother and father, King and Queen Fire-fly, both acceded to her whim, and the king issued a proclamation, by which he declared that no suitor should have the hand of his lovely daughter unless he performed the task she imposed upon him.



Forthwith did Prince Gold-beetle start from his kingdom of Gladiola over the grass, and placed his heart and hand at Princess Fire-fly's feet. She listened to all he had to say, and smiled very sweetly. "Yes," she said, "all that you say is very pretty indeed, and I am sure your proposal is exceedingly flattering; but you know the condition, without which I cannot possibly marry you."

"Name the condition, lovely princess," said the Gold-beetle; "no task, be it ever so hard, would be too much to undertake for such a prize."

"You must bring me, from anywhere you like," said the beautiful Fire-fly, "one spark of fire!"

"Is that all you wish for?" said the Gold-beetle. "I fly, and before another night has descended and passed by I will lay this spark at your feet." And away he flew, quite confident that he would be able to obtain so simple a thing as a mere little spark of fire, which the moment night came could be found in every house in the neighbourhood. You will hear presently how he fared in his quest.

In the meantime the beautiful Fire-fly had another suitor. Lord Cockchafer appeared upon the scene, and, obtaining entrance into the Lotus Palace, he boldly asked for the honour of becoming the Princess's husband, but she turned away quite disdainfully from him:

"I don't think I should ever care to marry you at all," she said; "but I am so very, very anxious to possess a spark of fire, and I really would like to know if you would be brave enough to undertake a perilous task in order to please me."

"I will travel night and day," said Lord Cockchafer, "till I bring you what you wish."

Away he went, tripping merrily, and blissfully unconscious of the fact that he was not the only one who was bent on this curious errand.

Presently Fire-fly had another suitor — a beautiful suitor he was too, with his shimmering suit of green and gold, my Lord Dragon-fly. He thought to dazzle her by his beauty and make her forget her foolish fancy about this spark of fire. But the princess would not listen

even to him; she only smiled, and said —

"I will only marry him who brings me this spark of fire."

And away he had to go. And thus, day after day, there came a regular crowd of suitors round the beautiful princess; but day after day she sent them off in quest of a spark of fire.

Prince Gold-beetle waited till night set in, then flew off gaily to the nearest city. He came up near a lovely little house, standing in a large garden; he looked in at the window, and there he saw a large table laid out with tea and cakes, sweets and fruit, and twelve little girls and boys sitting round, having their tea; on the table a large lamp was burning very brightly.

"Why, this is just what I want," said Prince Gold—beetle; and as the window was open he flew in. The lamp burnt beautifully, it quite fascinated him; he flew quite close, in order to get a better view of the bright flame.

"Oh, what a lovely beetle," he heard one of the little children say, "Mother, do look! What beautiful wings it has!"

"Oh, dear, it is flying so near the lamp I am sure it will burn its wings," said another.

The Gold-beetle took no notice of what they said, but drew nearer and nearer to the coveted prize; there was a spark of lovely fire, how pleased the beautiful princess would be when he brought it home for her. At last he made a bold dash to catch the flame, when lo! alas! he felt his poor wings all singed and burnt; he could not fly any more, but fell fainting on the tablecloth. He heard the little children say to each other —

"Stupid beetle to go flying into the lamp; now it has burnt its lovely wings."

Then somebody else said, "Throw away the nasty thing, or put it out of its misery."

That was the end of poor Prince Gold-beetle's life.

Another suitor of Fire-fly, a Hawk-moth, while fluttering about one evening, wandered into a room where, at first, he could see nothing, it

seemed pitch dark; presently he noticed a large luminous object, which turned out to be long blue flames, apparently emerging from a large bowl, filled with plums; all round he saw eager little laughing faces, and every now and then little fingers would boldly make a dash into the bowl and bring out a flaring sugar plum. Hawk-moth watched them for a time, very much interested; you see, they don't play snap dragon in the Lotus kingdom. Then he suddenly thought this would be a grand opportunity to steal a lovely spark of blue fire, and with it claim the hand of the proud princess. He fluttered round the bowl for some time, but no one paid any attention to him, they were all so merry pulling out the plums and eating them. It seemed so easy that Hawkmoth determined to try his luck, and boldly flew into the flames. Alas! poor fellow, he was burnt to a cinder, you could hardly tell him from a raisin.

One after another the suitors tried, and one after another they failed. There was a Horn-bug who actually, one night, saw a green light in a cat's eye; he tried to snatch that, but you may well imagine how pussy, very much annoyed, made a short meal of my lord Horn-bug.

A venturesome Carrion-beetle having drifted towards the sea-shore, late one night, saw some fish lying there apparently all glowing with fire. He picked off one of the glistening scales, and went away proud and happy, quite convinced that the necessary prize — the much-sought-for spark of fire — was at last in his grasp. He was hurrying to get to Lotus land as fast as his legs could carry him, when he met a Stag-beetle, who apparently was also carrying a luminous object in front of him. The fact of the matter was, that Mr. Stag-beetle had also fallen madly in love with the beautiful but capricious princess, and had determined to succeed in bringing her a spark of fire, even if it should cost him his wings!

After several unsuccessful attempts he had found at the foot of a large tree, a funny little bit of old wood, which gave out a beautiful little bright blue light. He approached very carefully (as he had been

severely burnt several times), and you may be sure he was delighted when he found that it did not give out any heat, so that he was able to carry it off without burning himself. He was hurrying off with his prize to claim the Princess, when he met Mr. Carrion-beetle bent on a similar errand.

They both stopped short, and glared at each other. No explanation was necessary. Each knew where the other one was hurrying to, and each was determined to get there first. They could not both marry Princess Fire-fly, that was very evident, so, after talking matters over for a while, they determined to fight it out till one of them remained dead on the battle-field. It was pitch dark, but the fish-scale and the bit of wood were quite enough light to kill one another by, so they each put down their prize, and began boxing in true beetle-like fashion.

As they both were equally tall, and equally strong, the fight lasted a considerable time. When lo! behold! as the first ray of dawn illumined the eastern sky, and the two combatants turned for a rest, previous to renewing hostilities, there, on the ground, instead of the two tiny sparks of blue flame, lay only a nasty fish's scale and an ugly bit of wood. King Phosphorus had vanished with the dawn. Further fighting was useless. Carrion-beetle and Stagbeetle each went his own way to seek fortune elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the Princess, in her beautiful palace, waited in vain for the return of one of her many suitors. When she heard of the sad fate of Prince Gold-beetle, she wept bitterly, for though she was so proud and vain, she was not wholly devoid of feeling, and of the many who had come wooing her she had preferred Prince Gold-beetle. When the Queen saw her tears, she tried to make her forego her purpose; but all her persuasions were of no avail, for the Princess was very obstinate, and would not own to being in the wrong.

Suitor after suitor came, and they were one and all sent off on the same hopeless errand. One day a most beautiful "Red Admiral" was on the point of committing suicide on the thorn of a rosebush, being

so fearfully despondent on account of his non-success, when he caught sight of a luminous object underneath the very branch upon which he meant to end his life. His joy was great; what was it? Would it hurt him? He thought not, it looked so beautiful as it lay and sparkled in the sun. All round it was a hoop of gold. He went closer; no, it did not burn. Then came the question, how was he to convey it to the Princess? It was far too heavy for him to carry. Whilst he was considering how he could possibly convey it, he heard footsteps, and in another second a little child's voice exclaim, "Why, look! here is your diamond ring you lost;... how lucky it is I have found it," and the child picked it up and gave it to a grown-up lady who was a little way off. This was the last straw for the beautiful Red Admiral, and in another minute he had committed suicide.

And thus it was with one and all — some were frightened, and never attempted the task, others were badly singed, some died, none succeeded, and even to this day, in far-off lands, where the lotus grows, we always say when we see a crowd of insects fluttering round a flame: "Ah! Princess Fire-fly has many suitors to-night!"

# The Twin Hunchbacks

## *A Rét törpe*

ONCE upon a time, long, very long ago, in the midst of Fairyland, there stood an extensive forest, so large that it would take many, many days to walk across it; in fact, it was an enchanted forest, for all night it was the haunt of all the little fairies in the neighbourhood. They would skip and dance there all night long, and far into the next day; but the moment the noonday sun streamed down upon them, they would all run away and go to bed inside the water lilies and pink lotus, and leave fairy rings on the grass to mark the place of their nightly revels.

There was a lovely glade in this forest, with a large pond in the middle, and tall dark trees around, which was a specially favoured spot with all the fairies and elves of the forest. Three little fairies particularly there were, who used to come here every morning at sunrise and enjoy themselves to their hearts' content. They were especially fond of a dance they had invented, which consisted in holding hands and twirling round, singing all the while, "Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!"

Well, one day a little hunchback woodcutter, who was out very early in the morning gathering chopsticks, suddenly came upon the lovely glade, and there, before him, he saw the three little fairies dancing in a ring, laughing and singing, "Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!" so merrily, that he threw down his bundle of faggots, and joined in their dance and their song with great energy. He danced so amazingly, and amused them so much by turning back somersaults, that they thought it the greatest pity in the world that so brisk a little man should be spoilt by having a great hump on his back; so they took some water from the pond in little golden cups, and each fairy emptied her own tiny vessel on the hunchback, singing the while, "Go away, ugly hump!" Then they again joined hands, and danced round him till his hunch had quite disappeared; whereupon he romped more gaily than

before, and was so glad and merry he could hardly sing "Humpty Dumpty!" any more for laughing. After that he kissed each of the fairies, and ran home as fast as his little legs would carry him, singing all the way "Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!" springing in the air, and jumping over every obstacle — so glad was he to have got rid of his ugly hump.

Now this little hunchback had a twin brother just as ugly and deformed as he had been himself, and when the now straightened little man came in at the cottage door his brother was very much astonished to see him skipping about without his hunch, and he naturally asked how he had managed to get rid of his ugly deformity.

"Oh," said the woodcutter, "it happened in a very curious way. I was out chopping sticks very early this morning in the woods, when I suddenly saw three dear little fairies before me, dancing in a ring, and singing 'Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!' They were tripping it so merrily that the desire seized me to join in their dance, so I boldly took them by the hand and joined in the ring, singing with them 'Humpty, Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!'"

"They seemed to like this very much, for when they got tired of dancing they took some water from the pond, and pouring it over my back, they sang 'Go away, go away, ugly hunch!' and sure enough my ugly hunch has gone."

The twin brother was very much surprised at the strange story he had just heard. Naturally enough he did not quite care about being known as the "hunchback woodcutter" whilst his brother looked so erect and handsome. In fact, he was not only jealous of his brother, but most anxious to be as good looking. He therefore thought the best plan would be to at once seek out the fairies and get them to be as kind and as useful to him as they had been to his brother. He therefore started off at a run for the enchanted glade, determined to get rid of his hump as his brother had done; unfortunately he was so afraid of being too late, that he ran himself quite out of breath, and was tired out by the time he reached the three little fairies, who were

dancing and singing as gaily as ever. The poor little fellow could neither sing nor dance, and had not sufficient breath left to cut a caper or turn a back somersault; this disappointed the little fairies very much. Presently they all joined hands, taking the little hunchback with them, and began their special dance, singing "Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!" but he got so confused and giddy from turning round so fast, that instead of singing "Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!" as the little fairies did, he would add — in his efforts to please them — "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall!" and kept on saying "Sat on a wall, sat on a wall!" which so annoyed the fairies, that when they took the water out of the pond in their little golden cups, and poured it over his back, instead of singing "Go away, ugly hump!" they sang "Hunch, get twice as big as before!" which it did immediately, and was then such a terrible size that it was frightful to look at, and so heavy that he had to crawl on his hands and knees all the way home.



## **Mr. Cuttlefish's Love Story**

### ***"Sengeralatti szerelem."***

THERE was a great commotion in the Coral Palace of the Queen of the Sea. It was very plain that something unusual was happening in the otherwise peaceful dwelling at the bottom of the deep blue sea. As a rule, on hot summer evenings, the Queen reclined lazily on a bed of pink sea-shell, while her two mermaids-in-waiting stood near her, fanning her with tall fans, made of sharks' fins, and telling her all the latest news that occurred among the upper ten of the fish kingdom. Everything had to be kept very quiet during that time, as the Queen objected to every kind of noise that might disturb her, if she chose to take a nap, which she usually did.

But on this particular evening the royal palace wore a totally different aspect; the bed of sea-shell was deserted, the fans of sharks' fins lay idle on the ground, and not a fish was visible in any of the pink coral halls.

Stay, that is not quite correct. When I say not a fish could be seen, I mean not a whole fish, for at every crevice, every window, and every door, there were rows and rows of tails, the heads and bodies of their owners being thrust as far out as possible. Apparently they were intent on watching a most amusing spectacle, for every now and then these tails shook with suppressed laughter, making the water foam and bubble all around.

The Queen herself so far forgot her dignity as to sit at a half-opened window, and gaze out into the blue depths, and clap her hands with glee, and laugh till the tears streamed down her cheeks.

What so evidently excited the mirth of her Majesty and all her subjects was certainly, to any impartial observer, a most amusing sight. Under the shades of the giant sea-weed, in the grounds of the Coral Palace, Mr. Cuttlefish was making love to dear little Marina, the Queen's favourite mermaid, whose amorous glances quite equalled his own. He rolled his great goggle eyes at her, and surrounded her

graceful little form with five of his long arms.

"My dearest, I am afraid we must part," she was saying to him, "and I don't think I can possibly meet you out here again. I am sure some one will see us; the Palace is so near and the windows of the great hall look out on this part of the grounds, and," she added, kissing his great puffy cheek, "I know the Queen will never consent to our marriage; you have no appointment at court, and your business compels you to live in quite another part of the sea. I must remain near the Queen, or by our laws I should lose the human half of my body and become a fish altogether, probably a sole, or some other nasty flat thing. What a cone-down for me, dear. I have always been accounted so sharp."

Mr. Cuttlefish did not appreciate jokes which were not his own, and would have administered a severe rebuke to Marina for venturing to make one at so serious a moment. She, however, looked so pretty, and was evidently so much in love with him, poor dear, that he merely withdrew two or three of his arms from round her waist to show his displeasure. This act of unnecessary cruelty brought tears to the eyes of poor little Marina.

"Well, my dear," he said, when harmony was once more restored between them, "you must try and find out whether there is not some good appointment vacant at Court, and I will immediately apply for and obtain it. There were several reasons why I withdrew myself from Court life altogether... Ahem!... I will leave you to guess these reasons, dear Marina... As a matter of fact Her Majesty herself... ahem!... lately intimated to her subjects her desire for a fitting helpmate through the cares of State... ahem!... and when she announced this intention in public... ahem!... ahem!"

"Well! well!"

"Well! ahem!... you won't be jealous, dear Marina?"

"Jealous? Why?"

"Well! the fact is," said Mr. Cuttle-fish, now blushing to the tips of his fingers, or rather suckers, "that Her Majesty deigned to cast eyes

of approval on one of her subjects whom modesty forbids me to name."

"Oh," said Marina, clasping her hands in awed reverence, "then you would be king of us all."

"Well; yes! my dear, I believe that would have been my position," said Mr. Cuttlefish, modestly covering his eyes with an arm or two and wiping a humble tear. "What was that?" he added, in sudden alarm, as a loud peal of irrepressible laughter from the hidden spectators of this dainty scene echoed through the grounds.

"Nothing, my dearest, only a difference of opinion, I expect, between two pikes in Her Majesty's kitchen; they never can agree over the way in which a minnow should be sliced, and quarrel over it in a most rowdy manner."

Mr. Cuttlefish thought to himself that he would not even slice a pike for that matter, but said nothing. Suddenly little Marina had an idea.

"I'll tell you what, dear Mr. Cuttlefish, I believe there is a vacant appointment at Court, it is a very lucrative one I know, and one to which, I think, you are peculiarly suited. Her Majesty's Royal Musician died the other day; one of the choir swallowed him accidentally while singing a bass solo. I know you have great talent for music, and, you see, none of your choir could possibly succeed in swallowing you."

"That is so," said Mr. Cuttlefish, "and how do you think I could best succeed in obtaining this appointment?"

"By thoroughly convincing the Queen of your musical capabilities. I should say if you could get an orchestra together, and a few soloists, you might obtain permission to perform before Her Majesty — that is," added little Marina, "if your modesty will allow you to stand once more before her after the forward advances she made to you."

At this point the laughter in the palace became so uproarious, that all the sea around became a wilderness of foam and bubbles. Little Marina ran home in dismay, terrified lest she should have been seen; and Mr. Cuttlefish sailed away more rapidly than dignity generally allows. Modesty had now got the better of him and he thought it

prudent to retire for the night to his cavern between the rocks.

The next day all was quiet and peaceful in the beautiful kingdom under the sea. The light shone like brilliant emeralds through the water, illuminating the coral grottoes, and lighting their fantastic forms with innumerable points of glittering sparks. The great branches of giant seaweed waved to and fro with slow rhythmic cadence, and the ribbon-weed floated gracefully, forming myriads of little ripples.

There was a general air of festivity pervading the whole of the royal palace. Every little fish seemed to have donned his gayest colours, and all the crabs and the lobsters seemed to have assumed an air of being very busy and pressed for time.

Suddenly a most singular sound echoed through all the neighbouring caverns, and caused a general commotion in the waters. It penetrated as far as the Queen's bed-chamber, where her Majesty was enjoying a quiet rest while reflecting over the events of the night before. She had forbidden all her Court to make the slightest allusion to them before her little mermaid, as it might distress her to feel that she and her lover had been so openly laughed at. She was a dear, kind-hearted sort of Queen, and really very fond of little Marina, so she determined to smooth the path of true love as much as lay in her power.

In the meantime the noise was growing louder and louder, and more and more distinct. Now it resembled a grampus blowing through his nose, and now it seemed like a hundred engines letting steam off all at once. At last an unusually discordant note resounded through the royal bedchamber, and Her Majesty, now fully aroused, and not at all pleased at being disturbed in her nap, dispatched an attendant crab to inquire the cause of this extraordinary commotion. He came back with the startling news that Mr. Cuttlefish was preparing for a grand concert, which he proposed to give that very afternoon.

"But," said the Queen, addressing no one in particular, "I did not know the gentleman was musical."

"He is not," said an old thornback, spitefully, "but he fancies he is, and likes to be thought a distinguished amateur and musical critic. He wrote a very severe article in the 'Fly Fancier's Gazette' on the subject of your Majesty's choir."

"In which," said the nautilus, indignantly, "he disapproved of my voice."

"And distinctly hinted that we sang flat," exclaimed the chorus of crabs.

"And," added the oysters, opening their shells, and looking defiantly round, "that we have no notion of time."

A wail of indignation rose at these complaints against Mr. Cuttlefish. However, the Queen was determined to try and make matters as pleasant for Marina as possible, and influence public opinion in her lover's favour as far as she could. She wished to hear more about the concert.

"May it please your Majesty," said a little bony fish, who seemed well posted up in all the news, "Mr. Cuttlefish issued cards of invitation early this morning, but the Grand Chamberlain, the Right Honourable Tortoise, who is offended with him about something or other, has evidently withheld your Majesty's card. As for me, I shall certainly not go, he does not mention the word supper, and I don't believe there will be any." While all this was going on poor little Marina felt on thorns, she grew hot and cold alternately, and hardly knew how to hold herself erect on her tail, while fanning the Queen. The concert was evidently now in full swing, the waters around were continually disturbed by crowds of fishes trooping to join in it, and carrying their cards of invitation under their fins; the Queen was now quite unable to check her curiosity any longer, and announced her gracious intention to honour the concert by her august presence.

Lord Chamberlain Tortoise, who had been simply dying to go himself, but, of course, did not dare show his eagerness before Her Majesty, now stalked off in high glee to order the royal mermen, who always conveyed the Queen, to be in readiness.

Her Majesty mounted one of them while another swam in front, both blowing a shell trumpet; Marina and the other little seamajds brought up the rear, carrying the fans, handkerchiefs and smelling salts. On seeing the Queen approach, Mr. Cuttlefish bade the music cease, then rose with great ceremony and bowed three times, as did all the other fishes present, while the oysters, whose absence of legs forbade them to bow, clapped their shells respectfully. Mr. Cuttlefish extended one of his arms and, taking the queen's hand, led her to a seat on a large green rock, covered with beautiful anemones. Seating himself, with a look at Marina, which conveyed to her the expression of his endless love, he took a great trumpet in one hand, seized a drumstick in another, a pair of cymbals and a concertina in four more. A large lobster then gravely announced that Mr. Cuttlefish would play a grand march, composed by himself, entitled "The good old Sharks," and would be assisted in the performance by a full choir, selected and trained by himself.

The words and music were alike impressive, the orchestration eminently modern, and the chorus written in four parts. Three huge frogs, rolling their goggle eyes, rolled out the bass, the herrings sang alto in sentimental style, the whiting were high treble, and as they sang with their tails in their mouths — as all well-regulated whiting do — their voices had an additional charm. The moonfish, the trunkfish, the gurnard were all tenors, but as they had been unavoidably prevented from attending the rehearsals, their parts did not go very well; however, the sword-fish, who sang baritone, and the fire-fish, who sang contralto, managed to drown their mistakes pretty effectually.

The conductor was a great green crab, who endeavoured to keep time by waving his claws; he found this fairly easy while the slow part of the march was being performed, but in the more rapid movements no one paid any attention to him, which somewhat marred the harmony of the whole effect, but in no way interfered with the enjoyment of the performers. As for Mr. Cuttlefish's trumpet and big

drum, nothing seemed to drown them, he never ceased blowing the one or beating the other; though he sometimes disengaged an available arm to administer an impressive rebuke to any of the chorus who appeared to slacken energy.

In fact the whole affair was a brilliant success, and when the piece was over, everybody clapped his shell or his fins, and congratulated the composer, who took all these honours with the indifference characteristic of genius.

Her Majesty desired his presence.

Mr. Cuttlefish advanced, and bending exceedingly low, humbly waited her gracious pleasure.

"We are very pleased with the extraordinary talent, sir, displayed by you this afternoon; in fact, our royal ears have never been struck by so large a volume of sound. We will therefore appoint you our Royal Musician, with a fitting salary, and give you the hand of our favourite sea-maiden, Marina, in marriage."

Mr. Cuttlefish cast a grateful look at his Sovereign, who taking a shark's fin fan in her hand and smiting him on top of his bald head, added:

"Rise, Sir Cuttlefish. We confer this honour upon you for your distinguished talents, and for the pleasure you have given us this afternoon."

Sir Cuttlefish wished to raise a modest protest against so much honour, but eventually thought better of it, and accepted it all with the noble resignation of the really great.

The lobster now announced a dance, Sir Cuttlefish opened the ball by standing on his head and whirling all his arms about till the water foamed, while everybody did their best to make the evening lively, by turning over and over and round and round. The shrimps waltzed together, while the eels curled themselves up first one way and then the other.

When they were all tired out the supper was brought in by five and twenty green tortoises. It was the most magnificent repast, consisting

of crayfish, minnows, and some deliciously prepared carp; Sir Cuttlefish ate five hundred of these, which proved to be an injudicious quantity. There was a slight stir towards the end of the supper, caused by the sharks, who had not been invited, gobbling up some of the company, but, on the whole, the evening passed off very pleasantly. After supper the gathering broke up, Sir Cuttlefish seeing the Queen home.

Next day the great composer was suffering from a detestable fit of indigestion. The poor Queen had a fearful headache, but, nevertheless, she had never enjoyed herself so much in all her life.

The wedding of Sir Cuttlefish and Marina was fixed for an early date, and the Queen did the bride the great honour of not only being present at the ceremony, but of holding a reception at the Palace. All the Court officials were ordered to be present, and the poor Lord Chamberlain Tortoise had his hands full, what with issuing the invitation cards, settling the order of precedence, and making arrangements for the breakfast. The Queen ordered that everything should be conducted in the best style, and expense should be no obstacle to the success of the entertainment.

Meanwhile, Sir Cuttlefish was busy. He chose the leader of his choir for his "best fish." Then he ordered the lobsters to make the ring of pearl, and it took no little ingenuity on their part to round off and polish it to Sir Cuttlefish's satisfaction. The happy bridegroom also presented his bride with a brooch made of sea diamonds, in shape like a big drum — a perfect work of art — in commemoration of the great concert that had proved such a triumph.

Needless to add, I think, that the deep sea orchestra and choir played and sang the wedding march and hymns, the new R. M. — Royal Musician — having drilled them himself most carefully. On the great day, Sir Cuttlefish got himself up in most sumptuous style; he had ordered four pairs of white gloves — you see he had eight arms; this was looked upon as a piece of most extravagant folly, and the shark (who had not yet got over his annoyance at not being asked to



the concert) made some very unpleasant remarks on the subject in his paper, "The Fisherman's Foe."

The gorgeousness of the ceremony and the splendour of the wedding breakfast it were vain to attempt to relate, for they even threw the glories of the Cuttlefish's concert and fête into the shade.

The bridegroom borrowed a most beautiful grotto in which to pass his honeymoon, and also spent much time in having his own house thoroughly done up and repaired, and in that newly decorated house under the sea, dear little readers, we will leave the happy pair, for in it they have lived in joy and prosperity from that day to this.

## Forget-me-not *"Nefelejts."*

IN the good old days, many many thousands of years ago, you must know that this world was inhabited by various little fairies, gnomes, elves, and such-like funny little creatures; beasts could talk like rational human beings, even better than most human beings can talk now-a-days; and in every flower there dwelt a little fairy, who sang sweet songs, and in every tuft of grass little elves played to and fro.

In those days there were no cities, roads, or houses; no big human creatures erected big buildings, drained rivers, or built railroads; everything was peaceful and quiet; wild animals lived happily in the forests, for the little fairies never dreamt of hunting or killing them for mere sport, and the fairy flowers grew in luxurious splendour, for the wild beasts did not pluck or cast them away.

In those days, somewhere in the world — I don't think I can tell you exactly where, for it is such a very long time ago — there stood in the midst of the forest a most beautiful lake, surrounded on all sides by graceful rushes, and covered with water-lilies and lotus. This lake was so clear and beautiful that all the little fairies who dwelt in the rushes and grasses round the lake used to come every morning and sit on the water-lilies, while they looked at themselves in the waters of the lake, which reflected their dainty little forms like a mirror.

It was a very truthful mirror too, for the little goldfishes, who dwelt in the lake, gave their opinion very impartially as to the beauty of the various little faces that peeped down at them from above. Sometimes they would argue down below as to the merits of one or the other beauty; then there was great splashing and disturbance in the waters, which amused the little fairies very much, and they would all shout as loudly as possible — "Goldfish, goldfish, living under the lake, who will the prize for beauty take?"

Of course you may imagine that opinions on this point among the little goldfish differed very much, and yet there were some days when

they were absolutely unanxious, and those were the days when the beautiful fairy princess, Narcissa, came to the lake, and kneeling on one of the lily leaves, looked down into the clear waters, while she combed her golden hair and sang in the sweetest of voices — "Goldfish, goldfish, tell me where

Is the fairest of the fair?"

Then all the little fish and all the little sprites would skip out of the water merrily, and sing with one accord — "Of beauteous fairies 'neath the skies,

Princess Narcissa takes the prize."

And Narcissa would go home happy and proud, with her head held well erect, for all around her the birds and beasts would do her homage. Wherever she walked the little birds would flutter round her to whisper sweet words of praise in her ears; the little frogs and rabbits would stop in their play to watch her pass; and all the little gnomes and grass elves would march before her in state, as if she were a queen.

Now I am sorry to say all this praise and admiration had a very bad effect on Narcissa. She grew haughtier and more conceited every day, and, in consequence idler and more disagreeable at home, so that her father and mother were made quite unhappy by their daughter's vanity, till at last it became almost unendurable. She used to go out morning, noon, and night, and sit for hours on the water-lily leaves, looking at her own reflection in the water, and hearing the waves, the winds, the flowers, the beasts, all murmur in concert: "Princess Narcissa is the most beautiful of all the fairies in the world!"

One day, when her poor fairy mother was thus left sitting all alone in her beautiful palace among the bulrushes, after seeing her daughter go off on her usual journey, she suddenly caught sight, near the edge of the lake, of a lovely little cluster of forget-me-nots. So sweet and modest did they look, and withal so exquisitely lovely in colour, that she sighed regretfully, and said, "Oh, how I wish I had another, a tiny blue-eyed daughter, modest and sweet, who would be a comfort to

me."

Now the Fairy Queen, who always hears the wishes of all her subjects, heard the poor mother's cry, and shortly after presented her with a nice little daughter, with lovely golden curls all round her tiny head, and such beautiful blue eyes that looked so sweetly out into the world, that her mother and father were almost beside themselves for joy, and named her "Forget-me-not," because she resembled those dainty little flowers.

The haughty Princess Narcissa did not take very much notice of her baby sister just at first; she was too much occupied with herself and her own beauty, inventing new garments for her little person, and new jewellery for her hair. She used to tease and torment her occasionally, though, especially when Forget-me-not began to grow up, compelling her to dress her hair, fasten her dress, and altogether using her as a sort of servant to help to administer to her own adornment. But Forget-me-not was so modest and unassuming, and really looked upon her older sister as a creature of such exquisite loveliness that she gladly did all that Narcissa wished, and even tried to invent all sorts of pretty new contrivances to further enhance her beauty.

This went on for some time; Forget-me-not was growing up very rapidly, and every day she seemed to grow in beauty, as well as in goodness; her hair was now long and glistened like gold, her skin was fine and transparent, as only fairy skin can be, and her eyes were tenderer and bluer than the little flowers after whom she was named. Her father and mother were now perfectly happy, for their little daughter was all the comfort in the world to them. When Narcissa had finished her toilet in the morning, and gone off to the enchanted lake, followed by her crowd of admirers, little Forget-me-not would go about the house singing merrily, chatting to her father, and helping her mother to spin and sew.

The little creature had never been outside her father's garden, she had never seen any one, except her father, and mother, and sister, so

she really did not know how beautiful she was, for the latter had no eyes for any one save herself, and the former had such a dread and horror of vanity creeping up in their darling's heart, that they were particularly careful never to speak on the subject before her.

One day, when Forget-me-not was running about in the garden, she saw a beautiful bright-eyed butterfly lying on the grass. She drew near on tip-toe to have a better look, when the butterfly spread out his wings and flew off to the other end of the garden. Forget-me-not ran after him, for she had never seen such a lovely creature before — all blue and silver, with great dark spots, like eyes. Hardly had she, however, come near enough to him, when the butterfly again flew off; this time far to the other side of the garden gates. Forget-me-not was tempted to follow him, and so she ran on and on till she saw him apparently settle on a water-lily leaf, and then disappear from her view.

Little Forget-me-not, who had now reached the edge of the lake, was determined to see where the beautiful butterfly had disappeared to, so, treading softly on the lotus and lily leaves, she looked round her, and then into the clear waters of the lake, but no butterfly could she see; only as she was looking a whole crowd of little goldfish and water sprites (things she had never seen in all her life before) rose from out of the water, and, forming a circle round the leaf on which she stood, they bowed low before her, and sang in the sweetest chorus she had ever heard —

"Forget-me-not, lovely blue-eyed Forget-me-not,  
Fairest far of all the lot."

She could hardly tear herself away from them, so beautifully did they all sing, till finally a little goldfish swam quite close to her, and asked her if she would honour him by getting on his back, and allowing him to swim with her to shore, which she did, as she did not like to wound his feelings by refusing so courteous an offer, but she felt very frightened at this altogether new mode of locomotion, and also very upset and shy at being suddenly so surrounded and

admired by a crowd of unknown beings.

When she got to shore she was still so nervous that she quite forgot to thank the goldfish and water sprites for their lovely music, and ran home as fast as her fairy legs could carry her, and into her mother's arms, who was very much upset when she heard the whole story, for she felt that evil would come of this if Narcissa were to know.

The next day Narcissa got up and dressed, or rather made Forget-me-not dress her as usual; she was not yet tired of all the admiration her beauty always roused wherever she passed, and she still loved as dearly as ever to gaze at her own reflection in the lake, and provoke its inhabitants into songs of praise. On this particular morning she had made herself look lovelier than ever, and she stepped out of her mother's garden, anxiously peering round for the squirrels, who always greeted her approach joyfully, and escorted her to the edge of the lake with many a bow of admiration and envy. However, this morning the squirrels were not to be seen, she could hear them in the distance holding an animated discussion, but not one of the little faces peeped down at her, and Narcissa thought it very strange that they should think other matters more interesting than the sight of her.

She ran down to the lake, and stepped on the broad water-lily leaves, then sitting on one of the pink blossoms the little vain fairy peeped down at her dainty image. How pretty she was! with her fairy figure, her milk-white skin and rosy lips, her graceful arms bent over her head, while she combed her golden hair with a pearl comb, while her garments, made of moon-beams, shone like silver, and made her appear like a bright jewel in the heart of the lotus flower.

Very soon a large crowd of gold and silver fish had gathered round her, and funny round eyes and gaping mouths peered at her from the green depths below. But instead of the usual chorus of admiration with which they usually greeted her, she found herself apparently the object of an extraordinary curiosity. The fishes appeared to be

whispering to each other, then looking at her with their funny wise heads held on one side, till Narcissa could bear the suspense no longer, and she sang in her sweetest tones —

"Goldfish, goldfish, tell me where,  
Is the fairest of the fair?"

Then, to her horror and dismay, a mischievous-looking little water sprite rose to the surface and said —

"Although Narcissa very beauteous be,  
Forget-me-not is fairer far than she."

Then the whole chorus of fishes echoed —

"Yes, Forget-me-not, little blue-eyed Forget-me-not,  
is fairer far than she."

Narcissa could hardly believe her own ears. Forget-me-not! ugly little Forget-me-not! Why, she had never been outside her mother's garden! The fishes could never have seen her, and if they had, why, surely there was no comparison between the lovely Narcissa, more beautiful than the Fairy Queen herself, and this tiny, unpretentious little sister of hers.

And yet the goldfish would keep on singing —

"Have you seen Forget-me-not,  
Fairest far of all the lot?"

Narcissa went ashore, and in a rage picked up some pebbles and pelted the fishes and water sprites with them, but they did not care; they dived down to the very bottom of the lake and re-appeared again, still singing —

"Forgot-me-not, lovely Forget-me-not."

The enraged little fairy ran off as fast as she could. As she passed the rushes where all the frogs had congregated she heard them croaking —

"Little Forget-me-not with blue eyes grand — Quack, quack, quack.

Is loveliest in Fairyland — Quack, quack, quack."

Through the woods she ran, where her friends, the squirrels,

always used to pay her homage; now they were running up and down the trees in a great state of excitement, and shouting to each other —

"Have you seen Forget-me-not, the loveliest of all the lot?"

This was too much for Narcissa altogether. She rushed through her mother's garden, up the steps, to where little Forget-me-not sat spinning a dress of spiders' webs. She was quite startled when she saw her sister rush in in so frantic a manner. Narcissa took hold of her hand, told her to leave her spinning and come with her.

Little Forget-me-not was so accustomed to do as she was told that she obeyed, and followed her sister, though she felt very frightened. On the two fairies ran, Narcissa dragging her little sister after her, till they came to an old dried-up well, which led down to the centre of the earth.

"Now," said Narcissa, "I have dropped my spindle in this well, and cannot finish my spinning; you must jump down and fetch it for me."

"But," said little Forget-me-not, "the well is so deep; mother says it has no bottom. I should not know where to look for your spindle."

"If you don't jump down immediately and do as you are told I will throw you in, for I am stronger than you," said Narcissa, and her eyes glittered with rage so that she looked quite ugly.

What was poor little Forget-me-not to do? She was all alone with her wicked sister, and no chance for any one to come and help her, so she thought of her dear mother as she stood one moment hesitating on the brink of the well; then, suddenly Narcissa gave her a push, and down she fell — down, down, down. It was pitch dark round her; she seemed to be floating in absolute space, and the last thing she remembered as she lost consciousness in her terror, was, high up above, a little speck of light, and Narcissa's wicked little face peering down at her and laughing triumphantly.

And so she fell lower and lower yet, the darkness grew more and more intense, and then all of a sudden a ray of light began to penetrate from a long way down below; this little thin streak of light encroached more and more upon the darkness. Little Forget-me-not



re-opened her eyes, and suddenly found herself in full daylight on the edge of another well, with tall, over-hanging trees round her; she clambered up and looked round, she was in a strange part of the world, that was very evident, curiously shaped trees and plants [surrounded her, flowers she had never seen before, but still they were trees and flowers, and as such Forget-me-not was not frightened at them, but still she did not dare venture through the thick masses of undergrowth, through which even her fairy-like little form could not have always found a passage. She felt very lonely and miserable, and longed for her dear mother, and her own familiar flowers; this was a very strange country, where perhaps she never would meet a friend who would be kind to her, and take her home. Poor little fairy, she sat down and cried, till the great sobs shook her little form, and her heart ached as if it would break.

Suddenly she heard a shrill voice quite close to her, calling her by her name,

"Forget-me-not, Forget-me-not, why do you cry?"

The little fairy, looked up in wonder, and there, standing before her, was the funniest little old woman she ever saw, her face was such a mass of wrinkles that you could not see any of the features, the eyes were hidden by deep furrows and ridges, the mouth appeared like a long narrow slit, only the nose, a very big hook nose, was so prominent and long that it quite frightened poor little Forget-me-not.

Her head was very huge, and seemed much too heavy for the small shrivelled body, all bent as if over-weighted with age. She had large bony hands and feet, with long nails like a bird's claws, and there she stood, blinking at the pretty little fairy, like an old hawk staring at a sparrow.

"Why do you cry?" the old woman repeated impatiently, as poor little Forget-me-not seemed unable to answer, but only stared at her in fear and astonishment.

"Oh," sobbed the poor little fairy, "I am so lonely and so miserable; my sister pushed me down a well, and I have fallen so deep down

that now I don't the least bit know where I am, and my poor dear mother at home must be crying after me, and wondering where I am, and I don't remember the way I came here, so I cannot go back. Dear, good, kind fairy, if you are a fairy, take me back to my mother, and I will do anything in the world to serve and help you if I can."

"I don't know that I want to take you back to your mother," the old fairy said, "and I am sure you can be of no possible use to me, so I don't see why I should trouble my head about you at all."

"But I can spin and sew for you," Forget-me-not said eagerly, noticing the funny old green rags in which the old woman was clad, "and I can cook most dainty dishes, and scrub the floors, and dress your hair, in fact, I can make myself most useful about a house, and like doing all kinds of work."

"H'm," said the ugly old fairy, "I have been looking out for a young servant for some time, and you do seem pretty active and willing"... "well," she said, "if you will come with me and be my maid, attend to my household and look after me, I will undertake to help and protect you. Will you agree to that?"

"But," said little Forget-me-not, "that will never do. I have no other wish but to go back to my dear mother, and go on living my own quiet happy life, and if I go to be your servant, what use is all protection in the world to me, while I know my dear ones at home are mourning for me, and think that I am dead?"

"Well, you can please yourself," said the little old woman, "I have told you under what conditions I will help and protect you, if they don't suit you you can leave them alone, or rather, I will leave you alone, for I am busy, and don't mean to stand here talking with you any longer. If you change your mind, clap your hands three times, and you will see me again. Good-bye."

Saying which, the old fairy hobbled off, leaning on her heavy stick, and laughing maliciously at poor little Forget-me-not, who was left more desolate and lonely than before.

Evening was drawing on rapidly, the forest around grew darker and

darker, every moment the poor little fairy began to feel very frightened. She heard strange sounds around her, and great luminous eyes seemed to be staring at her from out the darkness. The moon now rose and shed a soft mysterious light on the strange landscape, and curious little beings, grass-elves and wood-nymphs, came out, skipping and dancing merrily round the now terrified little form. She began to feel that if she spent a whole night here by herself she would die with fright. If only her dear mother could hear her and come to her rescue, or even if the malicious old fairy would be here to keep her company. She felt that anything would be better than stay alone a moment longer, so she clapped her little hands three times, and in a moment, as if she had sprung out of the earth, there stood the funny old woman in her green rags, leaning on her stick. "Oh, take me away from here!" poor Forget-me-not cried. "I will be your servant and do anything you like, but I cannot stay here any longer by myself. I should die of fright."

"Very well," said the old fairy; "you must come with me to my palace, but remember, you are to do everything I tell you, and help me to spin, sew, and cook, and to reward you I will help you and give you shelter."

"Well, then, you must help me now to let my mother know that I am quite safe, and will come back to her as soon as I can."

The old fairy waved her stick three times over her head, and a huge frog came jumping apparently from nowhere, and waited for orders. "Send any message you like," the old fairy said, "and this frog will convey it to your mother before daybreak."

"Please, Mr. Frog," said Forget-me-not, "go to my dear mother and tell her that I am still alive. Narcissa pushed me down the well, but a kind fairy has rescued me, and I am going to be her little servant until she releases me."

"Croak, croak," said the frog, and disappeared from view.

"Now," said the old fairy, "you must come home with me at once, and make the beds for the night. My son will be waiting for me, and

you must help to make everything comfortable for him at home."

She again waved her stick, and presently two bats came flying along, each carrying a broomstick. The old fairy mounted the one, and told Forget-me-not to get on to the other and follow her.

Away she flew, high up over the trees. Forget-me-not felt very frightened and uncomfortable, as she had never travelled on a broomstick before. However, the journey was not a very long one, and presently the two fairies landed opposite a most gorgeous palace, made entirely of glass. Through the walls one could see the long suites of exquisite rooms, with crystal domes and golden pillars. But not a soul was visible anywhere, neither in the palace nor in the beautiful moonlit grounds, the whole palace glittering in the moonlight, surrounded with gigantic trees and exquisitely-scented flower beds, wore a fearfully deserted look, and Forget-me-not wondered more and more about the curious old fairy who went about in rags, and owned such a magnificent though solitary abode. As she stepped off her broomstick and helped her mistress to alight she caught sight, in one of the gorgeous halls, of a sumptuously-laid-out feast, beautiful gold and silver dishes filled with the rarest fruits, and wine in diamond goblets. And there, alone, having a lonely meal, sat the handsomest fairy prince she could imagine. Little Forget-me-not could not take her eyes off him, he had such a lovely face, though he looked very dejected and melancholy in his loveliness.

"That is my son," said the old fairy. "I am very proud of him, as he is the handsomest prince in all fairyland, but I don't want him to marry, as then, of course, he would have to leave me. That is why I won't allow a living thing to come anywhere near my palace, for fear they should captivate his fancy, and put thoughts of marriage into his head. As for a bird, I won't have one near the place, as they will chirrup of nothing else but love and home. I have had no servant or attendant entirely on that account, and have been obliged to go about in rags, and eat nothing but nuts and fruit, as I had no one to spin, or sew, or cook for me. Bats and frogs are the only creatures I will

tolerate, as I don't think there is the faintest chance of my son falling in love with one of them. I have an old bat's skin somewhere up in my room, you will have to wear that all day, while my son is at home, you may only take it off for three hours after midnight, as then he always goes to sleep, and there is no fear of his seeing you."

Little Forget-me-not did not at all relish the idea of going about all day with a horrible old bat's skin on her, but of course she could say nothing, she had to do as her mistress told her.

The old fairy hobbled up the grand glass staircase, and presently returned carrying the skin. She made Forget-me-not put it on, and her own mother would not have recognized in this old gray bat her pretty blue-eyed little daughter.

The old fairy then told her that she might go to bed and rest for the remainder of the night, she would find her room at the top of one of the towers, and little Forget-me-not, now thoroughly tired and worn out, went up a long winding staircase, till she came to a nice little room, with a clean bed of straw, where she lay herself down, and immediately dropped into a long heavy sleep, where she forgot all about the well, the bats, the broomsticks, the little old woman, and even the handsome fairy prince.

The next morning she was up quite early, dressed herself in her bat's skin, and went downstairs. She cooked the breakfast for the prince and his mother, and all day she was kept busy, sewing and spinning new dresses in place of the fairy's old rags. She had to wait at all the meals too, and oh! it made her quite miserable to see the handsome prince sitting at table, looking so dejected and lonely, with no one to talk to, except his ugly old mother; there seemed to be such longing in his eyes when he looked round him, and saw nothing but ugly beings, frogs, bats or spiders; even the new servant was only another old bat, his eyes seemed to quite ache for something beautiful to look at, and his ears for sweet sounds. Forget-me-not quite longed to tell him of all the lovely things in nature, of the birds, the squirrels, and the butterflies, and also of all the beautiful fairies, of

which she herself was one, but she was pledged to the old woman, and was never allowed to take off her disfiguring garment, so she was obliged to hold her peace.

Day after day passed off in solitude for little Forget-me-not, her mistress was very kind to her in her old grim way, but watched over all her movements most rigidly, for fear she should ever speak to the prince. At night only, for three hours after midnight, was the little fairy, allowed to wander freely about the castle and the park, unencumbered by the heavy skin, clad in her pretty dress of cobwebs; she would then run down to the edge of a little neighbouring stream, and gather her little namesakes to weave pretty garlands for her hair, then she would sit on the bank and talk to the frogs and bats, who were her only companions; she had taken a great fancy to them, and loved to hear their quaint talk. They all told her how sorry they were for the poor prince, of whom his mother was so jealous, how they had all hoped when she came to be a little servant, that he would see her, fall in love with her, and marry her, and so change this gloomy, solitary place into one of festivities and gaieties; but, of course, with a badly fitting bat's skin on her, the thing was impossible, and the old fairy, was so watchful all day that it was quite impossible for any one to have a few words with the prince, she only relaxed her vigilance when he was asleep, and then she snored herself.

Forget-me-not listened to all this, and felt more miserable than ever to think that the handsome fairy prince, with whom she was now very much in love, should never have a chance of even knowing there was such a thing as love and beauty in the world; she asked her friend, the chief bat of the establishment, if he could not help her in any way, while her old mistress was asleep.

"Well," said the bat, "if you like to get on my back I can take you into the Prince's room one night, but then he is fast asleep, so I don't know of what use that can be to you."

But Forget-me-not was so desirous of seeing the Prince when his

mother was not there, that she told the bat she would not mind his being asleep, would he please take her in at his window and let her see him.

The old bat consented. It was too late then, but on the following night he agreed to wait for Forget-me-not under the old cedar tree. The little fairy could hardly contain her impatience all day. When midnight struck, and the old woman and her son had both gone to sleep, she ran up to her little room and took out her pretty fairy dress, then dressed her beautiful golden hair, and having placed a garland of forget-me-nots on her head, she anxiously awaited her friend, the bat, under the cedar tree.

He was punctual to the minute, and Forget-me-not, having mounted on his back, he deposited her on the sill of the Prince's window. She stepped in, and saw the handsome fairy prince lying asleep, looking, oh! so lonely and dissatisfied. She went up to him and kissed him gently, and a tear fell from her eye on to his pillow, where it changed into a brilliant diamond. Near it she laid the wreath of forget-me-nots from her hair, then stole gently out of the room again and regained her own couch without, fortunately, disturbing her old mistress, who was snoring louder than ever.

The next morning the Prince awoke feeling that he had had a most beautiful dream. He dimly remembered seeing a little form of exquisite beauty fly in at his window, come up close to him and kiss him, and then... but surely it was not a dream, for there, on his pillow, was the wreath of forget-me-nots she wore, and near it glittered the bright tear of love and sympathy which her fair eye had let fall on his forehead, and which had changed into a most brilliant diamond. He took both up and fastened them inside his doublet; then, as it was still very early in the morning, he stole on tiptoe down the stairs, out of the palace, and through the park, into the great world, beyond the crystal gates, which he had never dared to cross before. A new feeling which he could not explain seemed to put an altogether different life into him. Everything around him seemed endowed with unwonted

beauty; the great trees waved their majestic branches over his head and whispered words he had never understood before, and when he looked up, there among the boughs, he saw two lovely little beings he had never been allowed to see before, sitting quite close together and chirping sweet words to each other. He seemed to know directly what they were saying: "Love and beauty" was what they were talking of, and that was what the fairy prince was now in quest of — "love and beauty." He was determined to wander until he found the owner of the forget-me-not wreath and the diamond tear. He knew she could not be anywhere within his mother's palace or garden, so he had set off, no matter for how long a distance, until he had once more seen the bright blue eyes which had appeared to him in his dream.

On and on he went; he did not know himself how far he had gone, or how long he had been on the road. He felt no fatigue, all the world was so new to him, and so beautiful. In the forest the nimble squirrels and gaily-coloured birds; in the fields the bright-eyed butterflies, in the grass the tiny elves and fairies, in the waters the jewelled fishes, all were a source of wonder and admiration to him, so beautiful were they all, and yet not one so perfect as the little fairy being whom he had only seen in his dream.

At last, one day, after long, long wanderings, he came to the very lake near which Narcissa and her mother and father still dwelt. As he was beginning to feel very tired, he sat down on the reed-covered bank and looked down with delight at a cluster of forget-me-nots close to him, which so strongly reminded him of the bright blue eyes in his dream. He began to fear that he should never see her; that, perhaps, she did not really exist.

Suddenly he looked up, and coming down the path, he saw a lovely little fairy, walking dejectedly along. She was very beautiful, though not quite so beautiful as his dream. She had golden hair also, and blue eyes, but they were not the same blue eyes he had wandered all this long way to see.

Narcissa, for it was she, had never ceased to come to the edge of



the lake, and never ceased to look at herself in the waters and ask the goldfish who was the most beautiful fairy in the land, but the goldfish had never ceased to say —

"Although Princess Narcissa very beauteous be,  
Little Forget-me-not, far away, is more beautiful than she."

That is why she looked so dejected, for she was still so vain that she hated the idea that Forget-me-not should still be alive and still be thought more beautiful than she. The Prince looked at the fairy figure in admiration as she trod gracefully on the large lily leaves, then, sitting on a pink lotus, began to comb her golden hair.

Presently a whole row of little goldfish and water sprites put their little heads out of the water, and, looking critically at the fairy, began to sing gaily —

"Although Princess Narcissa very beauteous be,  
Little Forget-me-not, far away, is more beautiful than she."

[Then the Prince knew that they must mean his own little fairy, the lovely being that he had seen once, and immediately learnt to love, and in search of whom he had wandered from the other end of the world.

He heard Narcissa asking eagerly —

"And tell me, Goldfish, where is Forget-me-not, who you say is a thousand times more beautiful than I?"

"She is there, standing near you! Welcome, Forget-me-not, the most beautiful in all fairy-land."

The Prince looked round in amazement, astonished that this lovely being should have been so near him without his knowing it, but he saw no one, only an ugly old bat, whom he dimly recollected having seen a long time ago in his mother's palace.

Poor little Forget-me-not! — When she had perceived the consequences of her midnight adventure, and had seen her dear Prince go forth in quest of her, she resolved to follow him wherever he went. On and on she had wandered, always after him, until she felt so tired and footsore she could hardly walk, till at last she also had

arrived near the well-known lake, and had seen her sister, Narcissa, and her old friends, the goldfish, and all the old familiar places; yet she had no eyes for all these, she only thought of her dear prince, and longed to throw off her ugly disguise, and tell him that she was his own little fairy, who had kissed him in the night, and taught him the meaning of love and beauty; yet she dared not, she was pledged to the old fairy not to take off her disguise, and was too frightened of her to break her word. Besides, if Narcissa were to see her now, surely she would throw her into the water and kill her. So she had to stand by, and feel that the Prince was looking at her, and did not recognize her. Narcissa did, however, in one moment; the eyes of envy and vanity are so sharp. She looked round when the goldfish had spoken, and immediately, under the bat's skin, she spied her little blue-eyed sister.

Without a moment's hesitation she rushed at her, and giving her a violent push, threw her into the water.

The Prince, who had learnt to love all living creatures, however mean and humble, could not bear to see even an old bat drown, so he snatched hold of one of its wings to help it swim to shore, when lo! the bat's skin came right off, and in its place he was holding the lovely being from his dream, she was again looking at him with those bright blue eyes, he had never since forgotten. He pulled her to shore, and she at last was happy in his arms.

Now, need I tell my little readers any more? Well! perhaps they might like to hear that the old fairy mother, though at first sorely vexed at her son's conduct, finally was obliged to give her consent to his marriage with Forget-me-not, so there was a grand wedding in the palace of glass, which henceforth became the abode of mirth and gaiety. As for Narcissa, she was Forget-me-not's bridesmaid, and it was a severe punishment to her for all her wickedness, to hear the whole fairy world, yea even the Queen herself, say joyfully —

"Yes, Forget-me-not, little blue-eyed Forget-me-not, is the most beautiful fairy of the lot!"



## The Enchanted Cat

*"A bűvös macska."*

IN the far East, somewhere on the borders of Persia, there was once an extensive kingdom, over which ruled the good Sultan Abu Hafiz. The land was rich and fruitful; the trade prosperous; the people happy.

Yes! almost everybody in the kingdom was happy and gay, the only sorrowful person being the Sultan himself, and he was sadly wretched. He would walk on the terraces of his magnificent palace, and look over the fair gardens, but he never smiled, not even at the lovely goldfish that peered at him from out the crystal basins of the diminutive fountains.

The good Sultan, Abu Hafiz, had never been known to smile since the day when they brought home the beautiful Sultana Arizade dead. She had gone out walking one day, accompanied by her women, when at the very gate of the palace garden a great monster had bounded across her path, which so frightened the Sultana that she swooned away, and never recovered consciousness again. The faithful servants did all they could to restore their beloved mistress to life, but in vain — the sweet lady was dead; and they had to return to their lord bearing the dead body of his beautiful wife.

The Sultan rent his clothes, and tore his beard in his despair. He ordered his Court to go into mourning, and then for months no one ever saw his face. After a while, however, the affairs of State, and other matters of importance, claimed his attention, and he appeared again. He was just as good and kind as ever, and listened to the claims of his poorest subjects with the same patience as formerly, but he was no longer merry, and even his little son never saw him smile.

At last, his melancholy growing deeper and deeper, his subjects began to fear that grief would eventually kill him, so his Ministers held council as to what could be done to rouse the Sultan from his apathy,

and it was decided that the Grand Vizier, Ben Achmed, should approach his master on the subject of a second marriage.

Accordingly, Ben Achmed, seeing the Sultan one day more self-absorbed than ever, threw himself at his feet, and said: —

"Your Majesty, pardon the liberty an old and faithful subject is taking with you, but it is time that your mourning should cease. Your perpetual sadness causes all your people to lose heart, and really affects your entire nation. Laughter is banished from your kingdom; even trade is at a standstill. It is your solemn duty to rouse yourself from your grief; therefore, I, in the name of all your people, pray you most humbly to marry again some very beautiful Princess, who will cheer your Majesty and heal your sorrow."

Needless to say that, at first, the Sultan refused to listen to such a proposition, but at last his sense of duty to his people prevailed, and he consented to marry again, provided a Princess could be found as beautiful and as virtuous as the dead Sultana. Then the Vizier despatched ambassadors to countries near and distant, in order to discover a lady worthy of becoming Abu Hafiz's wife. At length one of the ambassadors, who had travelled very far, saw a Princess who was famous alike for her beauty, her wealth, and her accomplishments. She was the widow of a young Prince who had been killed in battle, and she was in every way fitted to share the throne of Abu Hafiz, and be a second mother to his son. To this match, however, there existed an impediment. The Princess had a son whom she would not leave. The ambassador, however, wrote such a glowing account of her exquisite beauty, her enchanting voice, her wisdom and goodness, that at last the Sultan decided to formally ask her to become his wife. He despatched a thousand messengers bearing costly presents, and a guard of honour composed of three hundred of the finest and bravest young noblemen in the land, with orders to bring the Princess and her son and all her retinue back to his kingdom. Arrangements were made in the palace for a grand wedding, the city was gaily decorated, and a feast prepared to

welcome to the wonderful Princess.

The Sultan sent his Vizier to the city gate, and he himself received her on the steps of the grand entrance to the palace. The Princess was certainly all that the ambassador had painted her; a more stately and beautiful lady could hardly have been imagined. Abu Hafiz was quite charmed, and, taking her hand, he led her to the banqueting hall, where he placed her near him on his throne of gold. Her conversation pleased him even more than her beauty, for her voice was sweet, and she talked ably and with sense upon in many subjects.

For three days the festivities were kept up, during which time all descriptions of gorgeous spectacles, of the most lavish splendour, were displayed before the new Sultana. The guests returned to their homes at the end of the festivities, and life at the palace resumed its normal course.

Insensibly the new Sultana took the place of the good lady who had met with such an untimely end. She exercised boundless influence over the good Sultan, Abu Hafiz, over his court, and his entire kingdom.

The new Sultana was very proud, and although very generous, her good acts did not win the love of the people among whom she had so recently taken up her abode. When the fascination that her beauty excited had diminished, the people noticed that their new queen was gradually using her influence to supplant, in favour of her own boy, her husband's son in his rights to the throne. The rightful heir was now a handsome young Prince, and both court and people felt that he would emulate his father's justice and wisdom.

The Sultana and her son were very jealous of his popularity, and many were the plots they hatched together to try and injure him, unknown to Abu Hafiz. This was well nigh impossible, as the young Prince was always with his father, and continually surrounded by a faithful and devoted body guard. At last the Sultan, who was now getting quite old, became tired of the cares and responsibilities of his

State, so he called his wife and his son to him one day, and told them that he had fully made up his mind to abdicate in favour of his young heir, and hoped the latter would soon marry a Princess as good and beautiful as his mother had been, and become a wise and just ruler, as he had always endeavoured to be.

This did not suit the Sultana's plans at all. If the young Prince Al Hafiz once gained the throne, the difficulties of doing away with him would become almost insurmountable.

That night she and her son Ben Haroun held a long consultation as to what had best be done. Prince Al Hafiz had already chosen a bride, a sweet lady, at his father's court, and whom he had loved for some time. The Sultan had consented to their union, and in three days they were to be married.

After the wedding, Abu Hafiz would formally resign the crown to his son, and retire with his wife and stepson into private life. This was a very serious state of things. The Sultana and Ben Haroun resolved to strike a sudden and decisive blow, and that very night, when every one in the palace was asleep, they went out and consulted the celebrated magician, Abraduz, who had come over from the far East in the Sultana's retinue.

They found him in his cavern brewing magic potions in curiously shaped goblets. A tall peaked cap was on his head, and his beard was so long that it swept the ground round him where he sat.

Without even looking up he said to the Sultana —

"I know what you want, and why you are here to-night; you want to destroy the young prince, Al Hafiz. I cannot do it; magic cannot kill, though it can do many things."

"You must help me," the Sultana said, her eyes glistening with rage; "for if magic cannot kill, my sharp dagger can, and unless you do as I bid you..."

"I am not afraid," the old man said, "but I will help you, because you have all been good to me, and because I know that the young prince hates all magicians, and when once Sultan, he will probably expel

them from his country. But kill him I cannot; I have not the power. However, I have a potion here, which, if you put one drop on the prince's threshold, will, the moment he treads on it, change him into a black cat. A cat is easily destroyed. But remember, on the night of every new moon my power ceases, and the prince will resume his human form for six hours. Therefore, lay your plans carefully, for the cat once dead, no one can ever know who was instrumental in his destruction."

Saying which, the old magician seized a long wand, and drawing a magic circle round a skull, into which he had poured some dark liquid, he began his incantation, the Sultana and the Prince watching him with eager curiosity. He murmured strange words, and mixed curious ingredients with his potion, some frog's legs, and skins of spotted snakes, a shark's tooth, and unicorn's horn. When he had finished, he picked up the skull and handed it to the Sultana, who carried her precious burden back with her to the palace.

It was yet night, and no one was about in the Palace, and the Sultana unable to contain her impatience, stole on tiptoe to Prince Al Hafiz's door. Two faithful negroes lay on the step, to prevent any one having access to their master. These were, however, fast asleep. The Sultana cautiously, but rapidly, poured some of the contents of the skull on the threshold, and fled back to her own chamber.

The next day every one in the Palace was profoundly agitated, and anxious, for the young Prince Al Hafiz had disappeared, as though the earth had engulfed him. His two negro attendants strongly asserted that no one had crossed the threshold of his apartments. They saw him come out of his room, and then something occurred which neither of them could exactly describe. The young Prince absolutely seemed to vanish, and not a trace could be found of him anywhere. Search was made throughout the entire kingdom, but it was useless, the young heir had disappeared. His beautiful young bride, and the good Sultan, nearly went mad with grief, nothing could console them, and the Palace became more gloomy than it had been



after the death of the first Sultana.

The only joy the poor old Sultan knew in all this trouble was the affection of a strange and beautiful Angora cat, which had haunted the Palace ever since the disappearance of the young Prince. It would sit for hours on his knee, and look at him with great and almost reproachful eyes, and the Sultan would stroke its soft fur, and somehow its eyes would remind him of his lost son.

Naturally the Sultana was not content for matters to remain as they were; the night of the new moon was rapidly approaching, and pussy must be got rid of before then. But this was a very difficult matter, for the Sultan would not allow the cat out of his sight. It sat on his [knee most of the day, and slept on the foot of his bed at night.

One night, however, everything seemed to favour the Sultana's plans, it was a very hot and dark night, and the Sultan had been persuaded to take a sleeping draught to cure him from the restless nights he had been spending since the disappearance of his son. The Sultana waited till everything was quiet in the Palace, and then went quietly to her lord's bedside, and threw a thick cloth over the cat's head as it lay curled up asleep. Poor pussy! it tried to struggle, knowing in whose hands it had fallen, but the wicked Sultana hurried with it to the window which overlooked the terrace, and beyond that the lake, and taking hold of the cat's paws hurled it as far as her strength could send it towards the lake.

She heard a cry and a splash, but did not dare look out, and crept noiselessly to bed. The next morning she got up happy, knowing that at last her hated stepson was out of her way for ever, when going down the marble steps of the terrace whom should she see but pussy sitting drying his still wet fur in the sun, and grinning at her triumphantly. She did not dare express any surprise, and eagerly waited to hear an explanation of the event.

The young Princess, who had been betrothed to Al Hafiz, had been out bathing with her attendants in the lake that night, when suddenly they saw poor pussy dropping apparently from nowhere, and

seemingly not relishing his rapid descent. In a moment they had formed a circle, and picked puss up in their arms, just as he fell with a splash into the lake. He got a ducking, which no cat relishes, but still he was unhurt, and, when the sun rose, they deposited him on the terrace, where it took him hours to restore his fur to its original sleek condition.

The Sultana was quite unable to conceal her rage when she heard this account, and from that moment never attempted to hide her antipathy to the black cat, and it required all the Sultan's watchful care to prevent her murdering his pet, even before his eyes. The night for the new moon was now drawing very near, and plan after plan did the Sultana and her stepson concoct, but every time they failed, for pussy was so cunning that it always managed to evade its enemies, and sought protection with the Sultan or the young Princess.

At last the very night had come. The moon would rise in a few hours, and something must be done at once. Fortune favoured the Sultana; her lord was closeted with his Grand Vizier, discussing affairs of State, and pussy was roaming about the palace seeking for the young Princess, who had gone out for a midnight ramble. Prince Ben Haroun went to the lake and caught a beautiful young trout, which he left fastened to his line, then he and the Sultana hid behind the pillars of the terrace and waited.

Presently pussy came out. He thought he sniffed the delicious smell of freshly caught trout, and stepped cautiously on the terrace to see if he had not been deceived. There, sure enough, on the marble steps, lay the silvery fish. Pussy found it quite irresistible, and ventured a little nearer. The trout appeared to go back at this, and, as pussy again approached, the trout again drew off.

This was very odd. The fish was certainly very tempting, but would it be safe to venture so near those mysterious pillars? Pussy pondered for one moment, then made one spring at the trout. Alas! in an instant he was seized, a cloth thrown over his head, and, worse than all, felt a heavy stone was adjusted round his neck, and he was

being carried towards the lake. Struggles, scratches, bites, were useless; he was absolutely at the mercy of his enemies, and not a soul was in sight. He heard his wicked stepmother say, "Quick, the lake is not far; quick, before the moon rises. I can see a light towards the east."

And then all his hopes sank, for the cloth was taken from his head and he saw the Sultana's wicked eyes glaring at him, while Ben Haroun prepared to hurl him into the water. Poor pussy was so small and so defenceless, his struggles were useless; he felt, indeed, his end had come... At that very moment, the thin, pale crescent of the new moon emerged from the clouds in the east, and a second later Ben Haroun was wrestling with his brother Al Hafiz, while the Sultana had fled in terror. Al Hafiz felt the strength of a giant in him, and with little difficulty he overpowered and made a prisoner of Ben Haroun.

When the Sultan heard the story of his wife's and stepson's villainy, he was beside himself with rage, and ordered that both should be expelled his domains, and forbidden to return on penalty of death. As for the wicked old magician, he was hanged the next morning, and I think, dear little readers, that he well deserved it.

The good old Sultan was now so happy to have found his son, whom he had believed dead, that he quite forgot all his past troubles. There was a gorgeous wedding in the Palace for the young couple, and I have no doubt that if we were to go to that distant kingdom on the borders of Persia we should find the Sultan Abu Hafiz, the young Prince Al Hafiz and his wife, and probably also the Vizier, Ben Achmed, living happy and prosperous, even to this day.

# The Wishing Skin

## *A vardzs b6r*

ONCE upon a time, there lived a woodcutter in a little cottage at the foot of an old gigantic oak tree. He had a wife, but no children, and together they lived humbly, but very contentedly; for in front of his cottage he had a nice little garden in which he grew everything that was necessary for their daily food; fine wheat, with which to bake bread, and rich fruit and vegetables; he also had a cow which gave him abundance of milk, and sheep that yielded him soft wool, which his wife wove into garments for themselves.

One day a pedlar had come wandering past the cottage, with pots and pans and other goods for sale; the wife bought a thing or two from him that she needed, and he again went his way. When he had gone, the woodcutter found an old book of tales lying in the road, which the pedlar had evidently dropped; he took it home to his wife, and, in the evening, when she sat at her spinning, he read some of the stories aloud to her. They were a curious lot of tales, all about fairies and magicians that granted people's wishes and changed woodcutters into kings.

That night the little woodcutter could not sleep a wink, he lay awake thinking of the fairies, and picturing himself having one of those godmothers, whose only duty seemed to consist in waving their wands and fulfilling requests. In the morning he went quite dejectedly to his work, quite different to his usual sprightly, little self. He chopped the wood with a heavy heart for a time, finally he threw down his axe in despair and sat down sullenly on the stump of a tree, wishing at least to see a fairy, and persuade her to take an interest in him. His attention was presently attracted by a bright-eyed rabbit which seemed to have suddenly come from nowhere, and sat opposite to him blinking one eye in a knowing way.

So absorbed was the little woodcutter in the castle he was building in the air, that he never started, even when the rabbit suddenly began

talking to him.

"Well, Mr. Woodcutter, and what can I do for you? You have been wishing to have a fairy godmother ever since last night; now, though I am not your godmother, I know a thing or two, for instance, I know where the wishing skin lies, which the little fairies have been weaving for three hundred years, and which is now completed, any one wearing the same can have every wish fulfilled the moment he formulates it. Of course, as the skin is made of wishes, every time one is fulfilled it evaporates, and the skin becomes that much smaller, but then what does that matter? The little fairies have hidden the skin under a lightning-struck willow tree, but I have burrowed a hole and I know exactly how to get at it. I will show it you, if you like."

Thereupon the little rabbit darted off, and presently returned dragging a large bundle after it, which he spread out before the woodcutter's eager eyes.

"And is this skin really made of wishes? Oh! Mr. Rabbit, please let me put it on just for a few minutes, I would like just to make one wish. I promise I will give it you back directly."

The good-natured little rabbit willingly helped the woodcutter to put the magic skits on, which fitted him somewhat tightly, but still it felt pretty comfortable.

"Oh! how I wish this skin were altogether mine," sighed the woodcutter, "and that I never need part with it."

Hardly had he uttered these words when he felt as if the skin fitted him a shade tighter than before.

"Hallo!" said the rabbit, "what have you been wishing for? Certainly you seem to me to have diminished in size. Here, give me the skin, I must put it back where I found it, or the fairies will be after me."

But the woodcutter knew he need not give up his treasure any more, so looking disdainfully at the rabbit he stalked off in the direction of his cottage, his head full of plans for future grandeur. But Mr. Bunny, in a great rage, lopped after him, yelling with all his might, till the woodcutter, losing all patience, turned round and screamed at

him, "I wish you'd go to Jericho, and leave me alone." When immediately, the rabbit ran away as hard as he could tear, and he felt the skin again tighten round him. He knew that Mr. Bunny had gone to Jericho, and would trouble him no more.

When he got home, he told his wife his wonderful adventure, but she only thought he had been drinking, and advised him to go to bed and sleep it off, when, to convince her, he said, "I wish there was a fine supper table laid all ready here, with roast fowls, roast ducks, and roast turkeys, pies and puddings, and four flunkies to wait on my wife and me."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when a most gorgeous table appeared in the centre of the room, heavily laden with the most delicious dishes, fruits and wines, while four servants in gold and silver livery stood waiting to serve the supper.

The wife could hardly believe her eyes, and they both sat down and ate and drank and made merry, for they felt that their future was now likely to be a glorious one. Certainly, the little man felt himself a good bit smaller — his feet, when he sat, no longer reached the ground — but what of that, he would become so rich and proud that his stature would not be of the slightest consequence, so lifting a glass of wine high over his head, he said: —

"I wish to be a rich lord, with a castle instead of a cottage, and lands and woods all my own; I wish to wear velvet garments, and my wife to go about in nothing but silk dresses, I wish to eat off nothing but gold plates, and use glasses cut of pure diamonds; I wish..."

But his wife checked him just in time, for at every new wish he uttered he diminished an inch before her very eyes, and, lo! the humble cottage had disappeared, and they were sitting in a grand hall, with marble pillars and soft carpets. They looked out of the window, and, though it was evening, they could see distinctly a lovely garden planted with graceful trees and flowers, and fountains in crystal basins, while soft music filled the air.

The wood-cutter looked at his wife and she at him. Poor little man,

was only three feet high now, but he was clad in a sumptuous coat and cloak of velvet lined with ermine; his wife was dressed in a lovely silk gown, with diamonds on her arms and neck. They could hardly contain themselves for joy, and the wife, seizing her little lord in her arms, began dancing round the room to the time of the distant music. The entrance of a number of lackeys and maid-servants asking his lordship for orders for the night, reminded them of the duties of their new position, and they marched off to their bedchamber in solemn state.

The next day they spent in visiting their extensive domains, the stables, coach-houses, farms, and dairies, they found that they were indeed considered enormously wealthy, everybody bowed down to them, and listened deferentially to all they had to say. The only thing that was very annoying was that the little lord felt that his three feet of stature were evidently a source of intense amusement to all his retainers and servants.

In the afternoon, they ordered their gilded coach and six white horses to take them to pay calls on their neighbours, whom they hoped to dazzle with their great splendour. They set off in most gorgeous style, with an army of outriders and flunkies following the carriage; but to their intense astonishment the various neighbouring lords had just as fine houses and gardens as their own, and wore just as fine dresses and magnificent jewels as they did themselves, so they returned home in disgust, Joan especially was intensely annoyed. One lady on whom she called, wore three more bracelets than she did, another had seven more servants, and a third wore a dress embroidered with real pearls, while her own was only embroidered in silver; and one and all had sneered at her diminutive lord, and pointed to their own handsome husbands. She wished she could be richer and grander than they were, so that they should be obliged to bow down before her, even at the cost of another foot off her husband's stature.

So after supper she talked to her lord about her grievances, and

pointed out to him, that while he was merely the equal of his neighbours, they would always laugh at him, but once their superiors, say a royal duke or a prince, they would never dare to do so again. At first Jack refused to wish for anything else just yet, he felt himself quite small enough, and did not think that any additional grandeur could compensate him for the loss of another twelve inches. However, at last, his wife prevailed upon him, and just before going to bed he wished to become a royal duke, second only to the king, and equal to any prince in the land; and the next morning Jack and Joan woke to find themselves in a royal palace, with all the servants in royal liveries calling them their Royal Highnesses; and all the lords and ladies in the land came to pay their respects to them. Joan was proud indeed; not one lady wore such fine jewels, or had such a number of servants and palaces as she had, and though her husband was now only two feet high, all the lords stood round him, loudly laughing at his jokes, and the ladies vied with each other as to who should lift him up into his chair. That very day the king was himself coming, with the queen and all his retinue, to pay a visit to the royal duke and duchess, and grand preparations were made for His Majesty's reception.

When the King and Queen arrived, Jack and Joan received them in the grand hall of their palace. Poor little Jack! he felt very nervous when he had to kiss the Queen's hand, Joan had to lift him into a chair, which amused their majesties very much, and caused a titter among the other royal dukes, princes and princesses. During the banquet, the diminutive royal duke had to sit on a very tall stool, and had to have his food placed on his plate for him, as he could not reach the dishes; the King was quite convulsed with laughter, and hardly could eat anything; no one else dared to smile, but the Queen made sneering remarks to the duchess about her funny little husband.

That night Joan and Jack had a frightful difference of opinion: she wished to rule supreme over everybody so that even the King and the Queen, who had laughed at them, should have to come and do



homage to her and her husband, whatever be his size. In fact she wished to become the greatest empress in the world; whereas Jack felt that another foot off his height would be a trial he could never undergo. However his wife goaded him on till she had gained her point, and before the sun rose next morning, the woodcutter and his wife became the most powerful emperor and empress in the world. There was not a King or a Queen in the world that did not come to do homage before their Imperial Majesties, no war was declared between any nations or treaty signed without their consent, they exacted tribute from all duchies, principalities, and even kingdoms around; but alas! for the poor little Emperor he was only six inches high, and had to be carried in state on a cushion to all the great functions, and to stand on a gold table when he received the ambassadors from foreign courts. At banquets and state dinners he had to sit on a little golden chair placed on the table, and be fed with a salt spoon out of the Empress's plate.

Very soon he got tired of all this, more especially as, after a little while, Joan, now having reached the height of her ambition, took very little notice of him, she wouldn't allow him to have any voice in any of the affairs of state, and grew tired of seeing her husband carried before her on a cushion. Finally she had a tiny doll's house built in the garden, into which she relegated her lord and master, and only took him out to play with occasionally. Poor little Jack! He thought sorrowfully of the days when he was a fine grown man and cut wood in the forest and was master of his own little home by the old oak tree. He cursed the rabbit, the fairies, the pedlar, and chiefly his own blind stupidity in wishing to change his own contented happy lot, for all this gilded misery.

At last one day, looking out of one of the tiny windows of his doll's house, he saw a woodcutter going along merrily with his bundle of faggots, whistling a lively tune. The poor little Emperor took his jewelled crown, which he always wore, off his head, and throwing it violently on the ground, so that the gems were scattered in all

directions, he said — "Oh, how I wish I were a full-grown man, a wood-cutter again, with my wife in my own little cottage, not dreaming even of such things as kings and emperors."

When he had spoken, in one moment, the magnificent palace, the exquisite gardens had vanished, and he sat in his big armchair opposite his wife who was knitting, his feet touched the ground, and his arm reached to where Joan was sitting. They fell into each other's arms. Was it all a dream, little readers? I cannot tell you, but all I know is that henceforth Jack and Joan lived humbly in their little cottage contented and happy ever after.

**"That's Not True"**  
***"Az mdr nem igaz!"***

ONCE upon a time there was a princess who was very beautiful, but very eccentric. She announced publicly that she would only marry the man who could tell her father, the king, a story which he could not believe. Now, in a village there dwelt a poor young peasant, who, hearing of this proclamation, went up to the king's palace, and loudly knocking at the gates demanded an audience of His Majesty.

The king knew very well what the young fellow wanted, as by that time many princes and knights had come on the same errand, in the hope of winning the beautiful princess, but they had all failed.

So John, the young peasant was admitted to the royal presence.

"Good morning, your Majesty," he said.

"Good morning, my lad. Well, what do you want?" asked the king, kindly.

"So please, your Majesty, I want a wife."

"Very good, lad; but what would you keep her on?"

"Oh! I dare say I could manage to keep her pretty comfortably. My father has a pig."

"Indeed!" said the king.

"A wonderful pig, your Majesty; he has kept my father, my mother, seven sisters, and myself, for the last twenty years."

"Indeed!" said the king.

"He gives us as good a quart of milk every morning as any cow."

"Indeed!" said the king.

"Yes, your Majesty, and lays most delicious eggs for our breakfast."

"Indeed!" said the king.

"And every day my mother cuts a nice bit of bacon out of his side, and every night it grows together again."

"Indeed!" said the king.

"The other day this pig disappeared, my mother looked for him

high and low, he was nowhere to be seen."

"That was very sad," said the king.

"Finally, she found him in the larder, catching mice."

"A very useful pig!" said the king.

"My father sent him into town every day to do errands for him."

"Very wise of your father," said the king.

"He ordered all my father's clothes, aye, and mine too, of your Majesty's own tailor."

"They do appear very well made!" said the king.

"Yes, your Majesty, and he pays all the bills out of the gold he picks up on the road."

"A very precious pig," said the king.

"Latterly he has seemed unruly, and rather out of sorts."

"That's very sad!" said the king.

"He has refused to go where he is told, and won't allow my mother to have any more bacon from his side."

"He should be chastised!" said the king.

"Besides which, your Majesty, he is growing rather blind, and can't see where he is going."

"He should be led," said the king.

"Yes, your Majesty, that is why my father has just engaged your father to look after him."

"That's not true," yelled the king... then suddenly he remembered his daughter's promise. So he was obliged to allow the princess to marry the peasant's son, but this he never regretted, for the peasant's son became a most clever and amiable young prince, and lived happily with his bride and his father-in-law for very many years. Years after, when John became the king, all his people declared they had never had so wise a ruler. Then it was that he romanced no longer but was always believed and respected.



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