Laboulaye's Fairy Book

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Title: Laboulaye's Fairy Book

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Release Date: August 21, 2008 [EBook #26386]

Language: English

Produced by Sankar Viswanathan, David Edwards, and the
Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net
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HE FLUNG HUGE MASSES OF ROCK AFTER THE VESSEL

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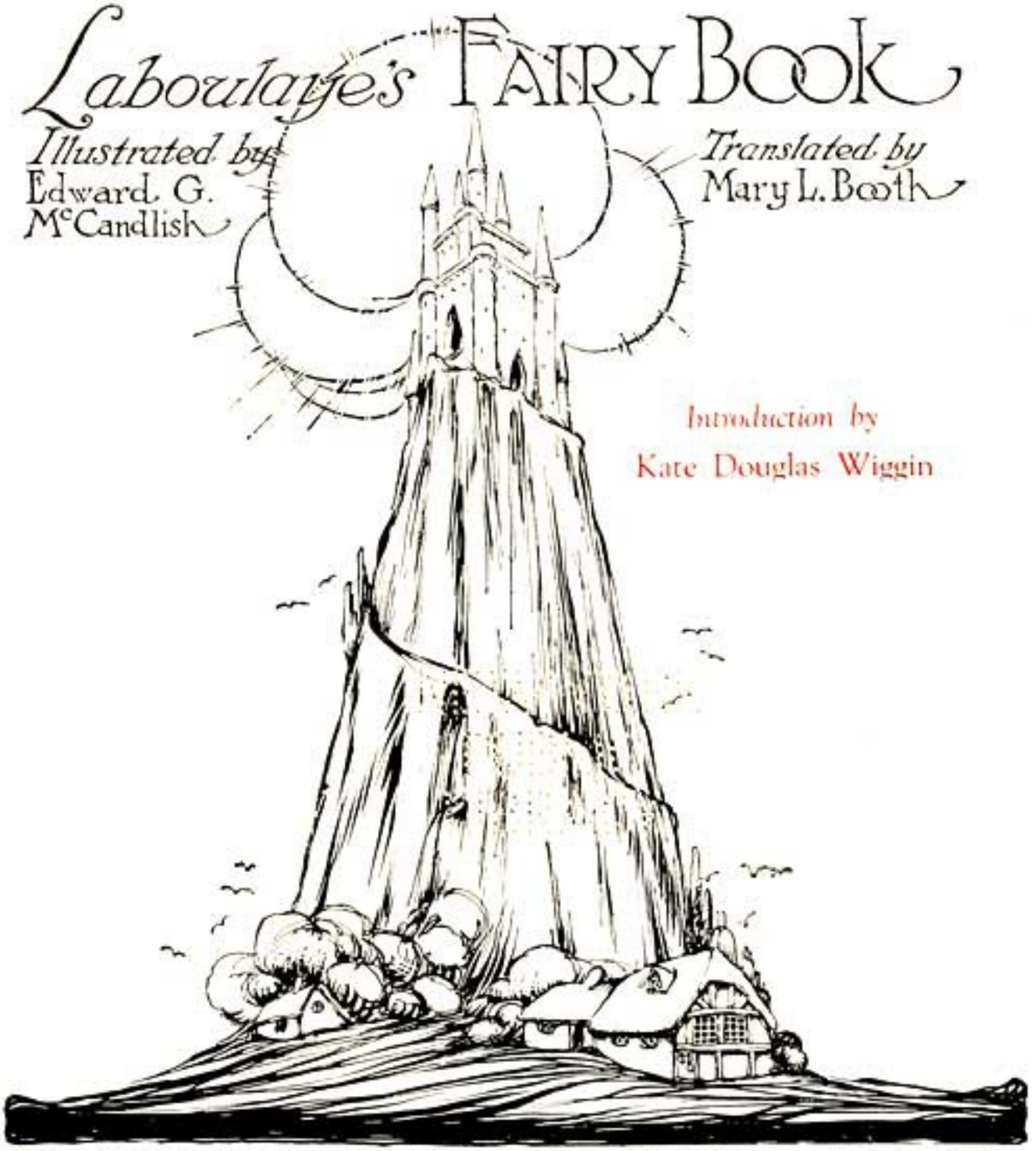

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK and LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

By KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

There was once a green book, deliciously thick, with gilt-edged pages and the name of the author in gilt script on the front cover.

Like an antique posy ring, it was a "box of jewels, shop of rarities"; it was a veritable Pandora's box, and if you laid warm, childish hands upon it and held it pressed close to your ear, you could hear, as Pandora did, soft rustlings, murmurings, flutterings, and whisperings from the fairy folk within. For this was a fairy book—Edouard Laboulaye's "Tales," and its heroes and heroines became first the daily companions, and then the lifetime possession, of the two little girls to whom it belonged.

From the New England village where it was originally given to them, it traveled to the far West and its tales were told to countless immigrant children of San Francisco, whose great eyes opened wider still as they listened, breathless, to stories beloved by their ancestors. In later years the green volume journeyed by clumsy, rattling stage and rawboned nags to Mexico, and the extraordinary adventures of "Yvon and Finette," "Carlino," and "Graceful" were repeated in freshly learned Spanish, to many a group of brown-cheeked little people on the hillsides of Sonora.

And now, long, long afterward, there stands on a shelf above my desk the very selfsame worn green volume, read and re-read a hundred times, but so tenderly and respectfully that it has kept all its pages and both its covers; and on this desk itself are the proofs of a new edition with clear, beautiful print and gay pictures by Edward McCandlish!

To be asked to write an introduction to this particular book seems insufferable patronage; yet one would do it for love of Laboulaye, or for the sake of one's own "little past," or to draw one more young reader into the charmed circle that will welcome these pages.

The two children who adored Laboulaye's "Tales" possessed many another fairy book, so why did this especial volume hold a niche apart

in the gallery of their hearts?

Partly, perhaps, because of the Gallic wit and vivacity with which the tales are told, for children are never too young to appreciate the charms of style.

You remember, possibly, the French chef who, being imprisoned with no materials save the tools of his trade, and commanded on pain of death to produce an omelette, proudly emerged at last, bearing a savory dish made out of the sole of his shoe?

Of even such stuff Laboulaye could have concocted a delectable tale; but with Brittany, Bohemia, Italy, Dalmatia, Hungary, and Spain for his storehouses, one has only to taste to know how finely flavored are the dishes he sets forth.

In his preface to the first American edition Laboulaye writes a letter to Mlle. Gabrielle Laboulaye, aged two! In it he says: "When you throw away this book with your doll, do not be too severe with your old grandfather for wasting his time on such trifles as fairy stories. Experience will teach you that the truest and sweetest things in life are not those which we see, but of which we dream." Happy the children who have this philosophy set before them early in life.

Like the fairy tales Robert Louis Stevenson remembered, these of Laboulaye's have "the golden smell of broom and the shade of pine," and they will come back to the child whenever the Wind of Memory blows.

In common with the stories of Charles Perrault, literary parent of the fairy tale, Laboulaye's charming narratives have a certain unique quality due to the fact that they were intended and collected for the author's own children, were told to them round the fireside in the evening, and so received at first hand the comment and suggestion of a bevy of competent, if somewhat youthful, critics.

It is said that there is a great scarcity of fairy folk in modern France; and that, terrified by the thunders of the Revolution, they left their unhappy country in a body during its stormy years, first assembling in grateful concourse around the tomb of Perrault, upon whose memory they conferred the boon of immortality.

If this story is true—and the last reported act of the fairies on leaving France makes it appear so—then we may be sure that a few of the more hardy and adventurous fays skipped back again across the

border and hid themselves in Laboulaye's box of jewels, where they give to each gem an even brighter sheen and a more magical luster.

"Quillcote," Hollis, Maine.

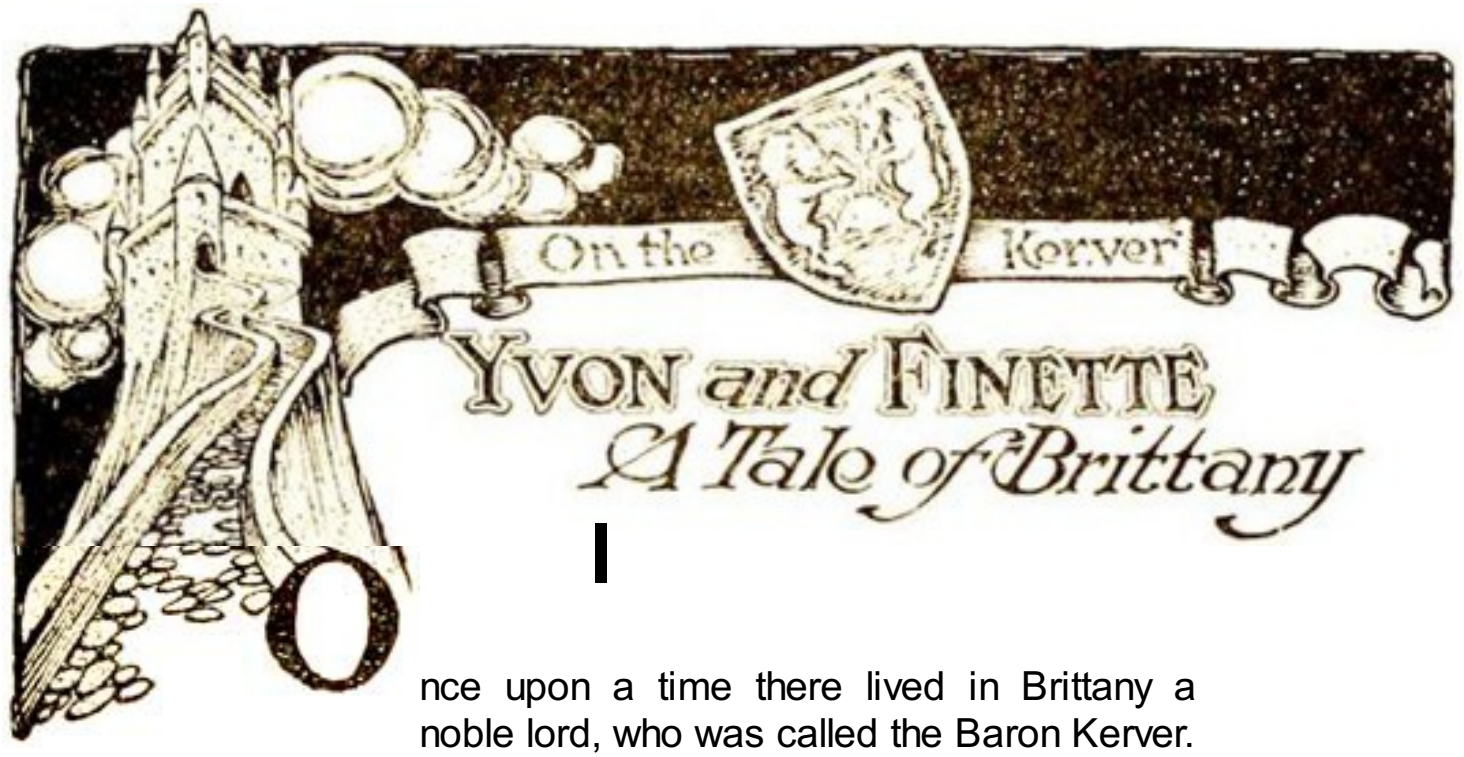
August, 1920.

Laboulaye's Fairy Book

On the Kerver

Yvon *and* Finette

A Tale of Brittany



Once upon a time there lived in Brittany a noble lord, who was called the Baron Kerver. His manor-house was the most beautiful in the province. It was a great Gothic castle, with a groined roof and walls, covered with carving, that looked at a distance like a vine climbing over an arbor. On the first floor six stained-glass balcony windows looked out on each side toward the rising and the setting sun. In the morning, when the baron, mounted on his dun mare, went forth into the forest, followed by his tall greyhounds, he saw at each window one of his daughters, with prayer-book in hand, praying for the house of Kerver, and who, with their fair curls, blue eyes, and clasped hands, might have been taken for six Madonnas in an azure niche. At evening, when the sun declined and the baron returned homeward, after riding round his domains, he perceived from afar, in the windows looking toward the west, six sons, with dark locks and eagle gaze, the hope and pride of the family, that might have been taken for six sculptured knights at the portal of a church. For ten leagues round, all who wished to quote a happy father and a powerful lord named the Baron Kerver.

The castle had but twelve windows, and the baron had thirteen children. The last, the one that had no place, was a handsome boy of sixteen, by the name of Yvon. As usual, he was the best beloved. In the morning, at his departure, and at evening, on his return, the baron always found Yvon waiting on the threshold to embrace him. With his hair falling to his waist, his graceful figure, his wilful air, and his bold bearing, Yvon was beloved by all the Bretons. At twelve years of age he had bravely attacked and killed a wolf with an ax, which had won him the name of *Fearless*. He deserved the title, for never was there a bolder heart.

One day, when the baron had stayed at home, and was amusing himself by breaking a lance with his squire, Yvon entered the armory in a traveling dress, and, bending one knee to the ground, "My lord and father," said he to the baron, "I come to ask your blessing. The house of Kerver is rich in knights, and has no need of a child; it is time for me to go to seek my fortune. I wish to go to distant countries to try my strength and to make myself a name."

"You are right, Fearless," replied the baron, more moved than he wished to appear. "I will not keep you back; I have no right to do so; but you are very young, my child; perhaps it would be better for you to stay another year with us."

"I am sixteen, my father; at that age you had already fought one of the proudest lords of the country. I have not forgotten that our arms are a unicorn ripping up a lion, and our motto. Onward! I do not wish the Kervers to blush for their last child."

Yvon received his father's blessing, shook hands with his brothers, embraced his sisters, bid adieu to all the weeping vassals, and set out with a light heart.

Nothing stopped him on his way. A river appeared, he swam it; a mountain, he climbed it; a forest, he made his way through it with the sun for a guide. "*On—the Kerver!*" he cried, whenever he met with an obstacle, and went straight forward in spite of everything.

For three years he had been roaming over the world in search of adventures, sometimes conquering, sometimes conquered, always bold and gay, when he received an offer to go to fight the heathen of Norway. To kill unbelievers and to conquer a kingdom was a double pleasure. Yvon enlisted twelve brave comrades, freighted a ship, and hoisted from the mainmast a blue standard with the unicorn and motto

of the Kervers.

The sea was calm, the wind fair, and the night serene. Yvon, stretched on the deck, watched the stars, and sought the one which cast its trembling light on his father's castle. All at once the vessel struck upon a rock; a terrible crash was heard; the sails fell like tinder; and an enormous wave burst over the deck and swept away everything upon it.

"*On—the Kerver!*" cried Yvon, as soon as his head appeared above the water, and he began to swim as tranquilly as if he had been bathing in the lake of the old castle. Happily the moon was rising. Yvon saw, at a little distance, a black speck among the silvery waves —it was land. He approached it, not without difficulty, and finally succeeded in gaining a foothold. Dripping wet, exhausted with fatigue, and out of breath, he dragged himself on the sand, then, without more anxiety, said his prayers and went to sleep.

II

In the morning, on awaking, Yvon tried to discover in what country he had been cast. He saw in the distance a house as large as a church, with windows fifty feet in height. He walked a whole day before reaching it, and at last found himself in front of an immense door, with a knocker so heavy that it was impossible for a man to lift it.

Yvon took a great stone and began to knock. "Come in," cried a voice that sounded like the roar of a bull. At the same instant the door opened, and the little Breton found himself in the presence of a giant not less than forty feet in height.

"What is your name, and what do you want here?" said the giant, taking up Yvon between his thumb and finger and lifting him from the ground so as to see him better.

"My name is Fearless, and I am seeking my fortune," answered Yvon, looking at the monster with an air of defiance.

"Well, brave Fearless, your fortune is made," said the giant, in a mocking tone. "I am in need of a servant and I will give you the place. You can go to work directly. This is the time for leading my sheep to the pasture; you may clean the stable while I am gone. I shall give you nothing else to do," added he, bursting into a laugh. "You see that I am a good master. Do your task, and, above all things, don't prowl about the house, or it will cost you your life."

"Certainly I have a good master; the work is not hard," thought Yvon, when the giant was gone. "I have plenty of time to sweep the stable. What shall I do meanwhile to amuse myself? Shall I look about the house? Since I am forbidden to do so, it must be because there is something to see."

He entered the first room, and saw a large fireplace in which a great pot was hanging, suspended from a hook. The pot was boiling, but there was no fire on the hearth.

"What does this mean?" thought Yvon; "there is some mystery here." He cut off a lock of his hair, dipped it into the pot, and took it out all coated with copper.

"Oh, oh!" cried he, "this is a new kind of soup; anybody that swallows it must have an iron-clad stomach."

He went into the next room; there also a pot was suspended from a hook, and boiling without fire. Yvon dipped a lock of hair into it, and took it out all coated with silver.

"The broth is not so rich as this in the Kerver kitchen," thought he, "but it may have a better taste."

Upon this, he entered the third room. There also a pot was suspended from a hook, and boiling without fire. Yvon dipped a lock of hair into it, and took it out all coated with gold. It shone so brightly that it might have been mistaken for a sunbeam.

"Good!" cried he. "In our country the old women have a saying, 'Everything gets worse and worse'; here it is just the contrary—everything gets better and better. What shall I find in the fourth room, I wonder—diamond soup?"

He pushed open the door and saw something rarer than precious stones. This was a young woman of such marvelous beauty that Yvon, dazzled, fell on his knees at the sight.

"Unfortunate youth!" cried she, in a trembling voice, "what are you doing here?"

"I belong to the house," answered Yvon; "the giant took me into his service this morning."

"His service!" repeated the young girl. "May Heaven preserve you from it!"

"Why so?" said Yvon. "I have a good master; the work is not hard. The stable once swept, my task is finished."

"Yes, and how will you set to work to sweep it?" said the lady. "If you sweep it in the usual way, for every forkful of dung that you throw out of the door, ten will come in at the window. But I will tell you what to do. Turn the fork and sweep with the handle, and the dung will instantly fly out of itself."

"I will obey," said Yvon; upon which he sat down by the young girl and began to talk with her. She was the daughter of a fairy, whom the wretched giant had made his slave. Friendship soon springs up between companions in misfortune. Before the end of the day Finette

(for that was the lady's name) and Yvon had already promised to belong to each other if they could escape from their abominable master. The difficulty was to find the means.

Time passes quickly in this kind of talk. Evening was approaching when Finette sent away her new friend, advising him to sweep the stable before the giant came home.

Yvon took down the fork and attempted to use it as he had seen it done at his father's castle. He soon had enough of it. In less than a second there was so much dung in the stable that the poor boy knew not which way to turn. He did as Finette had bid him; he turned the fork and swept with the handle, when, behold! in the twinkling of an eye the stable was as clean as if no cattle had ever entered it.

The task finished, Yvon seated himself on a bench before the door of the house. As soon as he saw the giant coming he lolled back in his seat, crossed his legs, and began to sing one of his native airs.

"Have you cleaned the stable?" asked the giant, with a frown.

"Everything is ready, master," answered Yvon, without troubling himself to move.

"I am going to see for myself," howled the giant. He entered the stable grumbling, found everything in order, and came out furious.

"You have seen my Finette," cried he; "this trick did not come from your own head."

"What is myfinette?" asked Yvon, opening his mouth and shutting his eyes. "Is it one of the animals that you have in this country? Show it to me, master."

"Hold your tongue, fool," replied the giant; "you will see her sooner than you will want to."

The next morning the giant gathered his sheep together to lead them to the pasture, but before setting out he ordered Yvon to go in the course of the day in search of his horse, which was turned out to graze on the mountain. "After that," said he, bursting into a laugh, "you can rest all day long. You see that I am a good master. Do your task; and, above all things, don't prowl about the house or I will cut off your head."

Yvon winked his eye as the giant left. "Yes, you are a good master,"

said he, between his teeth. "I understand your tricks; but, in spite of your threats, I shall go into the house and talk with your Finette. It remains to be seen whether she will not be more mine than yours."

He ran to the young girl's room. "Hurrah!" cried he; "I have nothing to do all day but to go to the mountain after a horse."

"Very well," said Finette. "How will you set to work to ride him?"

"A fine question," returned Yvon. "As if it was a difficult thing to ride a horse! I fancy that I have ridden worse ones than this."

"It is not so easy as you think," replied Finette; "but I will tell you what to do. Take the bit that hangs behind the stable door, and, when the animal rushes toward you breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils, force it straight between his teeth; he will instantly become as gentle as a lamb, and you can do what you please with him."

"I will obey," said Yvon; upon which he sat down by the side of Finette and began to talk with her. They talked of everything; but, however far their fancy strayed, they always came back to the point that they were promised to each other and that they must escape from the giant. Time passes quickly in this kind of talk. The evening drew nigh. Yvon had forgotten the horse and the mountain, and Finette was obliged to send him away, advising him to bring back the animal before his master's arrival.

Yvon took down the bit that was hidden behind the stable door and hastened to the mountain, when, lo! a horse almost as large as an elephant rushed toward him at full gallop, breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils. Yvon firmly awaited the huge animal, and, the moment he opened his enormous jaws, thrust between them the bit; when, lo! the horse instantly became as gentle as a lamb. Yvon made him kneel down, sprang on his back, and tranquilly returned home.

His task finished, Yvon seated himself on the bench before the door of the house. As soon as he saw the giant coming, he lolled back in his seat, crossed his legs, and began to sing one of his native airs.

"Have you brought back the horse?" asked the giant, with a frown.

"Yes, master," answered Yvon, without taking the trouble to move. "He is a fine animal and does you credit. He is gentle, well trained, and as quiet as a lamb. He is feeding yonder in the stable."

"I am going to see for myself," howled the giant. He entered the stable, grumbling, found everything in order, and came out furious.

"You have seen my Finette," he said; "this trick did not come from your own head."

"Oh, master," returned Yvon, opening his mouth and shutting his eyes, "it is the same story over again. What is this myfinette? Once for all, show me this monster."

"Hold your tongue, fool," returned the giant; "you will see her sooner than you will want to."

The third day at dawn the giant gathered his sheep together to lead them to the pasture; but, before setting out, he said to Yvon:

"To-day you must go to the bottomless pit to collect my rent. After that," continued he, bursting into a laugh, "you may rest all day long. You see that I am a good master."

"A good master, so be it," murmured Yvon, "but the task is none the less hard. I will go and see my Finette, as the giant says; I have great need of her help to get through to-day's business."

When Finette had learned what was the task of the day, "Well," said she, "how will you go to work to do it?"

"I don't know," said Yvon, sadly; "I have never been to the bottomless pit, and, even if I knew the way there, I should not know what to ask for. Tell me what to do."

"Do you see that great rock yonder?" said Finette; "that is one of the gates of the bottomless pit. Take this stick, knock three times on the stone, and a demon will come out all streaming with flames, who will ask you how much you want. Take care to answer, 'No more than I can carry.'"

"I will obey," said Yvon; upon which he took a seat by the side of Finette and began to talk with her. He would have been there till this time if the young girl had not sent him to the great rock, when the evening drew nigh, to execute the giant's commands.

On reaching the spot pointed out to him, Yvon found a great block of granite. He struck it three times with the stick, when, lo! the rock opened and a demon came forth all streaming with flames.

"What do you want?" he cried.

"I have come for the giant's rent," answered Yvon, calmly.

"How much do you want?"

"I never want any more than I can carry," replied the Breton.

"It is well for you that you do not," returned the man in flames. "Enter this cavern and you will find what you want."

Yvon entered, and opened his eyes wide. Everywhere he saw nothing but gold, silver, diamonds, carbuncles, and emeralds. They were as numerous as the sands on the seashore. The young Kerver filled a sack, threw it across his shoulder, and tranquilly returned home.

His task finished, our Breton seated himself on the bench before the door of the house. As soon as he saw the giant coming he lolled back in his seat, crossed his legs, and began to sing one of his native airs.

"Have you been to the bottomless pit to collect my rent?" asked the giant, with a frown.

"Yes, master," answered Yvon, without taking the trouble to stir. "The sack is right there before your eyes; you can count it."

"I am going to see for myself," howled the giant. He untied the strings of the sack, which was so full that the gold and silver rolled in all directions.

"You have seen my Finette," he cried; "this trick did not come from your own head."

"Don't you know but one song?" said Yvon, opening his mouth and shutting his eyes. "It is the old story, myfinette, myfinette. Once for all, show me this thing."

"Well, well," roared the giant, with fury, "wait till to-morrow and you shall make her acquaintance."

HE WAS SOON SNORING SO LOUDLY THAT IT SEEMED LIKE THUNDER SHAKING THE MOUNTAINS

"Thank you, master," said Yvon. "It is very good of you; but I see from

your face that you are laughing at me."

III

The next morning the giant went out without giving Yvon any orders, which troubled Finette. At noon he returned without his flock, complaining of the heat and fatigue, and said to the young girl:

"You will find a child, my servant, at the door. Cut his throat, put him into the great pot to boil, and call me when the broth is ready." Saying this, he stretched himself on the bed to take a nap, and was soon snoring so loudly that it seemed like thunder shaking the mountains.

Finette prepared a log of wood, took a large knife, and called Yvon. She pricked his little finger; three drops of blood fell on the log.

"That is enough," said Finette; "now help me to fill the pot."

They threw into it all that they could find—old clothes, old shoes, old carpets, and everything else. Finette then took Yvon by the hand and led him through the three antechambers, where she ran in a mold three bullets of gold, two bullets of silver, and one bullet of copper, after which they quitted the house and ran toward the sea.

"*On—the Kerver!*" cried Yvon, as soon as he saw himself in the country. "Explain yourself, dear Finette; what farce are we playing now?"

"Let us run—let us run!" she cried; "if we do not quit this wretched island before night, it is all over with us."

"*On—the Kerver!*" replied Yvon, laughing, "and down with the giant!"

When he had snored a full hour, the giant stretched his limbs, half opened one eye, and cried, "Is it ready?"

"It is just beginning to boil," answered the first drop of blood on the log.

The giant turned over, and snored louder than ever for an hour or two longer. Then he stretched his limbs, half opened one eye, and cried out: "Do you hear me? Is it almost ready?"

"It is half done," answered the second drop of blood on the log.

The giant turned over, and slept an hour longer. Then he yawned, stretched his great limbs, and cried out, impatiently:

"Isn't it ready yet?"

"It is ready now," answered the third drop of blood on the log.

The giant sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, and looked around to see who had spoken; but it was in vain to look; he saw nobody.

"Finette," howled he, "why isn't the table set?"

There was no answer. The giant, furious, sprang out of bed, seized a ladle, which looked like a caldron with a pitchfork for a handle, and plunged it into the pot to taste the soup.

"Finette!" howled he, "you haven't salted it. What sort of soup is this? I see neither meat nor vegetables."

No; but, in return, he saw his carpet, which had not quite all boiled to pieces. At this sight he fell into such a fit of rage that he could not keep his feet.

"Villains!" said he, "you have played a fine trick on me; but you shall pay for it."

He rushed out with a stick in his hand, and strode along at such a rate that in a quarter of an hour he discovered the two fugitives still far from the seashore. He uttered such a cry of joy that the earth shook for twelve leagues around.

Finette stopped, trembling. Yvon clasped her to his heart.

"*On—the Kerver!*" said he; "the sea is not far off; we shall be there before our enemy."

"Here he is! here he is!" cried Finette, pointing to the giant not a hundred yards off; "we are lost if this charm does not save us."

She took the copper bullet and threw it on the ground, saying,

"Copper bullet, save us, pray;
Stop the giant on his way."

And behold, the earth cracked apart with a terrific noise, and an enormous fissure, a bottomless pit, stopped the giant just as he was stretching out his hand to seize his prey.

"Let us fly!" cried Finette, grasping the arm of Yvon, who was gazing at the giant with a swaggering air, defying him to come on.

The giant ran backward and forward along the abyss, like a bear in his cage, seeking a passage everywhere and finding none; then, with a furious jerk, he tore up an immense oak by the roots and flung it across the gap. The branches of the oak nearly crushed the children as it fell. The giant seated himself astride the huge tree, which bent under his weight, and crept slowly along, suspended between heaven and earth, entangled as he was among the branches. When he reached the other side, Yvon and Finette were already on the shore, with the sea rolling before them.

Alas! there was neither bark nor ship. The fugitives were lost. Yvon, always brave, picked up stones to attack the giant and to sell his life dearly. Finette, trembling with fear, threw one of the silver bullets into the sea, saying,

"Silver bullet, bright and pliant,
Save us from this frightful giant."

Scarcely had she spoken the magic words when a beautiful ship rose from the waves like a swan spreading its white wings. Yvon and Finette plunged into the sea; a rope was thrown them by an invisible hand, and when the furious giant reached the shore the ship was receding rapidly at full sail, leaving behind it a long furrow of shining foam.

Giants do not like the water. This fact is certified to by old Homer, who knew Polyphemus; and the same observation will be found in all natural histories worthy of the name. Finette's master resembled Polyphemus. He roared with rage when he saw his slaves about to escape him. He ran hesitatingly along the shore; he flung huge masses of rock after the vessel, which happily fell by the side of it and only made great black holes in the water; and, finally, mad with anger, he plunged head foremost into the sea and began to swim after the ship with frightful speed. At each stroke he advanced forty feet, blowing like a whale, and like a whale cleaving the waves. By degrees he gained on his enemies; one more effort would bring him within reach of the rudder, and already he was stretching out his arm to seize it, when Finette threw the second silver bullet into the sea and cried, in tears,

"Silver bullet, bright and pliant,

Save us from this frightful giant."

Suddenly from the midst of the foam darted forth a gigantic swordfish, with a sword at least twenty feet in length. It rushed straight toward the giant, who scarcely had time to dive, chased him under the water, pursued him on the top of the waves, followed him closely whichever way he turned, and forced him to flee as fast as he could to his island, where he finally landed with the greatest difficulty, and fell upon the shore dripping, worn out, and conquered.

"*On—the Kerver!*" cried Yvon; "we are saved."

"Not yet," said Finette, trembling. "The giant has a witch for a godmother; I fear that she will revenge on me the insult offered to her godson. My art tells me, my dear Yvon, that if you quit me a single instant until you give me your name in the chapel of the Kervers I have everything to dread."

"By the unicorn of my ancestors," cried Yvon, "you have the heart of a hare and not of a hero! Am I not here? Am I going to abandon you? Do you believe that Providence has saved us from the fangs of that monster to wreck us in port?"

He laughed so gaily that Finette laughed in turn at the terror that had seized her.

IV

The rest of the voyage passed off admirably. An invisible hand seemed to impel the ship onward. Twenty days after their departure the boat landed Yvon and Finette near Kerver Castle. Once on shore, Yvon turned to thank the crew. No one was there. Both boat and ship had vanished under the waves, leaving no trace behind but a gull on the wing.

Yvon recognized the spot where he had so often gathered shells and chased the crabs to their holes when a child. Half an hour's walk would bring him in sight of the towers of the old castle. His heart beat; he looked tenderly at Finette and saw, for the first time, that her dress was fantastic and unworthy of a woman about to enter the noble house of Kerver.

"My dear child," said he, "the baron, my father, is a noble lord, accustomed to be treated with respect. I cannot introduce you to him in this gipsy dress; neither is it fitting that you should enter our great castle on foot like a peasant. Wait for me a few moments, and I will bring you a horse and one of my sister's dresses. I wish you to be received like a lady of high degree. I wish my father himself to meet you on your arrival, and hold it an honor to give you his hand."

"Yvon, Yvon," cried Finette, "do not quit me, I beg you. Once returned to your castle, I know that you will forget me."

"Forget you!" exclaimed Yvon. "If any one else were to offer me such an insult I would teach him with my sword to suspect a Kerver. Forget you, my Finette! You do not know the fidelity of a Breton."

That the Bretons are faithful no one doubts; but that they are still more headstrong is a justice that none will deny them. It was useless for poor Finette to plead in her most loving tones; she was forced to yield. She resigned herself with a heavy heart, and said to Yvon:

"Go without me, then, to your castle, but only stay long enough to speak to your friends; then go straight to the stable, and return as soon as possible. You will be surrounded by people; act as if you saw no one, and, above all, do not eat or drink anything whatever. Should you take only a glass of water, evil would come upon us both."

Yvon promised and swore all that Finette asked, but he smiled in his heart at this feminine weakness. He was sure of himself; and he thought with pride how different a Breton was from those fickle Frenchmen whose words, they say, are borne away by the first breath of the wind.

On entering the old castle he could scarcely recognize its dark walls. All the windows were festooned with leaves and flowers within and without; the courtyard was strewn with fragrant grass; on one side was spread tables groaning under their weight; on the other, musicians, mounted on casks, were playing merry airs. The vassals, dressed in their holiday attire, were singing and dancing and dancing and singing. It was a great day of rejoicing at the castle. The baron himself was smiling. It is true that he had just married his fifth daughter to the Knight of Kervalec. This marriage added another quartering to the illustrious escutcheon of the Kervers.

Yvon, recognized and welcomed by all the crowd, was instantly surrounded by his relatives, who embraced him and shook him by the hand. Where had he been? Where did he come from? Had he conquered a kingdom, a duchy, or a barony? Had he brought the bride the jewels of some queen? Had the fairies protected him? How many rivals had he overthrown? All these questions were showered upon him without reply. Yvon respectfully kissed his father's hand, hastened to his sisters' chamber, took two of their finest dresses, went to the stable, saddled a pony, mounted a beautiful Spanish jennet, and was about to quit the castle, when he found his relatives, friends, and vassals all standing in his way, their glasses in their hands, ready to drink their young lord's health and his safe return.

Yvon gracefully thanked them, bowed, and made his way by degrees through the crowd, when, just as he was about to cross the drawbridge, a fair-haired lady, with a haughty and disdainful air, a stranger to him, a sister of the bridegroom, perhaps, approached him, holding a pomegranate in her hand.

"My handsome knight," said she, with a singular smile, "you surely will not refuse a lady's first request. Taste this pomegranate, I entreat you. If you are neither hungry nor thirsty after so long a journey, I suppose at least that you have not forgotten the laws of politeness."

Yvon dared not refuse this appeal. He was very wrong. Scarcely had he tasted the pomegranate when he looked round him like a man

waking from a dream.

"What am I doing on this horse?" thought he. "What means this pony that I am leading? Is not my place in my father's house at my sister's wedding? Why should I quit the castle?"

He threw the bridle to one of the grooms, leaped lightly to the ground, and offered his hand to the fair-haired lady, who accepted him as her attendant on the spot, and gave him her bouquet to hold as a special mark of favor.

Before the evening was over there was another betrothed couple in the castle. Yvon had pledged his faith to the unknown lady and Finette was forgotten.

V

Poor Finette, seated on the seashore, waited all day long for Yvon, but Yvon did not come. The sun was setting in the fiery waves when Finette rose, sighing, and took the way to the castle in her turn. She had not walked long in a steep road, bordered with thorn-trees in blossom, when she found herself in front of a wretched hut at the door of which stood an old woman about to milk her cow. Finette approached her and, making a low courtesy, begged a shelter for the night.

SHE FOUND HERSELF IN FRONT OF A WRETCHED HUT AT THE DOOR OF WHICH STOOD AN OLD WOMAN, OF WHOM SHE BEGGED SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT

The old woman looked at the stranger from head to foot. With her

buskins trimmed with fur, her full red petticoat, her blue jacket edged with jet, and her diadem, Finette looked more like an Egyptian princess than a Christian. The old woman frowned and, shaking her fist in the face of the poor forsaken girl, "Begone, witch!" she cried; "there is no room for you in this honest house."

"My good mother," said Finette, "give me only a corner of the stable."

"Oh," said the old woman, laughing and showing the only tooth she had left, which projected from her mouth like a bear's tusk, "so you want a corner of the stable, do you! Well, you shall have it if you will fill my milk-pail with gold."

"It is a bargain," said Finette, quietly. She opened a leather purse which she wore at her belt, took from it a golden bullet, and threw it into the milk-pail, saying,

"Golden bullet, precious treasure,
Save me, if it be thy pleasure."

And behold! the pieces of gold began to dance about in the pail; they rose higher and higher, flapping about like fish in a net, while the old woman, on her knees, gazed with wonder at the sight.

When the pail was full the old woman rose, put her arm through the handle, and said to Finette, "Madam, all is yours, the house, the cow, and everything else. Hurrah! I am going to the town to live like a lady with nothing to do. Oh dear, how I wish I were only sixty!" And, shaking her crutch, without looking backward, she set out on a run toward Kerver Castle.

Finette entered the house. It was a wretched hovel, dark, low, damp, bad-smelling, and full of dust and spiders' webs—a horrible refuge for a woman accustomed to living in the giant's grand castle. Without seeming troubled, Finette went to the hearth, on which a few green boughs were smoking, took another golden bullet from her purse, and threw it into the fire, saying,

"Golden bullet, precious treasure,
Save me, if it be thy pleasure."

The gold melted, bubbled up, and spread all over the house like running water, and behold! the whole cottage, the walls, the thatch, the wooden rocking-chair, the stool, the chest, the bed, the cow's horns—everything, even to the spiders in their webs, was turned to gold. The

house gleamed in the moonlight, among the trees, like a star in the night.

When Finette had milked the cow and drank a little new milk, she threw herself on the bed without undressing, and, worn out by the fatigue of the day, fell asleep in the midst of her tears.

Old women do not know how to hold their tongues, at least in Brittany. Finette's hostess had scarcely reached the village when she hastened to the house of the steward. He was an important personage, who had more than once made her tremble when she had driven her cow into her neighbor's pasture by mistake. The steward listened to the old woman's story, shook his head, and said it looked like witchcraft; then he mysteriously brought a pair of scales, weighed the guineas, which he found to be genuine and of full weight, kept as many of them as he could, and advised the owner to tell no one of this strange adventure. "If it should come to the ears of the bailiff or the seneschal," said he, "the least that would happen to you, mother, would be to lose every one of these beautiful bright guineas. Justice is impartial; it knows neither favor nor repugnance; it takes the whole."

The old woman thanked the steward for his advice, and promised to follow it. She kept her word so well that she only told her story that evening to two neighbors, her dearest friends, both of whom swore on the heads of their little children to keep it secret. The oath was a solemn one, and so well kept that at noon the next day there was not a boy of six in the village that did not point his finger at the old woman, while the very dogs seemed to bark in their language, "Here is the old woman with her guineas!"

A girl that amuses herself by filling milk-pails with gold is not to be found every day. Even though she should be something of a witch, such a girl would none the less be a treasure in a family. The steward, who was a bachelor, made this wise reflection that night on going to bed. Before dawn he rose to make his rounds in the direction of the stranger's cottage. By the first gleam of day he spied something shining in the distance like a light among the woods. On reaching the place, he was greatly surprised to find a golden cottage instead of the wretched hut that had stood there the day before. But, on entering the house, he was much more surprised and delighted to find a beautiful young girl, with raven hair, sitting by the window and spinning on her distaff with the air of an empress.

Like all men, the steward did himself justice, and knew, at the bottom

of his heart, that there was not a woman in the world that would not be too happy to give him her hand. Without hesitating, therefore, he declared to Finette that he had come to marry her. The young girl burst out laughing, upon which the steward flew into a passion.

"Take care!" said he, in a terrible voice. "I am the master here. No one knows who you are or whence you came. The gold that you gave the old woman has raised suspicions. There is magic in this house. If you do not accept me for a husband this very instant, I will arrest you, and before night, perhaps, a witch will be burned before Kerver Castle."

"You are very amiable," said Finette, with a charming grimace; "you have a peculiar way of paying court to ladies. Even when they have decided not to refuse, a gallant man spares their blushes."

"We Bretons are plain-spoken people," replied the steward; "we go straight to the point. Marriage or prison, which do you choose?"

"Oh!" cried Finette, laying down the distaff, "there are the firebrands falling all over the room."

"Don't trouble yourself," said the steward; "I will pick them up."

"Lay them carefully on the top of the ashes," returned Finette. "Have you the tongs?"

"Yes," said the steward, picking up the crackling coals.

"*Abracadabra!*" cried Finette, rising. "Villain, may the tongs hold you, and may you hold the tongs till sunset!"

No sooner said than done. The wicked steward stood there all day with the tongs in his hand, picking up and throwing back the burning coals that snapped in his face and the hot ashes that flew into his eyes. It was useless for him to shout, pray, weep, and blaspheme; no one heard him. If Finette had stayed at home, she would doubtless have taken pity on him; but after putting the spell upon him, she hastened to the seashore, where, forgetting everything else, she watched for Yvon in vain.

The moment that the sun set, the tongs fell from the steward's hands. He did not stop to finish his errand, but ran as if the devil or justice were at his heels. He made such leaps, he uttered such groans, he was so blackened, scorched, and benumbed, that every one in the

village was afraid of him, thinking that he was mad. The boldest tried to speak to him, but he fled without answering, and hid himself in his house, more ashamed than a wolf that has left his paw in the trap.

At evening, when Finette returned home in despair, instead of the steward she found another visitor little less formidable. The bailiff had heard the story of the guineas and had also made up his mind to marry the stranger. He was not rough, like the steward, but a fat, good-natured man that could not speak without bursting into a laugh, showing his great yellow teeth, and puffing and blowing like an ox, though at heart he was not less obstinate or less threatening than his predecessor. Finette entreated the bailiff to leave her alone. He laughed, and hinted to her, in a good-natured way, that, by right of his office, he had the power to imprison and hang people without process of law. She clasped her hands and begged him with tears to go. For his only answer, he took a roll of parchment from his pocket, wrote on it a contract of marriage, and declared to Finette that, should he stay all night, he would not leave the house till she had signed the promise.

"Nevertheless," said he, "if you do not like my person, I have another parchment here on which I will write an agreement to live apart; and if my sight annoys you you have only to shut your eyes."

"Why," said Finette, "I might decide to do as you wish if I were sure of finding a good husband in you; but I am afraid."

"Of what, my dear child?" asked the bailiff, smiling, and already as proud as a peacock.

"Do you think," said she, with a pettish air, "that a good husband would leave that door wide open and not know that his wife was freezing with cold?"

"You are right, my dear," said the bailiff; "it was very stupid in me. I will go and shut it."

"Have you hold of the knob?" asked Finette.

"Yes, my charmer," answered the happy bailiff; "I am just shutting the door."

"*Abracadabra!*" cried Finette. "May you hold the door, villain, and may the door hold you till daybreak."

And behold! the door opened and shut, and slammed against the

walls like an eagle flapping its wings. You may judge what a dance the poor captive kept up all night. Never had he tried such a waltz, and I imagine that he never wished to dance a second one of the same sort. Sometimes the door swung open with him in the street; sometimes it flew back and crushed him against the wall. He swung backward and forward, screaming, swearing, weeping, and praying, but all in vain; the door was deaf, and Finette asleep.

At daybreak his hands unclasped and he fell in the road head foremost. Without waiting to finish his errand, he ran as if the Moors were after him. He did not even turn round, for fear that the door might be at his heels. Fortunately for him, all were still asleep when he reached the village, and he could hide himself in bed without any one seeing his deplorable plight. This was a great piece of good fortune for him, for he was covered with whitewash from head to foot, and so pale, haggard, and trembling that he might have been taken for the ghost of a miller escaped from the infernal regions.

When Finette opened her eyes she saw by her bedside a tall man dressed in black, with a velvet cap and a sword. It was the seneschal of the barony of Kerver. He stood with his arms folded, gazing at Finette in a way that chilled the very marrow of her bones.

"What is your name, vassal?" said he, in a voice of thunder.

"Finette, at your service, my lord," replied she, trembling.

"Is this house and furniture yours?"

"Yes, my lord, everything, at your service."

"I mean that it shall be at my service," returned the seneschal, sternly. "Rise, vassal! I do you the honor to marry you, and to take yourself, your person, and your property under my guardianship."

"My lord," returned Finette, "this is much too great an honor for a poor girl like me, a stranger, without friends or kindred."

"Be silent, vassal!" replied the seneschal. "I am your lord and master; I have nothing to do with your advice. Sign this paper."

"My lord," said Finette, "I don't know how to write."

"Do you think that I do, either?" returned the seneschal, in a voice that shook the house. "Do you take me for a clerk? A cross—that is the signature of gentlemen."

He made a large cross on the paper, and handed the pen to Finette.

"Sign," said he. "If you are afraid to make a cross, infidel, you pass your own death sentence, and I shall take on myself to execute it." He drew his heavy sword from the scabbard as he spoke, and threw it on the table.

For her only answer, Finette leaped out of the window and ran to the stable. The seneschal pursued her thither, but, on attempting to enter, an unexpected obstacle stopped him. The frightened cow had backed at the sight of the young girl, and stood in the doorway, with Finette clinging to her horns and making of her a sort of buckler.

"You shall not escape me, sorceress!" cried the seneschal, and, with a grasp like that of Hercules, he seized the cow by the tail and dragged her out of the stable.

"*Abracadabra!*" cried Finette. "May the cow's tail hold you, villain, and may you hold the cow's tail till you have both been around the world together."

And behold! the cow darted off like lightning, dragging the unhappy seneschal after her. Nothing stopped the two inseparable comrades; they rushed over mountains and valleys, crossed marshes, rivers, quagmires, and brakes, glided over the seas without sinking, were frozen in Siberia and scorched in Africa, climbed the Himalayas, descended Mont Blanc, and at length, after thirty-six hours of a journey, the like of which had never been seen, both stopped out of breath in the public square of the village.

A seneschal harnessed to a cow's tail is a sight not to be seen every day, and all the peasants in the neighborhood crowded together to wonder at the spectacle. But, torn as he was by the cactuses of Barbary and the thickets of Tartary, the seneschal had lost nothing of his haughty air. With a threatening gesture he dispersed the rabble, and limped to his house to taste the repose of which he began to feel the need.

VI

While the steward, the bailiff, and the seneschal were experiencing these little unpleasantnesses, of which they did not think it proper to boast, preparations were being made for a great event at Kerver Castle, namely, the marriage of Yvon and the fair-haired lady. Two days had passed in these preparations, and all the friends of the family had gathered together for twenty leagues round, when, one fine morning Yvon and his bride, with the Baron and Baroness Kerver, took their seats in a great carriage adorned with flowers, and set out for the celebrated church of St. Maclou.

A hundred knights in full armor, mounted on horses decked with ribbons, rode on each side of the betrothed couple, each with his vizor raised and his lance at rest in token of honor. By the side of each baron, a squire, also on horseback, carried the seigniorial banner. At the head of the procession rode the seneschal, with a gilded staff in his hand. Behind the carriage gravely walked the bailiff, followed by the vassals, while the steward railed at the serfs, a noisy and curious rabble.

As they were crossing a brook, a league from the castle, one of the traces of the carriage broke, and they were forced to stop. The accident repaired, the coachman cracked his whip, and the horses started with such force that the new trace broke in three pieces. Six times this provoking piece of wood was replaced, and six times it broke anew, without drawing the carriage from the hole where it was wedged.

Every one had a word of advice to offer; even the peasants, as wheelwrights and carpenters, were not the last to make a show of their knowledge. This gave the steward courage; he approached the baron, took off his cap, and, scratching his head,

"My lord," said he, "in the house that you see shining yonder among the trees there lives a woman who does things such as nobody else can do. Only persuade her to lend you her tongs, and, in my opinion, they will hold till morning."

The baron made a sign, and ten peasants ran to the cottage of

Finette, who very obligingly lent them her gold tongs. They were put in the place of the trace; the coachman cracked his whip, and off went the carriage like a feather.

Every one rejoiced, but the joy did not last long. A hundred steps farther, lo! the bottom of the carriage gave way; little more, and the noble Kerver family would have sunk quite out of sight. The wheelwrights and the carpenters set to work at once; they sawed planks, nailed them down fast, and in the twinkling of an eye repaired the accident. The coachman cracked his whip and the horses started, when, behold! half of the carriage was left behind; the Baroness Kerver sat motionless by the side of the bride, while Yvon and the baron were carried off at full gallop. Here was a new difficulty. Three times was the carriage mended, three times it broke anew. There was every reason to believe that it was enchanted.

Every one had a word of advice to offer. This gave the bailiff courage. He approached the baron and said, in a low tone:

"My lord, in the house that you see shining yonder among the trees there lives a woman who does things such as nobody else can do. Only persuade her to lend you her door for the bottom of the carriage, and, in my opinion, it will hold till morning."

The baron made a sign, and twenty peasants ran to the cottage of Finette, who very obligingly lent them her gold door. They put it in the bottom of the carriage, where it fitted as if it had been made expressly for it. The party took their seats in the carriage, the coachman cracked his whip, the church was in sight, and all the troubles of the journey seemed ended.

Not at all! Suddenly the horses stopped and refused to draw. There were four of them. Six, eight, ten, twenty-four more were put to the carriage, but all in vain; it was impossible to stir them. The more they were whipped the deeper the wheels sunk into the ground, like the coulter of a plow.

What were they to do? To go on foot would have been a disgrace. To mount a horse and ride to the church like simple peasants was not the custom of the Kervers. They tried to lift the carriage, they pushed the wheels, they shook it, they pulled it, but all in vain. Meanwhile the day was declining and the hour for the marriage had passed.

Every one had a word of advice to offer. This gave the seneschal

courage. He approached the baron, alighted from his horse, raised his velvet cap, and said:

"My lord, in the house that you see shining yonder among the trees there lives a woman who does things such as nobody else can do. Only persuade her to lend you her cow to draw the carriage, and, in my opinion, she will draw it till morning."

The baron made a sign, and thirty peasants ran to the cottage of Finette, who very obligingly lent them her golden-horned cow.

To go to church drawn by a cow was not, perhaps, what the ambitious bride had dreamed of, but it was better than to remain unmarried in the road. The heifer was harnessed, therefore, before the four horses, and everybody looked on anxiously to see what this boasted animal would do.

But before the coachman had time to crack his whip, lo! the cow started off as if she were about to go around the world anew. Horses, carriage, baron, betrothed, coachman, all were hurried away by the furious animal. In vain the knights spurred their horses to follow the pair; in vain the peasants ran at full speed, taking the cross-road and cutting across the meadows. The carriage flew as if it had wings; a pigeon could not have followed it.

On reaching the door of the church, the party, a little disturbed by this rapid journey, would not have been sorry to alight. Everything was ready for the ceremony and the bridal pair had long been expected; but, instead of stopping, the cow redoubled her speed. Thirteen times she ran round the church like lightning, then suddenly made her way in a straight line across the fields to the castle, with such force that the whole party were almost shaken to pieces before their arrival.

VII

No more marriage was to be thought of for that day; but the tables were set and the dinner served, and the Baron Kerver was too noble a knight to take leave of his brave Bretons until they had eaten and drunk according to custom—that is, from sunset till sunrise, and even a little later.

Orders were given for the guests to take their seats. Ninety-six tables were ranged in eight rows. In front of them, on a large platform covered with velvet, with a canopy in the middle, was a table larger than the rest, and loaded with fruit and flowers, to say nothing of the roast hares, and the peacocks smoking beneath their plumage. At this table the bridal pair were to have been seated in full sight, in order that nothing might be lacking to the pleasures of the feast, and that the meanest peasant might have the honor of saluting them by emptying his cup of hydromel to the honor and prosperity of the high and mighty house of Kerver.

The baron seated the hundred knights at his table, and placed their squires behind their chairs to serve them. At his right he put the bride and Yvon, but he left the seat at his left vacant, and, calling a page, "Child," said he, "run to the house of the stranger lady who obliged us only too much this morning. It was not her fault if her success exceeded her good will. Tell her that the Baron Kerver thanks her for her help and invites her to the wedding feast of his son, Lord Yvon."

On reaching the golden house, where Finette, in tears, was mourning for her beloved, the page bent one knee to the ground and, in the baron's name, invited the stranger lady to the castle to do honor to the wedding of Lord Yvon.

"Thank your master for me," answered the young girl, proudly, "and tell him that if he is too noble to come to my house, I am too noble to go to his."

When the page repeated this answer to his master the Baron Kerver struck the table such a blow that three plates flew in the air.

"By my honor," said he, "this is spoken like a lady, and for the first time I own myself beaten. Quick, saddle my dun mare, and let my

knights and squires prepare to attend me."

It was with this brilliant train that the baron alighted at the door of the golden cottage. He begged Finette's pardon, held the stirrup for her, and seated her behind him on his own horse, neither more nor less than a duchess in person. Through respect, he did not speak a single word to her on the way. On reaching the castle he uncovered his head and led her to the seat of honor that he had chosen for her.

The baron's departure had made a great excitement, and his return caused still greater surprise. Every one asked who the lady could be that the baron treated with such respect. Judging from her costume, she was a foreigner. Could she be the Duchess of Normandy or the Queen of France? The steward, the bailiff, and the seneschal were appealed to. The steward trembled, the bailiff turned pale, and the seneschal blushed, but all three were as mute as fishes. The silence of these important personages added to the general wonder.

All eyes were fixed on Finette, who felt a deadly chill at her heart, for Yvon saw, but did not know her. He cast an indifferent glance at her, then began again to talk in a tender tone to the fair-haired lady, who smiled disdainfully.

Finette, in despair, took from the purse the golden bullet, her last hope. While talking with the baron, who was charmed with her wit, she shook the little ball in her hand, and repeated, in a whisper,

"Golden bullet, precious treasure,
Save me, if it be thy pleasure."

And behold! the bullet grew larger and larger, until it became a goblet of chased gold, the most beautiful cup that ever graced the table of baron or king.

Finette filled the cup herself with spiced wine, and, calling the seneschal, who was cowering behind her, she said, in her gentlest tones, "My good seneschal, I entreat you to offer this goblet to Lord Yvon. I wish to drink his health, and I am sure that he will not refuse me this pleasure."

Yvon took the goblet, which the seneschal presented to him on a salver of enamel and gold, with a careless hand, bowed to the stranger, drank the wine, and, setting the cup on the table before him, turned to the fair-haired lady who occupied all his thoughts. The lady seemed anxious and vexed. He whispered a few words in her ear that

seemed to please her, for her eyes sparkled, and she placed her hand again in his.

Finette cast down her head and began to weep. All was over.

"Children," cried the baron, in a voice of thunder, "fill your glasses. Let us drink to the noble stranger who honors us with her presence. To the noble lady of the golden cottage!"

All began to huzzah and drink. Yvon contented himself with raising his goblet to a level with his eyes. Suddenly he started and stood mute, his mouth open and his eyes fixed, like a man that has a vision.

It was a vision. In the gold of the goblet Yvon saw his past life as in a mirror: the giant pursuing him; Finette dragging him along; both embarking in the ship that saved them; both landing on the shore of Brittany; he quitting her for an instant; she weeping at his departure. Where was she? By his side, of course. What other woman than Finette could be by the side of Yvon?

He turned toward the fair-haired lady and cried out like a man treading on a serpent. Then, staggering as if he were drunk, he rose and looked around him with haggard eyes. At the sight of Finette he clasped his trembling hands and, dragging himself toward her, fell on his knees and exclaimed, "Finette, forgive me!"

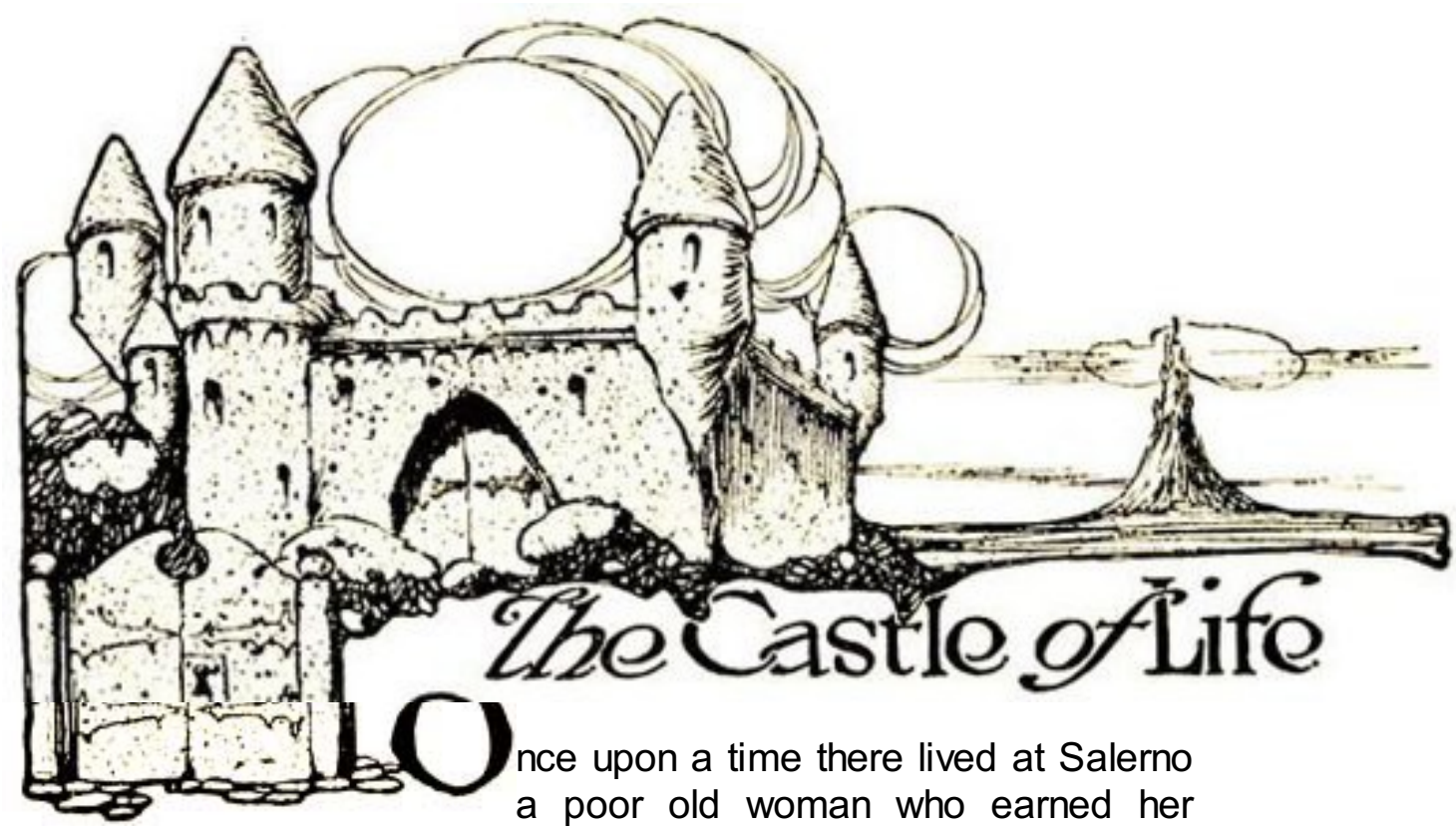
To forgive is the height of happiness. Before evening Finette was seated by the side of Yvon, both weeping and smiling.

And what became of the fair-haired lady? No one knows. At the cry of Yvon she disappeared; but it was said that a wretched old hag was seen flying on a broomstick over the castle walls, chased by the dogs; and it was the common opinion among the Kervers that the fair-haired lady was none other than the witch, the godmother of the giant. I am not sure enough of the fact, however, to dare warrant it. It is always prudent to believe, without proof, that a woman may be a witch, but it is never wise to say so.

What I can say on the word of a historian is that the feast, interrupted for a moment, went on gayer than ever. Early the next morning they went to the church, where, to the joy of his heart, Yvon married Finette, who was no longer afraid of evil spirits; after which they ate, drank, and danced for thirty-six hours, without any one thinking of resting. The steward's arms were a little heavy, the bailiff rubbed his back at times, and the seneschal felt a sort of weariness in his limbs, but all

three had a weight on their consciences which they could not shake off, and which made them tremble and flutter, till finally they fell on the ground and were carried off. Finette took no other vengeance on them; her only desire was to render all happy around her, far and near, who belonged to the noble house of Kerver. Her memory still lives in Brittany; and among the ruins of the old castle, any one will show you the statue of the good lady, with five bullets in her hand.

The Castle *of* Life



Once upon a time there lived at Salerno a poor old woman who earned her bread by fishing, and whose only comfort and stay in life was her grandson, a boy twelve years of age, whose father had been drowned in a storm and whose mother had died of grief. Graceful, for this was the child's name, loved nobody in the world but his grandmother; he followed her to the shore every morning before daybreak to pick up the shell-fish or draw the net to the beach, longing for the time when he should be strong enough to go to sea himself and brave the waves that had swallowed up all his kindred. He was so handsome, so well made, and so promising, that no sooner had he entered the town with his basket of fish on his head than every one ran after him, and he sold the whole before he reached the market.

Unfortunately, the grandmother was very old; she had but one front tooth left, her head shook with age, and her eyes were dim. Every morning she found it harder to rise than the day before. Feeling that she had but a few days longer to live, at night, before Graceful wrapped himself in his blanket and lay down on the ground to sleep, she always gave him good counsels for him to follow when she was gone; she told him what fishermen to avoid, and how, by being good and industrious, prudent and resolute, he would make his way in the

world and finally have a boat and nets of his own. The poor boy paid little heed to all this wisdom. As soon as his grandmother began to put on a grave air he threw his arms around her neck and cried: "Grandmamma, grandmamma, don't leave me. I have hands, I am strong, I shall soon be able to work for us both; but if you were not here at night when I came home from fishing, what would become of me?"

"My child," said the old woman one day to him, "I shall not leave you so much alone as you think; when I am gone you will have two powerful protectors whom more than one prince might envy you. A long time ago I did a favor to two great ladies, who will not forget you when the time comes to call them, which will be very soon."

"Who are these two ladies?" asked Graceful, who had never seen any women but fishermen's wives in the hut.

"They are two fairies," replied his grandmother—"two powerful fairies—the Fairy of the Woods and the Fairy of the Waters. Listen to me, my child; I am going to intrust you with a secret—a secret which you must keep as carefully as I have done, and which will give you wealth and happiness. Ten years ago, the same year that your father died and your mother also left us, I went out one morning before daybreak to surprise the crabs asleep in the sand. As I was stooping down, hidden by a rock, I saw a kingfisher slowly floating toward the beach. The kingfisher is a sacred bird which should always be respected; knowing this, I let it alight and did not stir, for fear of frightening it. At the same moment I saw a beautiful green adder come from a cleft of the mountain and crawl along the sand toward the bird. When they were near each other, without either seeming surprised at the meeting, the adder coiled itself around the neck of the kingfisher, as if tenderly embracing it; they remained thus entwined for a few moments, after which they suddenly separated, the adder to return to the rock, and the kingfisher to plunge into the waves which bore it away.

AT NIGHT THE GRANDMOTHER ALWAYS GAVE HIM GOOD COUNSELS FOR HIM TO FOLLOW WHEN SHE WAS GONE

"Greatly astonished at what I had seen, I returned the next morning at the same hour, and at the same hour the kingfisher also alighted on

the sands and the adder came from its retreat. There was no doubt that they were fairies, perhaps enchanted fairies, to whom I could render a service. But what was I to do? To show myself would have been to displease them and run into danger; it was better to wait for a favorable opportunity which chance would doubtless offer. For a whole month I lay in ambush, witnessing the same spectacle every morning, when one day I saw a huge black cat arrive first at the place of meeting and hide itself behind a rock, almost under my hand. A black cat could be nothing else than an enchanter, according to what I had learned in my childhood, and I resolved to watch him. Scarcely had the kingfisher and the adder embraced each other when, behold! the cat gathered itself up and sprang upon these innocents. It was my turn to throw myself upon the wretch, who already held his victims in his murderous claws; I seized him, despite his struggles, although he tore my hands in pieces, and without pity, knowing with whom I had to deal, I took the knife which I used to open shell-fish, and cut off the monster's head, claws, and tail, confidently awaiting the success of my devotion.

"I did not wait long; no sooner had I thrown the body of the animal into the sea than I saw before me two beautiful ladies, one crowned with white plumes, the other with a serpent's skin thrown like a scarf across her shoulder. They were, as I have already told you, the Fairy of the Waters and the Fairy of the Woods, who, enchanted by a wretched genie who had learned their secret, had been forced to remain a kingfisher and an adder until freed by some generous hand, and who owed me their power and freedom.

"'Ask of us what you will,' said they, 'and your request shall be instantly granted.'

"I reflected that I was old, and had suffered too much in life to wish to begin it anew, while the day would come, my child, when nothing would be too great for your desires; when you wish to be rich, noble—a general, a marquis, a prince, perhaps! When that day comes, thought I, I can give him everything, and a single moment of such happiness will repay me for eighty years of pain and misery. I thanked the fairies, therefore, and entreated them to keep their good will till the day when I should have need of it. The Fairy of the Waters took a small feather from her crown, and the Fairy of the Woods detached a scale from her scarf.

"'My good woman,' said they, 'when you wish for us, place this feather

and this scale in a vessel of pure water and call on us, making a wish. Should we be at the end of the world, we will be at your side in an instant, ready to pay the debt we owe you.'

"I bowed my head in token of gratitude. When I raised it all had vanished; even the wounds and blood had disappeared from my hands, and I should have thought that I had been dreaming, had not the scale of the serpent and the feather of the kingfisher remained in my hand."

"And where are these treasures, grandmamma?" asked Graceful.

"My child, I have carefully concealed them," answered the old woman, "not wishing to show them to you till you were a man and able to make use of them; but since death is about to separate us, the moment has come to give you these precious talismans. You will find at the back of the cupboard a wooden chest hidden under some rags; in the chest is a little pasteboard box, wound about with tow; open this box and you will find the scale and the feather carefully wrapped in cotton. Take care not to break them; handle them respectfully, and I will tell you what next to do."

Graceful brought the box to the poor woman, who was no longer able to quit her pallet, and she herself took from it the two articles.

"Now," said she, giving them to her grandson, "put a bowlful of water in the middle of the room; place the scale and the feather in the water, and make a wish—wish for fortune, nobility, wit, power, whatever you please; only, as I feel that I am dying, kiss me once more, my child, before speaking the words that will separate us forever, and receive my last blessing; it will be another talisman to bring you happiness."

But, to the old woman's surprise, Graceful did not come near her, either to kiss her or to receive her blessing. He quickly placed the bowl in the middle of the room, threw the feather and scale into the water, and shouted at the top of his voice, "Appear, Fairy of the Waters! I wish that my grandmother may live forever. Appear, Fairy of the Woods! I wish that my grandmother may live forever."

And behold! the water bubbled, bubbled, bubbled; the bowl grew to a great basin, which the walls of the hut could scarcely hold, and from the bottom of the basin Graceful saw two beautiful young women rise, whom he knew directly from their wands to be fairies. One wore a crown of holly leaves mixed with red berries, and diamond ear-rings

resembling acorns in their cups; she was dressed in a robe of olive green, over which a speckled skin was knotted like a scarf across the right shoulder—this was the Fairy of the Woods. As to the Fairy of the Waters, she wore a garland of reeds on her head, with a white robe trimmed with the feathers of aquatic birds, and a blue scarf, which now and then rose above her head and fluttered like the sail of a ship. Great ladies as they were, they looked smilingly at Graceful, who had taken refuge in his grandmother's arms, and trembled with fear and admiration.

"Here we are, my child," said the Fairy of the Waters, who spoke first, as the eldest. "We have heard what you said, and your wish does you honor; but, though we can help you in the plan which you have conceived, you alone can execute it. We can, indeed, prolong your grandmother's life for some time, but, for her to live forever, you must go the Castle of Life, four long days' journey from here, on the coast of Sicily. There you will find the Fountain of Immortality. If you can accomplish each of these four days' journey without turning aside from the road, and, on reaching the castle, can answer three questions that will be put to you by an invisible voice, you will obtain what you desire. But, my child, reflect well before undertaking this adventure, for you will meet more than one danger on the way; and if you fail a single time to reach the end of your day's journey you will not only miss the object of your pursuit, but you will never quit the country, from which none has ever returned."

"I will go, madam," returned Graceful.

"But you are very young, my child," said the Fairy of the Woods, "and you do not even know the way."

"No matter," replied Graceful. "I am sure, beautiful ladies, that you will not forsake me, and to save my grandmother I would go to the end of the world."

"Wait," said the Fairy of the Woods. Then separating the lead from a broken window-pane, she placed it in the hollow of her hand.

And behold! the lead began to melt and bubble without seeming to burn the fairy, who threw the metal on the hearth, where it cooled in a thousand different forms.

"What do you see in all that?" said the fairy to Graceful.

"It seems to me, madam," said he, after looking attentively, "that I see

a spaniel with a long tail and large ears."

"Call him," said the fairy.

A barking was instantly heard, and forth from the metal sprang a black and flame-colored spaniel, which began to gambol and leap around Graceful.

"This will be your companion," said the fairy. "His name is Fido. He will show you the way; but I warn you that it is for you to direct him, and not for him to lead you. If you make him obey, he will serve you; if you obey him, he will destroy you."

"And I," said the Fairy of the Waters, "have I nothing to give you, my poor Graceful?"

Then, looking around her, the lady saw on the ground a bit of paper, which she tossed into the fire with her tiny foot. The paper caught fire, and as soon as the blaze had died away thousands of little sparks were seen chasing one another about. The fairy watched these sparks with a curious eye; then, as the last one was about to go out, she blew upon the cinders, when, lo! the chirp of a bird was heard, and a swallow rose, which fluttered, terrified, about the room and finally alighted on Graceful's shoulder.

"This will be your companion," said the Fairy of the Waters. "Her name is Pensive. She will show you the way; but I warn you it is for you to direct her, and not for her to lead you. If you make her obey, she will serve you; if you obey her, she will destroy you."

"Stir the black ashes," added the good Fairy of the Waters, "and perhaps you will find something there."

Graceful obeyed. Under the ashes of the paper he found a vial of rock crystal, sparkling like a diamond. This, the fairy said, was to hold the water of immortality, which would break any vessel made by the hand of man. By the side of the vial Graceful found a dagger with a triangular blade—a very different thing from the stiletto of his father the fisherman, which he had been forbidden to touch. With this weapon he could brave the proudest enemy.

"My sister, you shall not be more generous than I," said the other fairy; then, taking a rush from the only chair in the room, she blew upon it, when, lo! the rush instantly swelled, and in less time than it takes to tell it became a beautiful musket, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A second

rush produced a cartridge-box, which Graceful slung around his body and which became him marvelously. One would have thought him a prince setting out for the chase; he was so handsome that his grandmother wept for joy and emotion.

The two fairies vanished; Graceful kissed the good old woman, urging her to await his return, and knelt before her to receive her blessing. She entreated him to be patient, just, and charitable, and, above all, not to wander from the right path. "Not for my sake," added the old woman, "for I would gladly welcome death, and I regret the wish that you have made, but for your own, my child, that you may return to me and that I may not die without your being here to close my eyes."

It was late. Graceful threw himself on the ground, too agitated, it seemed, to sleep. But slumber soon overtook him, and he slept soundly all night, while his poor grandmother watched the face of her dear child lighted by the flickering lamp, and did not weary of mournfully admiring him.

II

Early in the morning, when dawn was scarcely breaking, the swallow began to twitter, and Fido to pull the blankets. "Let us go, master—let us go," said the two companions, in their language, which Graceful understood by the gift of the fairies; "the tide is already rising on the beach, the birds are singing, the flies are humming, and the flowers are opening in the sun. Let us go; it is time."

Graceful kissed his grandmother for the last time, and took the road to Pæstum, Pensive fluttering to the right and the left in pursuit of the flies, and Fido fawning on his young master or running before him.

They had gone two leagues from the town when Graceful saw Fido talking with the ants, who were marching in regular troops, carrying all their provisions with them.

"Where are you going?" asked he.

"To the Castle of Life," they answered.

A little farther on Pensive encountered the grasshoppers, who had also set out on a journey, together with the bees and the butterflies; all were going to the Castle of Life, to drink of the Fountain of Immortality. They traveled in company, like people following the same road. Pensive introduced Graceful to a young butterfly that chatted agreeably. Friendship springs up quickly in youth; in an hour the two comrades were inseparable.

To go straight forward does not suit the taste of butterflies, and Graceful's friend was constantly losing himself among the grass. Graceful, who had never been free in his life, nor had seen so many flowers and so much sunshine, followed all the windings of his companion, and troubled himself no more about the day than if it were never to end; but, after a few leagues' journey his new friend began to be weary.

"Don't go any farther," said he to Graceful. "See how beautiful is this landscape, how fragrant these flowers, and how balmy these fields. Let us stay here; this is life."

"Let us go on," said Fido; "the day is long, and we are only at the

beginning."

"Let us go on," said Pensive; "the sky is clear and the horizon unbounded. Let us go on."

Graceful, restored to his senses, reasoned sagely with the butterfly, who fluttered constantly to the right and the left, but all in vain. "What matters it to me?" said the insect. "Yesterday I was a caterpillar, to-night I shall be nothing. I will enjoy to-day." And he settled on a full-blown Pæstum rose. The perfume was so strong that the poor butterfly was suffocated. Graceful vainly endeavored to recall him to life; then, bemoaning his fate, he fastened him with a pin to his hat like a cockade.

Toward noon the grasshoppers stopped in turn. "Let us rest," said they; "the heat will overpower us if we struggle against the noonday sun. It is so pleasant to live in sweet repose! Come, Graceful, we will divert you and you shall sing with us."

"Listen to them," said Pensive; "they sing so sweetly!" But Fido would not stop; his blood seemed on fire, and he barked so furiously that Graceful forgot the grasshoppers to follow his importunate companion.

At evening Graceful met the honey-bee loaded with booty. "Where are you going?" said he.

"I am returning home," said the bee; "I shall not quit my hive."

"What!" rejoined Graceful; "industrious as you are, will you do like the grasshoppers and renounce your share in immortality?"

"Your castle is too far off," returned the bee. "I have not your ambition. My daily labor suffices for me; I care nothing for your travels; to me work is life."

Graceful was a little moved at losing so many of his fellow-travelers on the first day; but when he thought with what ease he had accomplished the first day's journey his heart was filled with joy. He caressed Fido, caught the flies which Pensive took from his hand, and slept full of hope, dreaming of his grandmother and the two fairies.

III

The next morning, at daybreak, Pensive called her young master.

"Let us go," said she; "the tide is already rising on the shore, the birds are singing, the bees are humming, and the flowers are opening in the sun. Let us go; it is time."

"Wait a moment," said Fido. "The day's journey is not long; before noon we shall be in sight of the temples of Pæstum, where we are to stop for the night."

"The ants are already on the way," returned Pensive; "the road is harder than yesterday, and the weather more uncertain. Let us go."

Graceful had seen his grandmother smiling on him in his dreams, and he set out on his way with even greater ardor than the day before. The morning was glorious; on the right the blue waves broke with a gentle murmur on the strand; on the left, in the distance, the mountains were tinged with a roseate hue; the plain was covered with tall grass sprinkled with flowers; the road was lined with aloes, jujubes, and acanthuses, and before them lay a cloudless horizon. Graceful, ravished with hope and pleasure, fancied himself already at the end of his journey. Fido bounded over the fields and chased the frightened partridges; Pensive soared in the air and sported with the light. All at once Graceful saw a beautiful doe in the midst of the reeds, looking at him with languishing eyes as if she were calling him. He went toward her; she bounded forward, but only a little way. Three times she repeated the same trick, as if to allure him on.

"Let us follow her," said Fido. "I will cut off the way and we will soon catch her."

"Where is Pensive?" said Graceful.

"What does it matter?" replied Fido; "it is the work of an instant. Trust to me—I was born for the chase—and the doe is ours."

Graceful did not let himself be bid twice. While Fido made a circuit he ran after the doe, which paused among the trees as if to suffer herself to be caught, then bounded forward as soon as the hand of the pursuer touched her. "Courage, master!" cried Fido, as he came

upon her. But with a toss of the head, the doe flung the dog in the air, and fled swifter than the wind.

Graceful sprang forward in pursuit. Fido, with burning eyes and distended jaws, ran and yelped as if he were mad. They crossed ditches, brakes, and hedges, unchecked by nothing. The wearied doe lost ground. Graceful redoubled his ardor, and was already stretching out his hand to seize his prey when all at once the ground gave way beneath his feet and he fell, with his imprudent companion, into a pit covered over with leaves. He had not recovered from his fall when the doe, approaching the brink, cried, "You are betrayed; I am the wife of the King of the Wolves, who is coming to eat you both." Saying this, she disappeared.

"Alas! master," said Fido, "the fairy was right in advising you not to follow me. We have acted foolishly and I have destroyed you."

"At all events," said Graceful, "we will defend our lives"; and, taking his musket, he double-loaded it, in readiness for the King of the Wolves; then, somewhat calmed, he examined the deep ditch into which he had fallen. It was too high for him to escape from it; in this hole he must await his death. Fido understood the look of his friend.

"Master," said he, "if you take me in your arms and throw me with all your might, perhaps I can reach the top; and, once there, I can help you."

Graceful had not much hope. Three times he endeavored to throw Fido, and three times the poor animal fell back; finally, at the fourth effort, he caught hold of some roots, and aided himself so well with his teeth and paws that he escaped from the tomb. He instantly threw into the ditch the boughs which he found about the edge.

"Master," said he, "plant these branches in the earth and make yourself a ladder. Quick! quick!" he added. "I hear the howls of the King of the Wolves."

Graceful was adroit and agile. Anger redoubled his strength; in a moment he was outside. Then he secured his dagger in his belt, changed the powder in the pan of his musket, and, placing himself behind a tree, awaited the enemy with firmness.

Suddenly a frightful cry was heard, and an animal, with tusks like those of the wild boar, rushed on him with prodigious bounds. Graceful took aim and fired. The bullet hit the mark and the animal fell

back howling, but instantly sprang forward anew. "Load your musket again! Make haste!" cried Fido, springing courageously in the face of the monster and seizing his throat with his teeth.

The wolf had only to shake his head to fling the poor dog to the ground. He would have swallowed him at one mouthful had not Fido glided from his jaws, leaving one of his ears behind. It was Graceful's turn to save his companion; he boldly advanced and fired his second shot, taking aim at the shoulder. The wolf fell; but, rising, with a last effort he threw himself on the hunter, who fell under him. On receiving this terrible shock, Graceful thought himself lost; but without losing courage, and calling the good fairies to his aid, he seized his dagger and thrust it into the heart of the animal, which, ready to devour his enemy, straightened his limbs and died.

Graceful rose, covered with blood and froth, and seated himself, trembling, upon a fallen tree. Fido crept painfully to his feet, without daring to caress him, for he felt how much he was to blame.

"Master," said he, "what will become of us? Night is approaching and we are so far from Pæstum!"

"We must go," said the child, and he rose; but he was so weak that he was obliged to sit down again. A burning thirst devoured him; he was feverish and everything whirled before his eyes. He thought of his grandmother, and began to weep. What was poor Graceful's remorse for having so soon forgotten such fair promises, and condemned himself to die in a country from which there was no return, and all this for the bright eyes of a doe! How sadly ended the day so well begun!

Sinister howls were soon heard; the brothers of the King of the Wolves were calling him and coming to his aid. Graceful embraced Fido, his only friend, and forgave him the imprudence for which they were both about to pay with their lives; then loaded his musket, offered up a prayer to the good fairies, commended his grandmother to them, and prepared to die.

"Graceful! Graceful! where are you?" cried a little voice that could be none other than Pensive's, and the swallow alighted on the head of her master.

"Courage!" said she; "the wolves are still far off. There is a spring close by where you can quench your thirst and stanch your bleeding wounds, and I have found a hidden path which will lead us to

Pæstum."

Graceful and Fido dragged themselves along to the brook, trembling with hope and fear; then entered the obscure path, a little reanimated by the soft twittering of Pensive. The sun had set; they walked in the twilight for some hours, and, when the moon rose, they were out of danger. They had still to journey over a painful and dangerous road for those who no longer had the ardor of the morning. There were marshes to cross, ditches to leap, and thickets to break through, which tore Graceful's face and hands; but at the thought that he could still repair his fault and save his grandmother his heart was so light that his strength redoubled at every step with his hope. At last, after a thousand obstacles, they reached Pæstum just as the stars marked midnight.

Graceful threw himself on the pavement of the temple of Neptune, and, after thanking Pensive, fell asleep, with Fido at his feet, wounded, bleeding, and silent.

IV

The sleep was not long. Graceful was up before daybreak, which seemed long in coming. On descending the steps of the temple he saw the ants, who had raised a heap of sand and were bringing grain from the new harvest. The whole republic was in motion. The ants were all going or coming, talking to their neighbors, and receiving or giving orders; some were dragging wisps of straw, others were carrying bits of wood, others conveying away dead flies, and others heaping up provisions; it was a complete winter establishment.

"What!" said Graceful to the ants, "are you not going to the Castle of Life? Do you renounce immortality?"

"We have worked long enough," answered one of the laborers; "the time for harvest has come. The road is long and the future uncertain, and we are rich. Let fools count on to-morrow; the wise man uses to-day. When a person has hoarded riches honestly it is true philosophy to enjoy them."

Fido thought that the ant was right; but, as he no longer dared advise, he contented himself with shaking his head as they set out. Pensive, on the contrary, said that the ant was a selfish fellow, and that, if life were made only for enjoyment, the butterfly was wiser than he. At the same time, and with a lighter wing than ever, the swallow soared upward to lead the way.

Graceful walked on in silence. Ashamed of the follies of the day before, although he still regretted the doe, he resolved that on the third day nothing should turn him aside from the road. Fido, with his mutilated ear, limped after his master and seemed not less dreamy than he. At noon they sought for a shady place in which to rest for a few moments. The sun was less scorching than the day before. It seemed as if both country and season had changed. The road lay through meadows lately mown for the second time, or beautiful vineyards full of grapes, and was lined with great fig-trees laden with fruit, in which thousands of insects were humming; golden clouds were floating in the horizon, the air was soft and gentle, and everything tempted to repose.

In the most beautiful of the meadows, by the side of a brook which diffused its coolness afar, Graceful saw a herd of buffaloes chewing the cud under the shade of the ashes and plane-trees. They were lazily stretched on the ground, in a circle around a large bull that seemed their chief and king. Graceful approached them, and was received with politeness. They invited him by a nod to be seated, and pointed out to him great bowls full of milk and cheese. Our traveler admired the calmness and gravity of these peaceful and powerful animals, which seemed like so many Roman senators in their curule chairs. The gold ring which they wore in their noses added still more to the majesty of their aspect. Graceful, who felt calmer and more sedate than the day before, thought, in spite of himself, how pleasant it would be to live in the midst of this peace and plenty; if happiness were anywhere, it must surely be found here.

Fido shared his master's opinion. It was the season of the southward migration of the quails; the ground was covered with tired birds, resting to regain strength before crossing the sea, and Fido had only to stoop down to find game worthy of a prince. Satiated with eating, he stretched himself at Graceful's feet and slept soundly.

When the buffaloes had finished chewing their cud, Graceful, who had hitherto feared to disturb them, entered into conversation with the bull, who showed a cultivated mind and wide experience.

"Are you the masters of this rich domain?" asked he.

"No," replied the old buffalo; "we belong, with all the rest, to the Fairy Crapaudine, the Queen of the Vermilion Towers, the richest of all the fairies."

"What does she require of you?" asked Graceful.

"Nothing, except to wear this gold ring in the nose and to pay her a tribute of milk," returned the bull, "or, at most, to give her one of our children from time to time to regale her guests. At this price we enjoy our plenty in perfect security, and we have no reason to envy any on earth, for none are so happy as we."

"Have you never heard of the Castle of Life and the Fountain of Immortality?" asked Graceful, who, without knowing why, blushed as he put the question.

"There were some old men among our ancestors who still talked of these visions," replied the bull; "but we are wiser than our fathers; we

know that there is no other happiness than to chew the cud and sleep."

Graceful rose sadly to resume his journey, and asked what were those reddish square towers which he saw in the distance.

"They are the Vermilion Towers," returned the bull; "they bar the way; and you must pass through the castle of the Fairy Crapaudine in order to continue your road. You will see the fairy, my young friend, and she will offer you hospitality and riches. Take my advice and do like those that have gone before you, all of whom accepted the favors of our mistress, and found that they had done well to abandon their dreams in order to live happy."

"And what became of them?" asked Graceful.

"They became buffaloes like us," rejoined the bull, who, not having finished his afternoon nap, closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Graceful started and awakened Fido, who rose, grumbling. He called Pensive. Pensive did not answer; she was talking with a spider that had spun a great web between the branches of an ash-tree, which was glittering in the sun, full of flies. "Why take this long journey?" said the spider to the swallow. "What is the use of changing your climate and putting your life at the mercy of the sea, the weather, or a master? Look at me; I depend on nobody, and have everything for myself. I am my own mistress; I enjoy my art and genius; I bring the world to me; nothing can disturb either my calculations, or a serenity which I owe to myself alone."

Graceful called Pensive three times without making her hear, so completely was she engrossed in admiration of her new friend. Every instant some giddy fly fell into the web, and each time the spider, like an attentive hostess, offered the prey to her astonished companion, when suddenly a breeze passed—a breeze so light that it did not ruffle a feather of the swallow's wing. Pensive looked for the spider; the web had been swept away by the winds, and the poor insect was clinging by one foot to the last thread, when a bird seized it and bore it away.

V

Setting out again on their way, they proceeded in silence to the palace of Crapaudine. Graceful was introduced with great ceremony by two beautiful greyhounds, caparisoned with purple and wearing on their necks broad collars sparkling with rubies. After crossing a great number of halls, all full of pictures, statues, gold, and silver, and coffers overflowing with money and jewels, Graceful and his companions entered a circular temple, which was Crapaudine's drawing-room. The walls were of lapis-lazuli, and the ceiling, of sky-blue enamel, was supported by twelve chiseled pillars of massive gold, with capitals of acanthus leaves of white enamel edged with gold. A huge frog, as large as a rabbit, was seated in a velvet easy-chair. It was the fairy of the place. The charming Crapaudine was draped in a scarlet mantle covered with glittering spangles, and wore on her head a ruby diadem whose luster lighted up her fat cheeks mottled with green and yellow. As soon as she perceived Graceful she extended to him her fingers, covered with rings, which the poor boy was obliged respectfully to raise to his lips as he bowed.

"My friend," said the fairy to him, in a hoarse voice, which she vainly tried to soften, "I was expecting you, and I will not be less generous to you than my sisters have been. On the way here you have seen but a small part of my riches. This palace, with its pictures, its statues, and its coffers full of gold, these vast domains, and these innumerable flocks, all may be yours if you wish; it depends only on yourself to become the richest and happiest of men."

"What must I do for this?" asked Graceful, greatly excited.

"Less than nothing," replied the fairy; "chop me up into little pieces and eat me. It is not a very disagreeable thing to do," added Crapaudine, looking at Graceful with eyes redder than usual.

"Can I not season you, at least?" said Graceful, who had been unable to look without envy at the beautiful gardens of the fairy.

"No, you must eat me without seasoning; but walk about my palace, see and handle all my treasures, and reflect that, by giving me this proof of devotion, they will all be yours."

"Master," sighed Fido, in a supplicating voice, "a little courage! We are so comfortable here!"

Pensive said nothing, but her silence was consent. As to Graceful, who remembered the buffaloes and the gold ring, he distrusted the fairy. Crapaudine perceived it.

"Do not think, my dear Graceful, that I wish to deceive you," she said. "In offering you all that I possess, I also demand of you a service which I will reward as it deserves. When you have done what I propose I shall become a young girl, as beautiful as Venus, except that my hands and feet will remain like those of a frog, which is very little when one is rich. Ten princes, twenty marquises, and thirty counts have already begged me to marry them as I am; when I become a woman, I will give you the preference, and we will enjoy my vast fortune together. Do not blush for your poverty; you have about you a treasure that is worth all mine, the vial which my sister gave you." Saying this, she stretched out her slimy fingers to seize the talisman.

"Never!" cried Graceful, shrinking back, "never! I wish neither repose nor fortune; I wish to quit this place and to go to the Castle of Life."

"You shall never go there!" exclaimed the fairy, in a rage. The castle instantly disappeared, a circle of fire surrounded Graceful, and an invisible clock began to strike midnight. At the first stroke the child started; at the second, without hesitating, he plunged headlong into the flames. To die for his grandmother seemed to him the only means of showing his love and repentance.

VI

To Graceful's surprise, the flames parted without touching him, and he suddenly found himself in a new country, with his two companions by his side. This country was no longer Italy, but Russia, the end of the earth. He was wandering on a mountain covered with snow. Around him he saw nothing but great trees, coated with hoar-frost and dripping water from all their branches; a damp and penetrating mist chilled him to the bones; the moist earth sank under his feet; and, to crown his wretchedness, it was necessary to descend a steep precipice, at the bottom of which a torrent was breaking noisily over the rocks. Graceful took his dagger and cut a branch from a tree to support his faltering steps. Fido, with his tail between his legs, barked feebly; and Pensive, her ruffled feathers covered with icicles, clung to her master's shoulder. The poor bird was half dead, but she encouraged Graceful and did not complain.

When, after infinite pains, he reached the foot of the mountain, Graceful found a river filled with enormous icebergs, striking against one another and whirling in the current, and this river he must cross, without bridge, without boat, and without aid.

"Master," said Fido, "I can go no farther. Accursed be the fairy that drew me from nothingness to place me in your service." Saying this, he lay down on the ground and would not stir. Graceful vainly tried to restore his courage, and called him his companion and friend. All that the poor dog could do was to answer his master's caresses for the last time by wagging his tail and licking his hands; then his limbs stiffened and he expired.

Graceful took Fido on his back in order to carry him to the Castle of Life, and boldly climbed one of the icebergs, still followed by Pensive. With his staff he pushed this frail bark into the middle of the current, which bore it away with frightful rapidity.

"Master," said Pensive, "do you hear the roaring of the waters? We are floating toward a whirlpool which will swallow us up! Give me a last caress and farewell!"

"No," said Graceful. "Why should the fairies have deceived us? The

shore may be close by; perhaps the sun is shining behind the clouds. Mount, mount, my good Pensive; perchance above the fog you will find light and will see the Castle of Life!"

Pensive spread her half-frozen wings, and courageously soared amid the cold and mist. Graceful listened for a moment to the sound of her flight; then all was silent, while the iceberg pursued its furious course through the darkness. Graceful waited a long time; at last, when he felt himself alone, hope abandoned him, and he lay down to await death on the tottering iceberg. Livid flashes of lightning shot through the clouds, horrible bursts of thunder were heard, and the end of the world and of time seemed approaching. All at once, in the midst of his despair, Graceful heard the cry of the swallow, and Pensive fell at his feet. "Master, master," cried she, "you were right. I have seen the shore; the dawn is close at hand. Courage!" Saying this, she convulsively spread her tired wings and lay motionless and lifeless.

Graceful started up, placed the poor bird that had sacrificed itself for him next his heart, and, with superhuman ardor, urged the iceberg on to safety or destruction. Suddenly he heard the roaring of the breakers. He fell on his knees and closed his eyes, awaiting death.

A wave like a mountain broke over his head and cast him fainting on the shore, which no living person had touched before him.

VII

When Graceful recovered his senses, the ice, clouds, and darkness had disappeared. He was lying on the ground in the midst of a charming country, covered with trees bathed in a soft light. In front of him was a beautiful castle, from which bubbled a brook that flowed into a sea as blue, calm, and transparent as the sky. Graceful looked about him; he was alone—alone with the remains of his two companions, which the waves had washed on the shore. Exhausted with suffering and excitement, he dragged himself to the brook and bent over the water to refresh his parched lips, when he shrank back with affright. It was not his face that he saw in the water, but that of an old man with silvery locks who strongly resembled him. He turned round; there was no one behind him. He again drew near the fountain; he saw the old man, or rather, doubtless, the old man was himself. "Great fairies," he cried. "I understand you. If it is my life that you wish in exchange for that of my grandmother, I joyfully accept the sacrifice." And without troubling himself further about his old age and wrinkles, he plunged his head into the water and drank eagerly.

On rising, he was astonished to see himself again as he was when he left home, only more beautiful, with blacker hair and brighter eyes than ever. He picked up his hat, which had fallen near the spring, and which a drop of water had touched by chance, when what was his surprise to see the butterfly that he had pinned to it fluttering its wings and seeking to fly. He gave it its liberty, and ran to the beach for Fido and Pensive, then plunged them both into the blessed fountain. Pensive flew upward with a joyful cry and disappeared amid the turrets of the castle. Fido, shaking the water from both ears, ran to the kennels of the palace, where he was met by magnificent watch-dogs, which, instead of barking and growling at the new-comer, welcomed him joyfully like an old friend. Graceful had at last found the Fountain of Immortality, or rather the brook that flowed from it—a brook already greatly weakened, and which only gave two or three hundred years of life to those that drank of it; but nothing prevented them from drinking anew.

Graceful filled his vial with this life-giving water and approached the palace. His heart beat, for a last trial remained. So near success, he

feared the more to fail. He mounted the steps of the castle. All was closed and silent; no one was there to receive the traveler. When he had reached the last step and was about to knock at the door, a voice, rather gentle than harsh, stopped him.

"Have you loved?" said the invisible voice.

"Yes," answered Graceful; "I have loved my grandmother better than any one in the world."

The door opened a little way.

"Have you suffered for her whom you have loved?" resumed the voice.

"I have suffered," replied Graceful; "much through my own fault, doubtless, but a little for her whom I wished to save."

The door opened half-way and the child caught a glimpse of woods, waters, and a sky more beautiful than anything of which he had ever dreamed.

"Have you always done your duty?" said the voice, in a harsher tone.

"Alas! no," replied Graceful, falling on his knees; "but when I have failed I have been punished by my remorse even more than by the hard trials through which I have passed. Forgive me, and punish me as I deserve, if I have not yet expiated all my faults; but save her whom I love—save my grandmother."

The door instantly opened wide, though Graceful saw no one. Intoxicated with joy, he entered a courtyard surrounded with arbors embowered in foliage, with a fountain in the midst, spouting from a tuft of flowers larger, more beautiful, and more fragrant than any he had seen on earth. By the side of the spring stood a woman dressed in white, of noble bearing, and seemingly not more than forty years old. She advanced to meet Graceful, and smiled on him so sweetly that the child felt himself touched to the heart, and his eyes filled with tears.

"Don't you know me?" said the woman.

"Oh, grandmother! is it you?" he exclaimed. "How came you in the Castle of Life?"

"My child," said she, pressing him to her heart, "He who brought me

here is an enchanter more powerful than the fairies of the woods and the waters. I shall never more return to Salerno. I shall receive my reward here for the little good I have done by tasting a happiness which time will not destroy."

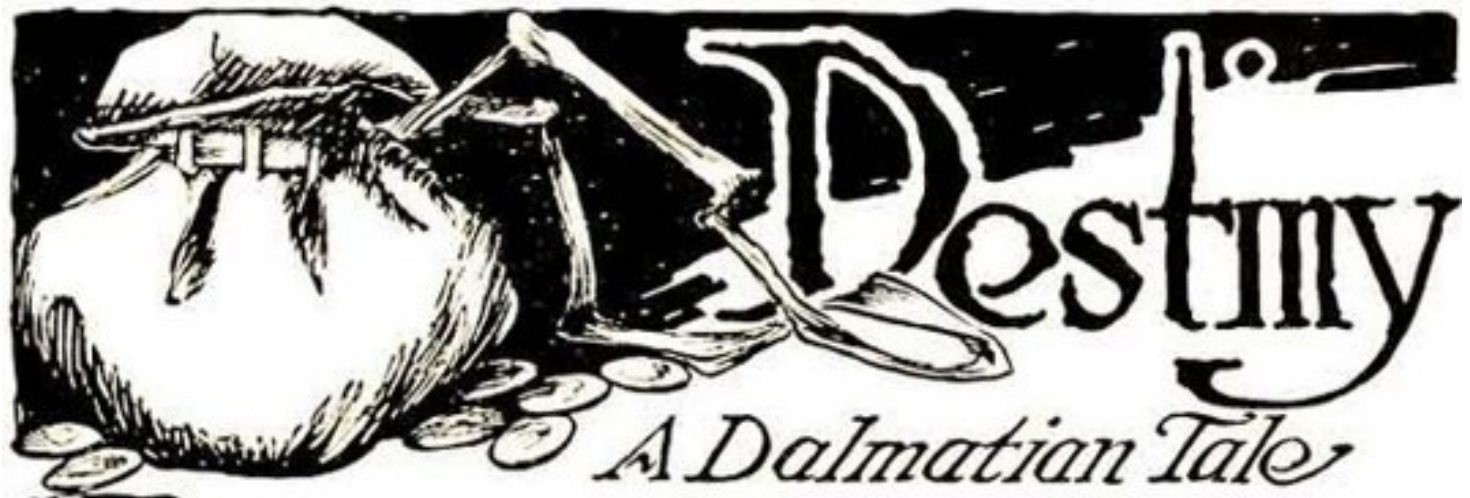
"And me, grandmother!" cried Graceful, "what shall become of me? After seeing you here, how can I return to suffer alone?"

"My dear child," she replied, "no one can live on earth after he has caught a glimpse of the celestial delights of this abode. You have lived, my dear Graceful; life has nothing more to teach you. You have passed in four days through the desert where I languished eighty years, and henceforth nothing can separate us."

The door closed, and from that time nothing was heard of Graceful or his grandmother. It was in vain that search was made for the palace and enchanted fountain; they were never more discovered on earth. But if we understood the language of the stars, if we felt what their gentle rays tell us every evening, we should long ago have learned from them where to look for the Castle of Life and the Fountain of Immortality.

Destiny

A Dalmatian Tale



Once upon a time there were two brothers, who lived together in one family. One did everything, while the other was an idle fellow who troubled himself about nothing but eating and drinking. The harvests were always magnificent; they had cows, horses, sheep, pigs, bees, and everything else in plenty.

The elder brother, who did everything, said to himself, one day, "Why should I work for this idler? It is better for us to separate; I will work for myself alone, and he can do as he likes." He said to his brother, therefore:

"Brother, it is not just for me to do everything, while you trouble yourself about nothing but eating and drinking; we must separate."

His brother tried to dissuade him from his plan, saying:

"Brother, don't do this, we are so well off as we are. You have everything in your own hands; what is mine is yours; and you know that I am always satisfied with what you do or order done."

The elder, however, persisted in his resolution till the younger was forced to yield. "Since it must be so," said he, "I am not angry. Divide the property as you like."

The division made, each took his share. The idler hired a drover for his cattle, a groom for his horses, a shepherd for his sheep, a goatherd for his goats, a swineherd for his hogs, and a keeper for his bees, and said to them all, "I intrust my property to you. May God have you in His keeping." And he continued to stay at home, with no more care than before.

The elder, on the contrary, labored for himself as he had done for the common good: he kept his own flocks and had an eye to everything; yet, in spite of all this, he found bad luck and misfortune everywhere; everything went wrong with him, until at last he was so poor that he had not even a pair of shoes, but was forced to go barefoot. He said to himself, "I will go to my brother's house and see how affairs are prospering with him."

His road lay through a pasture in which a flock of sheep was feeding. On approaching them he saw that they had no shepherd. A beautiful young girl was seated near them, with her distaff, spinning gold thread.

He saluted the young girl and asked her to whom the flock belonged.

"To him to whom I belong belong also these sheep," answered she.

"And who are you?" said he.

"I am your brother's fortune?" she replied.

"And where is my fortune?" he exclaimed, seized with anger and envy.

"Ah! she is far from you," said the young girl.

"Can I find her?" asked he.

"You can," she replied, "if you only look yonder."

On hearing these words, and seeing that the sheep were the finest that could be imagined, he had no wish to see the other flocks, but went straight to his brother, who, as soon as he saw him, burst into tears, moved with pity.

"Where have you been so long?" asked he. And, seeing him clothed in rags and barefooted, he gave him a pair of shoes and some money.

After staying three days in his brother's house, the poor man set out for home. No sooner had he reached his house than he threw a bag across his shoulder, with a piece of bread in it, took a staff in his hand, and set out to seek his fortune.

After walking for some time he found himself in a great forest, where he saw a wretched old hag asleep under a tree. He gave her a blow on the back with his staff to awaken her. She moved with difficulty, and, half opening her bleared eyes, said to him, "Thank God that I was asleep, for if I had been awake you would not have had those shoes."

"Who are you, then," asked he, "that would have prevented my having these shoes?"

"I am your fortune," answered the old woman.

"What! are you my fortune?" cried he, striking his breast. "May God exterminate you! Who gave you to me?"

"It was Destiny," replied the old woman.

"Where is Destiny?" he asked.

"Go and find him," said the old woman, lying down to sleep again.

He set out in search of Destiny. After a long, long journey, at length he reached a wood, where he found a hermit, of whom he asked the way to the abode of Destiny.

"Go straight up yonder mountain and you will find his castle," answered the hermit; "but when you find him take care not to speak to him, but only do all that you see him do."

The traveler thanked the hermit and took his way to the mountain. When he reached the abode of Destiny he saw a magnificent palace full of servants constantly bustling about and doing nothing. As to Destiny, he was supping at a table bountifully served. When the stranger saw this he also sat down at the table and supped with the master of the house. After supper Destiny went to bed, and his guest did the same.

At midnight a terrible noise was heard in the castle, and a voice cried, "Destiny, Destiny, such a number of souls have come into the world this night; give them something according to thy good pleasure."

And behold! Destiny rose, and opened a golden chest filled with shining guineas, which he scattered by handfuls about the room, saying, "Such as I am to-day, such shalt thou be all thy life!"

At daybreak the beautiful castle had vanished, and in its place stood an ordinary house, in which, however, nothing was wanting. When evening came Destiny sat down to supper. His guest did the same, but no one spoke a word. Supper over, they went to bed. At midnight a terrible noise was heard, and a voice cried, "Destiny, Destiny, such a number of souls have come into the world this night; give them something according to thy good pleasure."

And behold! Destiny rose, and opened a silver chest, but this time there were no guineas in it, but only silver coin, with a few small pieces of gold, which Destiny scattered on the floor, saying, "Such as I am to-day, such shalt thou be all thy life!"

At daybreak this house had also disappeared, and a smaller one stood in its place. The same thing happened every night, and every morning the house was smaller, until finally there was nothing but a wretched hut. Destiny now took a spade and began to dig the ground. His guest did the same, and both worked all day. When night came, Destiny took a crust of bread and, breaking it in two, gave half to his companion. This was all his supper. When they had eaten it they went to bed.

At midnight a terrible noise was heard, and a voice cried out, "Destiny, Destiny, such a number of souls have come into the world this night; give them something according to thy good pleasure."

And behold! Destiny rose, and opened a wooden chest filled with pebbles mixed with a few copper coins, which he scattered on the ground, saying, "Such as I am to-day, such shalt thou be all thy life!"

When morning dawned the cabin was changed into a splendid palace, as on the first day. Then, for the first time, Destiny spoke to his guest. "Why did you come here?" asked he.

The poor man told him the whole story of his wretchedness, and how he had come to ask Destiny himself why he had given him such a bad fortune.

"You saw what I was the first night, when I scattered guineas, and what followed," replied Destiny. "Such as I am on the night that a man is born, such will that man be all his life. You were born on a night of

poverty; you will always be poor. Your brother, on the contrary, came into the world on a lucky night; he will always be fortunate. But, since you have taken so much trouble to find me, I will tell you how to help yourself. Your brother has a daughter by the name of Miliza, who is as fortunate as her father. Take her for your wife when you return home, but be careful always to say that all that you have belongs to her."

The poor man thanked Destiny again and again, and set out for home. As soon as he arrived he went straight to his brother's house and said,

"Brother, give me Miliza for a wife; you see that I am all alone in the world."

"I am willing," answered his brother; "Miliza is yours."

The bridegroom carried Miliza to his house. He soon became very rich, but he always took good care to say, "All that I have belongs to Miliza."

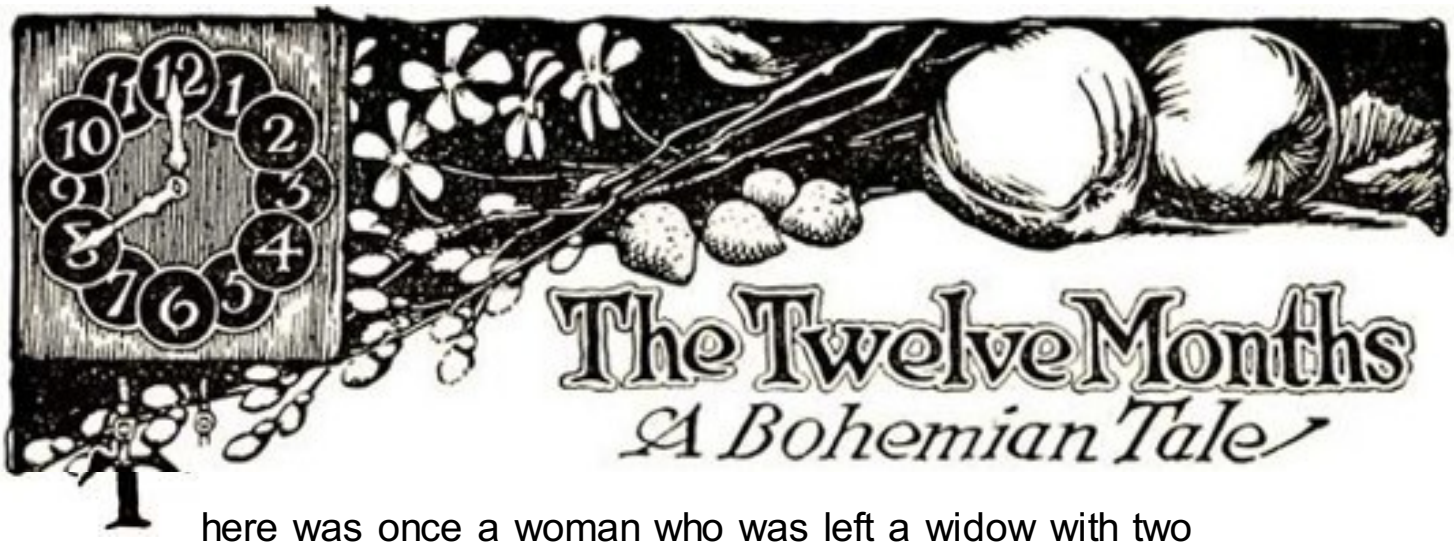
One day, however, as he was admiring his wheat, which was the most beautiful that ever was seen, a stranger passed by and asked, "Whose wheat is this?"

"It is mine," answered he, without thinking. But scarcely had he spoken when, behold! the wheat took fire, and the flames spread all over the field. Without stopping to put it out, he ran after the traveler, crying, "Stop, sir, I was mistaken; it belongs to Miliza, my brother's daughter."

The fire went out at once of its own accord. He had learned a good lesson which he never forgot, and from that time thenceforth he was fortunate, thanks to Miliza.

The Twelve Months

A Bohemian Tale



There was once a woman who was left a widow with two children. The elder, who was only her stepdaughter, was named Dobrunka; the younger, who was as wicked as her mother, was called Katinka. The mother worshiped her daughter, but she hated Dobrunka, simply because she was as beautiful as her sister was ugly. Dobrunka did not even know that she was pretty, and she could not understand why her stepmother flew into a rage at the mere sight of her. The poor child was obliged to do all the work of the house; she had to sweep, cook, wash, sew, spin, weave, cut the grass, and take care of the cow, while Katinka lived like a princess—that is to say, did nothing.

Dobrunka worked with a good will, and took reproaches and blows with the gentleness of a lamb; but nothing soothed her stepmother, for every day added to the beauty of the elder sister and the ugliness of the younger. "They are growing up," thought the mother, "and suitors will soon appear, who will refuse my daughter when they see this hateful Dobrunka, who grows beautiful on purpose to spite me. I must get rid of her, cost what it may."

One day in the middle of January, Katinka took a fancy for some violets. She called Dobrunka and said, "Go to the forest and bring me a bunch of violets, that I may put them in my bosom and enjoy their fragrance."

"Oh, sister, what an idea!" answered Dobrunka; "as if there were any violets under the snow!"

"Hold your tongue, stupid fool," returned her sister, "and do as I bid you. If you do not go to the forest and bring me back a bunch of violets I will beat you to a jelly." Upon this the mother took Dobrunka by the arm, put her out of the door, and drew the bolt on her.

The poor girl went to the forest weeping bitterly. Everything was covered with snow; there was not even a footpath. She lost her way and wandered about till, famishing with hunger and perishing with cold, she entreated God to take her from this wretched life.

All at once she saw a light in the distance. She went on, climbing higher and higher, until at last she reached the top of a huge rock, upon which a great fire was built. Around the fire were twelve stones, and on each stone sat a motionless figure, wrapped in a large mantle, his head covered with a hood which fell over his eyes. Three of these mantles were white like the snow, three were green like the grass of the meadows, three were golden like the sheaves of ripe wheat, and three were purple like the grapes of the vine. These twelve figures, gazing at the fire in silence, were the Twelve Months of the year.

PRETTY DOBRUNKA WAS OBLIGED TO DO ALL THE WORK OF THE HOUSE

Dobrunka knew January by his long white beard. He was the only one that had a staff in his hand. The poor girl was terribly frightened. She drew near, saying, in a timid voice, "My good sirs, please to let me warm myself by your fire; I am freezing with cold."

January nodded his head. "Why have you come here, my child?" he asked. "What are you looking for?"

"I am looking for violets," replied Dobrunka.

"This is not the season for them; there are no violets in the time of snow," said January, in his gruff voice.

"I know it," replied Dobrunka, sadly; "but my sister and mother will beat me to a jelly if I do not bring them some. My good sirs, please to tell me where I can find them."

Old January rose, and, turning to a young man in a green mantle, put his staff in his hand, and said to him, "Brother March, this is your business."

March rose in turn, and stirred the fire with the staff, when, behold! the flames rose, the snow melted, the buds put forth on the trees, the grass turned green under the bushes, the flowers peeped through the verdure, and the violets opened—it was spring.

"Make haste, my child, and gather your violets," said March.

Dobrunka gathered a large bouquet, thanked the Twelve Months, and joyfully ran home. You can imagine the astonishment of Katinka and the stepmother. The fragrance of the violets filled the whole house.

"Where did you find these fine things?" asked Katinka, in a disdainful voice.

"Up yonder, on the mountain," answered her sister. "It looked like a great blue carpet under the bushes."

Katinka put the bouquet in her bosom and did not even thank the poor child.

The next morning the wicked sister, as she sat idling by the stove, took a fancy for some strawberries.

"Go to the forest and bring me some strawberries," said she to Dobrunka.

"Oh, sister, what an idea! as if there were any strawberries under the snow!"

"Hold your tongue, stupid fool, and do as I bid you. If you don't go to the forest and bring me back a basket of strawberries, I will beat you to a jelly."

The mother took Dobrunka by the arm, put her out of the door, and drew the bolt on her.

The poor girl returned to the forest, looking with all her eyes for the light that she had seen the day before. She was fortunate enough to spy it, and she reached the fire trembling and almost frozen.

The Twelve Months were in their places, motionless and silent.

"My good sirs," said Dobrunka, "please to let me warm myself by your

fire; I am almost frozen with cold."

"Why have you returned?" asked January. "What are you looking for?"

"I am looking for strawberries," answered she.

"This is not the season for them," returned January, in his gruff voice; "there are no strawberries under the snow."

"I know it," replied Dobrunka, sadly; "but my mother and sister will beat me to a jelly if I do not bring them some. My good sirs, please to tell me where I can find them."

Old January rose and, turning to a man in a golden mantle, he put his staff in his hand, saying, "Brother June, this is your business."

June rose in turn, and stirred the fire with the staff, when, behold! the flames rose, the snow melted, the earth grew green, the trees were covered with leaves, the birds sang and the flowers opened—it was summer. Thousands of little white stars enameled the turf, then turned to red strawberries, looking, in their green cups, like rubies set in emeralds.

"Make haste, my child, and gather your strawberries," said June.

Dobrunka filled her apron, thanked the Twelve Months, and joyfully ran home. You may imagine the astonishment of Katinka and the stepmother. The fragrance of the strawberries filled the whole house.

"Where did you find these things?" asked Katinka, in a disdainful voice.

"Up yonder on the mountain," answered her sister; "there were so many of them that they looked like blood poured on the ground."

Katinka and her mother devoured the strawberries without even thanking the poor child.

The third day the wicked sister took a fancy for some red apples. The same threats, the same insults, and the same violence followed. Dobrunka ran to the mountain, and was fortunate enough to find the Twelve Months warming themselves, motionless and silent.

"You here again, my child?" said old January, making room for her by the fire. Dobrunka told him, with tears, how, if she did not bring home some red apples, her mother and sister would beat her to death.

Old January repeated the ceremonies of the day before. "Brother September," said he to a gray-bearded man in a purple mantle, "this is your business."

September rose and stirred the fire with the staff, when, behold! the flames ascended, the snow melted, and the trees put forth a few yellow leaves, which fell one by one before the wind—it was autumn. The only flowers were a few late pinks, daisies, and immortelles. Dobrunka saw but one thing, an apple-tree with its rosy fruit.

TURNED OUT BY HER MOTHER, DOBRUNKA WENT UNHAPPILY INTO THE FOREST

"Make haste, my child; shake the tree," said September.

She shook it, and an apple fell; she shook it again, and a second

apple followed.

"Make haste, Dobrunka, make haste home!" cried September, in an imperious voice.

The good child thanked the Twelve Months, and joyfully ran home. You may imagine the astonishment of Katinka and the stepmother.

"Red apples in January! Where did you get these apples?" asked Katinka.

"Up yonder on the mountain; there is a tree there that is as red with them as a cherry-tree in July."

"Why did you bring only two? You ate the rest on the way."

"Oh, sister, I did not touch them; I was only permitted to shake the tree twice, and but two apples fell."

"Begone, you fool!" cried Katinka, striking her sister, who ran away crying.

The wicked girl tasted one of the apples; she had never eaten anything so delicious in her life, neither had her mother. How they regretted not having any more!

"Mother," said Katinka, "give me my fur cloak. I will go to the forest and find the tree, and whether I am permitted or not I will shake it so hard that all the apples will be ours."

The mother tried to stop her. A spoiled child listens to nothing. Katinka wrapped herself in her fur cloak, drew the hood over her head, and hastened to the forest.

Everything was covered with snow; there was not even a footpath. Katinka lost her way, but she pushed on, spurred by pride and covetousness. She spied a light in the distance. She climbed and climbed till she reached the place, and found the Twelve Months each seated on his stone, motionless and silent. Without asking their permission, she approached the fire.

"Why have you come here? What do you want? Where are you going?" asked old January, gruffly.

"What matters it to you, old fool?" answered Katinka. "It is none of your business where I came from or whither I am going." She plunged into the forest. January frowned and raised his staff above his head. In

the twinkling of an eye the sky was overcast, the fire went out, the snow fell, and the wind blew. Katinka could not see the way before her. She lost herself, and vainly tried to retrace her steps. The snow fell and the wind blew. She called her mother, she cursed her sister, she cursed God. The snow fell and the wind blew. Katinka froze, her limbs stiffened, and she fell motionless. The snow still fell and the wind still blew.

The mother went without ceasing from the window to the door, and from the door to the window. The hours passed and Katinka did not return.

"I must go and look for my daughter," said she. "The child has forgotten herself with those hateful apples." She took her fur cloak and hood, and hastened to the mountain. Everything was covered with snow; there was not even a footpath. She plunged into the forest, calling her daughter. The snow fell and the wind blew. She walked on with feverish anxiety, shouting at the top of her voice. The snow still fell and the wind still blew.

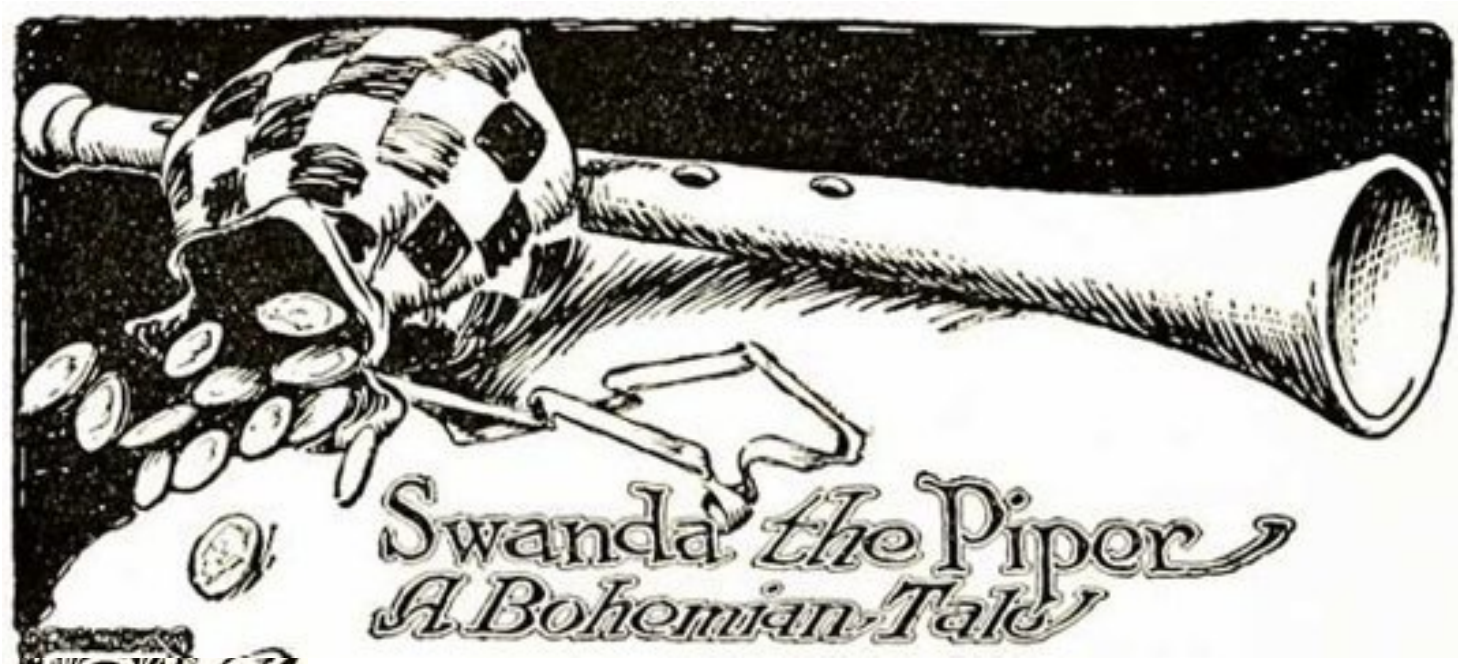
Dobrunka waited through the evening and the night, but no one returned. In the morning she took her wheel and spun a whole distaff full; there was still no news. "What can have happened?" said the girl, weeping. The sun was shining through an icy mist and the ground was covered with snow. Dobrunka prayed for her mother and sister. They did not return; and it was not till spring that a shepherd found the two corpses in the forest.

Dobrunka remained the sole mistress of the house, the cow, and the garden, to say nothing of a piece of meadow adjoining the house. But when a good and pretty girl has a field under her window, the next thing that follows is a young farmer who offers her his heart and hand. Dobrunka was soon married. The Twelve Months did not abandon their child. More than once, when the north wind blew fearfully and the windows shook in their frames, old January stopped up all the crevices of the house with snow, so that the cold might not enter this peaceful abode.

Dobrunka lived to a good old age, always virtuous and happy, having, according to the proverb, winter at the door, summer in the barn, autumn in the cellar, and spring in the heart.

Swanda the Piper

A Bohemian Tale



Swanda, the Piper, was a jolly companion. Like every true musician, he was born with an unquenchable thirst; besides, he was madly fond of play, and would have risked his soul at strajak, the favorite game at cards in Bohemia. When he had earned a little money he would throw aside his pipes, and drink and play with the first comer till he returned to his home as light in pocket as when he had left it. But he was always so merry, witty, and good-natured that not a drinker ever left the table while the piper was there, and his name still lives in Bohemia as the prince of good fellows.

One day there was a festival at Mokran, and no merry-making was ever complete without the piper. Swanda, after blowing his pipe till midnight and earning twenty zwanzigers, determined to amuse himself on his own account. Neither prayers nor promises could persuade him to go on with his music; he was determined to drink his fill and to shuffle the cards at his ease; but, for the first time in his life, he found no one to play with him.

Swanda was not the man to quit the inn so long as he had a kreutzer

in his pocket, and on that day he had many of them. By dint of talking, laughing, and drinking he took one of those fixed ideas which are not uncommon among those who look too often in the bottom of their glass, and determined to play at any price; but all his neighbors refused his challenge. Furious at finding no partner, he rose with an unsteady step, paid for what he had drank, and left the inn.

"I will go to Drazic," said he; "the schoolmaster and the bailiff there are honest people who are not afraid of play, and I shall find partners. Hurrah!"

The night was clear and the moon shone like a fish's eye. On reaching a cross-road Swanda raised his eyes by chance, and stopped, mute and motionless. A flock of ravens were croaking over his head, and in front of him rose four posts, standing like pillars, and connected at the top by cross-beams, from each of which swung a half-devoured corpse. It was a robbers' gallows, a spectacle by no means amusing to a less stoical spirit than that of Swanda.

He had not recovered from the first shudder when suddenly there appeared before him a man dressed in black, with pale and hollow cheeks, and eyes that glittered like carbuncles.

"Where are you going so late, friend Piper?" asked he, in a soft voice.

"To Drazic, Mr. Black Coat," answered the intrepid Swanda.

"Would you like to earn something by your music?"

"I am tired of blowing," returned Swanda. "I have some silver in my pocket, and wish to amuse myself."

"Who talks to you of silver? It is with gold that we pay."

Saying this, the stranger flashed before his eyes a handful of shining ducats. The piper was the son of a thrifty mother; he knew not how to resist such an invitation, and followed the black man and his gold.

How the time passed he never could remember. It is true that his head was a little heavy. The only thing that he recollected was that the black man warned him to accept whatever was offered him, whether gold or wine, but never to return thanks except by saying "Good luck, brother!"

Without knowing how he had entered, he found himself in a dark room

where three men, dressed in black like his guide, were playing at strajak by no other light than their glittering eyes. On the table were piles of gold, and a jug from which each one drank in his turn.

"Brothers," said the black man, "I bring you friend Swanda, whom you have long known by reputation. I thought to please you on this feast-day by giving you a little music."

"A good idea!" said one of the players. Then, taking the jug, he handed it to Swanda, saying, "Here, piper, drink and play."

Swanda had some scruples; but, after all, it is impossible to have charcoal without putting your finger into the ashes. The wine, though rather warm, was not bad. He replaced the jug on the table, and raising his hat, said, "Good luck, brother!" as he had been advised.

He began to play, and never had his music produced such an effect. Each note made the players leap for joy. Their eyes shot forth flames; they moved about uneasily in their chairs; they staked the ducats by handfuls; they shouted and burst into loud fits of laughter without stirring a muscle of their pallid faces. The jug passed from hand to hand, always full, though replenished by no one.

As soon as Swanda finished an air they handed him the jug, from which he never failed to drink deeply, and threw handfuls of gold into his hat. "Good luck, brother!" he repeated, astounded at his fortune —"good luck!"

The feast lasted a long time. At last, the piper having struck up a polka, the black men, in a transport of mirth, quitted the table and danced and waltzed with an ardor and frenzy which ill accorded with their icy faces. One of the dancers gathered up all the gold that was heaped on the table, and, pouring it into Swanda's hat, "Here," said he, "take this for the pleasure that you have given us."

HE BEGAN TO PLAY AND NEVER HAD HIS MUSIC PRODUCED SUCH AN EFFECT

"God bless you, my good lords!" said the dazzled piper. Scarcely had he spoken when men, room, and cards vanished.

In the morning a peasant on his way to the fields heard the sound of a pipe as he approached the cross-road. "It is Swanda," said he. But where was the piper? Seated on a corner of the gallows, he was blowing with all his might, while the corpses of the robbers danced in the wind to his music.

"Halloo, comrade!" cried the peasant. "How long have you been playing the cuckoo up there?"

Swanda started, dropped his pipe, opened his eyes, and glided, bewildered, down the gallows. His first thought, however, was for his ducats. He rummaged his pockets and turned his hat inside out, but all in vain; there was not even a kreutzer!

"My friend," said the peasant, making the sign of the cross, "God has punished you by giving you the devil for a partner; you love cards too well."

"You are right," said Swanda, trembling; "I will never touch them again in my life."

He kept his word; and, to thank Heaven for having preserved him from such peril, he took the fatal pipe to which the devil had danced, and suspended it as a votive offering in the church of Strakonic, his birthplace, where it may be seen to this day. The pipe of Strakonic has become a proverb, and it is even said that its sound is heard every year at the day and hour when Swanda played for Satan and his friends.

The Gold Bread

A Hungarian Tale

Once upon a time there was a widow who had a beautiful daughter. The mother was modest and humble; the daughter, Marienka, was pride itself. She had suitors from all sides, but none satisfied her; the more they tried to please her the more she disdained them.

One night, when the poor mother could not sleep, she took her beads and began to pray for her dear child, who gave her more than one care. Marienka was asleep by her side. As the mother gazed lovingly at her beautiful daughter, Marienka laughed in her sleep.

"What a beautiful dream she must have to laugh in this way!" said the mother. Then she finished her prayer, hung her beads on the wall, laid her head on the same pillow with her daughter, and fell asleep.

"My dear child," said she in the morning, "what did you dream last night that you laughed so?"

"What did I dream, mamma? I dreamed that a nobleman came here for me in a copper coach, and that he put a ring on my finger set with a stone that sparkled like the stars. And when I entered the church the

people had eyes for no one but the blessed Virgin and me."

"My daughter, my daughter, that was a proud dream!" said the mother, shaking her head. But Marienka went out singing.

The same day a wagon entered the yard. A handsome young farmer in good circumstances came to ask Marienka to share a peasant's bread with him. The mother was pleased with the suitor, but the proud Marienka refused him, saying, "Though you should come in a copper coach, and put a ring on my finger set with a stone that sparkled like the stars, I would not have you for a husband." And the farmer went away storming at Marienka's pride.

The next night the mother waked, took her beads, and prayed still more earnestly for her daughter, when, behold! Marienka laughed again as she was sleeping.

"I wonder what she is dreaming," said the mother, who prayed, unable to sleep.

"My dear child," she said the next morning, "what did you dream last night that you laughed aloud?"

"What did I dream, mamma? I dreamed that a nobleman came here for me in a silver coach, and that he offered me a golden diadem. And when I entered the church the people looked at me more than they did at the blessed Virgin."

"Hush! you are blaspheming. Pray, my daughter, pray that you may not fall into temptation."

But Marienka ran away to escape her mother's sermon.

The same day a carriage entered the yard. A young lord came to entreat Marienka to share a nobleman's bread with him.

"It is a great honor," said the mother; but vanity is blind.

"Though you should come in a silver coach," said Marienka to the new suitor, "and should offer me a golden diadem, I would not have you for a husband."

"Take care, my child," said the poor mother; "pride is a device of the Evil One."

"Mothers never know what they are saying," thought Marienka, and she went out shrugging her shoulders.

The third night the mother could not sleep for anxiety. As she lay awake, praying for her daughter, behold! Marienka burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"Oh!" said the mother, "what can the unhappy child be dreaming now?" And she continued to pray till daylight.

"My dear child," said she in the morning, "what did you dream last night?"

"You will be angry again if I tell you," answered Marienka.

"No, no," replied the mother. "Tell me."

"I dreamed that a noble lord, with a great train of attendants, came to ask me in marriage. He was in a golden coach, and he brought me a dress of gold lace. And when I entered the church, the people looked at nobody but me."

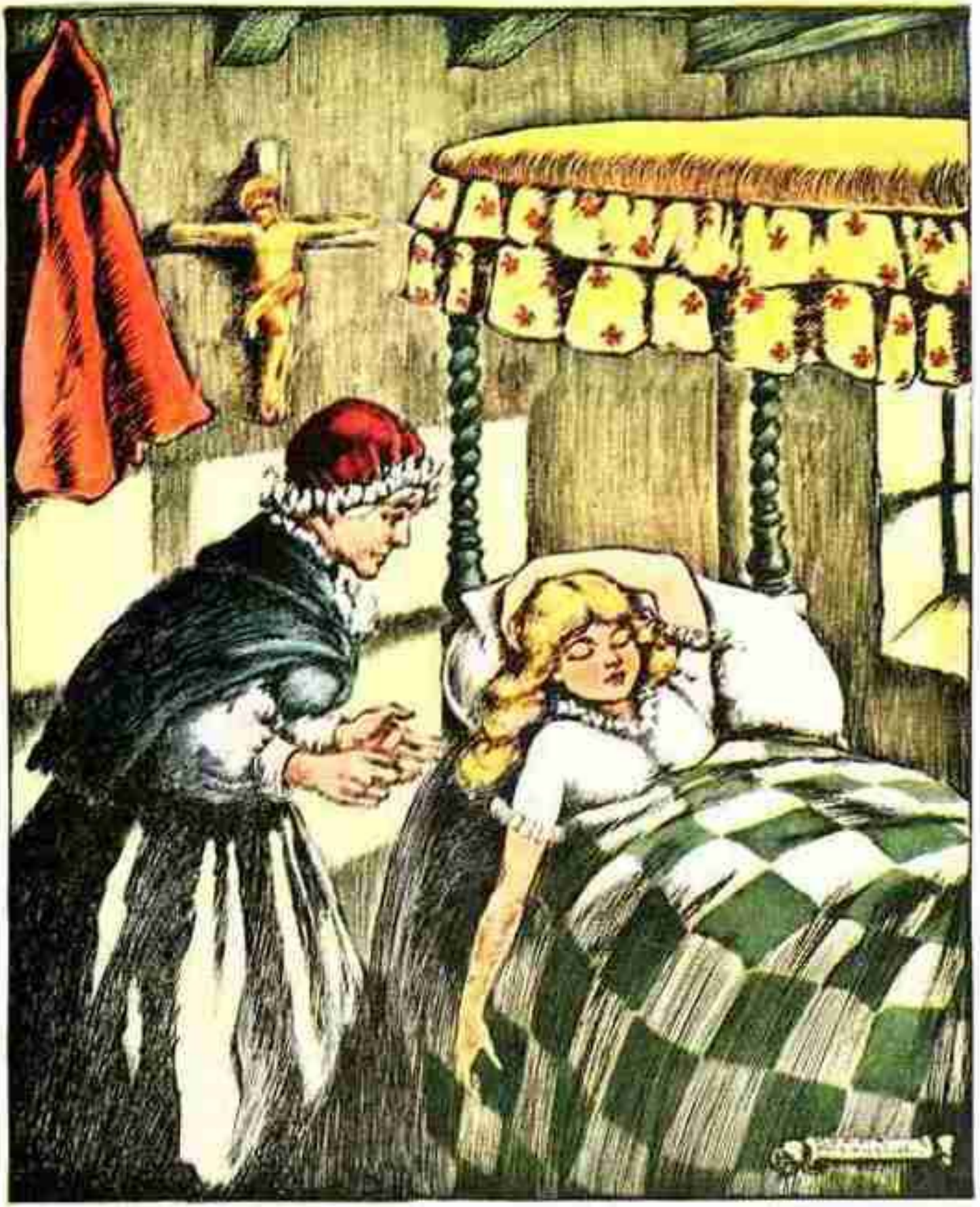
The mother clasped her hands. Marienka, half dressed, sprang from the bed and ran into the next room, to avoid a lecture that was tiresome to her.

The same day three coaches entered the yard, one of copper, one of silver, and one of gold; the first drawn by two horses, the second by four, and the third by eight, all caparisoned with gold and pearls. From the copper and silver coaches alighted pages dressed in scarlet breeches and green jackets and cloaks, while from the golden coach stepped a handsome nobleman all dressed in gold. He entered the house, and, bending one knee on the ground, asked the mother for her daughter's hand.

"What an honor!" thought the mother.

"My dream has come to pass," said Marienka. "You see, mother, that, as usual, I was right and you were wrong."

She ran to her chamber, tied the betrothal knot, and offered it smilingly as a pledge of her faith to the handsome lord, who, on his side, put a ring on her finger set with a stone that sparkled like the stars, and presented her with a golden diadem and a dress of gold lace.



AS THE MOTHER GAZED LOVINGLY AT HER BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, MARIENKA LAUGHED IN HER SLEEP

The proud girl ran to her room to dress for the ceremony, while the mother, still anxious, said to the bridegroom, "My good sir, what

bread do you offer my daughter?"

"Among us," said he, "the bread is of copper, silver, and gold. She can take her choice."

"What does this mean?" thought the mother. But Marienka had no anxiety; she returned as beautiful as the sun, took her lover's arm, and set out for the church without asking her mother's blessing. The poor woman was left to pray alone on the threshold; and when Marienka returned and entered the carriage she did not even turn round to look at her mother or to bid her a last farewell.

The eight horses set off at a gallop, and did not stop till they reached a huge rock in which there was a hole as large as the gate of a city. The horses plunged into the darkness, the earth trembled, and the rock cracked and crumbled. Marienka seized her husband's hand.

"Don't be alarmed, my fair one; in a moment it will be light."

All at once a thousand lights waved in the air. The dwarfs of the mountain, each with a torch in his hand, came to salute their lord, the King of the Mines. Marienka learned for the first time her husband's name. Whether he was a spirit of good or of evil, at least he was so rich that she did not regret her choice.

They emerged from the darkness, and advanced through bleached forests and mountains that raised their pale and gloomy summits to the skies. Firs, beeches, birches, oaks, rocks, all were of lead. At the end of the forest stretched a vast meadow the grass of which was of silver; and at the bottom of the meadow was a castle of gold, inlaid with diamonds and rubies. The carriage stopped before the door, and the King of the Mines offered his hand to his bride, saying, "My fair one, all that you see is yours."

Marienka was delighted. But it is impossible to make so long a journey without being hungry; and it was with pleasure, therefore, that she saw the mountain dwarfs bring in a table, everything on which glittered with gold, silver, and precious stones. The dishes were marvelous—side-dishes of emeralds, and roasts of gold on silver salvers. Every one ate heartily except the bride, who begged her husband for a little bread.

"Bring the copper bread," said the King of the Mines.

Marienka could not eat it.

"Bring the silver bread," said he.

Marienka could not eat it.

"Bring the gold bread," said he, at length.

Marienka could not eat it.

"My fair one," said the King of the Mines, "I am very sorry; but what can I offer you? We have no other bread."

The bride burst into tears. Her husband laughed aloud; his heart was of metal, like his kingdom.

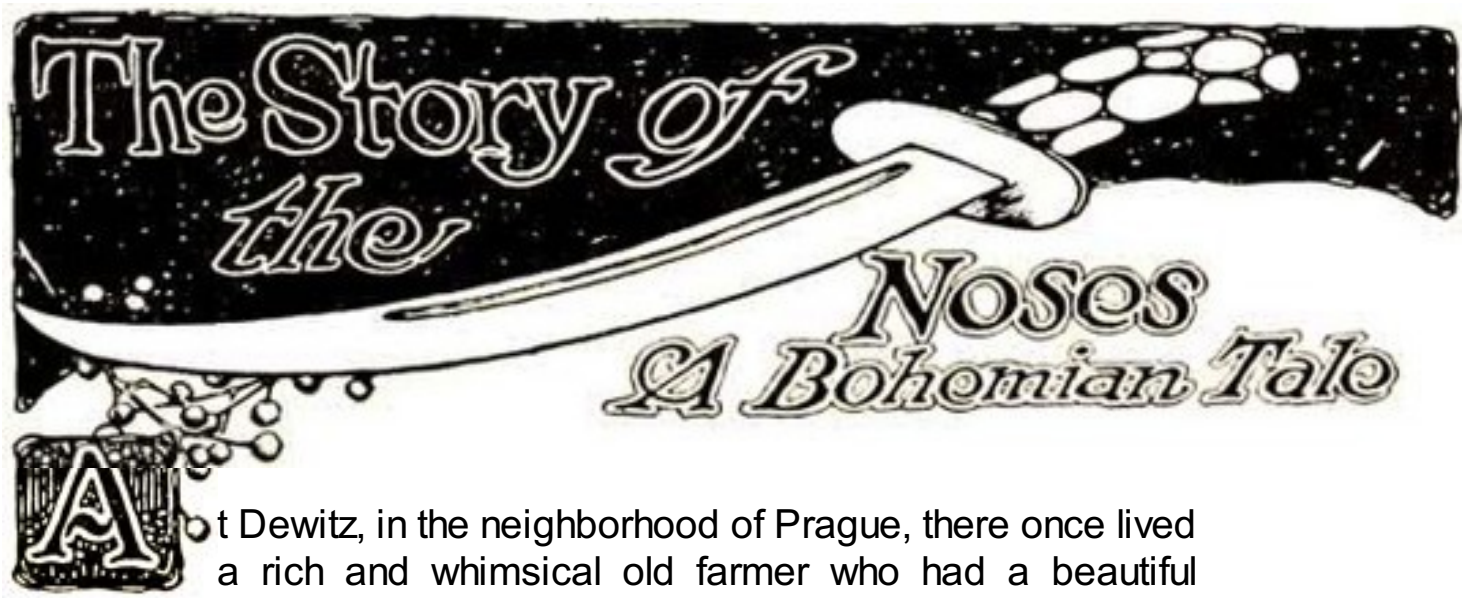
"Weep, if you like," he cried; "it will do you no good. What you wished for you possess. Eat the bread that you have chosen."

It was thus that the rich Marienka lived in her castle, dying of hunger, and seeking in vain for a root to allay the torture that was consuming her. God had humbled her by granting her prayer.

Three days in the year, the Rogation Days, when the ground half opens to receive the fruitful rain sent by the Lord, Marienka returns to the earth. Dressed in rags, pale and wrinkled, she begs from door to door, too happy when any one throws her a few crusts, and when she receives as alms from the poor what she lacks in her palace of gold—a little bread and a little pity.

The Story *of the Noses*

A Bohemian Tale



At Dewitz, in the neighborhood of Prague, there once lived a rich and whimsical old farmer who had a beautiful daughter. The students of Prague, of whom there were at that time twenty-five thousand, often walked in the direction of Dewitz, and more than one of them offered to follow the plow in hopes of becoming the son-in-law of the farmer. The first condition that the cunning peasant set on each new servant was this: "I engage you," he would say, "for a year—that is, till the cuckoo sings the return of spring; but if, from now till then, you say once that you are not satisfied, I will cut off the end of your nose. I give you the same right over me," he added, laughing. And he did as he said. Prague was full of students with the ends of their noses glued on, which did not prevent an ugly scar, and, still less, bad jokes. To return from the farm disfigured and ridiculed was well calculated to cool the warmest passion.

A young man by the name of Coranda, somewhat ungainly in manner, but cool, adroit, and cunning, which are not bad aids in making one's fortune, took it in his head to try the adventure. The farmer received him with his usual good nature, and, the bargain made, sent him to the field to work. At breakfast-time the other servants were called, but good care was taken to forget Coranda. At dinner it was the same. Coranda gave himself no trouble about it. He went to the house, and

while the farmer's wife was feeding the chickens unhooked an enormous ham from the kitchen rafters, took a huge loaf from the cupboard, and went back to the fields to dine and take a nap.

"Are you satisfied?" cried the farmer, when he returned at night.

"Perfectly satisfied," said Coranda; "I have dined better than you have."

At that instant the farmer's wife came rushing in, crying that her ham was gone. Coranda laughed, and the farmer turned pale.

"Are you not satisfied?" asked Coranda.

"A ham is only a ham," answered his master. "Such a trifle does not trouble me." But after that time he took good care not to leave the student fasting.

Sunday came. The farmer and his wife seated themselves in the wagon to go to church, saying to Coranda, "It is your business to cook the dinner. Cut up the piece of meat you see yonder, with onions, carrots, leeks, and parsley, and boil them all together in the great pot over the kitchen fire."

"Very well," answered Coranda.

There was a little pet dog at the farm-house by the name of Parsley. Coranda killed him, skinned him, cut him up with the meat and vegetables, and put the whole to boil over the kitchen fire. When the farmer's wife returned she called her favorite; but, alas! she saw nothing but a bloody skin hanging by the window.

"What have you done?" said she to Coranda.

"What you ordered me, mistress. I have boiled the meat, onions, carrots, and leeks, and parsley in the bargain."

"Wicked wretch!" cried the farmer, "had you the heart to kill the innocent creature that was the joy of the house?"

"Are you not satisfied?" said Coranda, taking his knife from his pocket.

"I did not say that," returned the farmer. "A dead dog is nothing but a dead dog." But he sighed.

A few days after, the farmer and his wife went to market. Fearing their

terrible servant, they said to him, "Stay at home and do exactly what you see others do."

"Very well," said Coranda.

There was an old shed in the yard the roof of which was falling to pieces. The carpenters came to repair it, and began, as usual, by tearing down the roof. Coranda took a ladder and mounted the roof of the house, which was quite new. Shingles, lath, nails, and tiles, he tore off everything, and scattered them all to the winds. When the farmer returned the house was open to the sky.

HE RAN TO THE TREE AND SHOOK IT WITH ALL HIS MIGHT, WHEN, BEHOLD! A YOUNG GIRL FELL FROM THE BRANCHES

"Villain!" said he, "what new trick have you played me?"

"I have obeyed you, master," answered Coranda. "You told me to do exactly what I saw others do. Are you not satisfied?" And he took out his knife.

"Satisfied!" returned the farmer; "why should I not be satisfied? A few shingles more or less will not ruin me." But he sighed.

Night came, the farmer and his wife said to each other that it was high time to get rid of this incarnate demon. As is always the case with sensible people, they never did anything without consulting their daughter, it being the custom in Bohemia to think that children always have more wit than their parents.

"Father," said Helen, "I will hide in the great pear-tree early in the morning, and call like the cuckoo. You can tell Coranda that the year is up, since the cuckoo is singing; pay him and send him away."

Early in the morning the plaintive cry of the cuckoo was heard through the fields. The farmer seemed surprised. "Well, my boy, spring is come," said he. "Do you hear the cuckoo singing yonder? I will pay you and we will part good friends."

"A cuckoo!" said Coranda; "that is a bird which I have always wanted to see."

He ran to the tree and shook it with all his might, when, behold! a young girl fell from the branches, fortunately more frightened than hurt.

"Villain!" cried the farmer.

"Are you not satisfied?" said Coranda, opening his knife.

"Wretch! you kill my daughter and you think that I ought to be satisfied! I am furious. Begone, if you would not die by my hand!"

"I will go when I have cut off your nose," said Coranda. "I have kept my word. Do you keep yours."

"Stop!" cried the farmer, putting his hand before his face. "You will surely let me redeem my nose?"

"It depends on what you offer," said Coranda.

"Will you take ten sheep for it?"

"No."

"Ten cows?"

"No; I would rather cut off your nose." And he sharpened his knife on the door-step.

"Father," said Helen, "the fault was mine; it belongs to me to repair it. Coranda, will you take my hand instead of my father's nose?"

"Yes," replied Coranda.

"I make one condition," said the young girl. "We will make the same bargain; the first one of us that is not satisfied after marriage shall have his nose cut off by the other."

"Good," replied Coranda. "I would rather it was the tongue; but that will come next."

Never was a finer wedding seen at Prague, and never was there a happier household. Coranda and the beautiful Helen were a model pair. The husband and wife were never heard to complain of each other; they loved with drawn swords, and, thanks to their ingenious bargain, kept for long years both their love and their noses.

The Three Citrons

A Neapolitan Tale

Once upon a time there lived a king who was called the King of the Vermilion Towers. He had but one son, whom he loved as the apple of his eye, and who was the only hope of a royal line about to become extinct. The old king's whole ambition was to marry this illustrious prince—to find him a princess at once handsome, noble, young, and rich. He could think of nothing but this wished-for marriage.

Unhappily, among all the virtues in which the heir to a crown is never lacking, Carlino, for that was the young prince's name, had the trifling fault of being shyer than a deer. He shook his head and fled to the woods at the mere sound of a woman's name, to the great grief of his father, who was in despair at seeing his family about to die out. But his grief was in vain; nothing touched the heart of Carlino. The tears of a father, the prayers of a whole people, the interest of the state, nothing could melt this stony heart. Twenty preachers had wasted their eloquence and thirty senators their Latin in reasoning with him. To be stubborn is one of the privileges of royalty, as Carlino had known from his birth, and he would have thought himself dishonored by being second to a mule in obstinacy.

But more things often happen in an hour than in a hundred years, and

no one can say with safety, "This is a road that I shall never travel." One morning at breakfast, as Carlino, instead of listening to his father's sermon, was amusing himself by watching the flies buzzing in the air, he forgot that he had a knife in his hand, and pricked his finger in a gesture of impatience. The blood gushed forth and fell into a plate of cream that had just been handed to him, where it made a curious mixture of white and red. Either by chance or by the punishment of Heaven, the prince was instantly seized with the maddest caprice that could be imagined.

"Sir," said he to his father, "if I do not soon find a woman as white and red as this cream dyed with my blood, I am lost. This wonder must exist somewhere. I love her; I am dying for her; I must have her; I will have her. To a resolute heart nothing is impossible. If you would have me live, let me go in search of her, or before to-morrow I shall be dead of loneliness."

The poor King of the Vermilion Towers was thunderstruck at this folly. It seemed to him that his palace was crumbling over his head; he turned red and pale by turns, stammered, wept, and finally cried, in a voice broken with sobs:

"Oh, my child, the staff of my old age, my heart's blood, the life of my soul, what an idea have you taken into your head! Have you lost your reason? Yesterday you almost made me die of sorrow by refusing to marry; to-day you are about to drive me from the world by another piece of folly. Whither would you go, unhappy boy? Why leave your home, where you have been born and bred? Do you know to what danger and suffering the traveler exposes himself? Drive away these perilous fancies, and stay with me, my child, if you would not deprive me of life and destroy your kingdom and house at one blow."

All these words, and others equally wise, had no more effect than an official harangue. Carlino, his eye fixed and his brow bent, listened to nothing but his passion. All that was said to him went in at one ear and out at the other; it was eloquence cast to the winds.

When the old king, worn out with prayers and tears, perceived that it was easier to melt a leaden weathercock on its steeple than a spoiled child in pursuit of his whim, he heaved a deep sigh and determined to let Carlino go; and giving him counsels to which he scarcely listened, several bags filled with guineas, which were rather better received than the counsels, and two trusty servants, the good king clasped his rebellious son to his heart and bade him adieu, then

mounted to the top of the great tower to follow the ungrateful boy with his eyes as far as he could see. When Carlino at last disappeared in the distance, the poor monarch thought that his heart was breaking. He buried his face in his hands and wept, not like a child, but like a father. The tears of a child are like the summer rain, large drops that are soon dried up; the tears of a father are like the autumnal rain, which falls slowly and soaks into the ground.

While the king wept, Carlino, mounted on a fine horse, rode on gaily, his plume waving in the wind, like a hero about to conquer the world. To find what he sought was not an easy task, however, and his journey lasted more than one day. He crossed mountains and valleys, traversed kingdoms, duchies, earldoms, and baronies, and visited cities, villages, castles, and cottages, gazing at all the women, and gazed at by them in turn; but all in vain: the treasure that he sought was not to be found in old Europe.

At the end of four months he reached Marseilles, resolved to embark for the Indies. At the sight of the raging sea, however, his brave and faithful servants were seized with an epidemic, called by the physicians stay-at-homeativeness in Hebrew, and the headache in the feet in Latin. To the great regret of these honest people, they were forced to quit their good master and remain quietly on shore, wrapped in their warm blankets, while Carlino, embarked on a frail bark, braved the winds and waves.

Nothing can stop a heart hurried away by passion. The prince roamed over Egypt, India, and China, going from province to province, from city to city, from house to house, and from cabin to cabin, everywhere seeking the original of the fair image that was engraved on his heart, but in vain. He saw women of all colors and shades, brown, blond, olive, sandy, white, yellow, red, and black, but he did not see her whom he loved.

Always seeking and never finding, Carlino at last reached the end of the world. There was nothing more before him but the ocean and the sky. His hopes were at an end; his dream had vanished. As he was walking despairingly up and down the seashore, he spied an old man warming himself in the sun. The prince asked him if there was nothing beyond these waves that stretched as far as the eye could reach.

"No," said the old man; "no one has ever discovered anything in this shoreless ocean, or, at least, those who have ventured on it have

never returned to tell the story. I remember, however, having heard the old men among us say, when I was a child," he added, "that their fathers had told them that yonder, a long, long way off, far beyond the horizon, was the Island of the Fates; but woe to the imprudent man who approaches these merciless fairies: he is struck with death at their sight."

"What does that matter?" cried Carlino. "I would face death itself to gain my wishes."

A bark lay by the strand. The prince sprang on board and unfurled the sail. The wind, which blew off the shore, hurried forward the frail craft, the land disappeared, and Carlino found himself in the midst of the ocean. In vain he gazed about him; there was nothing but the sea—the sea everywhere; in vain the bark bounded over the foaming waves with the speed of lightning, like a steed with mane floating on the wind; there was nothing but the sea—the sea everywhere. Billows followed billows, the hours passed one after another, the day declined, and the solitude and silence seemed to deepen around Carlino, when all at once he uttered a cry; he saw a black speck in the distance. At the same instant the bark, shooting ahead like an arrow, struck upon the sand at the foot of huge rocks, which raised their dark summits, notched and worn by time, to the skies. Fate had thrown Carlino upon that strand from which none had ever returned.

To climb this wall was not an easy matter; there was neither road nor path; and when Carlino, after long efforts, with torn hands and wearied limbs, at last succeeded in reaching a level spot, what he found was not calculated to reassure him. He saw nothing but glaciers piled upon one another—black, damp rocks rising from the midst of the snows—not a tree, not a blade of grass, not a bit of moss; it was the picture of winter and death. The only sign of life in this desert was a wretched hovel, the roof of which was loaded with great stones in order to resist the fury of the winds. The prince approached the hut, and was about to enter it, when he stopped short, struck with surprise and terror at the spectacle which presented itself.

At the end of the room was a great web of cloth, on which were pictured all the conditions of life. There were kings, soldiers, farmers, and shepherds, with ladies richly dressed, and peasant women spinning by their side. At the bottom boys and girls were dancing gaily, holding each other by the hand. Before the web walked the mistress of the house—an old woman, if the name woman can be

given to a skeleton with bones scarcely hidden by a skin yellower and more transparent than wax. Like a spider ready to pounce upon its prey, the old woman, armed with a great pair of shears, peered at all the figures with a jealous eye, then suddenly fell upon the web and cut it at random, when, lo! a piercing wail rose from it that would have moved a heart of stone. The tears of children, the sobs of mothers, the despair of lovers, the last murmurs of old age, all human sorrow seemed mingled in this wail. At the sound the old woman burst into a loud laugh, and her hideous face lighted up with ferocious delight, while an invisible hand mended the web, eternally destroyed and eternally repaired.

The hag, again opening her shears, was already approaching the web anew, when she saw the shadow of Carlino.

"Fly, unhappy man," cried she, without turning round; "I know what brings you here, but I can do nothing for you. Go to my sister; perhaps she will give you what you desire. She is Life—I am Death."

Carlino did not wait for a second bidding. He rushed onward, too happy to escape this scene of horror.

The landscape soon changed. Carlino found himself in a fertile valley. On every side were harvests, blossoming fields, vines loaded with grapes, and olive-trees full of fruit. In the thick shade of a fig-tree, by a running spring, sat a blind woman unrolling the last gold and silver thread from a spindle. Around her lay several distaffs, full of different kinds of materials ready for spinning—flax, hemp, wool, silk, and others.

When she had finished her task the fairy stretched out her trembling hand at random, took the first distaff that came, and began to spin.

Carlino bowed respectfully to the lady, and began with emotion to tell her the story of his pilgrimage, when the fairy stopped him at the first word.

"My child," said she, "I can do nothing for you. I am only a poor blind woman that does not even know herself what she is doing. This distaff, which I have taken at random, decides the fate of all who are born while I am spinning it. Riches or poverty, happiness or misfortune, are attached to this thread that I cannot see. The slave of destiny, I can create nothing. Go to my other sister; perhaps she will give you what you desire. She is Birth; I am Life."

"Thanks, madam," answered Carlino; and with a light heart he ran to find the youngest of the Fates. He soon discovered her, fresh and smiling as the spring. Everything about her was taking root and germinating; the corn was bursting through the earth and putting forth its green blades from the brown furrows; the orange-blossoms were opening; the buds on the trees were unfolding their pink scales; the chickens, scarcely feathered, were running round the anxious hen, and the lambs were clinging to their mother. It was the first smile of life.

The fairy received the prince with kindness. After listening to him without laughing at his folly, she asked him to sup with her, and at dessert gave him three citrons, and a beautiful knife with a mother-of-pearl handle.

"Carlino," said she, "you can now return to your father's house. The prize is gained; you have found what you have been seeking. Go, then, and when you have reached your kingdom, stop at the first fountain that you see and cut one of these citrons. A fairy will come forth, who will ask you for a drink. Give her the water quickly, or she will slip through your fingers like quicksilver. If the second escapes you in the same way, have an eye to the last; give her a drink instantly, and you will have a wife according to your heart."

Intoxicated with joy, the prince kissed again and again the charming hand that crowned his wishes. He was more happy than wise, and little deserved to succeed; but fairies have their caprices, and Fortune is always a fairy.

It was a long distance from the end of the world to the kingdom of the Vermilion Towers. Carlino experienced more than one storm and braved more than one danger on his way across land and sea, but at last, after a long voyage and a thousand trials, he reached his father's country with his three citrons, which he had treasured like the apple of his eye.

He was not more than two hours' journey from the royal castle when he entered a dense forest where he had hunted many a time. A transparent fountain, bordered with wild flowers and shaded by the trembling leaves of the aspen, invited the traveler to repose. Carlino seated himself on a carpet of verdure enameled with daisies, and, taking his knife, cut one of the citrons.

All at once a young girl as white as milk and as red as a strawberry

darted past him like lightning. "Give me a drink!" said she, pausing an instant.

"How beautiful she is!" cried the prince, so ravished by her charms that he forgot the advice of the Fate. He paid dearly for it; in a second the fairy had disappeared. Carlino smote his breast in despair, and stood as astonished as a child that sees the running water slip through his fingers.

He tried to calm himself, and cut the next citron with a trembling hand, but the second fairy was even more beautiful and more fleeting than her sister. While Carlino admired her, wonder-struck, in the twinkling of an eye she took flight.

This time the prince burst into tears and wept so bitterly that he seemed a part of the fountain. He sobbed, tore his hair, and called down all the maledictions of Heaven on his head.

"Fool that I am!" he cried; "twice I have let her escape as though my hands were tied. Fool that I am, I deserve my fate. When I should have run like a greyhound I stood still like a post. A fine piece of business! But all is not lost; the third time conquers. I will try the magic knife once more, and if it deceives me this time I will use it on myself."

He cut the last citron. The third fairy darted forth and said, like her companions, "Give me a drink!" But the prince had learned a lesson. He instantly gave her the water, when, lo! a beautiful, slender young girl, as white as milk, with cheeks like roses, stood before him, looking like a freshly opened rosebud. She was a marvel of beauty such as the world had never seen, as fresh as a lily and as graceful as a swan; her hair was of brighter gold than the sun, her clear blue eyes revealed the depths of her heart, her rosy lips seemed made only to comfort and charm; in a word, from head to foot she was the most enchanting creature that had ever descended from heaven to earth. It is a great pity that we have no likeness of her.

HE INSTANTLY GAVE HER THE WATER, WHEN, LO! A BEAUTIFUL, SLENDER YOUNG GIRL STOOD BEFORE HIM

At the sight of his bride the prince almost lost his reason from joy and

surprise. He could not understand how this miracle of freshness and beauty had sprung from the bitter rind of a citron.

"Am I asleep?" he cried. "Am I dreaming? If I am the sport of a delusion, for pity's sake do not awaken me."

The fairy's smile soon reassured him. She accepted his hand, and was the first to ask to repair to the good king of the Vermilion Towers, who would be so happy to bless his children.

"My love," answered Carlino, "I am as impatient as you to see my father and to prove to him that I was right; but we cannot enter the castle arm in arm like two peasants. You must go like a princess; you must be received like a queen. Wait for me by this fountain; I will run to the palace, and return in two hours with a dress and equipage worthy of you." Saying this, he tenderly kissed her hand and left her.

The young girl was afraid, on finding herself alone; the cry of a raven, the rustling of the trees, a dead branch broken by the wind, everything frightened her. She looked tremblingly about her, and saw an old oak by the side of the fountain whose huge trunk offered her a shelter. She climbed the tree and hid herself in it, all but her lovely face, which, encircled by the foliage, was reflected in the transparent fountain as in a clear mirror.

Now there was a negress, by the name of Lucy, who lived in the neighborhood, and who was sent every day by her mistress to the fountain for water. Lucy came, as usual, with her pitcher on her shoulder, and just as she was about to fill it, she spied the image of the fairy in the spring. The fool, who had never seen herself, thought that the face was her own. "Poor Lucy!" she cried. "What! you, so fresh and beautiful, are forced by your mistress to carry water like a beast of burden! No, never!" And in her vanity she dashed the pitcher to the ground and returned home.

When her mistress asked her why she had broken the pitcher, the slave shrugged her shoulders and said, "The pitcher that goes often to the well is soon broken." Upon this her mistress gave her a little wooden cask and ordered her to go back immediately and fill it at the fountain.

The negress ran to the spring, and, gazing lovingly at the beautiful image in the water, sighed and said, "No, I am not an ape, as I am so often told; I am more beautiful than my mistress. Mules may carry

casks—not I!" She dashed the cask on the ground, broke it in a thousand pieces, and returned to her mistress, grumbling.

"Where is the cask?" asked her mistress, who was waiting impatiently for the water.

"A mule ran against me and knocked it down, and it is all broken to pieces."

At these words her mistress lost patience. Seizing a broom, she gave the negress one of those lessons that are not soon forgotten; then, taking down a leathern bottle that was hanging on the wall, "Run, wretched ape," she said; "and if you do not instantly bring this back to me full of water, I will beat you within an inch of your life."

The negress took to her heels in terror, and filled the bottle obediently; but when it was filled she stopped to look once more in the fountain; and seeing the lovely face reflected there, "No!" she cried, in a burst of anger—"no, I will not be a water-carrier; no, I was not made to serve my mistress like a dog."

Saying this, she took from her hair the great pin that held it, and pierced the bottle through and through. The water spouted out in every direction. At the sight the fairy in the tree burst into a fit of laughter. The negress looked up, saw the beautiful stranger, and understood the whole.

"Oh!" said she to herself, "so you are the cause of my beating; no matter, you shall pay me well for it." Then, raising her voice, she called, in her sweetest tones, "What are you doing up there, lovely lady?"

The fairy, who was as good as she was beautiful, tried to comfort the slave by talking with her. The acquaintance was soon made; an innocent soul is unsuspicious in friendship. The fairy, without distrust, told the negress all that had happened to her and the prince, why she was alone in the forest, and how she was every instant expecting Carlino with a grand equipage to conduct his bride to the king of the Vermilion Towers, and to marry her there in the presence of all the court.

On hearing this story, the wicked and envious negress conceived an abominable idea. "Madame," said she, "if the prince is coming with all his suite, you must be ready to meet him. Your hair is all in disorder; let me come to you, and I will comb it."

"With pleasure," answered the fairy, with a gracious smile, as she stretched out a little white hand, which looked, in Lucy's great black paw, like a crystal mirror in an ebony frame.

No sooner had she climbed the tree than the wicked slave untied the fairy's hair and began to comb it; then, all at once, taking her great hair-pin, she pierced her to the brain. Feeling herself wounded, the fairy cried, "Palomba! Palomba!" when she instantly turned to a wood-pigeon and flew away. The horrible negress took her victim's place, and stretched out her neck among the foliage, looking like a statue of jet in a niche of emerald.

Meanwhile the prince, mounted on a magnificent horse, was riding thither at full speed, followed by a long cavalcade. Poor Carlino was astonished to find a crow where he had left a swan. He almost lost his reason, his voice was choked with tears, and he gazed in all directions, hoping to see his bride among the foliage. But the negress, putting on a suffering air, said to him, casting down her eyes, "Look no farther, my prince; a wicked fairy has made me her victim, and a wretched fate has changed your lily to charcoal."

Though he cursed the fairies who had played on his credulity, Carlino, like a true prince, would not break his word. He gallantly gave his hand to Lucy and helped her to descend from the tree, all the while heaving sighs that would have melted a heart of stone. When the negress was dressed like a princess, and covered with lace and diamonds that adorned her as the stars adorn the night, by rendering the darkness still more visible, Carlino seated her at his right hand, in a magnificent carriage lined with plate-glass and drawn by six white horses, and took his way to the palace, as happy as a criminal with the rope about his neck.

The old king came to meet them a league from the castle. The wonderful stories of his son had turned his brain. In spite of etiquette and against the remonstrances of his courtiers, he hastened to admire the incomparable beauty of his daughter-in-law. "Upon my word," he exclaimed, at the sight of a crow instead of the dove that had been promised him—"upon my word, this is too much. I knew that my son was mad, but I did not know that he was blind. Is this the spotless lily that he has been to the end of the world to seek? Is this the rose fresher than the morning dew, the miracle of beauty that has come from the rind of a citron? Does he think that I will bear this new insult to my gray hairs? Does he think that I will leave to mulatto

children the empire of the Vermilion Towers, the glorious inheritance of my ancestors? This baboon shall never enter my palace."

The prince fell at his father's feet and tried to move him. The prime minister, a man of great experience, remonstrated with his master that, at court, black often becomes white and white black in the space of twenty-four hours; and that there was no reason to be astonished at such a very natural metamorphosis. What was the king of the Vermilion Towers to do? He was a king and a father, and by this double title always accustomed to do the will of others. He yielded and consented with a bad grace to this strange union. The court gazette announced to the whole kingdom the happy choice that the prince had made, and ordered the people to rejoice. The wedding was postponed for a week; it was impossible to make the preparations for the ceremony in less time than this.

The negress was lodged in a magnificent suite of apartments; countesses disputed with one another the honor of putting on her slippers; and duchesses obtained, not without difficulty, the glorious privilege of handing her her nightgown. The town and castle were adorned with flags of all colors; walls were thrown down, yews were planted, walks were graveled, old speeches were furbished up, stale compliments were newly framed, and poems and sonnets that had done duty everywhere were patched up anew. There was but one idea in the kingdom—that of thankfulness to the prince for having chosen a wife so worthy of him.

The kitchen was not forgotten. Three hundred scullions, a hundred cooks, and fifty stewards set to work, under the superintendence of the famous Bouchibus, the chief of the royal kitchens. Pigs were killed, sheep cut up, capons larded, pigeons plucked, and turkeys spitted; it was a universal massacre. It is impossible to have a feast worthy of the name without the help of the poultry-yard.

In the midst of this bustle a beautiful wood-pigeon, with blue wings, perched on one of the kitchen windows, and cooed, in a plaintive voice,

> "Bouchibus, tell me, for you must know, sure,
> What has Carlino to do with the Moor?"

The great Bouchibus was at first too busy with public affairs to attend to the cooing of a pigeon; but after a while he began to be astonished at understanding the language of birds, and thought it his duty to

inform his new mistress of the wonder. The negress did not disdain to go to the kitchen. As soon as she heard the song, with a cry of affright, she ordered Bouchibus to catch the pigeon and make a stew of it.

No sooner said than done. The poor bird suffered itself to be caught without resistance. In an instant Bouchibus, armed with his great knife, cut off its head and threw it into the garden. Three drops of blood fell on the ground; and three days after there sprang from the earth a beautiful citron-tree, which grew so fast that before night it was in blossom.

The prince, while taking the air in his balcony, chanced to spy a citron-tree which he had never seen before. He called the cook and asked him who had planted this beautiful tree. The story of Bouchibus perplexed him greatly. He at once commanded, under penalty of death, that no one should touch the citron-tree, and that the greatest care should be taken of it.

The next morning, as soon as he awoke, the prince hastened to the garden. There were already three citrons on the tree—three citrons exactly like those which the Fate had given him. Carlino gathered them, hastened to his apartments, and shut himself up under lock and key. With a trembling hand he filled a golden cup, set with rubies, which had belonged to his mother, with water, and opened the magic knife, which had never left him.

He cut a citron, and the first fairy came forth. Carlino scarcely glanced at her, and suffered her to take flight. It was the same with the second; but as soon as the third appeared he gave her the cup, from which she drank with a smile, and stood before him more graceful than ever.

The fairy then told Carlino all that she had suffered from the wicked negress. The prince, beside himself with mingled joy and anger, laughed and wept, sang and raved. The king, hearing the noise, ran to see what was the matter, and you may judge of his surprise. He danced about like a madman, with his crown on his head and his scepter in his hand. All at once he stopped short, bent his brow, which was a sign that a thought had struck him, threw a large veil over the princess which covered her from head to foot, and taking her by the hand, led her to the dining-room.

It was the hour for breakfast. The ministers and courtiers were ranged round a long table, magnificently served, waiting for the entrance of

the royal family to be seated. The king called the guests one after another, and, raising the veil as each approached the fairy, asked:

"What shall be done to the person who sought to destroy this marvel of beauty?"

And each one, wonder-struck, answered in his own way. Some said that the author of such a crime deserved a hempen cravat; others thought that the wretch should be thrown into the water with a stone to his neck. Beheading seemed to the old minister too mild a punishment for such a villain; he was in favor of flaying him alive, and all present applauded his humanity.

When the negress's turn came she approached without suspicion, and did not recognize the fairy. "Sire," said she, "a monster capable of injuring this charming creature deserves to be roasted alive in an oven, and to have his ashes thrown to the winds."

"You have pronounced your own sentence," cried the king of the Vermilion Towers. "Wretch, behold your victim and prepare to die. Let a funeral pile be built in the square in front of the castle. I will give my good people the pleasure of seeing a witch burn; it will occupy them for an hour or two."

"Sire," said the young fairy, taking the king's hand, "Your Majesty surely will not refuse me a wedding gift?"

"No, indeed, my child," replied the old king. "Ask what you will; should it be my crown, I will gladly give it to you."

"Sire," continued the fairy, "grant me this wretched creature's pardon. An ignorant and miserable slave, life has taught her nothing but hatred and malice; let me render her happy and teach her that the only happiness on earth consists in loving others."

"My daughter," said the king, "it is very evident that you are a fairy; you know nothing of human justice. Among us, we do not reform the wicked, we kill them; it is sooner done. But I have given my word. Tame this serpent at your own risk and peril; I am willing."

The fairy raised the negress, who kissed her hands, weeping; then they all sat down to the table. The king was so happy that he ate enough for four. As for Carlino, who kept his eyes fixed on his bride, he cut his thumb five or six times in a fit of absent-mindedness, which each time put him in the best humor imaginable. Everything gives us

pleasure when the heart is happy.

When the old king died, full of years and honor, Carlino and his lovely wife ascended the throne in turn. For half a century, if history is to be believed, they neither raised the taxes, shed a drop of blood, nor caused a tear to fall; and although more than a thousand years have passed since then, the good people of the Vermilion Towers still sigh at the mention of this distant age, and little children are not the only ones to ask when the fairies will reign again.

Story of Coquerico

A Spanish Tale

Once upon a time there was a handsome hen who lived like a great lady in the poultry-yard of a rich farmer, surrounded by a numerous family which clucked about her, and none of which clamored more loudly or picked up the corn faster with his beak than a poor little deformed and crippled chicken. This was precisely the one that the mother loved best. It is the way with all mothers; the weakest and most unsightly are always their favorites. This misshapen creature had but one eye, one wing, and one leg in good condition; it might have been thought that Solomon had executed his memorable sentence on Coquerico, for that was the name of the wretched chicken, and cut him in two with his famous sword. When a person is one-eyed, lame, and one-armed, he may reasonably be expected to be modest; but our Castilian ragamuffin was prouder than his father, the best spurred, most elegant, bravest, and most gallant cock to be seen from Burgos to Madrid. He thought himself a phœnix of grace and beauty, and passed the best part of the day in admiring himself in the brook. If one of his brothers ran against him by accident, he abused him, called him envious and jealous, and risked his only remaining eye in battle; if the hens clucked on seeing him, he said it was to hide their spite

because he did not condescend to look at them.

One day, when he was more puffed up with vanity than usual, he resolved no longer to remain in such a narrow sphere, but to go out into the world, where he would be better appreciated.

"My lady mother," said he, "I am tired of Spain; I am going to Rome to see the pope and cardinals."

"What are you thinking of, my poor child!" cried his mother. "Who has put such a folly into your head? Never has one of our family been known to quit his country, and for this reason we are the honor of our race, and are proud of our genealogy. Where will you find a poultry-yard like this—mulberry-trees to shade you, a whitewashed henroost, a magnificent dunghill, worms and corn everywhere, brothers that love you, and three great dogs to guard you from the foxes? Do you not think that at Rome itself you will regret the ease and plenty of such a life?"

Coquerico shrugged his crippled wing in token of disdain. "You are a simple woman, my good mother," said he; "everything is accounted worthy of admiration by him who has never quitted his dunghill. But I have wit enough to see that my brothers have no ideas and that my cousins are nothing but rustics. My genius is stifling in this hole; I wish to roam the world and seek my fortune."

"But, my son, have you never looked in the brook?" resumed the poor hen. "Don't you know that you lack an eye, a leg, and a wing? To make your fortune, you need the eyes of a fox, the legs of a spider, and the wings of a vulture. Once outside of these walls, you are lost."

"My good mother," replied Coquerico, "when a hen hatches a duck she is always frightened on seeing it run to the water. You know me no better. It is my nature to succeed by my wit and talent. I must have a public capable of appreciating the charms of my person; my place is not among inferior people."

"My son," said the hen, seeing all her counsels useless—"my son, listen at least to your mother's last words. If you go to Rome, take care to avoid St. Peter's Church; the saint, it is said, dislikes cocks, especially when they crow. Shun, moreover, certain personages called cooks and scullions; you will know them by their paper caps, their tucked-up sleeves, and the great knives which they wear at their sides. They are licensed assassins, who track our steps without pity

and cut our throats without giving us time to cry mercy. And now, my child," she added, raising her claw, "receive my blessing. May St. James, the patron saint of pilgrims, protect thee!"

Coquerico pretended not to see the tear that trembled in his mother's eye, nor did he trouble himself any more about his father, who bristled his plumage and seemed about to call him back. Without caring for those whom he left behind, he glided through the half-open door and, once outside, flapped his only wing and crowed three times, to celebrate his freedom—"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

As he half flew, half hopped over the fields, he came to the bed of a brook which had been dried up by the sun. In the middle of the sands, however, still trickled a tiny thread of water, so small that it was choked by a couple of dead leaves that had fallen into it.

"My friend," exclaimed the streamlet at the sight of our traveler—"my friend, you see my weakness; I have not even the strength to carry away these leaves which obstruct my passage, much less to make a circuit, so completely am I exhausted. With a stroke of your beak you can restore me to life. I am not an ingrate; if you oblige me, you may count on my gratitude the first rainy day, when the water from heaven shall have restored my strength."

"You are jesting," said Coquerico. "Do I look like one whose business it is to sweep the brooks? Apply to those of your own sort." And with his sound leg, he leaped across the streamlet.

"You will remember me when you least expect it," murmured the brook, but with so feeble a voice that it was lost on the proud cock.

A little farther on, Coquerico saw the wind lying breathless on the ground.

"Dear Coquerico, come to my aid," it cried; "here on earth we should help one another. You see to what I am reduced by the heat of the day; I, who in former times uprooted the olive-trees and lashed the waves to frenzy, lie here well-nigh slain by the dog-star. I suffered myself to be lulled to sleep by the perfume of the roses with which I was playing; and, lo! here I am, stretched almost lifeless upon the ground. If you will raise me a couple of inches with your beak and fan me a little with your wing, I shall have the strength to mount to yonder white clouds which I see in the distance, where I shall receive aid enough from my family to keep me alive till I gain fresh strength from

the next whirlwind."

"My lord," answered the spiteful Coquerico, "Your Excellency has more than once amused himself by playing tricks at my expense. It is not a week since your lordship glided like a traitor behind me and diverted himself by opening my tail like a fan and covering me with confusion in the face of nations. Have patience, therefore, my worthy friend; mockers always have their turn; it does them good to repent and to learn to respect those whose birth, wit, and beauty should screen them from the jests of a fool." And Coquerico, bristling his plumage, crowed three times in his shrillest voice and proudly strutted onward.

A little farther on he came to a newly mown field where the farmers had piled up the weeds in order to burn them. Coquerico approached a smoking heap, hoping to find some stray kernels of corn, and saw a little flame which was charring the green stalks without being able to set them on fire.

"My good friend," cried the flame to the new-comer, "you are just in time to save my life; I am dying for want of air. I cannot imagine what has become of my cousin, the wind, who cares for nothing but his own amusement. Bring me a few dry straws to rekindle my strength, and you will not have obliged an ingrate."

"Wait a moment," said Coquerico, "and I will serve you as you deserve, insolent fellow that dares ask my help!" And behold! he leaped on the heap of dried weeds, and trampled it down till he smothered both flame and smoke; after which he exultingly shouted three times, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" and flapped his wings, as if he had done a great deed.

Proudly strutting onward and crowing, Coquerico at last arrived at Rome, the place to which all roads lead. Scarcely had he reached the city when he hastened to the great Church of St. Peter. Grand and beautiful as it was, he did not stop to admire it, but, planting himself in front of the main entrance, where he looked like a fly among the great columns, he raised himself on tiptoe and began to shout, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" only to enrage the saint and disobey his mother.

He had not yet ended his song when one of the pope's guard, who chanced to hear him, laid hands on the insolent wretch who dared thus to insult the saint, and carried him home in order to roast him for supper.

"Quick!" said he to his wife on entering the house, "give me some boiling water; here is a sinner to be punished."

"Pardon, pardon, Madame Water!" cried Coquerico. "Oh, good and gentle water, the best and purest thing in the world, do not scald me, I pray you!"

"Did you have pity on me when I implored your aid, ungrateful wretch?" answered the water, boiling with indignation. And with a single gush it inundated him from head to foot, and left not a bit of down on his body.

The unhappy Coquerico stripped of all his feathers, the soldier took him and laid him on the gridiron.

"Oh, fire, do not burn me!" cried he, in an agony of terror. "Oh, beautiful and brilliant fire, the brother of the sun and the cousin of the diamond, spare an unhappy creature; restrain thy ardor, and soften thy flame; do not roast me!"

"Did you have pity on me when I implored your aid, ungrateful wretch?" answered the fire, and, fiercely blazing with anger, in an instant it burnt Coquerico to a coal.

The soldier, seeing his roast chicken in this deplorable condition, took him by the leg and threw him out of the window. The wind bore the unhappy fowl to a dunghill, where it left him for a moment.

"Oh, wind," murmured Coquerico, who still breathed, "oh, kindly zephyr, protecting breeze, behold me cured of my vain follies. Let me rest on the paternal dunghill."

"Let you rest!" roared the wind. "Wait, and I will teach you how I treat ingrates." And with one blast it sent him so high in the air that, as he fell back, he was transfixed by a steeple.

There St. Peter was awaiting him. With his own hand he nailed him to the highest steeple in Rome, where he is still shown to travelers. However high placed he may be, all despise him because he turns with the slightest wind; black, dried up, stripped of his feathers, and beaten by the rain, he is no longer called Coquerico, but Weathercock, and thus expiates, and must expiate eternally, his disobedience, vanity, and wickedness.

KING BIZARRE AND PRINCE CHARMING

OR, THE ART OF GOVERNING MEN

A TALE OF ALL NATIONS

OR, THE ART OF GOVERNING MEN

A TALE OF ALL NATIONS

I

KING BIZARRE AND PRINCE CHARMING

n the kingdom of Wild Oats, a happy country, a land blessed of Heaven, where the men are always right and the women never wrong, there lived long ago a king who thought of nothing but the happiness of his kingdom, and who, it is said, never was dull for lack of amusement. Whether he was beloved by his people is doubtful; it is certain that the courtiers had little esteem and less love for their prince. For this reason, they had given him the surname of King Bizarre, the only title by which he is known in history, as is seen in the *Great Chronicles of the Kingdoms and Principalities of the World Which Have Never Existed*, a learned masterpiece which has immortalized the erudition and criticism of the reverend father, Dr. Melchisedec de Mentiras y Necedad.

Left a widower after a year's marriage, Bizarre had fixed his whole affections on his son and heir, who was the most beautiful child imaginable. His complexion was as fresh as a rose; his beautiful hair fell in golden curls on his shoulders; add to his clear blue eyes a straight nose, a small mouth, and a dimpled chin, and you have the portrait of a cherub. At twelve years of age this young marvel danced enchantingly, rode like a riding-master, and fenced to perfection. No one could have helped being won by his smile and the truly royal manner in which he saluted the crowd in passing when he was in good humor. For this reason, the voice of the people, which is never mistaken, had christened him Prince Charming, and his name always clung to him.

Charming was as beautiful as the day; but the sun itself, it is said, has spots, and the princes do not disdain to resemble the sun. The child dazzled the court with his fine mien; but there were shadows here and there which did not escape the piercing eye of love or envy. Supple, agile, and adroit in all kinds of bodily exercises, Charming had an

indolent mind. He lacked application, and had taken a fancy that he ought to know everything without studying. It is true that governesses, courtiers, and servants had continually repeated to him that work was not made for kings, and that a prince always knows enough when he lavishes on poets, writers, and artists, with a prodigal and disdainful hand, a little of the money which the people are too happy to offer him.

These maxims tickled Charming's pride; and at twelve years of age the beautiful child, with precocious firmness, had steadily refused to learn the alphabet. Three teachers, chosen from the most able and patient instructors, a priest, a philosopher, and a colonel, had attempted in turn to bend his youthful obstinacy; but the priest had wasted his philosophy, the philosopher his tactics, and the colonel his Latin. Left master of the field of battle, Charming listened to nothing but his caprice, and lived lawless and unconstrained. As stubborn as a mule, as irascible as a turkey-cock, as dainty as a cat, and as idle as an adder, but an accomplished prince withal, he was the pride of the beautiful country of Wild Oats, and the hope and love of a people that esteemed nothing in their kings but grace and beauty.

II

PAZZA

Notwithstanding he had been brought up at court, King Bizarre was a man of sense. Charming's ignorance was far from pleasing to him, and he often asked himself with anxiety what would become of his kingdom in the hands of a prince whom the basest of flatterers might easily deceive. But what was he to do, what means could he employ with a child that a worshiped wife had bequeathed to him in dying? Rather than see his son weep, Bizarre would have given him his crown; his affection rendered him powerless. Love is not blind, whatever the poets may say; alas! it would be too happy not to see a jot. It is the torment of him who loves to become, despite himself, the slave and accomplice of the ingrate who feels himself beloved.

Every day, after the council, the king went to spend the evening with the Countess of Castro, an old lady who had dandled him on her knees when an infant, and who alone could recall to him the sweet memories of his childhood and youth. She was very ugly, and something of a witch, it is said; but the world is so wicked that we must never believe more than half its scandal. The countess had large features and luxuriant gray hair, and it was easy to see that she had been beautiful in former times.

One day, when Charming had been more unreasonable than usual, the king entered the countess's house with an anxious air, and seating himself before the card-table, began to play a game of Patience. It was his way of diverting his thoughts and forgetting for a few hours the cares of royalty. Scarcely had he ranged sixteen cards in a square when he heaved a deep sigh.

"Countess," he cried, "you see before you the most wretched of fathers and kings. Despite his natural grace, Charming is every day becoming more wilful and vicious. Must I leave such an heir after me, and intrust the happiness of my people to a crowned fool?"

"That is the way with Nature," replied the countess; "she always distributes her gifts with an impartial hand. Stupidity and beauty go

hand in hand, and wit and ugliness are seldom separated. I have an example of this in my own family. A few days ago a great-grandniece was sent to me, a child under ten years old, that has no other relative. She is as tawny as a frog, as scraggy as a spider, yet, withal, as cunning as an ape, and as learned as a book. Judge for yourself, sire; here is my little monster coming to salute you."

Bizarre turned his head and saw a child that answered in every respect to the countess's description. With a high, round forehead, black, wild-looking eyes, rough hair turned back in the Chinese fashion, dull, brown skin, great white teeth, red hands, and long arms, she was anything but a beauty. But the chrysalis gives birth to the butterfly. Wait a few years, and you will see what pretty women come from these frightful little girls of ten.

The little monster approached the king, and courtesied to him with so serious an air that Bizarre could not help laughing, though he felt little like it.

"Who are you?" asked he, chucking the child under the chin.

"Sire," she answered, gravely, "I am Donna Dolores Rosario Coral Concha Balthazara Melchiora Gaspara y Todos Santos, the daughter of the noble knight Don Pasquale Bartolomeo Francesco de Asiz y __"

"Enough," said the king. "I did not ask for your genealogy; we are witnessing neither your baptism nor your marriage. What are you commonly called?"

"Sire," replied she, "I am called Pazza."[1]

[1] That is to say, Madcap, in Italian. It appears that a very mixed language is spoken in the kingdom of Wild Oats.

"And why are you called Pazza?"

"Because it is not my name."

"That is strange," said the king.

"No, it is natural," replied the child. "My aunt pretends that I am too giddy for any saint to wish to own me for her goddaughter, and that is why she has given me a name that can offend no one in Paradise."

"Well answered, my child. I see that you are not an ordinary girl. The

saints in Paradise are not always treated with such consideration. Since you know so much, tell me what is a wise man?"

"A wise man, sire, is one who knows what he says when he speaks, and what he does when he acts."

"Upon my word," exclaimed the king, "if my wise men were what you fancied them, I would make the Academy of Sciences my council of state, and would give it my kingdom to govern. What is an ignorant man?"

"Sire," returned Pazza, "there are three kinds of ignorant men: he who knows nothing, he who talks of what he does not know, and he who will learn nothing; all three are fit for nothing but to be burned or hung."

"That is a proverb. Do you know what proverbs are called?"

"Yes, sire; they are called the wisdom of nations."

"And why are they called so?"

"Because they are mad; they say whatever you please; they are of all colors, to suit all tastes. Proverbs are like bells, which answer yes or no according to the humor of their listener."

Upon which, springing with both feet from the ground, Pazza caught a fly that was buzzing about the king's nose; then, leaving Bizarre astonished, she took her doll and, seating herself on the ground, began to rock it in her arms.

"Well, sire," the countess said, "what do you think of this child?"

"She has too much wit," answered the king; "she will not live long."

"Ah, sire," exclaimed Pazza, "you are not complimentary to my aunt; she is considerably older than I am."

"Hush, gipsy!" said the old lady, smiling; "don't you know that nobody lectures kings?"

"Countess," said Bizarre, "an idea has just struck me, which is so strange that I hardly dare tell it to you; yet I have a violent wish to carry it out. I can do nothing with my son; reason has no power with the stubborn child. Who knows whether folly would not be more successful? If I thought so, I would make Pazza Charming's teacher. The intractable boy, who rejects all masters, might be defenseless before a child. The only objection is that no one will be of my opinion; I

shall have everybody against me."

"Bah!" said the countess; "everybody is so stupid that it is a proof that you are right that you think differently."

III

THE FIRST LESSON

In this manner Pazza was intrusted with the instruction of the young prince. There was no official appointment; it was not announced in the court gazette that the king, with his usual wisdom, had found an unparalleled genius at the first attempt, to whom he had confided the heart and mind of his child; but the very next morning Charming was sent to the countess's house, and was permitted to play with Pazza.

The two children, left alone together, gazed at each other in silence. Pazza, being the bolder, was the first to speak.

"What is your name?" asked she.

"Those who know me call me Your Highness," answered Charming, in a piqued tone; "those who do not know me call me simply My Lord, and everybody says Sir to me; etiquette requires it."

"What is etiquette?" asked Pazza.

"I don't know," replied Charming. "When I want to jump, shout, and roll on the ground, I am told that it is contrary to etiquette; then I keep still, and yawn for lack of amusement—that is etiquette."

"Since we are here to amuse ourselves," resumed Pazza, "there is no etiquette needed; speak to me as if I were your sister, and I will speak to you as if you were my brother. I will not call you My Lord."

"But you don't know me," said Charming.

"What does that matter?" returned Pazza; "I will love you, that is better. They say that you dance beautifully; teach me to dance, will you?"

The ice was broken; Charming took the young girl by the waist, and in less than half an hour taught her the last new polka.

"How well you dance!" said he. "You have caught the step directly."

"It is because you are a good teacher," she replied. "Now it is my turn

to teach you something."

She took a beautiful picture-book, and showed him fine buildings, fishes, statesmen, parrots, scholars, curious animals, and flowers, all of which greatly amused Charming.

PAZZA, THOUGH SHE LOVED THE PRINCE, WAS A VERY STERN SCHOOLMISTRESS

"See," said Pazza, "here is the explanation of all the pictures; read it."

"I don't know how to read," replied Charming.

"I will teach you; I will be your little tutor."

"No," replied the stubborn prince, "I do not wish to read. My masters tire me."

"Very well; but I am not a master. See, here is an A, a beautiful great A; say A."

"No," returned Charming, frowning, "I will never say A."

"Not to please me?"

"No, never. Enough of this; I do not like people to differ from me."

"Sir," said Pazza, "a polite man never refuses ladies anything."

"I would refuse the devil in petticoats," replied the young prince, tossing his head. "I am tired of you; let me alone. I don't love you any longer. Call me My Lord."

"My Lord Charming, or my charming lord," said Pazza, flushed with anger, "you shall read, or I will know the reason why."

"I won't read."

"Will you not? One—two—three!"

"No! no! no!"

Pazza raised her hand, and, lo! the king's son received a box on the ear. Pazza had been told that she was witty to the ends of her fingers, and had been stupid enough to believe it; it is never right to jest with children.

At this first lesson in reading, Charming turned pale and trembled; the blood mounted to his cheeks, his eyes filled with tears, and he gazed at his young teacher with a look that made her start; then all at once, with a great effort, he regained his self-possession, and said, in a tremulous voice, "Pazza, that is A." And the same day and at one sitting he learned all the letters of the alphabet; at the end of the week he spelled readily, and before the month was ended he read with ease.

King Bizarre was delighted. He kissed Pazza on both cheeks; he insisted on having her always with him or his son, and made this child his friend and counselor, to the great disdain of all the courtiers.

Charming, still gloomy and silent, learned all that this young mentor could teach him, then returned to his former preceptors, whom he astonished by his intelligence and docility. He soon knew his grammar so well that the priest asked himself one day whether, by chance, these definitions, which he had never understood, had not a meaning. Charming none the less astonished the philosopher, who taught him every evening the opposite of what the priest had taught him in the morning. But, of all his masters, the one to whom he listened with the least repugnance was the colonel. It is true that Bayonet, for that was the colonel's name, was a skilful strategist, and that he could say, like the ancient poet, with a slight variation, "I am a man, and nothing that pertains to the art of despatching poor human beings is indifferent to me." It was he that initiated Charming into the mysteries of button gaiters and shoulder-straps; it was he that taught his pupil that the noblest study for a prince is the drilling of battalions, and that the groundwork of statesmanship is to have reviews in order to make war, and to make war in order to have reviews.

This was not perhaps altogether according to Bizarre's idea of the art of government; but he thought he could correct any errors in the future, and besides, he was so rejoiced at Charming's progress that he was unwilling in any way to meddle with the admirable work of an education so long considered hopeless.

"My child," he often said, "never forget that you owe everything to Pazza." As the king spoke thus, Pazza gazed tenderly at the young man. Despite all her wit, she was foolish enough to love him. Charming contented himself with coldly answering that gratitude was a princely virtue, and that Pazza should some day learn that her pupil had forgotten nothing.

IV

PAZZA'S WEDDING

When Prince Charming had attained his seventeenth year, he went one morning in search of King Bizarre, whose health was declining and who was very desirous of seeing his son married before his death.

"Father," said he, "I have long reflected on your wise words. You gave me life, but Pazza has done still more in awakening my mind and soul. I see but one way of paying the debt of my heart; that is, to marry the woman to whom I am indebted for what I am. I come to ask you for Pazza's hand."

"My dear child," answered Bizarre, "this step does you credit. Pazza is not of royal blood; she is not the one whom, in different circumstances, I should have chosen for your wife; but her virtues, her merit, and, above all, the service which she has rendered us, make me forget idle prejudices. Pazza has the soul of a queen; she shall mount the throne with you. In the country of Wild Oats, wit and humor are held in sufficient estimation to win you forgiveness for what fools call a misalliance, and what I call a princely marriage. Happy is he who can choose an intelligent wife, capable of understanding and loving him! To-morrow your betrothal shall be celebrated, and in two years your marriage shall take place."

The marriage occurred more speedily than the king had foreseen. Fifteen months after these memorable words, Bizarre expired of languor and exhaustion. He had taken the vocation of king in earnest; he fell a victim to royalty. The old countess and Pazza wept their friend and benefactor, but they were the only mourners. Without being a bad son, Charming was engrossed with the cares of the empire; and the court expected everything from the new reign, and thought no more about the old king, whose eyes were closed in death.

After honoring his father's memory by magnificent obsequies, the young prince, thenceforth wholly devoted to love, celebrated his marriage with a splendor that charmed the good people of Wild Oats.

The taxes were doubled, but who could regret money so nobly employed? Men came from a hundred leagues round to gaze at the new king, and Pazza, whose growing beauty and air of goodness fascinated all hearts, was not less admired. There were interminable dinners, harangues longer than the dinners, and poems more tedious than the harangues. In a word, it was an incomparable festival, which was talked of for six months after.

Evening come, Charming took the hand of his graceful, timid, and blushing bride, and with cold politeness led her through the corridors of the old castle. All at once Pazza was frightened to find herself in a gloomy dungeon, with grated windows and huge bars and locks.

"What is this?" asked she. "It looks like a prison."

"Yes," said the prince, with a terrible look, "it is a prison which you will quit only for the grave."

"My dear, you frighten me," said Pazza, smiling. "Am I a criminal without knowing it? Have I deserved your displeasure, that you threaten me with a dungeon?"

"You have a short memory," replied Charming. "An insult is written on sand to the giver; it is inscribed on marble and bronze to the receiver."

"Charming," returned the poor child, beginning to be afraid, "you are repeating something from those speeches that tired me so much. Can you find nothing better to say to me to-day?"

"Wretch!" cried the king, "you no longer remember the box on the ear that you gave me seven years ago, but I have not forgotten it. Know that if I wished you for my wife, it has been only to have your life in my hands and to make you slowly expiate your crime of high treason."

"My dear," said Pazza, with a pettish manner, "you may put on your Bluebeard airs, but you will not frighten me, I assure you. I know you, Charming, and I warn you that if you do not put an end to this bad jest, I will not only give you one box on the ear, but three, before I forgive you. Make haste and let me go out, or I vow that I will keep my word."

"Vow it then, madame," cried the prince, furious at not intimidating his victim. "I accept your vow. I vow, too, on my side, that I will never acknowledge you as my wife till I have been base enough to receive three times an insult which nothing but blood can wash out. He laughs

well that laughs last. Here, Rachimburg!"

At this terrible name, a jailer with a bushy beard and threatening mien entered the room, pushed the queen on a wretched truckle-bed, and shut and double-locked the iron door.

If Pazza wept, it was so quietly that no one heard her. Tired of the silence, Charming departed, with rage in his heart, resolving that his rigor should break the pride that braved him. Vengeance, it is said, is the delight of kings.

Two hours later the countess received a note by a sure hand acquainting her with the sad fate of her niece. How this note reached her is known to me, but I will not betray the secret. If a charitable jailer is found by chance, he should be treated with consideration; the species is rare, and is daily becoming rarer.

V

A TERRIBLE EVENT

The next morning the court gazette announced that the queen had been seized with a raging fit of madness on the very night of her wedding, and that there was little hope of saving her. There was scarcely a courtier, indeed, that had not observed the princess's restless air on the evening before, and no one was surprised at her malady. All pitied the king, who received with a gloomy and constrained mien the expressions of affection which were lavished on him. He was doubtless weighed down with grief, but this grief appeared very much lightened after the visit of the countess.

The good lady was very sad, and had a great desire to see her poor child, but she was so old, and found herself so weak and sensitive, that she entreated the king to spare her a heartrending spectacle. She threw herself into the arms of Charming, who tenderly embraced her, and withdrew, saying that she placed all her hope and trust in the love of the king and the talent of the chief physician of the court.

She had scarcely left the room when the physician whispered a few words in Charming's ear which called to his face a smile quickly repressed. The countess pacified, there was nothing more to fear; the vengeance was sure.

Doctor Wieduwillst was a great physician. Born in the country of Dreams, he had early quitted his native land to seek his fortune in the kingdom of Wild Oats. He was too able a man not to find it. In the five years that he had spent in the celebrated University of Lugenmaulberg, the medical theory had changed twenty-five times, and, thanks to this solid education, the doctor had a firmness of principle which nothing could shake. He had the frankness and bluntness of a soldier, it was said; he swore at times, even with ladies, a rudeness which left him at liberty always to be of the same mind with the stronger, and to demand a fee for having no opinion. The queen had fallen into his incorruptible hands.

She had been imprisoned for three days, and the town was already

beginning to talk of something else, when one morning Rachimburg abruptly entered the king's apartments with a distracted air, and threw himself trembling at his feet.

"Sire," said he, "I bring you my head. The queen has disappeared."

"What do you tell me!" exclaimed the king, turning pale. "The thing is impossible; the dungeon is barred on all sides."

"Yes," said the jailer, "the thing is impossible, that is certain; the bars are in their places, the walls are whole, and neither the locks nor the bolts have been disturbed; but there are witches in the world that pass through walls without moving a stone, and who knows but what the prisoner is one of them? Was it ever known whence she came?"

The king sent in search of the doctor. He was a strong-minded man and had little faith in witches. He sounded the walls, shook the bars, and cross-examined the jailer, but all to no purpose. Trusty men were sent everywhere through the town, and spies were set on the countess, whom the doctor suspected, but all in vain, and after a week the search was abandoned. Rachimburg lost his place as jailer, but as he possessed the royal secret, as he was needed, and as he thirsted to avenge himself, he was made the warden of the royal castle. Furious at his bad luck, he exercised his supervision with such strictness that in less than three days he arrested Wieduwillst himself half a dozen times, and disarmed all suspicion.

At the end of a week some fishermen brought to the court the robe and mantle of the queen. The waves had cast on the shore these sad relics, covered with sand and sea-foam. That the poor mad woman had drowned herself no one doubted on seeing the grief of the king and the tears of the countess. The council was assembled. It decided with a unanimous voice that the queen was legally dead and that the king was legally a widower, and for the interest of the people entreated his majesty to abridge a painful mourning and to marry again as soon as possible, in order to strengthen the dynasty. This decision was transmitted to the king by Wieduwillst, the chief physician to the king and president of the royal council, who made so touching a speech that the whole court burst into tears, and Charming threw himself into the doctor's arms, calling him his cruel friend.

It is unnecessary to say that the funeral of a queen so much lamented was magnificent. In the kingdom of Wild Oats everything serves as a pretext for ceremony. The pageant was worthy of admiration, but the

most admirable thing in it was the attitude of the young girls of the court. Every one looked at Charming, who was handsomer than ever in his mourning dress; every one wept with one eye in honor of the princess, and smiled with the other to attract the king. Ah! had photography only been invented, what portraits would antiquity have transmitted to us—what models for our painters! The passions still existed among these good people; their mobile faces were animated by love, hatred, and anger; to-day we are all so virtuous and prudent that we all wear the same dress, the same hat, and the same expression. Civilization is the triumph of morality and the ruin of art.

After the description of the funeral ceremonies, which, according to etiquette, filled six columns, the court gazette laid down rules for the full and the second mourning, blue and pink, which are the mourning colors in the kingdom of Wild Oats. The court was required to be in deep affliction for three weeks, and to be comforted by degrees during the three weeks following; but carnival occurring during the period of the second mourning, and respect being had for trade, it was determined to give a masked ball at the palace. Tailors and dressmakers immediately set to work, invitations were solicited by great and small, and men began to intrigue as if the fate of the monarchy had been in question.

It was in this solemn manner that they mourned for poor Pazza.

VI

THE MASKED BALL

The great day so impatiently expected at length arrived. For six weeks the good people of Wild Oats had been in a fever of excitement. Nothing more was heard of ministers, senators, generals, magistrates, princesses, duchesses, and citizens; for twenty leagues round, clowns, harlequins, punchinellos, gipsies, Columbines, and Follies alone were to be seen. Politics were silenced, or, rather, the nation was divided into two great parties—the conservatives that went to the ball, and the opposition that stayed at home.

If the official gazette is to be believed, the festival outshone in splendor all others past and to come. The ball was held in the midst of the gardens, in a rotunda magnificently decorated. A winding walk, shaded by elms and dimly lighted by alabaster lamps, led to a hall resplendent with gold, verdure, flowers, and light. An orchestra, half concealed in the foliage, breathed forth music, by turns plaintive and gay. Add to this the richness of the costumes, the brilliancy of the diamonds, the piquancy of the masks, and the charm of intrigue, and you will see that it would have needed the soul of an ancient Stoic to resist the intoxication of pleasure.

Yet Prince Charming was not amused. Concealed under a blue domino, with his face entirely masked, he had addressed himself to the most elegant and sprightly women, and had lavishly displayed his wit and grace, yet he had met with nothing but indifference and coldness. They scarcely listened to him, answered with a yawn, and hastened to quit him. All eyes were fixed on a black domino with pink rosettes that moved carelessly among the dancers, receiving with the air of a sultan the compliments and smiles that every one lavished on him. This domino was the Lord Wieduwillst, a great friend of the prince, but still more the friend of his own pleasure. In an unguarded moment the doctor had said that morning by chance, under the seal of secrecy, and to two ladies only, that the prince would wear pink rosettes in his black domino. Was it his fault if the ladies had been indiscreet or the prince had changed his mind?

While the doctor was enjoying, despite himself, indeed, his unexpected triumph, Charming seated himself in a corner of the hall and buried his face in his hands. Alone in the midst of the crowd, he abandoned himself to reflection, and the image of Pazza rose before him. He had no reproaches to make himself; his vengeance was just, yet he felt an indescribable remorse. Poor Pazza! no doubt she had been guilty; but at least she loved him, she understood him, she listened to him, her eyes sparkling with joy. How different from all those fools who had not recognized a prince under a domino at the first moment by his wit!

He rose suddenly to quit the hall, when he perceived, a little way off, a mask that had also left the crowd and seemed lost in contemplation. A half-open domino disclosed a gipsy's dress and a pair of slippers with buckles, containing a foot smaller than that of Cinderella.

The king approached the stranger, and saw through the velvet mask a pair of large black eyes, the melancholy glance of which surprised and charmed him.

"Fair mask," said he, "your place is not here. Why are you not among the eager and curious crowd that is pressing around the prince to dispute his smile and heart? Do you not know that there is a crown to be gained there?"

"I make no pretentions," answered the domino, in a grave, sweet voice. "In this game of chance one runs the risk of taking the servant for the king. I am too proud to expose myself to such a hazard."

"But if I show you the prince?"

"What could I say to him?" replied the stranger. "I could not blame him without offense, or praise him without flattery."

"You think much evil of him, then?"

"No, a little evil and much good; but what does it matter?" And, opening her fan, the domino relapsed into her reverie.

This indifference surprised Charming. He addressed her with warmth, she replied coldly; he prayed her so urgently to listen to him that she finally consented to do so, not in the ball-room, where the heat was overpowering and the curiosity indiscreet, but in the long elm-walk, where a few promenaders were seeking silence and fresh air.

The night was advancing, and the gipsy had already spoken several times of retiring, to the great regret of the prince, who vainly entreated her to unmask. The stranger made no reply.

"You drive me to despair," cried he, inspired with strange respect and admiration for this mysterious figure. "Why this cruel silence?"

"Because I know you, my lord," replied the stranger, with emotion. "Your voice, which goes to the heart, your language, your grace, all tell me who you are. Let me go, Prince Charming."

"No, madam," cried the prince, delighted at so much wit, "you alone have recognized me, you alone have understood me, to you belong my heart and kingdom. Throw off that suspicious mask; this very instant we will return to the ball-room and I will present to the ignorant crowd the woman whom I have had the happiness not to displease. Say but one word, and all my people shall be at your feet."

"My lord," replied the stranger, sadly, "permit me to refuse an offer which does me honor and the memory of which I shall always preserve. I am ambitious, I own; the time has been when I should have been proud to share your throne and name; but before all things I am a woman and place all my happiness in love. I will not have a divided heart, should my rival be only a memory; I am jealous even of the past."

"I have never loved in my life," cried the prince, with a vehemence that made the stranger start. "There is a mystery concerning my marriage which I can reveal only to my wife; but I swear to you that I have never given away my heart; I love now for the first time."

"Show me your hand," said the gipsy, approaching the lamp, "and let me see whether you have told the truth."

Charming extended his hand with assurance; the gipsy studied the lines and sighed.

"You are right, my lord," said she, "you have never loved. But this does not appease my jealousy. Another woman has loved you before me. These sacred bonds are not broken by death; the queen still loves you—you belong to her. To accept a heart which is no longer at your disposal would be sacrilegious and criminal in me. Farewell."

"Madam," said the king, with an ill-assured voice, "you do not know what you make me suffer. There are things which I would gladly burn

in eternal silence, but which you force me to reveal. The queen never loved me; ambition alone dictated her conduct."

"That is not so," said the stranger, letting go the prince's hand. "The queen loved you."

"No, madam," replied Charming; "my father and I were the victims of a detestable intrigue."

"Enough!" said the stranger, whose hands trembled and whose fingers worked in a strange manner. "Respect the dead; do not slander them."

"Madam," said the prince, "I assure you, and none ever doubted my word, that the queen never loved me. She was a wicked woman."

"Ah!" said the domino.

"Wilful, violent, and jealous."

"If she was jealous, she loved you," interrupted the mask. "Seek for proofs which have at least a shadow of probability; do not accuse a heart which was wholly yours."

"So far from loving me," said the king, excitedly, "the very night of my marriage she dared tell me to my face that she had married me only for my crown."

"That is not true," said the gipsy, raising her hand.

"I swear it," replied Charming.

"You lie!" cried the stranger. And, lo! a box on the ear blinded the prince; the blow was repeated, and the stranger fled.

The king stepped back furious, and sought the hilt of his sword; but men do not go to balls armed as for war; for his sole weapon he found a knot of ribbons. He ran after his enemy, but which way had she fled? Charming lost himself twenty times in the labyrinth; he met none but peaceful dominos walking in couples and scarcely glancing at him as he passed. Breathless, distracted, and desperate, he returned to the ball-room, where he doubted not that the stranger had taken refuge; but how was he to find her?

A brilliant idea crossed the prince's mind; he would order all to unmask, and would doubtless see the gipsy, confounded by the king's presence and betrayed by her own agitation. He instantly leaped on a

chair, and exclaimed in a loud voice that caused every one to start:

"Ladies and gentlemen, day is approaching and pleasure is languishing; let us revive mirth by a new caprice. Off with the masks! I set the example; let all who love me follow it."

He threw off his domino, raised his mask, and appeared in the richest and most elegant Spanish costume ever worn by prince. There was a general outcry; all eyes were at first turned toward the king, then toward the black domino with pink rosettes, who retreated as fast as possible with a modesty that was not affected. All unmasked. The ladies gathered round the king, who, it was remarked, had the most violent fancy for the gipsy costume. Young or old, all the gipsies received his homage; he took them by the hand and gazed at them with an air which made all the other masks ready to burst with envy, then made a sign to the orchestra; the dance recommenced, and the prince disappeared.

He hastened again to the elm-walk in search of the traitress who had insulted him, doubtless led by vengeance. His blood boiled in his veins; he wandered at random, suddenly stopping short, looking, listening, and spying in all directions. At the faintest gleam of light through the foliage he sprang forward like a madman, laughing and weeping at the same time as though distracted.

At the turn of an alley he met Rachimburg advancing toward him trembling, with an air of terror.

"Sire," murmured he, in a mysterious voice, "has Your Majesty seen it?"

"What?" asked the king.

"The specter; it passed close by me. I am a lost man; I shall die to-morrow."

"What specter?" said Charming. "What fool's tale are you telling me?"

"A specter—a domino with flashing eyes, that threw me on my knees and boxed my ears twice."

"It is she!" cried the king; "it is she! Why did you let her go?"

"Your Majesty, I had not my pike; but if ever I see her again I will knock her down."

"Do no such thing!" returned the king. "If ever she returns, do not frighten her; follow her and discover her retreat. But where is she? Which way did she go? Lead me; if I find her your fortune is made."

"Sire," said the honest porter, looking at the moon, "if the specter is anywhere, it must be up yonder; I saw it, as plainly as I see Your Majesty, dissolving in mist. But before taking flight it gave me a message for Your Majesty."

"What? Speak quickly!"

"Sire, its words were terrible; I shall never dare repeat them to Your Majesty."

"Speak, I order you."

"Sire, the specter said, in a sepulchral voice, 'Tell the king that if he marries again he is a dead man. The loved one will return.'"

"Here," said the prince, whose eyes shone with a strange luster, "take this purse. Henceforth I attach you to my person; I appoint you my first attendant, counting on your devotion and prudence. Let this affair remain a secret between us."

"That makes two," murmured Rachimburg, as he departed with a firm tread, like a man who neither suffers himself to be cast down by fear or dazzled by good fortune. He was a strong-minded man.

The next morning the court gazette contained the following lines, in the form of a letter without signature, in the unofficial part of the paper:

"A rumor has been spread that the king is thinking of marrying again. The king knows what he owes to his people, and is always ready to sacrifice himself for the happiness of his subjects. But the people of Wild Oats have too much delicacy not to respect a recent affliction. The king's whole thoughts are fixed on his beloved wife; he hopes the consolation from time that is at present refused him."

This note threw the court and town in agitation. The young girls thought the scruples of the prince exaggerated; more than one mother shrugged her shoulders, and said that the king had vulgar prejudices worthy only of the common people; but at night there was strife in every well-ordered household. There was not a wife of any pretensions to aristocratic birth that did not quarrel with her unworthy spouse and force him to admit that there was but one heart capable

of love, and but one faithful husband in the whole kingdom, namely, Prince Charming.

VII

TWO CONSULTATIONS

After so much excitement, the king was seized with a cruel fit of tedium. To divert himself, he attempted every kind of pleasure; he hunted, he presided over his council, he went to the play and the opera, he received all the state corporations with their wives, he read a Carthaginian novel, and reviewed the troops half a score of times; but all in vain: an inexorable memory, an ever-present image left him no rest or peace. The gipsy pursued him even in his dreams; he saw her, he talked to her, and she listened to him; but, by some unaccountable fatality, as soon as she raised her mask, Pazza's pale, sad face always appeared.

The doctor was the only confidant to whom Charming could avow his remorse, but at his word Wieduwillst burst into laughter.

"The effect of habit, sire," he said. "Gain time, multiply impressions, and all will be effaced."

To procure the prince excitement and to drive away sorrow by a bold diversion, the doctor supped every evening alone with His Majesty, and poured out intoxication and forgetfulness with a liberal hand. Wieduwillst did not spare himself, but wine had little effect on his strong brain; he would have defied Bacchus and Silenus together with Charming. While the prince, by turn noisy and silent, plunged into the extremes of joy and sadness, always restless and never happy, Wieduwillst, calm and smiling, directed his thoughts, and through pure goodness of soul took upon himself all the fatigue and care of the government.

Three decrees had already placed in his hands the police, the courts, and the finances. The doctor well understood all the advantages of centralization. The way in which he administered the taxes relieved him from all personal anxiety for the future. The courts punished those who clamored too loudly; the police silenced those who whispered too much. Nevertheless, in spite of the ability of these political schemes, the people, always ungrateful, did not appreciate their

happiness. The inhabitants of Wild Oats delight in complaining; the pleasure was spoiled for them.

King Bizarre's name was in all hearts and every one regretted the good old times when they shouted over the roof-tops that they were gagged.

The doctor was ambitious; he was born for a prime minister. Every morning some new ordinance made the people feel that the king was nothing and the minister everything. Charming was the only one that did not perceive his nothingness. Shut up in his palace, and dying of ennui, his sole companion was a page placed near him by the prime minister on Rachimburg's recommendation. Frolicsome, chattering, and indiscreet, a good musician and capital card-player, Tonto, for that was the page's name, amused the king by his pranks; he pleased the prime minister no less, but by other virtues. Devoted to his benefactor, the good-natured page innocently repeated to him the most trifling words of the prince—an easy task, moreover, as the king was constantly dreaming and never spoke.

It is a fine thing to have the advantages of power; but appetite comes by eating even with ministers. The ambitious doctor began to desire both the honors and luster of royalty. Charming's best friend did not once think of dethroning him; nations sometimes have foolish prejudices and cling to old habits, but nothing was easier than to frighten a sick prince and send him afar off in search of a cure that would be long coming, while in his absence the doctor would reign as his proxy.

Charming was young; he still clung to life, and, moreover, how could he resist the tender solicitude of the good doctor? The three most renowned physicians of the faculty met one evening in consultation at the palace—long Tristram, fat Jocundus, and little Guilleret, three celebrated men—three geniuses who had made their fortune, each with one idea, which had been the reason why they had never had any more.

After the king had been cross-questioned, looked at, handled, auscultated, and turned round again and again, Tristram spoke first, in a rude voice.

"Sire," said he, "you must be bled like a peasant, and live without any exertion whatever. Your disease is a deficiency of blood, a constitutional atony. Nothing but a journey to the Clear Waters can

cure you. Go quickly, or you are a dead man. You have my opinion."

THE MOST RENOWNED PHYSICIANS OF THE FACULTY MET ONE EVENING IN CONSULTATION AT THE PALACE

"Sire," said fat Jocundus, "I fully share the admirable opinion of my dear professional brother. You are suffering from superabundant vitality. Your disease is a constitutional plethora. Go, drink the Clear Waters, and you will be a well man again. You have my opinion."

"Sire," said little Guilleret, "the diagnostic of my masters fills me with admiration. I bow before their learning. Like them, I believe that you are suffering from disorder of the sympathetic nerves. Your disease is a constitutional nervousness. Drink the Clear Waters. Go quickly, or you are a dead man. You have my opinion."

A unanimous opinion was drawn up and immediately carried to the court gazette by Tonto; and the three doctors rose, bowed to the minister and the king, shook hands with one another, and went down-stairs quarreling or laughing, I know not which; the chronicle is almost illegible, owing to a large blot in this place.

After the three physicians had gone, Wieduwillst read the opinion, reflected deeply, and looked at the king. Charming, who had supped a little better this evening even than usual, had not once listened to the doctors, but sat gazing around him with bloodshot eyes.

"Sire," said he, "it is the unanimous opinion of these gentlemen that, if you wish to be cured, you must go to the Clear Waters and abandon the affairs of state. Such a resolution appears to me unworthy of Your Royal Majesty. A great prince should sacrifice himself for his people, and—"

"Enough," said the king. "Spare me this worn-out moralizing and come to the conclusion. You wish me to go, my good friend; you are dying for me to do so, for my own interest, of course. Draw up a decree placing the regency in your hands, and I will sign it."

"Sire, the decree is here, in your portfolio; a good minister always has papers drawn up to suit whatever circumstances may arise. He never knows what may happen."

Charming took the pen, carelessly signed the decree without reading it, and handed it to the minister, who approached to receive it with a smile; then, seized with a new caprice, he drew back the paper and read it.

"What!" said he, "no statement of reasons; nothing to assure my people of the kindness I bear them! Doctor, you are too modest; to-morrow this decree shall be in the gazette, with a statement from the

hand of your friend and master. Good night; these gentlemen have tired me."

The doctor went out with a light step, erect brow, and sparkling eye, prouder and more insolent than ever. Charming sank again into his reverie, thinking that, in spite of all, he was not the most unhappy of princes, since Heaven had given him such a friend.

All at once the strangest little doctor that had ever been seen in a castle entered the king's apartment unannounced. He wore a wig with long curls, his snow-white beard fell on his breast, and his eyes were so bright and youthful that it seemed as though they must have come into the world sixty years after the rest of his body.

"Where are those knaves?" cried he, with a shrill voice, rapping on the floor with his cane. "Where are those ignorant fellows, those pedants, those ill-bred men that did not wait for me? Ah! so you are the patient," said he to the stupefied king. "That is good. Put out your tongue. Quick! I am in a hurry."

"Who are you?" asked the king.

"I am Doctor Truth, the greatest doctor in the world, as you will see, in spite of my modesty. Ask Wieduwillst, my pupil, who sent for me from the Land of Dreams. I cure everybody, even those who are not ill. Put out your tongue; that's right. Where is the opinion? Very well. Atony—*asinis!* Plethora—*asini!* Nervousness—*asinorum!* Drink the Clear Waters—*asininum!* Do you know what is your disease? It is vexation, and even worse."

"Do you see that?" said Charming, terrified.

"Yes, my son, it is written on your tongue. But I will cure you: it shall be done by to-morrow noon."

"To-morrow!" said the king. "All my treasures—"

"Silence, my son. What portfolio is that?—the minister's? Good. Sign these three papers for me."

"They are blank decrees," said the king. "What do you wish to do with them?"

"They are my ordinances. Sign. Well done, my son; be obedient, and to-morrow noon you shall be as gay as a lark. First ordinance: If you would live at peace, appear at peace; I suppress six regiments.

Second ordinance: A penny in a peasant's pocket is worth twenty in the king's treasury; I suppress one fourth of the taxes. Third ordinance: Liberty is like the sunshine—it is the happiness and fortune of the poor; I throw open the political prisons and demolish the debtors' prisons. You are laughing, my son; it is a good sign when a patient laughs at his doctor."

"Yes," said Charming, "I am laughing to think of Wieduwillst's face to-morrow on reading these ordinances in the court gazette. Enough of these follies, buffoon doctor; give me back the papers and put an end to this farce."

"What is this?" said the little man, taking up the decree of the regency. "God forgive me! it is an abdication. What are you thinking of, Prince Charming? What! the inheritance bequeathed to you by your fathers, the people intrusted to you by God, your name, your honor, will you throw all these at the feet of an adventurer? Will you let yourself be dethroned and duped by a deceiver? Impossible! It does not suit me. I oppose it. Do you hear?"

"What insolent fellow addresses his prince in this way?"

"Politeness is not in words. Charming, are you mad? Are you dreaming? Are you wholly without heart?"

"This is too much!" cried the king. "Begone, wretch, or I will throw you out of the window."

"Begone!" said the little doctor, in a shrill voice. "No, not till I have destroyed this mad and stupid document. See, I tear your abdication in pieces and trample it under-foot!"

Charming seized the madman and called his guards. No one answered. The little man struggled with wonderful strength. With his foot he threw the lamp on the ground; but the king, despite the darkness, kept fast hold of the sorcerer, who felt his strength failing.

"Let me go!" murmured he; "for Heaven's sake let me go! You know not what you are doing. You are breaking my arm."

His words and prayers were useless. Suddenly a shower of blows, dealt by a strong hand, fell on the king's ears. Charming let go his hold in surprise, and turned to attack his invisible enemy. He found nothing but empty space, and, staggering in the darkness, cried loudly for the help that did not come. Such a thing could not have

happened in a minister's house; kings are always worse guarded.

VIII

THE END OF A DREAM

At last a door opened and Rachimburg entered, according to etiquette, to undress the king. The faithful servant appeared greatly vexed to find him without a light, groping along the wall.

"Where is that infernal doctor?" asked Charming, foaming with rage.

"It is more than an hour, sire, since His Excellency quitted the palace."

"Who is talking of Wieduwillst?" cried the king. "Which way did the villain go that just insulted me?"

Rachimburg looked at the prince with a contrite air, and raised his eyes to heaven, sighing.

"A man went out of the door that leads to your rooms," said Charming. "How did he enter, and where has he fled?"

"Sire," said Rachimburg, "I have neither quitted my post nor seen any one."

"I tell you that a man was in this room a moment ago."

"Sire, Your Majesty is never mistaken; if a man was in this room he is still here, unless he has flown through the window or Your Majesty has been dreaming."

"Fool, do I look like a man who has been dreaming? Did I overturn this lamp? did I tear these papers?"

"Sire, I am nothing but a worm of the earth; God forbid that I should contradict my sovereign. Your majesty does not hire me to give him the lie. But this year strange dreams are an epidemic. No one knows what he may do or suffer in his sleep. Only just now I was overtaken with sleep in spite of myself, and if I were not sure that I was dreaming I should declare that an invisible hand boxed my ears twice, at which I awakened with a start."

"It was the specter!" said the king.

"Your Majesty is right," replied Rachimburg; "I am nothing but a simpleton; it was the specter."

"And I did not know her!" resumed Charming. "Nevertheless, it was her voice and air. What does this mean? Is it a new insult? Is it a warning from heaven? Does some danger threaten me? No matter, I will remain in my kingdom. My friend, not a word of all this: take this purse and keep the secret."

"That makes the third," murmured the faithful Rachimburg, as he undressed the king with a zeal and address which several times made His Majesty smile.

So many emotions one after another banished sleep; it was daybreak before the prince dozed, and broad daylight before he awoke. In the first moment between sleeping and waking Charming fancied that he heard a strange noise—bells ringing, cannon firing, and three or four bands of music playing each a different air. He was not mistaken; it was an infernal hubbub. The king rang. Rachimburg entered, carrying a bouquet of flowers.

"Sire," said he, "will His Majesty permit the humblest of his servants to be the first to express to him the universal joy? Your people are intoxicated with love and gratitude. The taxes lessened, the prisons opened, the army reduced! Sire, you are the greatest prince in the world; never has earth seen a ruler like you. Show yourself at the balcony; answer these cries of 'Hurrah for the king!' Smile on the people that bless you."

Rachimburg could not finish; tears choked his voice. He attempted to wipe his eyes, but in his excitement he took the gazette from his pocket instead of a handkerchief, and began to kiss it like a madman.

Charming took the journal, and vainly attempted, while dressing, to collect his ideas. By what chance had these insane ordinances found their way into the official journal? Who had sent them? Why did not Wieduwillst make his appearance? The prince wished to reflect, consult, and question; but the people were under the windows, and their majesties were too impatient to wait.

As soon as the king appeared in the balcony he was greeted with shouts of enthusiasm, which, despite everything, thrilled his heart. Men tossed their caps in the air, women waved their handkerchiefs, mothers lifted up their children and made them stretch their innocent

hands to heaven, and repeat, "Hurrah for the king!" The guns of the palace guards were decked with flowers, the drums beat, and the officers' swords flashed in the sun. It was a scene of delirious joy. Charming was infected by the general emotion; he wept without exactly knowing why. At that instant the clock struck noon. The specter was right—the prince was cured.

After the crowd it was the turn of the corporations, all of whom, the ministers at the head, came to congratulate and thank the king for having so well understood the wishes of his faithful counselors. A single person was lacking, namely, Wieduwillst. None knew where he had hidden his ignorance and spite. A mysterious note received by him that morning had occasioned his flight, yet this note contained only the words, *The king knows all!* Who had written this fatal letter? Not the prince; he alone, perhaps, in the palace, thought of the minister, and wondered at not seeing him by his side.

All at once Tonto entered, pale and haggard. He ran to the king and gave him a letter which an officer had brought at full gallop. The governor of the province, General Bayonet, sent terrible news; the six disbanded regiments had mutinied, headed by Wieduwillst. The rebels had proclaimed the downfall of the king, whom they accused of abominable crimes, especially of the murder of the queen. Numerous and well commanded, they were approaching the city, which was defended only by a few doubtful and disaffected regiments. Bayonet entreated the king to come instantly and take command; an hour later, and all would be lost.

Hurried on by Tonto and Rachimburg, the king secretly quitted the palace, followed by a few officers. A proclamation, placarded on all the walls of the city and at every corner of the streets, declared that there was no truth in the rumors spread by a few malicious persons, and that the army had never been more devoted or faithful. Upon this there was a universal panic; stocks fell 50 per cent. in half an hour, and did not rise again till unofficial news arrived that the king had been well received at head-quarters.

IX

HEROIC REMEDIES FOR GREAT EVILS

The news was false; the prince had been received with great coldness. It was his own fault. Sad, despondent, and abstracted, Charming had neither found a jest for the soldiers nor a word of trust for the officers. He entered the general's tent and fell into a chair. Tonto was little less disheartened.

"Sire," said Bayonet, "permit me to speak to you with the frankness of a soldier and the freedom of an old friend. The army is murmuring and hesitating; we must secure it, or all is lost. The enemy is in sight; we must attack him. Five minutes sometimes decide the fate of empires; it is so with us now. Do not wait till it is too late."

"Very well," said the king. "To horse! in an instant I will be with you."

Left alone with Tonto and Rachimburg, the king exclaimed, in despair, "My good friends, quit a master who can do no more for you. I shall not dispute my wretched life with my enemies. Betrayed in friendship and treacherously assassinated, I recognize in my misfortune the hand of an avenging God. It is in punishment for my crime. I killed the queen in my stupid vengeance; the hour has come to expiate my fault, and I am ready."

"Sire," said Tonto, trying to smile, "shake off these sad thoughts. If the queen were here she would tell you to defend yourself. Believe me," he added, twisting his budding mustache, "I am acquainted with women! Were they dead, they would still love to avenge themselves. Besides, you did not kill the queen; and perhaps she is not so dead as you imagine."

"What do you say?" exclaimed the king; "you are losing your reason."

"I say that there are women who die expressly to enrage their husbands; why should there not be those that would rise from the dead to enrage them still more? Leave the dead, and think of the

living who love you. You are a king; fight like a king, and, if necessary, fall like a king."

"Sire," said Bayonet, entering, sword in hand, "time presses."

"General, to horse!" cried Tonto; "let us go."

Bayonet quitted the room to give the needful orders. When he was gone, Charming looked at Tonto and said: "No, I will not go. I do not understand my feelings; I abhor myself. I am not afraid of death; I am going to kill myself; nevertheless, I will not fight."

"Sire," said Tonto, "in Heaven's name, summon up your courage. To horse! Great God!" he exclaimed, wringing his hands, "the prince will not listen to me; we are lost. Come!" said he, taking hold of Charming's cloak; "up, sire; to horse, unhappy prince! Save your kingdom—save your people—save all that love you. Coward! look at me; I am nothing but a child, yet I am about to die for you. Fight! do not disgrace yourself. If you do not rise I will insult you—I, your servant. You are a coward—do you hear? a coward!"

And behold! the insolent page boxed the king's ears.

"S'death!" cried Charming, drawing his sword. "Before dying I will have the pleasure of punishing one subject, at least."

But the page had left the tent. With one bound he sprang into the saddle and galloped toward the enemy, sword in hand, crying, "The king! my friends—the king! Sound the trumpets! Forward!"

Charming, mad with anger, spurred his horse in pursuit of the page: like a bull at the sight of a red flag, he rushed forward, head downward, caring neither for death nor for danger. Bayonet rushed after the king, and the army after the general. It was the finest cavalry charge ever known in history.

At the noise of the squadrons, which shook the ground like thunder, the enemy, surprised, scarcely had time to form in line of battle. One man, however, had recognized the king—the infamous Wieduwillst. Charming was alone; wholly absorbed in his vengeance, he saw nothing but the page whom he was pursuing. The traitor threw himself on the prince, sword in hand, and would have slain him at one stroke had not Tonto, plunging his spurs into the flanks of his horse, made the animal rear and fall on Wieduwillst. The page received the blow intended for his master. He threw up his arms and fell with a loud cry;

but his fall, at least, was avenged. The king thrust his sword into the throat of the treacherous physician, and drew it forth, dripping with blood, not without pleasure. Man is decidedly the king of wild beasts.

The traitor's death decided the fate of the day. The royal army, electrified by the heroism of its leader, soon dispersed the straggling battalions. The rebels, having nothing more to hope, sued for pardon, and their prayer was granted by the happy and clement king.

An hour after quitting the camp where he had wished to die, Charming returned in triumph, bringing with him conquerors and conquered, all blended in the same ranks, the former loudly protesting their loyalty, the latter overpowering them with their enthusiasm. Nothing sharpens devotion so much as a little treason.

X

IN WHICH WE SEE THAT IT IS WRONG TO JUDGE ACCORDING TO APPEARANCES, AND THAT TONTO WAS NOT TONTO

The king entered his tent to rest a moment, when the sight of Rachimburg reminded him of Tonto.

"Is the page dead?" he asked.

"No, sire," answered Rachimburg; "unfortunately for him, he is still living; he is hopeless. I ordered him carried to his aunt's, the Countess de Castro's, close by here."

"Is he the countess's nephew?" said the king. "I was never told of it."

"Your Majesty has forgotten it," replied Rachimburg, quietly. "The poor child is fatally wounded in the shoulder; he cannot recover. It would give him great happiness could he see Your Majesty before he dies."

"Very well," returned the king; "lead me to him."

On his arrival at the castle Charming was met by the countess, who conducted him to a darkened room. The page was stretched, pale and bleeding, on a couch; nevertheless, he had strength to raise his head and welcome the king.

"What a miracle!" exclaimed Charming. "This is the strangest wound that I ever saw in my life: one side of Tonto's mustache is gone!"

"Sire," said the countess, "the blade of the sword probably swept off one side. Nothing is so capricious as sword wounds, as every one knows."

"How strange!" cried the king. "On one side it is Tonto, my page, my insolent subject, and on the other it is—no, I am not mistaken—it is you, my good angel and my savior; it is you, my poor Pazza!"

He fell on his knees and seized her hand, which lay on the coverlet.

"Sire," said Pazza, "my days are numbered, but before dying—"

"No, no, Pazza, you shall not die," cried the king, in tears.

"Before dying," she added, casting down her eyes, "I hope that Your Majesty will forgive me the box on the ear which I gave you this morning in indiscreet zeal—"

"Enough," said the king; "I forgive you. After all, a throne and honor were well worth—what I received."

"Alas!" said Pazza, "that is not all."

"What!" exclaimed Charming, "is there anything more?"

"Oh, sire, what have you done?" cried the countess; "my child is dying!"

"My Pazza, you must not die!" exclaimed the king. "Speak, and be sure that I forgive in advance all you have done. Alas! it is I that have need of forgiveness."

"Sire, the little doctor who took the liberty of boxing Your Majesty's ears—"

"Was it you that sent him?" asked Charming, with a frown.

"No, sire, I myself was he. Ah, what would I not have done to save my king! It was I who, to save Your Majesty from the traitorous knaves that surrounded you, took the liberty of boxing your ears—"

"Enough," said Charming; "I forgive you, though the lesson was a harsh one."

"Alas! this is not all," said Pazza.

"What, more?" cried the king, rising.

"Oh, aunt, I am dying!" exclaimed Pazza. By dint of care, however, she was restored to life; and, turning her languishing eyes toward the king, "Sire," said she, "the gipsy girl at the masked ball, who dared to box your ears—"

"Was yourself, Pazza?" said charming. "Oh, I forgive you for that; I well deserved it. How could I doubt you, who are sincerity itself! But,

now I think of it, do you remember the rash vow that you made on the night of our marriage? You have kept your promise; it is for me to keep mine. Pazza, make haste to recover, and return to the castle from which happiness fled with you."

"I have a last favor to ask of Your Majesty," said Pazza. "Rachimburg was the witness this morning of a scene for which I blush, and of which all must remain ignorant. I commend this faithful servant to your goodness."

"Rachimburg," said the king, "take this purse, and keep the secret under penalty of your head."

"That makes the fourth," whispered Rachimburg to himself; "my fortune is made."

In a few moments Pazza was asleep. "Do you think that she will recover?" asked Charming, anxiously, of the countess.

"Bah!" said the old lady. "No matter how ill a woman may be, happiness will bring her back from the brink of the grave. Kiss the queen, my nephew; it will do her more good than all the doctors in the world."

Charming stooped and kissed the sleeping Pazza. An angelic smile stole over her features, at the sight of which he wept like a child.

XI

A WIFE SHOULD OBEY HER HUSBAND

The countess was right (women are always right—past sixty). A fortnight of happiness set Pazza on her feet again, and enabled her to make a triumphant entry into the city with the king, her husband. Her paleness, and her wounded arm, which she carried in a sling, added to her grace and beauty. Charming had eyes for no one but the queen, and the people's looks followed the king's.

They were more than an hour in reaching the castle. The magistrates had erected not less than three triumphal arches, frowning fortresses, defended each by thirty-six deputations and thirty-six speeches. The first arch, made of trellis-work, and adorned with leaves and flowers, bore the inscription,

TO THE MOST TENDER AND FAITHFUL OF HUSBANDS

This was intrusted to the keeping of five or six thousand young girls, dressed in white, with pink ribbons, representing the spring of the year, the hope of the future, welcoming Glory and Beauty.

The second arch, more solidly built, was a frame covered with tapestry, surmounted by Justice, with her eyes bandaged and her scales in her hand.

On the pedestal of the statue was written,

TO THE FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE,
THE BEST AND WISEST OF PRINCES

A host of priests, statesmen, and magistrates, in robes of all colors, represented Religion, Wisdom, and Virtue; at least so said these venerable and discreet personages, who are never in error.

Last came an immense arch, a true military trophy, bearing as its motto,

Here the army awaited its general, and the queen was saluted by the majestic voice of a hundred cannon and two hundred drums—a voice before which all human eloquence falters, and which always has the last word.

I spare you a description of the dinner, which was interminable, and of sixty more speeches from the court gazette, where they had already done service two or three times, and wherein they were again deposited for the use of future generations. There is nothing so monotonous as happiness, and we must be indulgent to those who sing its praises officially. In such cases, the ablest is he who says the least.

The long evening, during which the king had lavished his most gracious smiles on those whom he despised at the bottom of his heart, was at length at an end, and Charming led Pazza, no longer to a dungeon, but to a magnificent apartment, where a new surprise awaited her. At the bottom of the room was an illuminated transparency, on which were written lines so bad that a king alone could have been the author of them. These lines, which were published in the official gazette, have been handed down to us by one of those indiscreet persons who suffer no follies of the past to be lost. Such persons are the rag-pickers of history.

Ye indolent dunces, who rust in your sloth,
Too lazy or wilful to learn;
Ye courtiers, who crowd round the king, nothing loth
By base flattery his favor to earn;
Ye doctors, who laugh at us cowards, and sell
Long words and wise oracles dear—
Beware lest some night a mischievous sprite
Should give you a box on the ear.

And you, ye proud husbands, puffed up with conceit,
Who deem yourselves statesmen so wise
That the whole world admiringly bows at your feet —
Who truth, love, and goodness despise—
Beware lest some day your less frivolous wives,
Derided by those they held dear,
Should start from your side, aroused by just pride,
And give you a box on the ear.

"What means this enigma, sire?" asked Pazza.

"It means that I do myself justice," answered the king. "I am nothing except through you, dear Pazza; all that I know and all that I think I owe to you. Without you I am nothing but a soulless body, fit only for follies."

"Pardon me if I contradict Your Majesty," said Pazza.

"Oh," returned the king, "I affect no false modesty; I know very well that I have the clearest head of any in my council; my ministers themselves are forced to acknowledge it, for they are always of my opinion; but with all this there is more wisdom in your little finger than in all my

royal brain. My resolution, therefore, is fixed. Let my court and people celebrate my wisdom, my goodness, and even my valor; it is all very well, and I accept the homage. You alone have the right to laugh at it, and you will not betray me. But from this day I abandon my power to you. The king, my dear Pazza, will be only the chief of your subjects, the faithful minister of your will. You shall write the piece and I will play it; the applause will be mine, according to custom, and I will give it back to you by force of love."

"Do not talk in this way, my dear," said Pazza.

"I know what I am saying," returned the king, warmly. "I wish you to rule; I mean that in my empire, as in my house, nothing shall be done except by your command; I am the master and the king; I desire and order it."

"Sire," said Pazza, "I am your wife and servant; it is my duty to obey."

After this, says the chronicle, they lived happily to a good old age, beloved by all their subjects; and the people of the kingdom of Wild Oats still talk of the good old days of Prince Charming and the Princess Pazza.

THE END

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