



THERE was once a rich and powerful king, who had a daughter remarkable for her beauty. When this Princess arrived at an age to be married, he caused a proclamation to be made by sound of trumpet and by placards on all the walls of his kingdom, to the effect that all those who had any pretension to her hand were to assemble in a wide-spread meadow.

Her would-be suitors being in this way gathered together, the Princess would throw into the air a golden apple, and whoever succeeded in catching it would then have to resolve three problems, after doing which he might marry the Princess, and, the King having no son, inherit the kingdom.

On the day appointed the meeting took place. The Princess threw the golden apple into the air, but not one of the first three who caught it was able to complete the easiest task set him, and neither of them attempted those which were to follow.

At last, the golden apple, thrown by the Princess into the air for the fourth time, fell into the hands of a young shepherd, who was the handsomest, but, at the same time, the poorest of all the competitors.

The first problem given him to solve—certainly as difficult as a problem in mathematics—was this:—

The King had caused one hundred hares

to be shut up in a stable; he who should succeed in leading them out to feed upon the meadow where the meeting was being held, the next morning, and conduct them all back to the stable the next evening,

would have resolved the first problem. When this proposition was made to the young shepherd, he asked to be allowed a day to reflect upon it; the next day he would say "yes" or "no" to it.

The request appeared so just to the King that it was granted to him.

He immediately took his way to the forest, to meditate there on the means of accomplishing the task set him.

With down-bent head he slowly traversed a narrow path running beside a brook, when he came upon a little old woman with snow-white hair, but sparkling eyes, who inquired the cause of his sadness.

The young shepherd replied, shaking his head:

"Alas! nobody can be of any assistance to me, and yet I greatly desire to wed the King's daughter."

"Don't give way to despair so quickly," replied the little old woman; "tell me all about your trouble, and perhaps I may be able to get you out of your difficulty."

The young shepherd's heart was so heavy that he needed no entreaty to tell her his story.

"Is that all?" said the little old woman; "in that case you have not much to despair about."

And she took from her pocket an ivory whistle and gave it to him.

This whistle was just like other whistles in appearance; so the shepherd, thinking



"SHE TOOK FROM HER POCKET AN IVORY WHISTLE."

that it needed to be blown in a particular way, turned to ask the little old woman how this was, but she had disappeared.

Full of confidence, however, in what he regarded as a good genius, he went next day to the palace, and said to the King :

"I accept, sir, and have come in search of the hares to lead them to the meadow."

On hearing this, the King rose, and said to his Minister of the Interior :

"Have all the hares turned out of the stable."

The young shepherd placed himself on the threshold of the door to count them ; but the first was already far away when the last was set at liberty ; so much so, that when he reached the meadow he had not a single hare with him.

He sat himself down pensively, not daring to believe in the virtue of his whistle. However, he had no other resource, and placing the whistle to his lips he blew into it with all his might.

The whistle gave forth a sharp and prolonged sound.

Immediately, to his great astonishment, from right and left, from before him and behind him—from all sides, in fact—leapt the hundred hares, and set to quietly browsing on the meadow around him.

News was brought to the King, how the young shepherd had probably resolved the problem of the hares.

The King conferred on the matter with his daughter.

Both were greatly vexed ; for if the young shepherd succeeded with the two other problems as well as he had with the first, the Princess would become the wife of a simple peasant, than which nothing could be more humiliating to royal pride.

"You think over the matter," said the Princess to her father, "and I will do the same."

The Princess retired to her chamber, and disguised herself in such a way as to render herself unrecognisable ; then she



"HE BLEW WITH ALL HIS MIGHT."

had a horse brought for her, mounted it, and went to the young shepherd.

The hundred hares were frisking joyously about him.

"Will you sell me one of your hares?" asked the young Princess.

"I would not sell you one of my hares for all the gold in the world," replied the shepherd; "but you may gain one."

"At what price?" asked the Princess.

"By dismounting from your horse and sitting by me on the grass for a quarter of an hour."

The Princess made some objections, but as there was no other means of obtaining

up the lid of the basket, sprang to the ground, and made off as fast as his legs would carry him.

A moment afterwards, the shepherd saw a peasant coming towards him, mounted on a donkey. It was the old King, also disguised, who had quitted the palace with the same intention as his daughter.

A large bag hung from the donkey's saddle.

"Will you sell me one of your hares?" he asked of the young shepherd.

"My hares are not for sale," replied the shepherd; "but they may be gained."

"What must one do to gain one?"



"THE PRINCESS SEATED HERSELF BY THE YOUNG SHEPHERD."

the hare, she descended to the ground, and seated herself by the young shepherd.

The hundred hares leaped and bounded around him.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, during which the young shepherd said a hundred tender things to her, she rose and claimed her hare, which the shepherd, faithful to his promise, gave her.

The Princess joyfully shut it in a basket which she carried at the bow of her saddle, and rode back towards the palace.

But hardly had she ridden a quarter of a league, when the young shepherd placed his whistle to his lips and blew into it; and, at this imperative call, the hare forced

The shepherd considered for a moment.

"You must kiss three times the tail of your donkey," he said.

This strange condition was greatly repugnant to the old King, who tried his hardest to escape it, going so far as to offer fifty thousand francs for a single hare, but the young shepherd would not budge from the terms he had named. At last the King, who held absolutely to getting possession of one of the hares, submitted to the conditions, humiliating as they were for a king. Three times he kissed the tail of his donkey, who was greatly surprised at a king doing him so much honour; and the shepherd, faithful to his promise,



"THREE TIMES HE KISSED THE TAIL OF HIS DONKEY."

gave him the hare demanded with so much insistence.

The King tucked his hare into his bag, and rode away at the utmost speed of his donkey.

But he had hardly gone a quarter of a league when a shrill whistle sounded in the air, on hearing which the hare nibbled at the bag so vigorously as speedily to make a hole, out of which it leapt to the ground and fled.

"Well?" inquired the Princess, on seeing the King return to the palace.

"I hardly know what to tell you, my daughter," replied the King. "This young shepherd is an obstinate fellow, who refused to sell me one of his hares at any price. But don't distress yourself; he'll not get so easily through the two other tasks as he has done with this one."

It need hardly be said that the King made no allusion to the conditions under which he had for a moment had possession of one of his hares, nor that the Princess said nothing about the terms of her similar success.

"That is exactly my case," she remarked; "I could not induce him to part with one of his hares, neither for gold nor silver."

When evening came, the shepherd returned with his hares; he counted them before the King; there was not one more or one less. They were given back to the Minister of the Interior, who had them driven into the stable.

Then the King said:

"The first problem has been solved; the second now remains to be accomplished. Pay great attention, young man."

The shepherd listened with all his ears.

"Up yonder, in my granary," the King went on, "there are one hundred measures of grey peas and one hundred measures of lentils; lentils and peas are mixed together; if you succeed to-night, and without light, in separating them, you will have solved the second problem."

"I'll do my best," replied the young shepherd.

And the King called his Minister of the Interior, who conducted the young man up to the granary, locked him in, and handed the key to the King.

As it was already night, and as, for such a labour, there was no time to be lost, the shepherd put his whistle to his lips and blew a long, shrill note.

Instantly five thousand ants appeared, and set to work separating the lentils from the peas, and never stopped until the whole were divided into two heaps.

The next morning the King, to his great astonishment, beheld the work accomplished. He tried to raise objections, but was unable to find any ground whatever.

All he could now do was to trust to the third trial, which, after the shepherd's success in the other two trials, he found to be not very hopeful. However, as the third

was the most difficult of all, he did not give way to despair.

"What now remains for you to do," he said, "is to go into the bread-room, and, in a single night, eat the whole week's bread, which is stored there. If to-morrow morning not a single crumb is to be found there, I will consent to your marrying my daughter."

That same evening the young shepherd was conducted to the bread-room of the palace, which was so full of bread that only a very small space near the door remained unoccupied.

But, at midnight, when all was quiet in the palace, the shepherd sounded his whistle. In a moment ten thousand mice fell to gnawing at the bread in such a fashion, that the next morning not a single crumb remained in the place.

The young man then hammered at the door with all his might, and called out :

"Make haste and open the door, please, for I'm hungry !"

The third task was thus victoriously accomplished, as the others had been.

Nevertheless, the King tried hard to get out of his engagement.

He had a sack, big enough to hold six measures of wheat, brought ; and, having called a good number of his courtiers about him, said : "Tell us as many falsehoods as

will fill this sack, and when it is full you shall have my daughter."

Then the shepherd repeated all the falsehoods he could think of ; but the day was half spent and he was at the end of his fibs, and still the sack was far from being full.

"Well," he went on, "while I was guarding my hares, the Princess came to me disguised as a peasant, and, to get one of my hares, permitted me to kiss her."

The Princess, who, not in the least suspecting what he was going to say, had not been able to close his mouth, became as red as a cherry ; so much so that the King began to think that the young shepherd's tarradiddle might possibly be true.

"The sack is not yet full, though you have just dropped a *very* big falsehood into it," cried the King. "Go on."

The shepherd bowed and continued : "A moment after the Princess was gone, I saw his Majesty, disguised as a peasant and mounted on a donkey. His Majesty also came to buy one of my hares ; seeing, then, what an eager desire he had to obtain a hare from me, what do you imagine I compelled him to do—"

"Enough ! enough !" cried the King ; "the sack is full."

A week later, the young shepherd married the Princess.



"THE SACK IS FULL!"