

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

FROM THE SERVIAN.



HERE were once a King and a Queen who had an only daughter—a princess with golden locks, whose beauty surpassed any that was ever seen or heard of. Her forehead had the brightness of the full moon, her lips the freshness of the rose, her complexion the white purity of the lily, and her breath the sweet odour of the jessamine blossom; her voice and looks were so enchanting that no one could help listening to her and gazing upon her.

The first seventeen years of this lovely princess's life were passed in her maiden apartment, and filled with joy the King, the Queen, her governesses and servants. Nobody else saw her, for all approach to her apartment was forbidden to the sons of kings and princes, and she herself never quitted it, nor ever cast her eyes on the external world, nor ever breathed the air without.

For some years past, sons of kings and other princes had sought her hand in marriage, either in person or by ambassadors; but the King had always deferred to another time the giving of his answer. Now, however, after having long deliberated with the Queen, he sent off couriers in all directions to spread the news that, in conformity with the wishes of her parents, the

princess would choose a husband, and that he towards whom her heart might incline would obtain, besides the possession of her charms, the right of succession to the kingdom.

Great was the joy of the princess as soon as she was informed of this decision. She took to gazing into the garden through the gilded trellis of her window, dreamed there for a long time, and finished by feeling an irresistible desire to descend into the garden and walk about upon the fresh greensward. So earnestly did she ask permission of her governesses that they could not refuse to allow her to walk in the garden for a little while in their company.

The crystal doors opened, the double doors of oak enclosing the orchard creaked upon their hinges, and the princess stepped upon a velvet lawn. She set off running about the garden, plucking the flowers and inhaling their perfume, and chasing the many-hued butterflies.

Prudence was not yet much developed in her young head; she strayed far away



from her governesses, her face was uncovered, her beauty displayed itself unveiled.

And now an impetuous whirlwind, such as has never been seen or recorded, even in fabulous story, burst over the garden. It roared and raged, and, snatching up the princess, bore her away.

The King and Queen, speechless with sorrow, knew not what to do. At this very time a crowd of princes had arrived at the palace. Seeing the King a prey to so much distress, they asked of him the cause.

"Woe to my white hair!" cried the King. "A Vikhar (whirlwind) has carried off my beloved daughter, the lovely princess with the golden locks, and I know not whither he has borne her. He who finds her and brings her back to me shall have her for his bride, and with her and at once the half of my kingdom, and the rest of my fortune and titles after my death."

On hearing these words spoken, the princes and knights sprang upon their horses and set forth to scour the world, inquiring everywhere for the princess with the golden locks who had been carried away by a whirlwind.

Among the most distinguished of all these was the son of a king.

His eyes resembled those of a falcon and his eyebrows those of the sable. His right hand was of pure gold. His bearing was so majestic as to excite astonishment in all who saw him.

The young prince set off, straight before him—over deep rivers and over stupendous mountains.

At length, arrived at a dark forest, he perceived at a distance a cabin perched on

the claws of a cock. About the cabin there was a field full of poppies in bloom. The prince went towards it, and suddenly felt himself overcome by a strong desire to go to sleep—a desire so strong as to be almost

irresistible. But he set spurs to his steed and, trampling down the heads of the poppies in his course, presently arrived in front of a cabin perched on a cock's claws and called out—

"Turn, cabin, turn!—turn on your claws, your back to the forest, your front to me!"

Instantly the cabin turned about with a grating sound, and brought its door on the side of the prince.

He entered and found within a stunted old woman with white hair and face all covered with wrinkles and stains, hideous to see. She was

seated behind a table, her head resting upon her hands and her eyes fixed upon the ceiling, plunged in a deep reverie. Near her, seated on a form, were her two daughters, both young and beautiful, with complexions of combined roses and lilies, most pleasing to the sight.

"How do you do, prince with the hand of gold?" asked the old woman, whose name was Yaga. "What has brought you to my dwelling?"

The prince having informed her as to the motive of his travels, she said to him—

"Many have perished on the mountain which touches the clouds, while they were searching for the princess with the golden locks carried off by Vikhar, the Whirlwind."

"How can I reach that abductor?" asked the prince.

"Ah, my poor child!—he will swallow



"THE WHIRLWIND BORE THE PRINCESS AWAY."



you up like a fly ; even I am afraid of him. For a hundred years I have not stirred out of this cabin, for fear lest he should bear me away to his mountain which touches the clouds."

"He will not carry me off, for I am not so beautiful ; and he will not carry me off for another reason—I have a hand of gold with which I can break everything."

"Well, my dove, if you are not afraid, I will help you ; but give me your word that you will bring me from that mountain some of the water of Jouvence, which possesses the virtue of instantly restoring to youthfulness whoever sprinkles herself with it."

"I promise to bring you some of it."

"This is what you must do, then. I'll give you a ball of thread to guide you ; you must throw it before you and follow it wherever it goes. It will lead you up the mountain which touches the clouds, which, in the absence of Storm, is guarded by the Tempest of the North and the Wind of the South. If, while following the ball of thread upon the mountain, you feel yourself being overcome by cold, put on this warming-cap. When you have gone further and a burning heat begins to suffocate you, drink of this refreshing flask. By the aid of these three things you will reach the summit of the mountain, where Vikhar has imprisoned the princess with the golden locks. As to how you will deal with him, that is your affair ; only, don't forget to bring me back with you some of the water that restores lost youthfulness."

The prince took the warming-cap, the refreshing-flask, and the guiding-ball of thread, and bowing to old Yaga and her two pretty daughters, sprang upon his horse, threw the ball of thread as far as he could throw it, and galloped away in the direction it indicated.

After passing across two kingdoms, he found himself in the centre of a third, in a beautiful and far-extending valley, above which rose a mountain, the top of which touched the clouds ; its summit, indeed, was so prodigiously high as almost to reach the moon.

Leaving his horse to feed at liberty, the prince, still following his guiding-ball of thread, began to ascend the steep and stony side of the mountain. Higher and higher he mounted, until he had accomplished half the ascension.

Suddenly the north wind began to blow

violently ; the cold became so intense that the trunks of trees creaked and the breath congealed into ice. The young prince felt himself becoming benumbed.

Instantly he drew from his pocket the warming-cap and placed it on his head, crying as he did so—

"Warming-cap, lend me your warmth, that the cold may harm me not."

The north wind redoubled its fury at that moment, but the prince was so warm as to be obliged to unbutton his doublet, and with his handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

Still upwards he followed the guid-



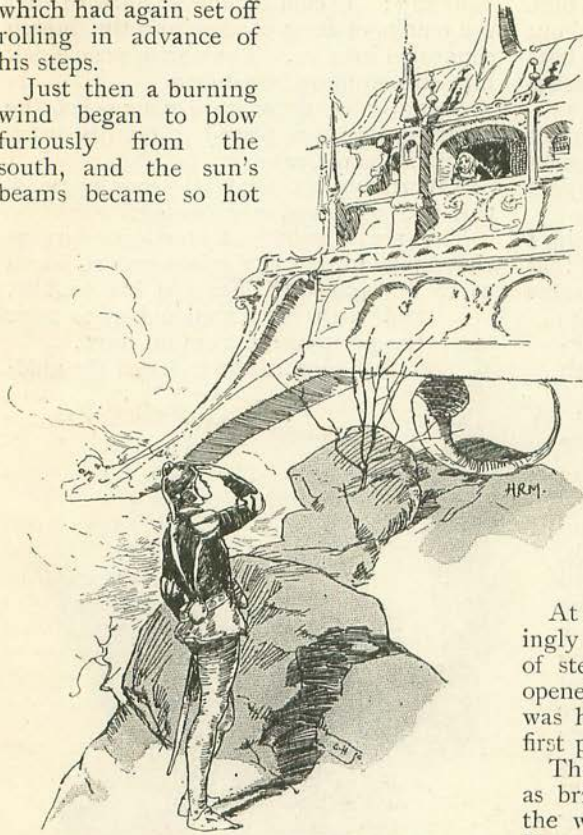
"WARMING-CAP, LEND ME YOUR WARMTH."

ing-ball of thread, which, after a while, stopped short upon a little eminence covered with snow. The prince cleared away the snow from the surface, and discovered two frozen bodies, which he concluded must be those of two former adventurers. Kneeling down, he uttered a prayer over them. That done, he followed the guiding-ball,



which had again set off rolling in advance of his steps.

Just then a burning wind began to blow furiously from the south, and the sun's beams became so hot



"THERE HE FOUND A MARVELLOUS PALACE"

that the leaves of the trees shrivelled, the grass dried up, and the earth opened in wide chasms. Thirst, heat, and fatigue began to overcome the prince, but he drew from his pocket the refreshing-flask, and cried—

"Flask of refreshing powers, preserve me from all harm."

He drank freely of its contents, and presently, feeling himself become stronger than ever, continued his way up the mountain. Not only did he suffer no more from the heat, but he was even obliged to button up his doublet, so cool had he become.

The guiding-ball still mounted, and the prince, keeping closely up with it,

passed through the region of clouds, and at last reached the summit of the mountain.

There he found a marvellous palace, made entirely of silver, with steel-barred gates, and roofed with gold. Standing upon a single cock's claw, the flight of steps leading up to its main entrance was turned towards a deep abyss, so that no living creature could gain access to it. From one of its windows the princess with the golden locks was looking forth, her beautiful hair streaming in the wind, her eyes shedding light, her breath embalming the air. The prince had hardly seen her before he sprang forward and cried—

"Palace, palace, turn upon your sustaining claw—turn your back towards the precipice, your front towards me."

At these words, the palace turned creakingly upon its support, and set its flight of steps before the prince, who speedily opened the door and entered. No sooner was he within than the palace resumed its first position.

The prince penetrated a room that was as bright as the sun, of which the floor, the walls, and the ceiling were of glass. He paused, full of astonishment, for instead of one princess, he perceived twelve—all



"THE YOUNG PRINCE EMPTIED IT AT A DRAUGHT."



of the same beauty, all having the grace, all the same golden locks as the true princess.

As soon as the princess set eyes on the prince, she uttered a cry of joy and sprang to meet him.

"If life is dear to you," she cried, "fly from hence, for Vikhar may return at any moment, and he could kill you with a look!"

"If I fail to rescue you, of what value to me will my life be? But I am of good hope; only give me to drink from the heroic well some of the water drunk by Vikhar."

The princess, having drawn a pailful, handed it to him. The young prince emptied it at a draught, and asked for a second. Though somewhat astonished at this, the princess drew him another pailful, which he drank off as before. After which he said—

"Princess, permit me to sit down for a moment to recover breath."

She handed him an iron chair, on which he seated himself, but which broke under him in a thousand pieces. She then brought the chair used by Vikhar himself, but though it was made of steel, the prince had no sooner sat down upon it than it cracked and bent under his weight.

"You see, princess, that I have become heavier than your invincible Storm. But, before he returns, tell me, I beg, how you pass your time here?"

"Alas! I pass my time in tears and sorrow; my only consolation is that, so far, I have been able to resist the importunities of my persecutor, who vainly solicits me to become his wife. I have told him that I will never marry anyone but the man who succeeds in

finding the answers to six enigmas which I have composed; thus two years have passed and, in spite of all his efforts, he has failed. The last time he went from the palace he announced to me that if, on returning, he was still unable to answer my enigmas, he would compel me to marry him in spite of my opposition."

"Then I will be the priest on that occasion—and wed him to death."

At that instant a horrible hissing sound was heard.

"Be on your guard, prince," cried the princess. "Vikhar is coming."

The palace began to turn rapidly on the claw which supported it. Frightful noises arose on all sides, thousands of ravens and other birds of ill omen croaked, and all the doors flew open of themselves with a terrifying crash.

Mounted upon a winged steed which snorted flames, Vikhar dashed into the glass room, and beheld the presence of the prince with astonishment. The impatient horse reared and beat its wings. Vikhar had the body of a giant and the head of a dragon.

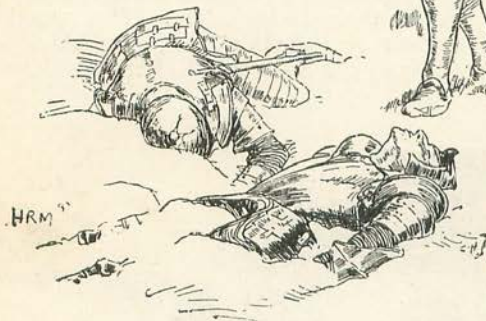


"THE PRINCE SEIZED HIM BY THE COLLET."



He roared, vomited flames, and sprang upon the prince open-mouthed, intending to swallow him alive. The prince stepped nimbly on one side and seized him by the gullet, and hurled him with so much force against the opposite wall that the monster entered it like a cannon-ball, shedding a torrent of blood and, at the same time, giving up his life.

The young prince took the half-fainting princess in his arms; then he drew from three different springs the water which resuscitates, the water which



"THE FROZEN PRINCES."

revives, and the water which restores lost youthfulness. That done, he seized the bridle of the winged horse, which appeared to be petrified, and pointed toward the spot where the two dead and frozen princes lay. The horse threw up its head, reared, beat its wings, rose high into the air, and at length descended gently at the spot where the two dead princes were lying. The prince with the golden hand sprinkled their frozen bodies with the water which resuscitates. The chill of death was dissipated, and the hue of life returned to their faces. Next he sprinkled them with the water which reanimates. Their eyes opened, and they

ROSE.

The prince with the hand of gold related to them all that had happened. They embraced each other tenderly. Taking them up with the princess on to his horse's back, he pointed to the place where the cabin of old Yaga stood upon its cock's claws. Tossing its head, the steed reared, spread its wings, and mounted to the clouds, clearing high forests in its course, and at length descended at the spot to which it had been directed.

The prince cried—

"Cabin, cabin, turn on your claws—your back to the forest, your front to me."

Immediately the cabin turned round creakingly, and presented its door in face of the prince. Old Yaga came out to meet him, and having received a phial full of the water of

Jouvence, instantly sprinkled herself with its contents. All signs of age at once disappeared from her features, and, from being ugly, she became young and charming. So happy was she in the change, that she kissed the hands of the princes, and said—

"Ask of me what you will; I can refuse you nothing."

At that moment, her two young and pretty daughters, fresh as rosebuds, looked out of their windows. The sight of them so pleased the two princes that they cried, in one voice—



"HER TWO YOUNG AND PRETTY DAUGHTERS LOOKED OUT OF THEIR WINDOWS."



"Give us your two daughters to be our wives."

"I give them to you," replied the young mother.

She motioned to her daughters to come from the cabin, saluted her future sons-in-law, burst into laughter, and disappeared. The elder princes took up their betrothed on the same horse, and an hour or two afterwards it descended, as its master had commanded, in front of the palace of the princess's parents.

The King and Queen, on seeing their only daughter returned, flew to meet her with cries of delight, embraced her tenderly, and thanked her liberator.

Embracing her father tenderly, the princess with the golden locks said—

"My most honoured king and lord, the prince, my betrothed, knows the vow I made when I was carried away by Vikhar the Storm—only to give my hand to him who should succeed in guessing my six enigmas. Is a princess with golden locks permitted to break her word?"

The King made no answer, but the prince cried—

"I am ready; speak, princess, I listen."

"This is my first enigma," said the princess. "Two of my extremities form one sharp point; the two others, each a ring; and, in the middle, there is a rivet."

"Scissors," said the prince.

"Well guessed. Here is the second: I

pass round the table on a single foot, but if I am broken my injury is past remedy."

"A wineglass."

"Very good. My third enigma: Though tongueless, I answer faithfully; nobody sees me; all hear me."

"Echo."

"True. Here is my fourth: Fire does not light me and the broom cannot sweep me away; no painter can paint me, no prison can hold me."

"The light of the sun."

"Even so. Listen to my fifth enigma: I existed before Adam was created; I have always alternated the two colours of my dress; thousands of years have passed, yet I have changed neither in form nor colour."

"Time—made up of day and night."

"You have guessed the five that were the most difficult, the last one is simpler: By day a ring, by night a serpent—whoever guesses that shall be my husband."

"A waist-belt."

"You have guessed them all aright," said the princess, placing her hand in that of the young prince.

Both knelt at the feet of the King and Queen. The marriage of the three couples was celebrated that same evening. A splendid banquet was prepared, to which a host of noble guests were invited, and the festivities were joyously continued far into the next day.

