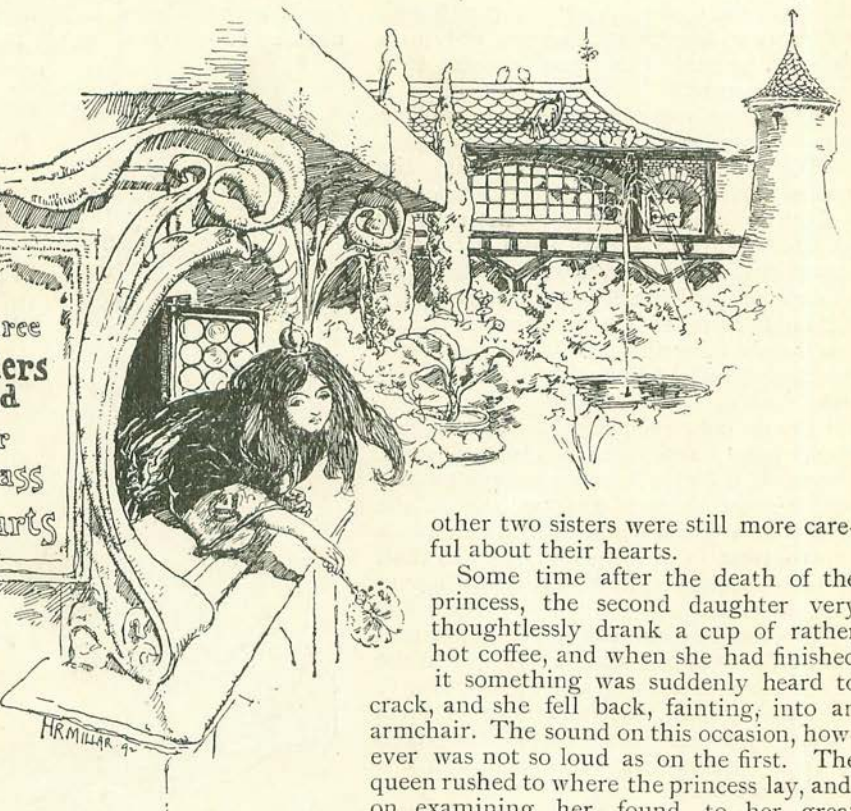


The
Three
Sisters
and
Their
Glass
Hearts

A STORY
FOR
CHILDREN,
FROM THE
RUSSIAN.



HERE were once a king and queen who had three beautiful daughters, and the organism of these three princesses was remarkable for their each being furnished with a heart

of glass.

"Children! children!" said the queen, when the princesses were still quite small, "whatever you do, take care of your hearts, for they are of fragile make."

The children therefore tried to be very careful, and for some time all went well, and the hearts remained unbroken.

But one day the eldest girl, who was leaning out of the window, looking down into the garden below, noticed a little bee which was buzzing busily round some flowers. The little creature interested her so much that she leaned out farther, so as to be able to watch it more closely, when suddenly—smash!—there came a sound of broken glass! The young princess had crushed her heart against the window-sill, and so, alas! the poor girl expired.

After this exceedingly sad accident the

other two sisters were still more careful about their hearts.

Some time after the death of the princess, the second daughter very thoughtlessly drank a cup of rather hot coffee, and when she had finished it something was suddenly heard to crack, and she fell back, fainting, into an armchair. The sound on this occasion, however was not so loud as on the first. The queen rushed to where the princess lay, and, on examining her, found, to her great delight, that the heart was only slightly cracked, and not broken, and that her daughter was still alive.



"THE PRINCESS DRANK A CUP OF RATHER HOT COFFEE."

"What are we to do with our daughter?" said the king to the queen, "for although the injury to her heart amounts only to a crack at present, this may increase to a decided fracture."

But the princess begged them not to worry themselves about her.

"For you know," said she, "it's the cracked pitcher that goes oftenest to the well."

Meanwhile the youngest daughter grew up, and became a most beautiful as well as a most remarkably clever girl; and many a handsome and wealthy prince from distant lands came to ask for her fair hand. But the old king did not forget the bitter experiences he had had with his two elder girls.

"I have only one daughter left with a whole heart, and hers is also of glass. Therefore, if I give her in marriage to anyone, it must be to a king who is at the same time a glazier, and who understands how to treat an article so fragile; so that, in case of accidents, he would know how to rivet the cracks."

Unfortunately, none of the young princes and nobles who had come as suitors to the princess knew anything at all about how to rivet broken glass, and were none of them glaziers by profession, so they had to return to their native lands miserable and disappointed lovers.

Among the royal pages in the palace was one whose term as page was shortly to expire. He had still to carry the train of the youngest princess three times, and after that he was to be promoted to a full-blown courtier.

On the first occasion when the page had to carry the young princess's train, she glanced at him, and as their eyes met she blushed. When next he carried her train, she waved her hand to him at parting, and the unfortunate youth was unable to sleep the whole of that night in consequence!

The third time when the young fellow bore the princess's train, the king came forward to meet them half way, and dismissed the page, saying—

"You have done your duty now, young man, and you may go. I thank you, and have also to congratulate you on your promotion."

With that the king turned and walked away, while the princess bent forward to where the page stood, and said—

"You carried my train so beautifully—better than anyone else! Oh, why are you not a king and a glazier?"

The unfortunate young man felt so confused, as well as delighted, that he was unable to utter a word in reply. He



"YOU CARRIED MY TRAIN SO BEAUTIFULLY."

managed, however, to make a very graceful and polite bow. When the princess had left him, he ran as hard as ever he could to the nearest glazier, and asked him whether he was in need of a foreman.

"Yes," replied the other; "but you will have to work four years with me before you can be foreman. At first you must be a sort of errand boy, and go to the baker's to fetch me my bread; and also look after my children, wash them, and dress them. Secondly, you must learn how to putty the cracks; thirdly, you will have to learn how to cut the glass and fix in windows; and after that, in the fourth year, you shall be my foreman."

The page thought this would take rather too long, so he asked the glazier whether he could not possibly begin with cutting the glass and fixing windows, and leave out the rest, so as to get on quicker. But the glazier shook his head, and assured the young fellow that every good glazier had to begin his career from the beginning, or

he could never be clever. So the page was obliged to reconcile himself to his fate.

The whole of the first year the unfortunate young courtier spent his time in running to the baker's for bread for his master; and in washing and dressing the children. In the second year he did nothing but stop cracks with putty. In the third year he learnt how to cut glass and



fix windows, and at last, at the commencement of the fourth year, he was made foreman.

After having been foreman for a whole year, he took leave of his master; and, dressing himself up once more in his court dress, he walked along the

"IN THE SECOND YEAR HE DID NOTHING BUT STOP CRACKS WITH PUTTY."

roads in deep thought, wondering how he could possibly become a king. As he was walking on a man came towards him, and, seeing that the young courtier was in deep thought, he stopped and asked him whether he had lost anything.

"Well, I don't know that I have exactly lost anything; but at any rate I cannot find what I want."

"And what is that?"

"A kingdom. I am wondering how on earth I can become a king."

"Well, if you had been a glazier," said the stranger, "I might have helped you."

"That is just exactly what I am!" exclaimed the other. "I have only lately been foreman to a glazier!"

"Then you have nothing to fear. You are no doubt aware that our king decided some time ago to give his youngest daughter in marriage to a glazier who was to be at the same time a king or at any rate a prince; but, as they have been unsuccessful in finding such a person, the king has been reluctantly obliged to modify his demands by adding two other condi-

tions. The bridegroom must in any case be a glazier, that of course goes without saying."

"But what are the two conditions?" asked the young courtier, excitedly.

"The first condition is that he should please the princess; and the second is that he should be a nobleman by birth. There have already been a great number of glaziers applying at the palace, but not one of them took the princess's fancy, and all of them had coarse, rough hands like those of the commonest glazier."

When our young courtier heard these words, he jumped three times about a yard above the road for very joy, and then, turning round, ran helter-skelter back to the town, and presented himself at the palace in less than no time!

The king at once ordered the princess to be called, and when she arrived, he asked



her whether this young glazier took her fancy.

The princess glanced at the young man, and, recognising him at once, she blushed, and said: "Oh, yes."

The king ordered the young fellow to



"HE JUMPED THREE TIMES FOR JOY."

take off his gloves and show his hands, so that they should know whether he was of noble birth. However, the princess said that it was quite unnecessary for the young man to do anything of the kind, as she felt perfectly certain that there was no doubt whatever about his being of noble birth, and that his hands, she was sure, would be as white as those of a prince.

So they were married; and, as the young princess's husband was a glazier by profession, as well as a nobleman by birth, he understood how to treat a heart so delicate and fragile as hers; therefore, she lived blissfully to the end of her days without any accident happening.

The king's second daughter, with the cracked heart, had the pleasure of being an aunt, and a very excellent aunt she made, too! She taught the little princess to read

and write, and make dresses for her dolls; she also took a great interest in the little prince's lessons, and when he knew them well and had good marks, like a good little boy, then she would praise him and make him all sorts of pretty presents, and he would leave her looking red and rosy, and flushed with delight. When, on the contrary, he did *not* know his lessons, and his marks were anything but good, then she would be *very* different, and he would leave her looking also very red and rosy, *very* flushed, but *not* with delight.

This princess lived to a very old age, notwithstanding that her heart was cracked, and if anyone marvelled at her living so long, she would answer them, as she had done her parents once before:

"Remember, 'It's the cracked pitcher that goes oftenest to the well.'"

