

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

BY HORACE MURREIGH.



ONCE, many, many years ago, there lived a King called Rulewell, who reigned over the country of Mythia. He was a good monarch, just and kind, and his people all loved him and his beautiful Queen, Ruwella. Throughout the wide dominion of the King his subjects were prosperous, loyal, and happy, for they lived under the best of laws, and were ruled by a Court the Sovereign of which set such an excellent example of virtue that all the people could not but admire and follow it. Robbery was unknown in the land, and one could walk through it by day or night without being in any way molested.

The King and Queen had one child, Prince Lilac, whom they loved dearly, and of whom they were very proud, for he was a bright, lovable little fellow, of a gentle disposition, and giving every promise of being a worthy successor of his good father.

Now, there was a country close by called Mystria, over which there ruled an evil King whose name was Blackbrow, who hated the good King of Mythia. Blackbrow was a cruel tyrant, and grievously ill-treated his subjects. So hateful was his rule that many of his people, from time to time, fled from the country, and took refuge in Mythia, where, of course, they were sure of protection; and because King Rulewell refused to give up these poor people, Blackbrow hated him, and was ever seeking to injure him. He was afraid to go to war with Mythia, for the soldiers of that country were many, brave and

well-trained, and, being a coward, he feared to risk his life in battle with them; so he obtained the aid of an enchanter named Dreadwill, thinking to gain his revenge by cunning and magic.

Knowing the character of their enemy, the Queen of Mythia trembled for the safety of Prince Lilac, and often commanded him never to quit the palace grounds, unless the King or some of his trusted attendants were with him.

It happened one day, when the Prince was about nine years old, that as he was fishing in a river that ran through the gardens, he hooked a big trout, one so large that the little fellow could not manage it, and away dashed the fish down the stream, followed by the Prince, who would not let go his prize. Before he realized how far he was going the trout had taken him into a dark wood, and then Prince Lilac dropped his line in a fright, and turned to go back. But just as he did so the fish leaped out of the water, and, to the terror of the boy, suddenly changed into the enchanter, Dreadwill, who caught him up quickly, and, stifling his cries, hurried away with him to the castle of Blackbrow.

Great was the grief of the King and Queen when it became known that their darling son had disappeared. Soldiers were sent out everywhere, who searched eagerly in all directions, but no trace of the missing Prince could be found, and his unhappy parents had at last to give up all hope of ever seeing him again.

One morning, about seven years after the loss of the Prince, as the Queen was walking in the garden, and thinking of her son, for it was his birthday, she grew very sorrowful, and cried out at last:—

“Oh! Lilac, Lilac. Will no kind fairy help me to find my boy?”

She had hardly spoken when she heard a low, sweet cry, like the whistle of a bird, only it seemed to say:—

“Come here, come here.”



Ruwella started. Presently the cry was repeated :—

"Come here, come here."

The Queen walked up to a large lilac bush, in full flower, growing against a mossy bank, out of which the sound seemed to come. Peering in among the branches, she saw a tiny fairy standing on one of the boughs and beckoning. She was a dainty little creature, dressed in a lilac-coloured robe, over which she wore a green cloak. On her feet were tiny sandals laced up with twisted spiwers' webs, and in her hand she carried a crystal wand.

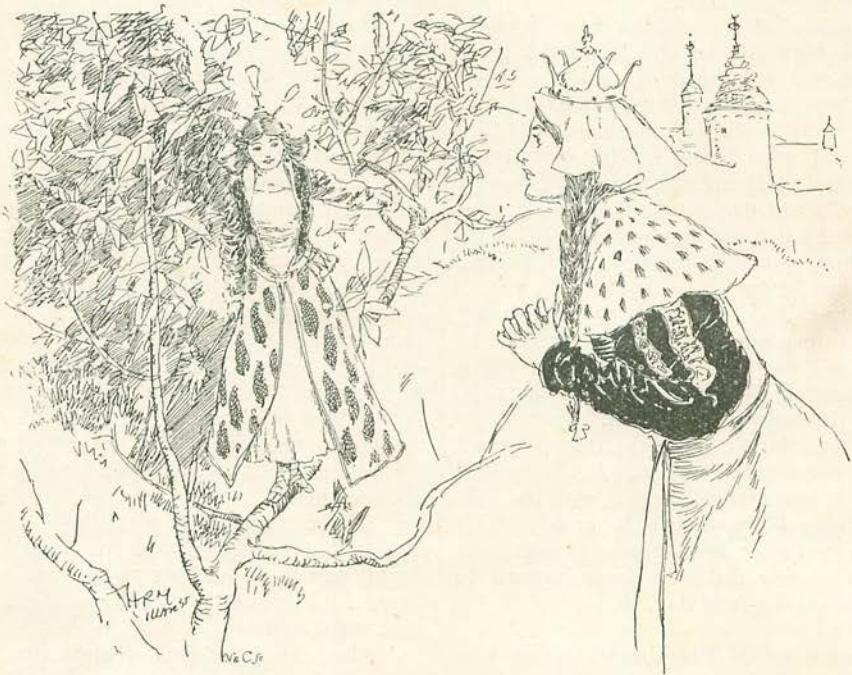
"I am the lilac fairy, good Queen," she

Blackbrow, who is aided by the enchanter, Dreadwill, over whom I have no power."

Ruwella wrung her hands in grief, and cried out bitterly :—

"Alas ! my son, Lilac, what an evil fate has fallen upon you ! How can we deliver you from one so powerful ?"

"Do not despair," said the fairy, in a voice full of pity. "Your foes are strong and clever, but they are wrong-doers, and we have justice on our side. Remember that *right* in the end always triumphs over *wrong*. We cannot rescue Prince Lilac by force, but we may by cunning. It is true that I have no power over the enchanter at present, but



"THE LILAC FAIRY."

said, "and I am called Ima. I have seen your grief over the loss of your son, and I have longed to aid you, but could not do so because you did not ask me. We flower fairies cannot help mortals until they beg us to assist them."

"Oh, kind fairy," exclaimed the Queen, stretching out her hands beseechingly, "if you know anything of the fate of my boy, tell me how he is, and where I can find him."

"He lives, and is well," said Ima, "but he is a prisoner. Since you have now asked me to help you, I will do all I can to restore him to you. But it will be a difficult task to rescue him, for he is in the hands of the wicked

there is a way by which I may gain the mastery over him for a day, and that will be long enough a time for us. Anyone who eats a mouthful of honey gathered from the blossoms of the lilac becomes subject to my will for twenty-four hours. Dreadwill, I know, is fond of honey ; I will send my friends, the golden bees, to the garden of the castle where the Prince is confined. Aurea, their queen, will carry out my commands."

She seized a tiny silver bugle, which hung from her waist by a silken thread, and placing it to her lips blew two quick notes. In a few seconds the queen of the golden bees appeared at her side.



"Aurea," said the lilac fairy, "I have work for you to do. Know you Blackbrow's castle?"

The bee queen sighed as she replied:—

"Who does not know the abode of that evil King? Far and wide is he dreaded for his cruel deeds. Unhappy are they who fall into his hands, and ill would it have fared with poor Prince Lilac, had not you, oh! my mistress, watched over him. I know also the walled garden where he wanders day by day, guarded by the slaves of Dreadwill."

"Go to the castle, Aurea," said the fairy, "and set your bees to gather honey in the garden, but be careful to take it only from the flowers of the lilac bushes; none other must be mixed with it. When you have filled a comb, come again to me."

The queen of the golden bees joyfully undertook her task, for she loved the good lilac fairy, and was never so happy as when serving her in deeds of benevolence.

"And now," said Ima, turning to Queen Ruwella, "I must leave you, but be of good hope, for unless Dreadwill refuses the honey, which he is not likely to do, we shall soon have Prince Lilac back again with you. I go to see him now. To-morrow I will come again to you."

She turned and tapped the bank with her wand. Immediately a moss-covered door swung open, and Ima, drawing her green cloak around her, stepped into the opening, and closed the door behind her.

Filled with happiness at the news she had heard, Ruwella hastened to the King and told him of her strange meeting with the lilac fairy. Ruwella's joy was as great as his Queen's, and they both scarcely slept that night, so eagerly did they look forward to Ima's visit on the next day.

In the garden of Blackbrow's castle, shut in by lofty walls, the unhappy Prince Lilac wandered sadly. Wherever he went two black slaves of Dreadwill, armed with long spears, followed closely, ever watching him. It was a lovely day. Butterflies and bees sped from flower to flower. Birds twittered among the branches of the trees, and sang songs of love to each other. The captive Prince watched their unfettered movements with envy.

"Oh!" he thought, "if only I had your liberty, sweet songsters, with what haste would I fly from this hateful castle, back to the home of my dear parents in beloved Mythia. Most miserable of mortals am I, doomed to be a prisoner within these cruel walls at the mercy of the wicked King and his magician."

Just then a loud buzzing sounded in his ears, followed by a yell of terror from his guards. A swarm of bees had suddenly attacked the slaves, who, casting away their weapons, fled howling towards the castle door. The Prince was about to follow them, when a low, sweet voice, close to him, called out:—

"Stay, Prince Lilac. Do not fear the bees, they are my servants and will not hurt you."

Prince Lilac stared round him in surprise.

"I hear a voice," he cried, "but I can see no one. Who is it that speaks to me?"

The fairy threw back her cloak, and stepping out from a shrub, waved her crystal wand. The sunlight flashing from it caught the Prince's eye.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, in delight, "beautiful little lady, who are you?"

"I am the lilac fairy, Ima," she answered, smiling at him, "and I have come to help you to escape from Blackbrow. Your good father and mother have long mourned you as dead, but I have seen them, and promised to aid you to return to them. Listen carefully to me. In the hollow trunk of yonder apple-tree is a store of honey, of which you must take a comb to-morrow, and when Blackbrow sends for you, which he will be sure to do, carry it with you, and eat a piece before him and the magician. They will snatch the rest from you, and, as soon as they have tasted it, run to the window and throw this ball of wool into the air. Be silent and watchful, and above all, do not let them know you have seen anyone."

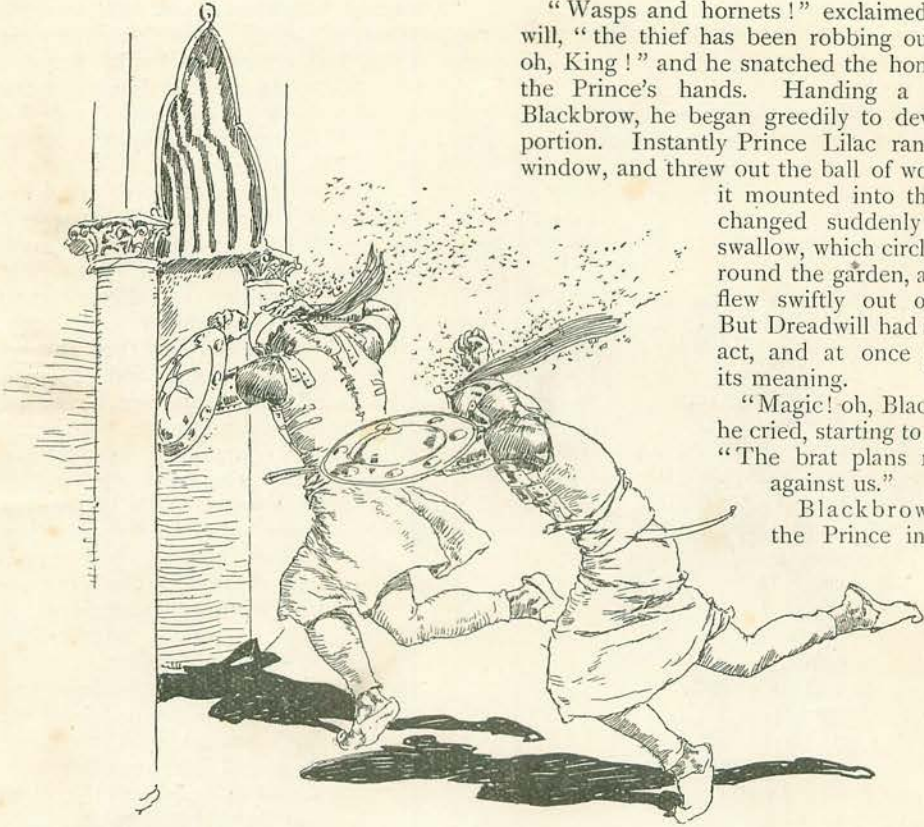
"Kindest and best of fairies," cried the Prince, "let us go now to the wicked King. Surely he can do nothing against one so good as you. Even Dreadwill, the magician, must give way to you."

"Alas! innocent boy," replied Ima, sadly. "Good and evil in the world are more evenly matched than you think. The powers of wickedness are to be overcome only by fighting; they will not yield to a *show* of force. Do, however, as I have told you, and all will be well. But see, your guards are returning, and I must go."

She stepped quickly back into the bush, and disappeared among its green leaves, while the Prince picked up the ball she had dropped at his feet, and putting it into his pocket, turned to meet the slaves.

The next morning, as the Prince was walking in the garden attended, as usual, by the slaves, he went up to the apple-tree shown him by the fairy. A few golden bees were flying in and out of the hollow trunk.





"THE SLAVES FLED HOWLING TOWARDS THE DOOR."

"Wasps and hornets!" exclaimed Dreadwill, "the thief has been robbing our hives, oh, King!" and he snatched the honey from the Prince's hands. Handing a part to Blackbrow, he began greedily to devour his portion. Instantly Prince Lilac ran to the window, and threw out the ball of wool. As

it mounted into the air, it changed suddenly into a swallow, which circled once round the garden, and then flew swiftly out of sight. But Dreadwill had seen the act, and at once guessed its meaning.

"Magic! oh, Blackbrow," he cried, starting to his feet. "The brat plans mischief against us."

Blackbrow seized the Prince in a grip

"See!" exclaimed the Prince, "there is a store of honey within this tree," and he boldly thrust his hand into the opening, and drew out a large piece of white honeycomb. He had scarcely done so, when a messenger ran hurriedly from the castle, and ordered him to come at once to Blackbrow. Carefully hiding the honey under his jacket, the Prince hastened to the presence of the King. When he arrived he found Blackbrow and the magician drinking and making merry, for they had caught a poor Mythian peasant who had lost his way, and after having cruelly tortured him, they had cut off his head, and brought it to the castle to make sport with before their prisoner.

"Ha! Prince Lilac," exclaimed the brutal tyrant, "your loving father has sent you a message. Behold Mythia's messenger!" He threw the gory head on to the table, and laughed aloud in savage glee, as he saw the look of disappointment and horror on the Prince's face. Lilac did not answer a word, but, drawing the honeycomb from under his jacket, he bit a piece out of it.

of iron, while the magician bent a savage look upon him, as he growled out:—

"Say by whose aid you have done this, or die."

The poor Prince now gave himself up as lost, but, mindful of the fairy's command, he did not reply.

"Slay him, slay him," panted the enchanter. As Blackbrow raised his iron club aloft, a loud, angry buzzing sound arose, and in through the window flew a large swarm of golden bees, which attacked the wicked King and the magician so fiercely that they had to release the Prince, and flee for their lives. But they were not to be easily beaten. Soon Dreadwill returned, and, by his magic, raised such a cloud of sulphurous smoke in the room that the bees had hastily to leave. In the meantime, Prince Lilac had run through the opposite door down into the garden. Reaching the bush where the fairy had appeared the day before, he cried out:—

"Oh! Ima, Ima, come to my aid now, or I shall, indeed, be lost."

The golden bees flew about him, their



angry hum filling the air. Presently the magician was seen approaching, walking in a cloud of poisonous smoke.

"Ah, my bantam!" he exclaimed, is he drew near to the poor Prince. "Now we shall see whose magic is the greater."

"Dreadwill," she cried, "you have wrought nothing but evil here, but your power is gone now. I can deal with you as I will. Begone!

If, after an hour, you are found within a mile of the castle, death shall be your fate!"

The baffled magician turned sulkily away, and the golden bees soon chased him from the garden, and drove him to a hasty flight.

Fairy Ima then entered the castle, and, opening all the dungeons, released the unfortunate prisoners they contained. Among them were many of the nobles of Mystria. Blackbrow was found, and delivered over to the chiefs he had wrongfully imprisoned. He was tried by them, and condemned to death for the many crimes he had committed.

Then the fairy ordered two horses to be brought from the castle stables, and, mounting Prince Lilac on one, she seated herself upon the other, and they set out for the palace of the King of Mythia.

The good King and Queen were overcome with joy on beholding their beloved child once more, and for days the Court and populace gave themselves up to rejoicings over the return of the Prince.

Everyone, from the happy parents to the lowliest peasant, was filled with gratitude to the lilac fairy, and poured forth their thanks to her. But the kind little fairy would not listen to any thanks.

"Good deeds repay themselves," she said, "and my best reward is to see the happiness I have brought to you all."

The King did not forget the services of the golden bees. A beautiful hive was built for them in the palace gardens, where, thenceforth, they gathered their sweet honey in peace, protected and loved by everyone.



"WASPS AND HORNETS!" EXCLAIMED DREADWILL.

"Mine," cried the clear voice of the lilac fairy, and she glided from the bush, waving her wand aloft. The cloud around Dreadwill melted rapidly away. The enchanter stood scowling at her for a moment, and then, in a voice hoarse with rage, he gabbled this charm:—

"Dust and powder, darkness and night. Powers of magic, strike her, strike her!"

"Silence!" commanded the fairy, in a tone of anger. Dreadwill recoiled before her stern gaze. His charm had failed, and he knew it. Then the lilac fairy spoke again.