



THE Sun PRINCESS

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

A Breton Farm Labourer's story told at Plouaret,
20th December, 1891, to Fr. M. Luzel.

TRANSLATED BY MARGARET MAITLAND.

But for the last three hundred years a cruel magician has held me captive under the form you see."

"A hard case that," said Ewen, who had a kind heart. "Can no one do anything to help you?"

"Yes, Ewen. There is a way to help me—and the man who does it shall receive rich rewards."

"Just tell me then," cried Ewen; "just tell me what to do."

"Ah," said the eel, "it's no use telling. Many have tried, all have failed: Princes and brave knights as well as the rest."

"Never mind that," said Ewen, "tell me, all the same. I should like to have a try at it, too, and, who knows? by the help of God I may succeed where others have failed."

"Well, then," said the eel, "this is what you have to do. You must spend three whole nights in the deserted old castle on top of the hill, above the mill-pond; and if, at the end of the three nights, there's anything of you left alive, you will have set me free from the power of the spell, and I shall again be what I was before, a lovely Princess."

"All right, then," said Ewen. "Whether it turn out well or ill, I'll try it for all I am worth, and I hope I may succeed."

The castle was very old, and it was a very long time since anyone had lived in it; but people said that every night demons and wizards met there and kicked up an unearthly row, and so everyone took good care never to go anywhere near the place after sunset. To go there, therefore, at night and alone showed that Ewen was a brave fellow. But the fact was that, in the long winter evenings,

As I've heard tell, and perhaps you know,
Hens had teeth a long time ago.



AND in those days, when Ewen, Kerepol, the miller of Keran-born, went one morning to open his flood-gate and let the water in to turn his mill-wheel, he saw, in the pool, a big eel, which, to his amazement, spoke to him just as he was going to strike it with the heavy iron lever he carried in his hand.

"Ewen," it said, "do not hurt me."

"What," cried Ewen, "you are but an eel, and yet you can talk! What does this mean?"

"It means," was the answer, "that I look like one thing and am another."

"And what are you, then, I should like to know?"

"I am a Princess—the Sun Princess.

round the fire, he had often heard stories about things of this kind that had turned out very well when taken in hand by some sturdy fellow of his own humble class; so he made up his mind to try his luck in the matter.

Night came, and off he went, therefore, to the castle, telling no one where he was going, and taking with him only a jug of cider and some tobacco, not any arms or weapons. He lighted a fire on the hearth of the big old kitchen, sat himself down in an ancient carved wood chair, lighted his pipe, and sat and smoked. Not a sound did he hear; a dead silence reigned.

"Queer, this," he said to himself; "perhaps there is to be no Sabbath to-night, because the witches don't care for my company; and so much the better for me if I get off as cheap as this."

About midnight, perhaps a little before, perhaps a little after, finding everything so quiet, and seeing a bed at the far end of the kitchen, he thought he would go and lie down on it; but hardly had he done this than he saw three giants come in, and down they all sat at the table and began playing cards. They were very rough and noisy over their game, and kept on abusing one another for cheating, which was nothing to Ewen. But that was not all; for, at last, one of them jumped up and roared out:—

"I smell the smell of a Christian. Don't you fellows smell him, too? There's a Christian hidden somewhere or other here."

And with that he marched straight up to the bed and found Ewen.

"I told you so," he cried. "It's Ewen Kerepol, the miller of Keranborn; and he's come here, of course, to find out our secrets and hunt us out of the castle. Come, comrades, come and help me teach him to come here again to spy on us, if he dare."

Then, dragging him out of bed, the giants threw him down on the paved floor, tore all the bedding and mattresses off the bed, made a pile of this on top of poor Ewen, jumped on the top of the pile, and set to work to dance there, singing and roaring with laughter at the joke all the time.

But not one word did Ewen utter, because the eel had warned him to hold his tongue, no matter what he heard or what was done to him.

At last a cock crowed, and, as that showed that dawn had come, the giants went away quite satisfied that they had smothered the miller.

Directly they disappeared the Sun Princess came, and so lovely was she and so radiant

her beauty that, like the Sun himself, she shed a glory of light about her.

Stooping down she gently drew Ewen out from beneath the pile of bedding, and you may be sure she found him in a pitiful state. But there still was a little spark of life in him, and when she poured into his mouth a drop or two of the wonderful elixir of life, which she had with her in a small bottle, he felt better at once than he ever had in all his life before.

"You have got off easily this time," said the Princess, "but things will be harder for you to-morrow."

"Never mind," he answered, "I have made up my mind I won't give in."

"Courage, then, friend," she answered, "and remember to hold your tongue, happen what may."

She disappeared when she had said this; and Ewen left the castle and went back to his mill, his head full of all he had seen and heard, though not a word about it did he speak to anyone.

At nightfall back he went to the old castle, and laid himself down on the bed just as he had the night before, and set himself to wait.

Presently down the chimney came the three giants, and down they sat at the table and began their noisy, quarrelsome game of cards. As to Ewen, whom they no doubt supposed they had smothered under the bedding the night before, they did not seem to be giving him a thought. But presently a horrible goblin came down the chimney too, with a fine row and clatter, and called out, angrily:—

"What! you play cards at your ease, and let the miller pry into all your secrets that he may come and drive you out of the castle and set the Princess free?"

"Don't worry yourself about that," they answered. "We have nothing to fear from the miller. Before we left last night we smothered him under the mattresses off the bed where he was hidden."

"That's what you think, is it? Just tell me, then, who's in the bed now?"

"In the bed? In the bed?" they cried. "Is there anyone there?"

And with that they ran to it and screamed:—

"It's the miller, the miller again. How did he do it? But if he has escaped us once, we'll do for him this time."

Then they pulled him out of the bed and played ball, with him for the ball. They knocked him backwards and forwards,



"THEY PLAYED BALL, WITH HIM FOR THE BALL."

between one another, from one end of the room to the other, and every now and then they kicked him up to the ceiling and let him fall with a bang down again to the flagged pavement.

But in spite of all he suffered not one word did Ewen utter.

At last the cock crew, and they all disappeared, but, as they were leaving, the goblin gave Ewen a parting hurl that sent him against the wall with such violence that he stuck there, just as a roasted apple might.

No sooner were they gone than the Princess came, and, finding a little spark of life still left in Ewen, she first rubbed him well with an ointment she had made herself, then gave him some drops of the wonderful liquid, and after that he jumped up vigorous and full of life again.

"You have had a hard time of it, friend," said the Princess, "but you are still alive, at least, and there is only one more night, and, after that, the end of all your troubles and the rewards I have promised you. So

courage, and trust me, and everything will end well."

"Well," said Ewen, "to speak truly, I don't find enchanted Princesses exactly easy to deliver. But never mind, I am not going to give in, and, no matter

what happens, I will see the thing through to the end."

After that the Princess vanished and Ewen went home to his mill.

The third night was the worst of all—the giants, angrier than ever, dashed poor Ewen against the walls, threw him on the pavement and then stamped on him, and tore him with their nails, and, last of all, finding that he still breathed when the cock crew, they put him on the spit and left him there to roast before an enormous fire and went away, quite certain that this time they had done for him.

The first thing the Princess did when she came was to move him away from the fire, although by that time he was half cooked. Then she looked anxiously for any trace of life, no matter how small, that might be left in him, for this time she was afraid he was dead. But, although she was afraid, still she rubbed him with her ointment, and besides that poured over him the whole contents of a bottle of spirits that she had with her. Little by little he came to himself; slowly at first, but at last she had the joy of seeing him as well and strong again as ever he had been in his life.

And seeing this she cried, "Victory! All your trials are ended, and, thanks to you, I am freed from the power of those wicked fiends, who can do me no more harm now."

Then she put her arms round his neck and kissed him; after which she said:—

"Follow me. The time has come to reward you."

She led the way to the cellar of the old castle, and there she showed him two huge hogsheads.

"These hogsheads," she said, "are filled, one with new gold pieces, the other with silver ones, and both I give to you. You now will be the wealthiest man in the neighbourhood and can choose for yourself the most beautiful and wealthy bride."

Ewen thanked her, but his thanks did not satisfy her, for he seemed almost sad instead of delighted as she expected.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked. "Is it not enough? Do you want more? Is that why you look sad?"

"Yes," he said; "my heart is sad."

"Why is it so?" asked the Princess. "Tell me the reason, and whatever you want I will give you, if I can."

"I did not think," said Ewen, "that after all I have suffered for your sake you would have paid me with gold and silver. I hoped you would give me your hand."

"I can refuse you nothing," she said, holding out her hand, "not even that. So from this moment you and I are engaged to one another, and the wedding shall take place in ten days—that is, if you remain faithful so long, and don't forget me. Our meeting-place will be at the town of Plouaret, ten days hence, and there the marriage will be celebrated. In the meantime I am going to visit my father, the King of Gascony, in his kingdom."

When the ten days were over Ewen set out for Plouaret, taking with him his man who helped in the mill, whom he had provided with a new coat, because he was to be groomsmen and witness. On their way they had to pass Penanmenez, where, in a miserable hut by the road-side, dwelt an old hag, whose young and pretty daughter had fallen in love

with Ewen, for he was a fine-looking fellow. When, therefore, Ewen and his servant passed the hut the old hag stood at her door and called out:—

"How grand you are, my fine fellows! Where are you bound? One might think you were going to a wedding."

"And perhaps they would be right," said Ewen, but he did not stop.

"What a hurry you are in. Won't you stop a moment and tell me something about this marriage?"

"We can't stop now," he answered. "We are afraid of being late."

"Oh, very well, then. But, at least, take



"HE ROLLED OFF HIS HORSE INTO THE DITCH."

this lovely apple that grew in my garden."

And with that she gave him a fine red apple. He took it and popped it into his pocket; then he and his man went on their way.

The weather was hot, and, presently, Ewen began to feel thirsty, so he ate the witch's apple, and, directly he

did so, fell sound asleep—so sound, indeed, that he rolled off his horse into the ditch. Gabic came quickly to him, and did his best to rouse him and get him on his horse again; but all in vain—nothing woke him, and, not knowing what else to do, Gabic at last left him, with his horse beside him, and hurried on alone to Plouaret to meet the Princess.

Just at the stroke of ten she arrived in the town square, in her golden coach drawn by four dromedaries, and looking as beautiful and as radiant as the morning sun.

"Where is Ewen Kerepol?" she asked.

"Alas, my Princess," replied Gabic, "he fell asleep by the way, and nothing I could do woke him."

The Princess sighed, then, handing a handkerchief to Gabic, she said:—

"Take him this handkerchief, which is the same colour as the stars; and give it to him from me, and tell him to come here to-morrow at this hour; but to speak to no one on the way, for, if he does, harm will happen to him as it has to-day."

Then, looking displeased, she got back into her coach, the dromedaries broke into a gallop, and away she went.

Gabic then returned to his master, whom he found just awake, and told him all the Princess had said and all that had happened, to all of which Ewen listened with a sad countenance, and then the two men returned silently and sadly to the mill.

Next day, at the right hour, they set out once more, and, just as had happened the day before, the witch was standing at her door when they passed her hovel, and again she called out to them:—

"Well, Ewen Kerepol, where are you going, dressed so fine? Is there a wedding to-day, too?"

"Mind your own business, you old hag," answered Ewen, very angrily.

"You seem a little put out this morning," she replied; "but just let me have a word or two with you. I have something to tell you." And without waiting for leave she sidled up to him and, before he knew it, dropped another apple into his pocket.

The day was hot again and, on the way, Ewen, happening to put his hand into his waistcoat pocket and finding an apple there, ate it, not remembering what had happened the day before.

Again a heavy sleep overtook him, again he fell from his horse, again Gabic, unable to rouse him, left him and went alone to Plouaret to meet the Princess.

"Where is Ewen Kerepol?" she asked, directly she arrived in her golden coach with the four dromedaries harnessed to it.

"Alas, Princess," said poor Gabic, looking very much ashamed. "Everything has happened that happened yesterday; and he fell so sound asleep that I could not wake him."

She sighed a great sigh and,

handing him another handkerchief, said:—

"Take this handkerchief, which is the colour of the moon, and tell him to be here to-morrow morning at this hour, and advise him from me to be careful about himself, to speak to no one, and to accept nothing from anyone on the way; because this is his last chance, and, if he fails this time to keep the appointment with me, he will never see me more."

Then, looking still more displeased than the day before, she got into her coach, and



"LOOKING STILL MORE DISPLEASED THAN THE DAY BEFORE, SHE GOT INTO HER COACH."

the four dromedaries galloped away with her.

Gabic then returned to his master, who, just awake, seemed again to be very sorry at not having kept his appointment with the Princess.

Next morning the miller and his man started again together for the third and last time. Again the old hag stood at the door of her hut, and again hailed them as they passed.

"Hie, my pretty lads," she called; "is it to go to a wedding again to-day that you wear such fine clothes?"

Ewen and Gabic answered not a word, and only urged on their horses, but the witch hobbled quickly after them, and, without Ewen's knowing it, poked another apple into his pocket. And presently he ate this apple, just as he had eaten the others, and again a deep sleep fell upon him, and he rolled off his horse and was left in the ditch by Gabic, who went on to meet the Princess.

"Alone! alone again!" she cried. "Where, then, is your master?"

"Asleep," said Gabic, much ashamed, "and I couldn't wake him."

"Ah, wretched man that he is," cried the Princess, sighing more deeply than ever. "Take him this handkerchief, which is the colour of the sun, from me, and say to him that I am lost to him for ever, and that he will never see me again."

This time her face was very stern and angry as she mounted into her coach and the dromedaries galloped away with her.

Gabic, as usual, went back to his master, to find him, as usual, just awakening, and when he gave him the Princess's handkerchief and message he really seemed to be in despair. But, though he wept, he said:—

"Give her up I *never* will. I will set out this very minute, and will rest neither night nor day till I have found her."

After that he went to the castle, thanks to him not now a haunted one, and filled his pockets with gold and silver before he started on his journey.

He who gives with open hand
Friends he finds in every land;
Who shuts his fist and nothing gives
Is always friendless while he lives.

So he gave freely wherever he went, and everywhere he found a hearty welcome and people glad to give him advice.

Trudging to-day and trudging to-morrow,
That's how travellers shorten their sorrow.

And on and on he went steadily, but without any fixed plans; only keeping up his courage and sticking like a man to his purpose.

At last, one day, in the midst of a dense forest, he came on a long avenue of oaks, and, seeing an old man standing at the entrance, he said to him:—

"Father, where does this avenue lead to?"

"A hundred years have I lived here," answered the old man, "but never have I been to the other end of the avenue, and I can't tell you where it goes. I know only that it is very long."

"No matter for that," said Ewen; "the longest avenue must end somewhere, and the thing I want to know is where this one ends."

And without more ado he plunged boldly into it. Then he walked and he walked, hearing round him, all the time, the wild beasts of the forest roaring and howling, and he said to himself:—

"I sha'n't get out of this alive."

But, for all that, he kept resolutely on his way, and in two days and two nights found himself at the other end. But, instead of the fine castle he had expected to see there, he saw only a mean hut built of clods of turf and roofed with branches. Inside this hut he found a very aged-looking man with a flowing white beard.

"Good-day, Father Hermit," he said, addressing him.

"Good-day, my son. Of what use can I be to you?"

"I am seeking the Castle of the Sun Princess, Father; and if you can show me the way to it, you would be doing me a great service."

"Fifty years have I dwelt here in solitude," answered the hermit, "and with no company but that of the wolves and other wild beasts of the forest; for, till this day, no human being ever came here. I know not where the Castle of the Sun Princess may be, but all the animals in the forest are subject to me, and some of them wander far afield. I will summon the wolves, and they may be able to tell us what you want to know."

Then he took up his horn, and went out and mounted on the top of a high rock and blew a sounding blast to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west; and the wolves came trooping in from all these quarters, little ones and big ones, old and young; and when all were there the hermit made them this little speech:—

"Wolves," he said, "I have called you together to inquire of you whether any of you know where the Castle of the Sun Princess is to be found?"

But none of them knew; they had heard only that the Princess used to be a prisoner

in the castle above the pond of Keranborn Mill.

So the hermit gave them leave to scatter again, and turning to Ewen he said :—

“I have a brother, a hermit like myself, who lives also in the forest, a day’s march from here. To him are subject all the birds of the air, great and small, and as birds go farther and faster than four-footed creatures, it may be that he can do more for you than I can. I will give you a golden ball that will roll on and on in front of you, until it brings you to where you will find him. And when he sees the ball he will know you come from me, and will gladly give you all the help that lies in his power.”

Then he gave a golden ball to Ewen, who, thanking him heartily and bidding him good-day, set out to follow it. And on and on rolled the ball until finally it rolled up against the brother hermit’s door.

“Good-day to you, Brother’s Ball,” said the hermit. “What news of him do you come to bring me?”

“It is I who am all the news he brings you, Father Hermit,” said Ewen. “I have been a long time travelling, seeking to find the Castle of the Sun Princess, and your brother told me that perhaps you could set me on the right road to go there.”

“I know not, my son, where the Castle of the Sun Princess may be; but all the birds of the air, great and small, are subject to me, and one or other of them may perhaps be able to give us some news of it. I will now call them together.”

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Then he went outside the hut and mounted on top of a hill, and, when he had sounded his beautiful silver whistle four times, clouds of birds came flying from every direction towards him.

“Are you all here?” asked the old man.

“Yes,” replied an old raven, “all, but the eagle.”

“Whenever I call you together, it is always the eagle who is late,” said the hermit. “No doubt he is far away, but he too will come by-and-by. Do any of you know where the Castle of the Sun Princess is?”

There was no answer, but at last the raven spoke again :—

“I don’t know where her castle may be; but I know she used to be a prisoner in the old castle above the pond of Keranborn Mill.”

Just then the eagle came.

“Eagle,” said the hermit, in a tone of displeasure, “whenever I call you all together you always come last. Where were you?”

“I was at the Castle of the Sun Princess, and I was very comfortable there; for everything is being made ready for her marriage with the son of the King of Portugal,

and a great number of oxen, cows, calves, pigs, and sheep have been slaughtered, and I had my share of all of them.”

“Yes, yes,” said the hermit; “we all know that you are greedier than other birds. But, at any rate, you know, then, where the Castle of the Sun Princess is?”

“Yes, I know where it is.”

“Well, then, what you have to do now is to carry this man”—and he pointed at Ewen



“BIRDS CAME FLYING FROM EVERY DIRECTION.”

—“safe and sound on your back to the castle.”

“All right,” said the eagle, “on condition that I have as much as I like to eat, for it is a long way from here.”

“You shall have all you want, glutton. And how much may that be?”

“I can’t do it under twelve sheep,” was the answer.

“And where are we to get twelve sheep from?” asked Ewen.

“There is a gentleman who lives not far from here who has plenty,” said the Hermit, “and I think you will be able to get them from him.”

Then he took Ewen to see the gentleman, who was willing enough to sell his sheep because Ewen paid him just what he asked for them, and a good deal more too.

Next day all the sheep, piled on one another, with Ewen on the top of them, being laid on the eagle’s back, he seemed to find some difficulty, at first, in raising his load from the ground. But he managed it somehow or other, and, once he got on his wings, nothing stopped him. He flew over forests and the highest mountains and widest rivers, over the White Sea, and the Black and the Red Seas too, until at last they reached the Castle of the Sun Princess.

Then he gently put Ewen on the ground, and in very good condition, too; for he had kept his promise exactly; and, before leaving him, he told him that if he required his services again at any time he would be glad to oblige him.

The first thing Ewen did was to hire a room at the best hotel in the town, which lay at the foot of the castle. Next he asked the landlord what news there was in the country-side. To which the landlord answered:—

“You must indeed have come a long way if you don’t know the news which is turning everyone’s head with joy and setting the town upside down.”

“Yes,” said Ewen, “I have come a great distance. But what is this news, then?”

“Why,” said the landlord, “to-morrow the Sun Princess is to be married to the son of the King of Portugal.”

“That is all right,” said Ewen, “for I trade in precious things, and I have come just at the right moment, no doubt, to do a stroke of business.”

Next morning, therefore, he took his stand betimes near the church door. At ten o’clock the bridal procession arrived: first the King and Queen, then the bride and bride-

groom, and after them all the Court. And as the procession passed him Ewen spread out his handkerchief that was the colour of the stars, and everyone saw and admired it. The Princess saw it too, and knew it at once, as well as the face of him who held it in his hand; and she said to one of her ladies:—

“I must have that handkerchief before I enter the church. Go and buy it for me.”

“What is the price of your handkerchief, merchant?” asked the lady, speaking to Ewen.

“Neither gold nor silver will buy my handkerchief,” he answered.

“It is the Sun Princess who wants it,” said the lady; “ask what you like, and she will pay it.”

“I tell you once more,” said Ewen, “that neither gold nor silver will buy it.”

“What will, then?” asked the lady. “Tell me quickly.”

“I ask nothing for it except to be allowed to kiss the left foot of the bride.”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” answered the lady. “Tell me at once what your price is.”

“I am in earnest,” said Ewen, “and I have no other answer to send back to your mistress.”

So all the lady could do was to carry this strange message back.

“What an extraordinary fancy!” said the Princess.

“Tell him,” put in the King, “to come to me at the castle directly after the ceremony and I will settle with him.”

“No,” said the Princess, “I won’t go into the church until I have that handkerchief.”

And as she stuck out for this, in spite of all her father and mother and the bridegroom could do or say, the marriage ceremony had to be put off till next day, and the procession went back to the castle. The merchant was then sent for and brought into the presence of the Princess, and he kissed her left foot and, in exchange for the kiss, gave her the star-coloured handkerchief.

After that all the company sat down to a magnificent banquet at which everyone ate, drank, laughed, and talked to his heart’s content.

Next morning, at ten o’clock, as on the day before, the procession set out for the church, and again the merchant was there waiting for it, and again he spread out a handkerchief, and this time it was the colour of the moon.

Again, too, the Princess saw the handkerchief and wanted to have it, and sent one of her attendants to buy it; but everything hap-

pened just as it had the day before, except that it was her right foot the merchant asked to kiss this time. So, just as had happened the day before, so to-day the procession went back to the castle without entering the church, and the ceremony was put off another day. Then, also, the merchant was sent for and brought into the room of the Princess and

on having the handkerchief, and all happened as twice before, except that this time the merchant asked to kiss her hand.

The King was now very much put out by all these delays, and began to say it was high time to have done with such nonsense. But Ewen got his way, and kissed the hand of the Princess, and, moreover, she kept him this time to take part with the other guests in the banquet.

And when the banquet was nearly over, and everyone was laughing and merry, and telling stories about all the adventures each had had (some of them very astonishing adventures indeed), the Princess made this little speech, addressing it to the bridegroom's father, His Majesty the King of Portugal:—

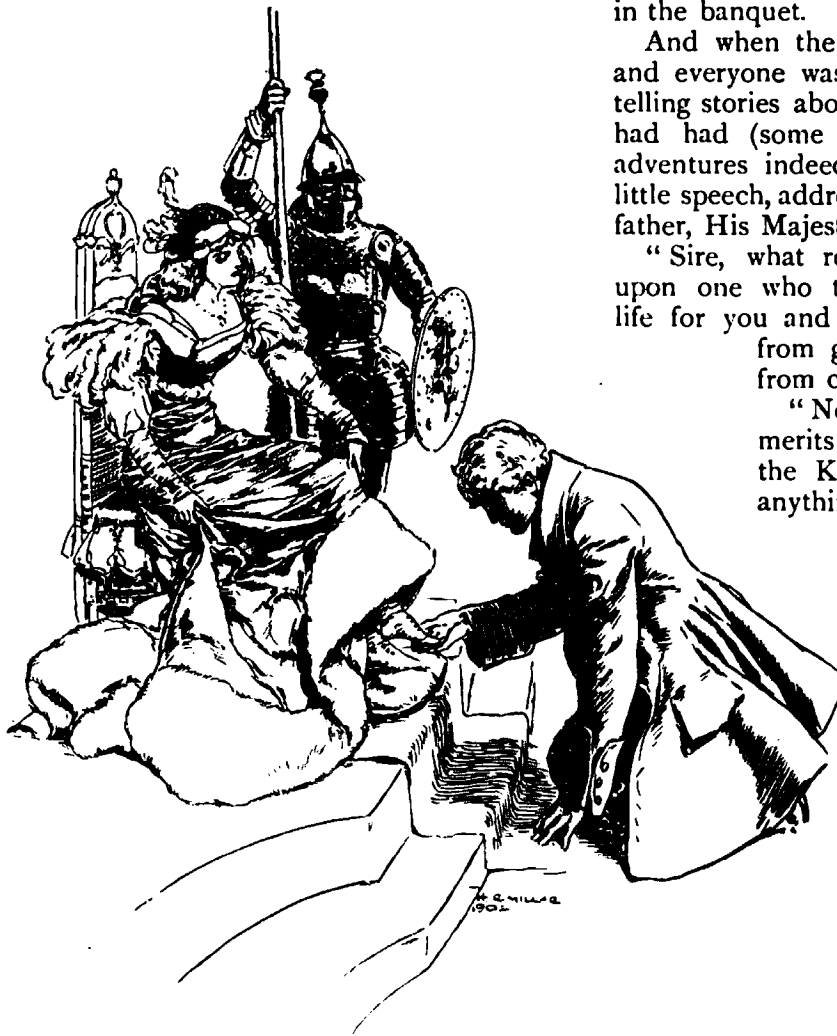
"Sire, what rewards would you bestow upon one who three times had risked his life for you and who had either saved you from great dangers or freed you from captivity?"

"No rewards could exceed the merits of such a man," answered the King. "I would give him anything he asked me for."

"Well, your Majesty, you have before you a man who three times risked his life for me, and who delivered me from wicked monsters who held me in cruel captivity under the form of an eel, into which shape a wicked magician had turned me. Here," she said, pointing to Ewen, "is the man—the man who shall be my husband instead of your son, who never has done anything for me."

Great was the excitement and astonish-

ment caused by this speech. The King of Portugal, his Queen and their son, the Prince, confused and shame-struck, rose from their seats, left the banqueting-hall, and got into their coach and drove back to Portugal as fast as they could. And the very next day the marriage of the Sun Princess and Ewen Kerepol was celebrated with such pomp and magnificence that the festivities lasted a whole fortnight, since which time I have not heard any further news of them.



"HE KISSED HER LEFT FOOT."

kissed her right foot, and in exchange gave her the moon-coloured handkerchief.

Then the banquet followed, with eating and drinking and talking and laughter, that were kept up far into the night.

Next day the procession started for the third time; but at the church door there again stood the merchant, and this time the handkerchief he spread out, being the colour of the sun, shone so brightly that it made everyone blink. Again the Princess insisted