THE A.L

BRIGHT STORY READERS

RUL ISLAM HIGH SCH

2407

THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER

D. V. DINSDALE

No. 318

Grade I

125

BOOKS IN THIS SERIES

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NOORUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL
Date 2407
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THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER

ONCE upon a time a darling little princess was born. She was so pink and white and dainty that her royal parents bestowed upon her the pretty name of "Rose." But her father, with whom she was a great pet, always called her his "little Rosebud," so that, by and by, she came to be known everywhere as the "Princess Rosebud."

When she was still quite a little girl, her father and mother both died, and her uncle became the next king.

Now, Rosebud's father had been a good king; but her uncle was a very different kind of man from her father, and he was not at all good to his little orphaned niece.

At first he scarcely took any notice of her; but as she grew up, and he saw what a beautiful maiden she was becoming, he decided to marry her to the son of the king whose country was next his own.

So, one day, a message was sent to the Princess Rosebud, informing her that her uncle, the king, wished to speak to her at once. When she came into the room she felt a little timid, because he was usually so harsh and stern.

It was so seldom that he ever troubled to speak to

her, that she was half afraid he was going to be angry about something now. But he began by speaking quite kindly to her, and he told her to come and sit by his side, as he had something important to say.

" My dear niece," began the king, " I have been thinking a great deal about you lately. You have grown to be such a beautiful and charming maiden that it is now my dearest wish to see you married."

At these words the princess blushed and looked very shy, but could not think of any reply to make, so the king went on to say,

" And what is more, I have found a young and handsome husband for you."

When the king told her the name of the young prince whom he had in mind, she laughed.

" But, you funny uncle," said she, " I am not the least little bit in love with this prince."

" That does not matter in the least, my dear," the king replied. " You will fall in love with him fast enough, when you have married him. And whether you do or not, he will be a king some day, and you will be a queen ; and *that* ought to be good enough for you."

" No, no," replied Rosebud, " I am not particular about being a queen. And, as for my ever falling in love with the prince, why, that is quite impossible."

" And *why* is it impossible, may I ask ? " said the king, in a very much crosser tone.

The princess now blushed more deeply than ever,

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until she really looked like one of the pretty flowers she had been named after.

"You see," she said in a very tiny, timid voice, "I—I happen to be ever so much in love with somebody else."

And now the king grew very angry indeed.

"How *dare* you be in love with somebody else without my permission?" he thundered. "And who is this bold young man who has dared to allow you to fall in love with him?"

"He fell in love with me first," replied the princess, with a pout.

"Worse and worse!" exclaimed the angry king, jumping up and down in his rage. "Tell me his name at once."

The poor princess, seeing her uncle's anger, began to tremble all over, and her pretty face turned from rosy red to lily white. But the king had to be obeyed, so she told him that her lover's name was Rolande.

Since Rolande was only a page in the royal household, and not even a lord or other nobleman, the news made the king even angrier than before. He told Rosebud that he would never on any account allow her to marry Rolande.

Moreover, he said that until she made up her mind to marry the prince whom he had chosen for her she was to be shut up as a prisoner, and not allowed to see anyone at all.

Then he bade the princess go to her own rooms

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and remain there, while he made preparations for her imprisonment.

First of all, however, he banished from the palace the poor young page who was Rosebud's lover, commanding him to leave the country, and never again set foot in his kingdom. Then he ordered horses and attendants to make ready for a journey, for he himself was going to convey the poor little princess to the place where she was to be imprisoned.

About half a day's journey from the palace there was a big, dark forest, and in the heart of the forest stood a very high tower. From the top of it the king could see for miles and miles, even to the farthest borders of his kingdom; for it was far taller than the tallest trees, and indeed it was built so high that it seemed almost to reach to the clouds.

There was only one door into this tower, and that a very strong one; inside, a dark and winding stone staircase led up to the top, where there were three little rooms. Here it was that the cruel king brought his niece, telling her that she was to remain until she promised to marry the prince.

"I shall come to you every Friday afternoon, to see if you have made up your mind about it," he added, "and the sooner you decide to obey me, the better."

After bolting the door which was at the top of the stairs, and which led into Rosebud's three little rooms, he went downstairs, and, with an enormous key that

he carried at his girdle, he locked the great oaken door once more, leaving poor Rosebud to cry her heart out alone.

Presently she went to one of the little casement windows, and, opening it, she leaned out. She could scarcely see to the bottom of the tower, for twilight was already falling.

As she stood there sadly, watching the stars come out one by one, she heard the soft beating of wings, and, the next minute, a pretty white dove flew in at the window. It was one of Rosebud's own pet doves which had flown after her all the way from the palace, and presently the others followed it.

Rosebud was delighted to have her pets with her once more; she was very much comforted, and did not feel nearly so lonely as she had felt at first. If only she could have her dear Rolande with her too, she thought, she would not mind spending all the rest of her life in the tower.

But when she thought of Rolande, who, as she knew, was banished from her uncle's kingdom, and who, she supposed, would by this time be far away from her, she began to cry afresh, thinking that she would never, never see him again. At last she fell asleep with the tears still wet upon her cheeks.

But Rosebud was quite wrong, when she imagined that Rolande had gone away. He loved his dear little sweetheart far too well to forsake her in her trouble.



'She stood there sadly, watching the stars come out one by one.'—*Page* 5.

Knowing, however, that the king would surely kill him if he dared to disobey him openly, he had disguised himself as a poor peasant, and had secretly followed the king, when he travelled with Rosebud to the tower. Then he had hidden himself in the forest until the king and his attendants had mounted their horses once more to ride back to the palace.

After that, he had come out from his hiding-place, and was, in fact, sitting patiently at the foot of the tower, trying to plan some way of escape for Rosebud, all the time that she was murmuring his name in her sleep, and dreaming of flying away to him.

There he sat all through the night, thinking as hard as he could of some way out of their difficulties, for, indeed, he had more than one to deal with.

The first of these difficulties was how to let his princess know that he was there.

You may think, perhaps, that Rosebud had only to lean out of her window, when she would see him at once, and be able to call down to him. But you must remember that the tower was very high indeed, so that although Rosebud, on looking down, might *see* him, he would appear only as a tiny figure far below, and in his disguise she would be quite unable to recognize him.

As for her calling down to him, or for his shouting up to her, both would have been in vain. At so great a distance, they would have been unable to hear each other's words, even if they had shouted at the top of

their voices. Rolande knew this, and set about getting over the difficulty in another way.

As soon as it was daylight, he began to explore the forest, and soon he discovered a little brook of clear water, not far away from the tower. The bed of the brook was covered with small white pebbles, and Rolande collected some hundreds of these, and brought them back with him to the foot of the tower. Then, by placing them side by side on the ground, he was able to form big letters, and thus to spell out words.

The white pebbles showed up well with the dark earth for a background, and Rolande knew that Rosebud would be able to read his message from her window at the top of the tower. So, taking great pains, he made with his pebbles the following words:—

DO NOT DESPAIR, ROSEBUD,
YOUR ROLANDE IS HERE, AND HE
WILL NEVER FORSAKE YOU.

It took him some time to do this, and by the time he had completed his task, the sun had risen high in the heavens, and Rosebud had awakened. She went to the window to give her doves their morning meal, and, looking out, she was amazed to see a man waving to her far down at the bottom of the tower.

She could not recognize him, but as soon as she had read his message, she knew, of course, that it was her Rolande. Her delight was beyond measure.

She waved back to him, and blew down hundreds of kisses ; but that seemed to be all she could do, since they could not speak to each other.

Presently Rolande became hungry, and sat down to eat some of the food which, luckily, he had remembered to bring with him from the palace. While he was eating his meal, Rosebud's pet doves hovered around him, and perched on his shoulders, waiting to pick up his crumbs.

They were very tame with him, for Rolande was kind to all birds and animals, and had long since made friends with the doves at the palace. So now they knew him quite well, and allowed him to hold them in his hands and fondle them.

While he was caressing one of these pretty doves, and wishing that he, too, were a bird, so that he might fly up to his dear princess, another clever idea occurred to Rolande.

Taking writing materials from his wallet, he wrote a tender little note to Rosebud, and, after wrapping it carefully around one of the dove's legs, he tied it gently with a piece of silken thread.

What happened next you can easily imagine. The little bird flew back to its mistress, and she, seeing the paper tied to its leg, quickly undid it, and read Rolande's note. So now the lovers were able to write messages to each other several times a day, by making the doves into little "postmen."

Still, neither of them could think of any plan

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for Rosebud's escape, for there were no windows in the tower where Rolande could climb in, except those at the very top, while the door was so strong, and so thickly studded with great iron nails, that a whole army of men could not have burst it open, much less poor Rolande by himself.

Meanwhile, time was going on. The king came to see Rosebud every Friday afternoon, as he had promised, to bring her food and question her, and every time he asked her if she had made up her mind to marry the prince yet. Every time she answered, as before, that she would marry nobody but her own Rolande. At last the king lost patience, and told Rosebud that whether she consented or not, he would *make* her marry the prince.

"The wedding shall take place next week," he said. "I shall come to you next Friday afternoon for the last time, to take you away with me, and you shall be married to the prince on the same day, whether you like it or not."

Then the king left her, and Rosebud felt more miserable than ever before; for while she was in the tower, she could at least see her beloved Rolande. But once she was married to the prince, all hope would be lost.

It was a very sad little letter, which Rosebud next sent down to Rolande, and he, when he read it, and learnt what the king had said, was just as miserable as she. All through the night he sat,

wide awake, thinking as hard as ever he could. But it was of no use—he simply *could not* think of any way to rescue his princess. The same happened on the second night, and the third also, but on the fourth night he had a really bright idea.

As soon as possible in the morning, he sent a letter to Rosebud, telling her that he had a wonderful plan for her escape, but that it was necessary for him to make some preparations first, and for this purpose he would have to leave her for a while, and go out of the forest to the nearest town.

"I shall be away two nights and a day," he wrote, "but do not lose heart, Rosebud, for when I come back, I shall be able to release you from the tower, and take you far away from your wicked uncle."

Rosebud was much cheered at this news, and, after bidding him take great care on his journey, in case any of the king's men chanced to be about, she waved good-bye to him, and watched him disappear among the trees.

It was now Tuesday, so if Roland were to be gone two nights and a day, it would be Thursday morning before he could come back. That meant that they would have one whole day and night in which to escape, before the king came to take Rosebud to the prince.

But suppose that Rolande got lost in the dark forest, and could not find his way back to her in time! Rosebud trembled at the thought, and grew

quite pale and thin during the time that Rolande was away.

However, he did *not* lose his way, and when Rosebud looked out of her window eagerly on Thursday morning, she was not disappointed ; for there was Rolande busily engaged upon some task, although Rosebud, from her great height, could not see what it was. She soon found out, however, for he wrote her a long letter to explain.

While he had been away, Rolande had bought a large quantity of rope and string, and a horse. The horse, as you hardly need telling, was for them both to ride away upon, once Rosebud was out of the tower. But what do you think the rope and the string were for ?

You may guess, very likely, as Rosebud did at first, that the rope was intended for her to climb down from the top of the tower ; but then how did Rolande propose to get it up to her, since he could never possibly throw it so far ? Besides, what could the string be for ?

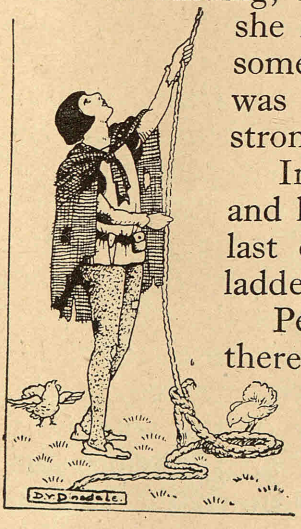
Rosebud would never have guessed the answer to these riddles, if Rolande had not explained his plan to her in the letter. Then she became very excited, and spent all the day watching him from her window.

First of all, he was making a strong ladder of the rope, long enough to reach from the top of the tower to the bottom. This was a very big task,



and took him nearly all the day. When it was finished, he tied a long piece of silken thread to the leg of one of Rosebud's doves. Then he let the dove fly back to the top of the tower, where Rosebud was waiting for it. She unfastened the thread from the dove's leg, and began to wind it up on a spool.

Meanwhile, Rolande had tied a piece of fine string to the other end of the silk thread, and as Rosebud went on winding, she came presently to the string. Still she went on winding, until, at the end of the fine string, she found that Rolande had fastened some stronger string ; and when that was all wound up, there was a yet stronger piece of string attached to it.



In time she came to a thin rope, and later still to a thick rope ; and, last of all, up came the strong rope ladder.

Perhaps you will wonder why there had to be so many different thicknesses of string and rope, before the ladder could come up. Well, Rolande knew, of course, that a little bird would

not be strong enough to carry rope or even string, so he began with the silk thread first. He knew also that the silk thread would break, if it were used to pull up anything as heavy as rope, or even thick string. So he used fine string first, then thick string, and rope last of all.

When Rosebud pulled in the ladder, she at once made it fast to the foot of her bed, and then ran to the window to beckon to Rolande, as a sign that all was now safe for him to come up.

Rolande now began his perilous climb, while Rosebud, leaning out of the window and watching him, felt herself going dizzy as she saw him swinging in mid-air, and thought how terrible it would be, if he were to fall. But up and up he came, nearer and nearer, until at last he was at the top, and climbing in through her little window.

How happy Rosebud was then ! How she flung her arms around his neck, and kissed him, and clung to him, as if she would never let him go ! And Rolande, you may be sure, was just as happy.

But soon the lovers realized that time was flying. Darkness had fallen, and they had yet to get down the ladder before they could mount their horse, and ride away out of the forest. So Rosebud packed up a few little things which she needed for her journey, and lowered them out of the window to the foot of the tower. Then, after having some supper, they prepared to climb down the ladder.



Rosebud was terribly frightened at first, but Rolande said that he would climb out first, then he would be just below her all the way, ready to catch her if she slipped.

"It is too dark now to see to the bottom of the tower," he said, "so you need not be afraid that you will feel dizzy, if you happen to look down."

So down they went together, rung by rung, Rosebud holding her breath now and again with terror, and then plucking up her courage to go a little farther.

At last they arrived safely at the bottom, and Rosebud heaved a big sigh of relief. They quickly gathered their things together, and strapped them upon the

horse's back ; then Rolande mounted to the saddle, and lifted Rosebud to the pillion seat behind him.

Gaily then they rode away through the dark forest, with Rosebud's white doves flying after them, and only the silvery radiance of the moon, and the stars, glimmering faintly through the trees to light them on their way.

As the lovers were now travelling along strange paths, they were obliged to go very slowly until daylight, for fear of losing their way.

At last, they came to the end of the forest, and found themselves in wild, open country. It was very hot, with the sun blazing down upon them, and no trees here to shelter them. Since Rosebud was very weary after their long ride through the night, Rolande lifted her down from the horse, and spread his cloak on the ground for her to lie down upon. She was so tired that she fell fast asleep at once, while Rolande kept watch beside her, and the horse browsed upon the grass close by.

Meanwhile, the king had set off from the palace to fetch Rosebud from the tower. He was so impatient to get the wedding over, that he had started a little earlier than usual, so that it was only just after mid-day when he arrived at the tower. There, the first thing he saw was the rope ladder hanging from Rosebud's window, just as she and Rolande had left it.

When the king saw it, he knew at once that

Rosebud must have used it as a means of escape, although how she had managed to get such a big ladder up to the top of the tower was, of course, a mystery to him.

He was beside himself with rage to think that he had lost her, and vowed he would make her suffer the most cruel punishments, if once he could catch her again. He felt almost sure that he *would* catch her, for he imagined that after climbing down the ladder, she had wandered away into the forest on foot, where she would never be able to find her way out alone.

Thinking that perhaps he might see her from the top of the tower, he unlocked the door, and hurried up the stairs to the three little rooms. Then he leaned out of each window in turn, and, by looking through a powerful spy-glass which he had with him, he hoped to catch a glimpse of Rosebud wandering along the forest paths.

Now, just at this moment, Rosebud, in the field beyond the forest, was awaking from her sleep, and Rolande was making ready to ride farther with her. So it happened that when the king looked out of the third window, he espied them in the distance through his strong glass.

"Aha!" he chuckled to himself, "so it is Rolande who has helped the little runaway to escape! I daresay he thinks he is a very clever fellow, but wait until I catch them!"

So, feeling very sure of himself, he ran downstairs and, mounting his horse, he galloped away after them as fast as his horse could take him.

Now, the king knew all the paths in his forest, and had no need to keep stopping to look about him; moreover, his horse was very strong and swift, and could gallop like the wind, so that the king had no doubt that he would soon catch up to his niece and her lover. And so, indeed, he might have done, but for an accident which befell him.

A rabbit, popping up suddenly in the path startled his horse, and caused it to shy and rear in its fright. At the same moment, a gust of wind blew the king's cloak above his head, where it caught in some branches, while his horse, galloping away from beneath him, left him dangling from the tree, fuming with helpless rage, and unable to free himself, or to get either up or down.

As he had come alone into the forest, bringing no attendants with him, there he had to remain until his servants, having seen the horse trotting home without its master, came out to look for him.

When they found him, he was waving his arms about, and kicking his legs in the air, and looking so funny that they could not help laughing.

Of course, while all this was happening, Rolande and his princess had ridden far away out of sight, and although the king and his men rode hard until nightfall, they never overtook them.

For when Rolande and Rosebud drew near the big hills which marked the border of her uncle's kingdom, they knew that at last they were safe, since the king could follow them no farther. So they stopped to rest again for a while, and then prepared to continue their journey.

"Where shall we go, now we are leaving this land for ever?" asked Rosebud presently.

"We will ride over the hills and far away into my own country," answered Rolande. "There we shall be quite safe."

"Into your own country!" echoed Rosebud in surprise, for she thought that Rolande had always lived in the same land as herself. "And where may that be?"

Then, as they rode along, Rolande told her a secret which he had kept for a very long time. His own country, he said, was far away from that belonging to Rosebud's uncle, and the good king of that land was Rolande's own father, while he himself was a prince all the time.

"So you see, my little Rosebud, you will be a queen some day, after all," said he, as he ended his story.

"Yes," said Rosebud, "that will be very nice; but all that really matters is that I have you, and whether you are a prince or a page, I love you just the same. But tell me," she continued, "if you were a prince all the time, why did you pretend to

be only a page boy when you lived with us in the palace ? "

Then Rolande told Rosebud how he had first fallen in love with her, when she was still quite a little girl ; how he had waited until she grew up, and then determined to come to the palace where she lived with her uncle, so that he might win her love in return.

But as he had wanted her to love him just for himself, and not because he happened to be a rich prince, he had decided to keep his royal birth a secret. Therefore, he had pretended to be quite poor, and so had persuaded the king to engage him as a page boy.

When all was explained, Rosebud was almost beside herself with surprise and joy, and began to look forward eagerly to meeting Rolande's father. Her cheeks, which had gone so pale while she was shut up in the tower, turned pink once more with happiness ; her eyes sparkled, and she was her own merry little self again, when they came at last to their journey's end in that far-off land where the good king, Rolande's father, was waiting to make them welcome.

There Rosebud was married to her faithful Rolande, and, as you will, no doubt, have guessed, they lived happily for ever after.

THE STORY OF BLONDELLE AND BRUNETTE

THERE was once a king who had two daughters, one of them with hair as golden as the morning sun, and the other with curls as black as midnight. Both were very beautiful, and the king and queen were very proud of having two such charming daughters.

Now, when these princesses were babies, a powerful magician had laid a spell upon them, which, at that time, had pleased their parents very much. The magician declared that each of the princesses should carry a fortune in her face; for, he said, whenever the golden-haired princess, whose name was Blondelle, laughed, priceless pearls should fall from her lips, while the dark-haired princess, who was called Brunette, should never weep tears that were aught but diamonds.

As you can imagine, the king thought that soon he would be very rich, for, of course, he thought that both his little daughters would laugh and cry sometimes. In this way he thought to obtain a large fortune, so that when the time came for the two princesses to be married, he would be able to give each of them a splendid wedding present.

But unfortunately the royal nurses soon discovered that Blondelle, who was the one that should have laughed, never even smiled at anything, while Brunette, whose tears would have been valuable, was a gay little creature who laughed merrily at everything about her.

Now, as time went on, this state of affairs began to worry the king greatly, for he was really very hard up, his kingdom was in debt, and he had even begun to think of raising money on the State jewels, including his crown and sceptre.

At last, in despair, he set all his courtiers to work in an attempt to make either the Princess Blondelle laugh, or else the Princess Brunette cry. Moreover, he gave it out that the hand of one of the princesses in marriage, besides half his kingdom, should be the reward of any one who should succeed in either of these attempts.

As I have said, the princesses were both very beautiful. Their fame had spread far and wide; and as, of course, any man in the kingdom would have been proud to have a princess for his wife, young men and old, rich and poor, came from far and near to join in the competition.

Those who were more in love with the Princess Blondelle came dressed up in weird garments, bringing with them anything amusing they could think of, and when they were received into the princesses' state chamber, they began making such

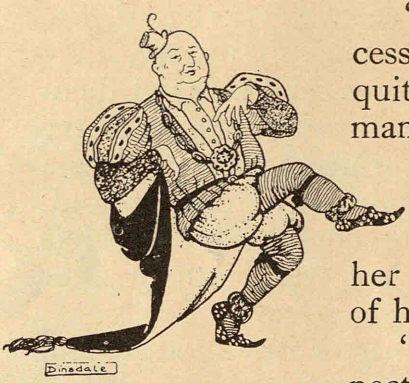
ridiculous faces and telling such funny stories that all the courtiers simply held their sides and rocked to and fro with laughter. But the princess only looked more miserable than ever.

On the other hand, those who preferred the Princess Brunette came with tales of misery, they sang long and pitiful songs to her, and some of them even pinched her, and stepped on her toes, to try and make her cry. But the princess took it all as a great joke, and while her courtiers stood around, sobbing, and using no end of pocket handkerchiefs to mop up their tears, she just went into fit after fit of laughing.

At last one young man had a bright idea, and begged to be allowed to speak to the king. When he was admitted, he told the king that he firmly believed he could not only make the sad princess merry, but that he could also make the merry princess sad. The king was much heartened by this news, and commanded him to lose no time in making the attempt.

So Cynicus, for that was the young man's name, was led at once into the Princess Blondelle's presence, where the Prime Minister, a very fat old man, and usually extremely solemn and dignified, was at that moment in the act of capering about with a tiny cap perched on the side of his big bald head, and looking so very absurd that all present, except the princess, were shrieking with laughter.

When Cynicus approached her throne, the princess asked him what he wanted. "I have come to make Your Highness laugh," the young man replied.



"Oh, dear!" cried the Princess. "*Another* one! I am really quite bored to tears with so many people all trying to do the same thing in the same way." And as she spoke, a real tear did indeed fall from her eyes and rolled off the end of her nose.

"That is exactly what I expected, Your Highness," Cynicus replied, "and therefore I am not going to try in the same way as other people."

On hearing these words, the princess wiped her eyes, and looked at the young man with interest. As he was very handsome, she immediately fell in love with him, and secretly hoped he would be able to make her laugh, so that she might marry him.

He then began to tell her a story, and as he had promised, it was not like any of the other stories she had heard; for they had all been funny, while this was a particularly sad one. When the courtiers heard him, they all thought he must be mad to think of making anybody laugh by such means; and as his story proceeded, tears began to well up

in their eyes, and all the pages in the royal household were kept running backwards and forwards with fresh supplies of clean pocket handkerchiefs. Almost at the first word, however, the princess began to look brighter, soon she was even smiling, and presently, to the amazement of all, she actually burst out laughing, and a shower of milk-white pearls fell in a shining heap on her lap!



The news spread around the palace like wildfire, and when the king heard it, he was overjoyed. He hastened to congratulate Cynicus on his success, and, at first, was all for marrying him there and then to the Princess Blondelle. But the queen reminded him that Cynicus had fulfilled only one-half of his promise, the other half being to make the Princess Brunette weep.

So presently Cynicus found himself standing before the other princess, who was just then having a fit of laughing over the efforts of a famous actor, who was pretending to be suffering severely. The poor man was really doing his best, and acting his part so well that all the courtiers were weeping for

pity's sake. Cynicus, however, shook his head, for he saw at once that this method would never succeed. So he went boldly up to the princess, and said, "With your Highness's permission, I am here to make you weep."

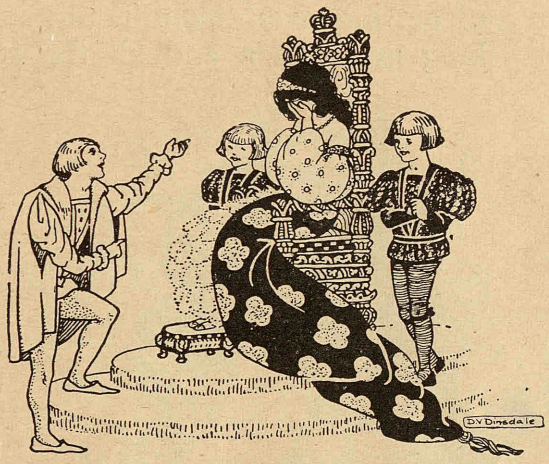
The princess stopped laughing in a moment, and looked at him in surprise, for she had never before heard anyone speak with so much assurance. She also liked the look of Cynicus very much, and even began to think it would be worth while having to weep sometimes, if she could have such a charming young man for a husband. So she ordered him to begin, and he commenced a story, this time one of the funniest the court had ever heard.

It was so funny, indeed, that the courtiers quite forgot their manners, and were unable to remain standing. Some of them rolled on the floor, helpless with mirth, while others buried their faces in the sofa cushions, and the Lord High Chancellor was actually observed stuffing his handkerchief into his mouth to avoid going off into peals of laughter.

But the princess's pretty face lost its smile almost at once, she began to look quite melancholy, and, after a moment, her snow-white shoulders began to shake with sobs, and, lo and behold! great tears were falling from her eyes, and every one of them was a magnificent diamond!

By this time, Cynicus found himself hailed as a

wonder-worker, for he had done what nobody had been able to do before. But a difficulty arose, for he was now entitled to marry one of the princesses, but the question was, which one?

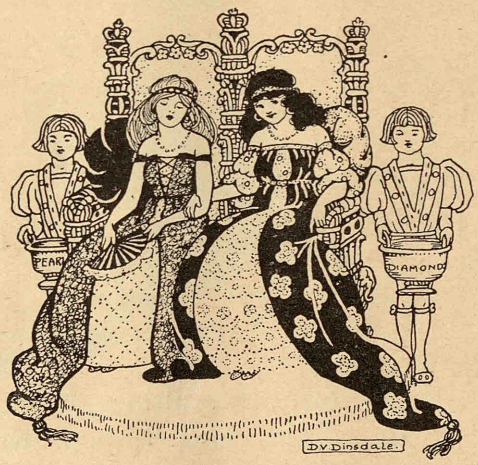


When the king had promised one of his daughters to the man who could win her, he had never thought that it might be possible for the same man to win both of them. Moreover, both the princesses were in love with Cynicus, and that made it rather awkward for him, for although he preferred the Princess Blondelle, and hoped to marry her, he did not like to say so for fear of hurting the Princess Brunette's feelings.

So, after explaining his difficulty to the king and queen, he suggested that the best way to settle the matter would be for him to tell a story to both the princesses at once, and during the telling of it he hoped to make one laugh, and the other weep. If, at the end of the story, the pearls which had fallen from Blondelle's lips were greater in number than the diamonds which fell from Brunette's eyes, then

he would marry Blondelle. But if, on the other hand, Brunette wept more than her sister laughed, then he would be quite ready to marry Brunette.

Everybody agreed that this was a very fair way of getting over the difficulty; so the next day the king and queen and all the court gathered in the grand reception chamber, where the two princesses sat side by side to hear the story which Cynicus had to tell.



Now, everybody, on talking the matter over, had decided that Cynicus had, this time, set himself an impossible task. For what sort of story, they said, can be both funny and sad at once? But Cynicus, who was very wise, and had travelled much and seen much, and who had, moreover, read nearly all the books in the world, did not despair.

He had already decided that the only sort of story which could draw both laughter and tears would be a love story, since love is both gay and sad, and he determined to make his story a little more sad than gay, since by that means he hoped to make

the Princess Blondelle laugh more than her sister wept, and then he would be able to claim her for his bride.

So he began like this :—

" Once upon a time there was a beautiful maiden who lived in a wood with her wicked stepmother. Now the stepmother was cruel, and used to beat her black and blue."

At these words everybody looked sad, except the melancholy princess, who laughed heartily, and a whole string of pearls fell from her lips.

" But," went on Cynicus, " the maiden was not always sad, for she was the proud possessor of a green nightcap with pink spots and yellow stripes on it."

At this everybody burst out laughing, except the merry princess, who instantly began to weep bitterly and, of course, all the tears were diamonds.

Cynicus went on like this, making his story first sad and then amusing, while the courtiers were kept busy counting the pearls and diamonds, and calling out the number of each, as if they were keeping the score at a cricket match.

When he came to the part of his story where the beautiful maiden went off with her lover, wearing the green nightcap with the pink spots and the yellow stripes, and forgetting in her haste that she had put on odd stockings—one red, and the other purple—the Princess Brunette sobbed aloud, and

the courtiers could hardly keep count of the diamonds, so rapidly did they fall from her eyes.

But when he described the revenge taken by the wicked stepmother, who caught them just as they were about to climb into an aeroplane and fly away, the Princess Blondelle laughed till she shook a dozen pearls at once from her mouth.

By the time he came near the end of his story, two hundred and thirty-four pearls had dropped from Blondelle's rosy lips, and two hundred and thirty-four diamonds had fallen from Brunette's starry eyes ; so, you see, one had laughed exactly as much as the other had wept.

And now Cynicus made his big mistake. He had been so successful thus far, and the courtiers had cheered him so loudly—even the queen clapping her hands, and the king shouting, " Hear ! Hear !" —that it is no wonder he lost his head, and became, perhaps, a trifle absent-minded. At any rate it was the last sentence of all in his story, which decided his fate.

For, after telling how his beauteous maiden and her lover went through many trials, he told at last how they arrived at the door of the church where they were to be married.

Up to now, as I have said, the princesses were equal in " score," and Cynicus had only to make his story end up sadly in order to make one more pearl drop from Blondelle's lips, and then he would

have won her for his wife. But I can only think that Cynicus forgot himself, for this is what he said :—

"And so the beautiful maiden and her lover were married, but as the parson had forgotten to bring his prayer-book to church, and the bridegroom had forgotten to bring the ring, *they all lived happily ever afterwards*."

And at these words the Princess Brunette started to weep as if she would never stop, while the Princess Blondelle sat without the ghost of a smile on her sad little face.

And that is how Cynicus came to marry the Princess Brunette after all, although he would dearly have liked to marry Blondelle. However, he made the best of things, saying that perhaps it was better in the long run to have a wife who laughed for nothing, rather than one whose smiles were won at the cost of so much labour; for, as he remarked, he could not *always* go on telling sad stories.

He was not very rich, after all, for he was really too kind-hearted to make his wife cry every time that he was hard up, and wanted some diamonds. They were both quite happy, nevertheless; and so, I believe, was Blondelle. I have heard that, at length, she married the Chief Tax Collector in her father's kingdom, and he, of course, knew so many sad things to talk about that she laughed quite often, and kept her husband tremendously rich.

QUESTIONS

THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER

1 Who was Rolande?

2 How did Rosebud's uncle punish her for not being willing to marry the prince whom he had chosen for her?

3 Write down the message which Rolande made with the pebbles.

4 Tell me how Rolande and Rosebud managed to send messages to one another.

5 What did Rolande bring back with him from the town?

6 How did Rolande get the rope ladder to the top of the tower?

7 Tell me how the lovers made the journey once they were out of the tower.

8 How did the king discover where his niece and her lover were?

9 Describe the accident which prevented his overtaking the pair.

10 What did Rosebud learn about Rolande after they had left her uncle's country?

THE STORY OF BLONDELLE AND BRUNETTE

1 Write down the spell which had been laid upon the baby princesses.

2 How was it that no precious stones were obtained from either princess?

3 Tell me how Cynicus managed to make Blondelle laugh and Brunette weep.

4 How was it to be decided which princess Cynicus should marry?

5 How should Cynicus have made his story end if he wished to marry Blondelle?

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