THE A.L

BRIGHT STORY READERS

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STORIES FROM ITALY

Re-told by F. A. TAPSELL

No. 127

Grade 2

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STORIES FROM ITALY

By F. A. TAPSELL

Illustrated by Mary T. Brown

THE FAIRY'S CURE

THERE was once a princess who had such a bad temper that she made everyone about her unhappy. She had no mother; and her father, though he loved her, could do nothing with his wayward daughter.

At last, when one day she had been even worse than usual, he said aloud, "Oh, how I wish someone could cure my daughter of her bad temper!"

Now just at that moment a little fairy peeped in at the window. She felt sorry for the king, who looked so kind and yet so sad. "I will see if I can cure her," she said to herself; then away she flew.

Up and down, and all over the town, flew the little fairy until she found a girl who was of the same age as the princess, and whose face was so like hers that you could not have told one from the other, had they been dressed alike. This girl was very poor and led a hard life.

Her master kept a fish-shop, and she had to work in the shop, or else in the house, from early morning until late at night. Nor was this all; for

her master was unkind, and beat and scolded her, even though she tried hard to please him. This girl's name was Bianca.

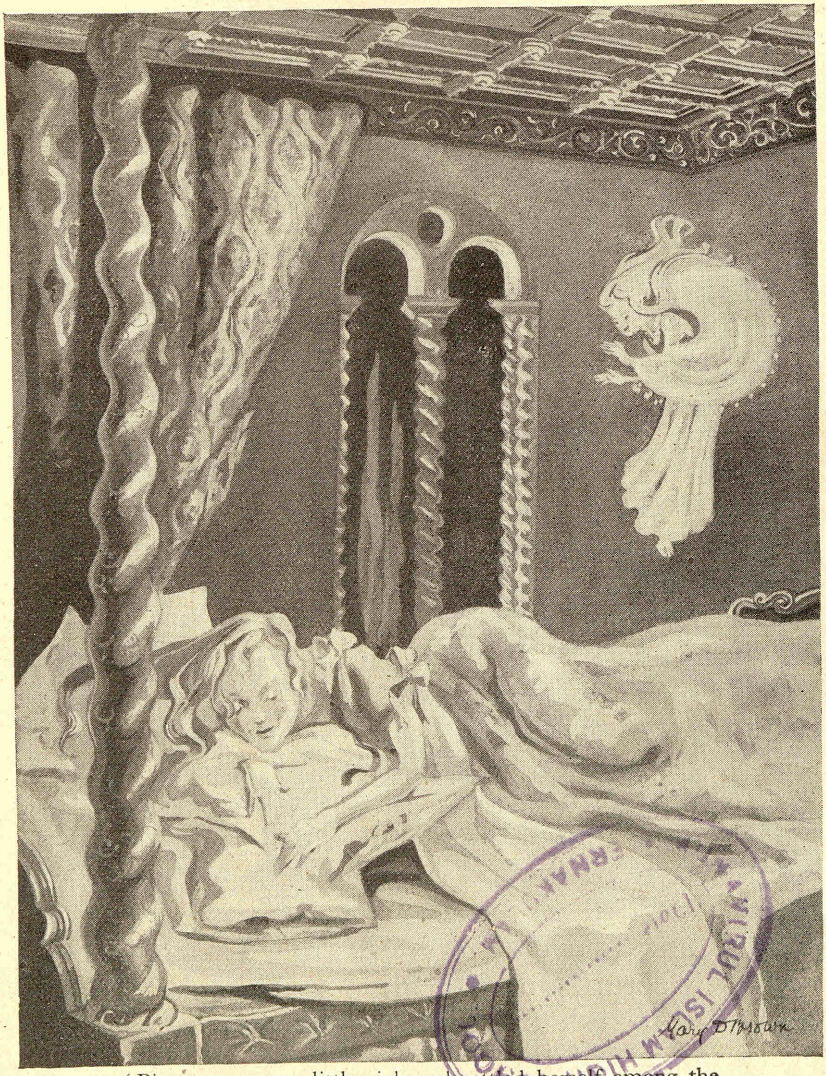
Now that night, when everyone was fast asleep, the fairy flew to the palace. She took the princess out of her bed and flew with her through the town to the narrow, dirty street in which she had seen the fish-shop. She carried her up into a tiny garret where she could not even stand upright, and laid her in Bianca's hard bed.

Bianca, the fairy carried away to the palace, and gently laid her in the soft, cosy bed out of which she had taken the princess. Bianca gave one little sigh of content and settled herself among the silken pillows. She thought it was all part of a lovely dream.

When the princess awoke the next morning, she sat up and looked about her, and began to wonder where she could be. She, too, thought she must be dreaming, but that it was a very nasty dream. She wished to get up, but her clothes were gone. There was nothing to put on but the dirty rags which Bianca had worn. This made the princess very angry. She began to stamp and cry with rage.

Before she could make up her mind to put on the ragged clothes, the fish-seller called up the stairs to know why she had not come down long ago, and why the breakfast was not ready.

"I cannot get up," she replied, "for I have no



'Bianca gave one little sigh and settled herself among the silken pillows'—*Page 2*

clothes except some rags which are not fit even for a beggar to wear."

But when he made answer that, if she were not down in less than five minutes, he would bring a stick and beat her, the princess jumped out of bed and dressed herself in the rags, as best she could.

At last, still thinking it was a dream, she went downstairs into the little room behind the shop. She stood and stared about her. Everything was ugly, mean, and dirty. She could not make out where she was. But there was no time to think about it; for the man was shouting to her to go and make the coffee, unless she wished to be beaten.

The princess had not the least idea how coffee should be made, and she let the water boil over on to the stove.

"How dare you waste the coffee like that?" cried the man, and picked up a stick to beat her.

The princess was not used to being spoken to in this way.

"I won't do your dirty work," she cried; but, as she spoke the words, the stick came down on her shoulders, and then the princess saw that she would have to do as she was told, or she would be beaten all the time.

She had to work very, very hard. There were floors to scrub, and the dinner to cook, and the people in the shop to be served with fish, so that every minute of the day was full.

When she knew it *had* to be done, she tried to do things as well as she could ; but, of course, she was new to the work, and the man beat her again and again for being slow and stupid.

At last night came. Never before had the princess been so glad the day had come to an end. She crept up to her hard little bed in the attic and sobbed herself to sleep. " I will never be cross with anyone again," she thought, " I know now how sad it can make them, and how hard a lot is that of the poor."

That same morning Bianca awoke to find herself lying in a soft bed. Everything around her was rich and beautiful, quite unlike the dreary little attic on which she had opened her eyes every day of her life until now. By the side of the bed lay some fine clothes ; and, after she had been awake a little while, a maid came and dressed her in them.

For days it seemed like a dream to Bianca. She had good food to eat, fine clothes to wear, and, what was nicer to her than all, she had no work to do, but just took things easy while others waited upon her, hand and foot. It seemed like a little bit of heaven after the life she had led in her master's shop.

But Bianca was not stuck up and proud because of the good fortune that had befallen her. She was very gentle with the maids who waited upon her, and spoke so kindly to them that they began to

rejoice, and wonder what could have changed the haughty princess of old into such a sweet, gentle maiden.

Of course they thought this was the same princess as she who had always scolded them from morn till night, and kept them running backwards and forwards to wait upon her the livelong day.

When the king came to bid her good morning, he brought his daughter a bunch of roses. The real princess would very likely have tossed them aside with a frown, and not even have said, "Thank you," to her father. But Bianca took them from the king with a pleased smile, thanked him with pretty words, and said how sweet they smelled.

So time passed on. The princess still lived at the fish-shop, and Bianca at the palace. One girl was very happy; but the other, very, very sad.

One day the king drove past the shop where the princess was at work. She saw him pass and ran out, all in her rags, crying, "Father! Oh, my father, take me home with you! I will never be cross any more." But she was so ragged and dirty that her father did not know her. Thinking this was but some beggar-girl asking for alms, he threw her a coin and drove on.

The princess went back to her little attic room, and wept until she could weep no more. She thought her father had cast her off because of her bad temper, and that she would have to spend the rest

of her life among the dirt and hardships of the fish-shop.

Again and again she had told the fish-seller she was not his servant, but the princess from the palace. Of course he did not believe her. He only laughed in her face, and said she must be mad to say such things. So now the princess lay upon her bed and sobbed and sobbed, and wished that she might die.

But the fairy was watching. She did not mean to let the princess suffer more than she could bear. That night she came again to the town. First, she peeped in at the window of the little attic ; and, though she saw the princess sobbing, she smiled to herself, as if she were not wholly sorry at the sight.

The fairy waited until at last the princess had fallen asleep ; then she took her in her arms and carried her back to the palace, for she was now cured of her bad temper. The fairy smiled as she gazed upon Bianca also, for the girl had grown strong and well with the good food and the long rest. She would now be much better able to do the hard work which was her lot.

When the morning came, the princess found herself back in her own room at the palace, with fine clothes to wear and nothing to do once more. She thought her life at the fish-seller's shop must have been a dream ; but dream or not, it had

taught her much. She was never rude to her father or cross with the maids again.

One day, as she sat and thought of the strange dream she had had, she began to wonder if there really was a fish-shop such as she dreamed she had lived and worked in. She made up her mind she would find out, so she gave orders that the carriage was to be ready to take her out that afternoon.

She drove through almost every street in the town without finding the place she sought, and had almost given up her quest in despair, when, at last, as she drove through a narrow back street, she saw a little fish-shop, which she felt sure was the one of her dreams.

Even the sight of it sent a shiver through her. She jumped out of the carriage and ran to the window. Yes, it was the very shop! Inside she could see a girl so like herself it might almost have been she, and this girl was wearing the very same rags as the princess had worn in her dream-life.

She went into the shop and spoke to the girl, who was looking very sad and weary. "Tell me," she said, "have you been here long?"

"Oh yes," replied Bianca, "I have lived here all my life. Until a few weeks ago I had never been away. Oh, those lovely weeks! How I wish they might come back again! For then I lived in a palace as a princess—unless, as I cannot help

thinking, it was all a dream. But now I must work hard again, and have only rags to wear and scraps of food to eat."

The princess took her hand. "You shall not do any more of that horrid work," she said. "I know how hard your life is, for I have tried it. You shall come to the palace with me, and live there as my friend and sister."

She led Bianca to the carriage and they drove back to the palace. In a very little while they became the greatest of friends. They played and worked together, and were happy in planning many little treats for those who, though but young girls the same as themselves, had little pleasure in their lives.

BEPPO AND THE GOBLIN

THERE was once a little boy named Beppo. He was the dearest little boy, with big dark eyes, and very white teeth. There was always a smile upon his face, for he was full of fun.

One day his mother had set him to sweep the room. On the floor he found a penny. "Mother dear, may I have this penny I have found?" he asked.

"Yes, Beppo, you may have it because you have been a good boy and helped me with the work," said his mother.

Beppo danced with joy. His mother was very poor, so it was not often he had a penny of his own. "Now what shall I buy?" he thought.

He ran to look at the shops, peeping in at the window of first this one and then that. It took him a long time to make up his mind; but at last he went into a shop and bought a pennyworth of lovely ripe figs.

"Now I will have a feast," he said. He ran into the wood, climbed into a tree, and sat down to enjoy the figs. Oh, how good they were!

By and by an old man, who was really a goblin, came along. He saw Beppo eating his figs up in the tree. "Dear me, that is a nice fat boy," he thought. Then he said aloud, "Little Beppo, will you throw me down one of your figs?"

Beppo was not a greedy little boy, and this man looked very poor and old; so he threw him down a fig. But it fell into a mud puddle, and this made it much too dirty to eat; so once more the goblin said, "Little Beppo, throw me down a fig."

Again, Beppo threw down one of his figs; but again it fell into the mud. "Why did you not catch it?" Beppo called to the old man.

"Because you do not throw straight," replied the goblin. "Bend down this time and give it to me in your hand, that is a dear good little Beppo."

So Beppo leaned down out of the tree and held out a fig to the goblin. As he did so, the wicked

old goblin seized hold of the little boy and pulled him down. In spite of his cries and struggles he put him into a sack, tied it up with a piece of cord, and, throwing it over his back, set out for his home in the hills.

But Beppo was plump and well grown for his age; and before long the goblin began to find him very heavy. It was a long way to go and all up hill. He puffed and blew, and grumbled and growled, and at last he was so tired he really could not go any further.

He sat down under the shadow of a bush to rest for a while. He did not mean to stay long; but the sun was hot, and the goblin was so tired that, before he knew what he was about, he fell asleep. When Beppo heard him begin to snore, he took his knife out of his pocket, cut a hole in the sack, and crept out.

Then, lest the goblin should wake and find out he was gone, he filled up the sack with stones and tied up the hole with a piece of string. When this was done, he ran home; and all the way he laughed and laughed, as he thought of the goblin and the very stony meal he would have.

The goblin slept for some time. When at last he awoke, he felt quite fresh and ready to shoulder his burden once again; so he took up the sack and went on his way up the hill.

He had not gone far, when he stopped to shift

the sack from one arm to the other. A little while after, he put it back on the first arm. But he would not rest again. He went straight home to his wife, puffing and blowing, and grumbling all the way.

He put the sack down on the floor. " Wife," he said, " put the big pot on to boil. I have brought home the most lovely fat little boy. We will have such a feast to-night as we have never had before."

His wife put the pot on the fire ; then she went to help the goblin pull the nice little boy out of the sack. They untied the sack. They turned it upside down ; but, instead of the nice fat little boy, out fell a great heap of stones.

The goblin stood and looked at them ; but his wife cried, " Why did you tell me there was a nice fat boy in the sack, when there was nothing but a heap of stones ? You must have done it just to annoy me." She was in a great rage and picked up the poker, as if she would like to strike her husband with it.

He dodged round to the other side of the table. " Indeed," he said, " I *know* it was a boy I put into the sack. His name was Beppo, and I saw him sitting up in a tree eating figs. Somebody must have let him out of the sack. I will go and look for that boy, for I fancy it is he who has played me this trick."

The goblin set off. He went into the wood to look for Beppo, but Beppo was not there. He went

into the fields, but no Beppo was to be found. Then he went through all the streets, one by one, and at last he saw Beppo sitting upon the roof of a house.

He was very careful not to let the boy see he was angry, and said, in his sweetest voice, "Why, little boy, how did you climb on to that high roof?"

"Do you really want to know?" asked Beppo.

"Yes," said the goblin. "The sun must be so nice and warm there that I should like to come up and sit with you."

"I will tell you how to get here," said Beppo; but there was a naughty smile upon his face as he spoke. "Make a great pile of dishes, plates, glasses, cups and saucers, or anything you can find. Climb upon it and so on to the roof. You will find it quite easy."

The goblin did not know there was a flight of stairs on the other side of the house, and it was up these stairs that Beppo had climbed to the roof. He ran into all the houses near and brought out glasses, cups, dishes, and plates, and made them into a pile that reached nearly as high as the roof.

Then he began to mount. The glasses smashed under his feet, the cups and plates broke as soon as he trod upon them, and, as well as this, everything began to slither and slide. The harder he tried to climb, the more the pile of things cracked and broke.

At last he flew into a great rage. "I *will* get up! I *will!* I *will!*" he cried. He was just going to give a leap which, he hoped, would take him on to the roof, when there was a loud shout behind him.

The women had come back from their work in the fields. They had caught sight of the goblin jumping upon their plates and dishes and were shouting to him to stop.

They rushed at him and would soon have killed him in their anger; but just at that moment the whole pile of crockery gave way, and the goblin was buried beneath the ruins of china and glass.

THE SERPENT PRINCE

THERE was once a peasant's wife who very much wished to have children of her own, yet no little ones came to gladden the tiny house in the wood. She and her husband, who was a woodcutter, lived alone. They saw but little of other people, for there were no other houses near.

One day the woodcutter brought home a bundle of twigs for the fire, and out of them crept a tiny baby serpent. When the woman saw the little serpent, she sighed, and said, "See, even the serpents have their young. I alone am without chick or child of my own."

Then, much to her surprise, the little serpent

spoke, saying, " Since you have no child of your own, take me and bring me up with care and kindness. I will love you as a son, and you shall have no cause to be sorry for your kindness."

At first the woman was struck dumb with terror that a serpent should be able to speak thus ; but in a little while she said, " Yes, I will love you and bring you up as my son." She made him a bed in a cupboard ; and every day she gave him a share of all she had to eat, even though there might be barely enough for herself.

With all this care the serpent throve, and grew until he was larger than any serpent the woodcutter and his wife had ever seen. He crawled about in the wood by day, but at night he always came back to the woodcutter's little house.

One day, when he was quite grown up, the serpent said to the peasant, whom he looked upon as his father, " Father, I am lonely. I wish to marry."

" Very well," said the woodcutter, " I will search the woods until I find a serpent who is a fit mate for you."

" No," said the serpent, " that will not suit me at all. I wish to marry the king's daughter. Go, seek out the king and tell him there is a serpent who wishes to have his daughter for a wife."

Now the peasant was a very simple man ; so he went to the king, and said, " Sire, there dwells

in my house a serpent who would have your daughter for his wife. I am here on his behalf to ask you for her hand."

The king, seeing how simple the man was, laughed, and said, " Go home and tell this serpent that, if he can turn all the fruit in my garden into gold, I will give him my daughter." Then he sent the peasant away and thought no more about it.

The woodcutter went back to his home in the wood and told the serpent what the king had said.

The serpent replied, " You must go out very early in the morning, and pick up all the fruit kernels you can find, take them to the royal garden, and sow them there ; then you will see great wonders."

The peasant said he would do his best, though he could not think what the serpent might mean. As soon as the sun had arisen, the woodcutter took his basket on his arm and went out. He picked up all the seeds and kernels of peach, apricot, cherry, and other fruits he could find, until his basket was full.

He carried them to the king's garden and sowed them there, as the serpent had told him. But before he had time to sow the last of the seeds, the stems, leaves, and fruit of all the trees and bushes that grew near had turned to shining gold. The woodcutter stood and looked at them in amazement ; then he hurried home to tell the

serpent of the wonderful thing that had happened.

Meanwhile at the palace, the day being hot, the king went to walk in his garden early. He saw the fruit, and the flowers, and the trees that had all been turned into gold. He started back as if he could hardly believe his eyes. He looked again; yes, they were really gold! What could it mean? Surely it could not be the work of the poor peasant man who had come to see him on behalf of the serpent!

But when, by and by, the peasant was sent by the serpent to ask the king to keep his promise, he only said, "Wait a bit. If the serpent really wishes to marry my daughter, he must do more than this. Tell him that I must have every floor in the palace covered with gold before I can let my daughter marry a serpent."

The peasant was almost afraid to carry these words to the serpent. "He will surely be very angry with me," he thought.

But he need not have been afraid. The serpent only said, "Go to the wood, gather a bunch of green herbs, and sweep the floors of the palace with it; then we shall see what the king will say."

The peasant ran to the wood and gathered all the greenest herbs he could find. He tied them into a bunch, went to the palace, and began to sweep the floors of the rooms there. Beneath his broom of herbs the floor of every room became spread with a thick, glittering carpet of gold.

Once more the peasant went in the serpent's name to ask the king for the hand of his daughter. This time the king could think of nothing more to ask, so he had to keep his promise.

He called his daughter to him, and said, "My dear daughter, I have made a promise—a rash one, it is true—but a promise *is* a promise, and I must keep it. That I may do this, I hope you will resign yourself to abide by my will so that disgrace may not fall upon me."

"It shall be as you please," replied the princess. "Tell me what is your will, and I will do it."

"I wish you to marry him whom I have chosen for you," said the king. The princess bowed her head and gave her word that she would do as her father wished; but she did not know it was a serpent to whom her father had promised her.

As soon as this was settled, the king sent the peasant to fetch the serpent to the palace. Within an hour the serpent came, riding in a carriage made of gold and drawn by four elephants. But, as the carriage passed along the streets, the people fled in fright at the sight of the huge serpent that sat within.

When the serpent reached the palace, the courtiers trembled and shook with fright, and the servants fled from the sight. Even the king and queen were scared and shut themselves up in a room at the far end of the palace.

The king was now sorry for what he had done. He felt he could not give his daughter to such a monster as this; so he called to the princess, "Fly! Fly while there is yet time to escape!"

But the princess was not going to run away after she had given her word. "No, father," she said, "I will not flee from the husband to whom you have promised me, and so cause my father to be disgraced."

By this time the serpent had come into the room where she was. The princess made a lovely picture as she stood, frightened, yet resolved to keep her word. The serpent looked at her; then, all of a sudden, the serpent's skin dropped off him, and there stood before her a handsome young prince, with merry, dark eyes and curly black hair.

The king, who had heard him go into the room where his daughter was, cried to the queen, "Alas! I fear it is all over with our dear daughter. Woe is me that I should have brought about her death through my greed! Come, let us go and see what has happened."

They crept out of their hiding-place and peeped through the key-hole of the room where the serpent and their daughter were shut in together. What a surprise it was to see a handsome young prince in place of the great serpent! They knew it must be that the serpent had changed his form, for they could see his skin lying upon the floor.



'The princess ran to the window, but the pigeon was soon lost to sight'—*Page* 21

The queen was delighted. " I will see that he does not become a serpent any more," she cried. She ran into the room, picked up the skin, and threw it upon the fire, saying, " Now our daughter will be safe."

But the young prince turned sadly to her. " Ah, you do not know what you have done," he said ; and at that moment he was changed into a pigeon. He flew against the window with such force that the glass was broken. Out he passed, and flew far up into the blue sky ; but, as he flew, they could see drops of crimson blood upon his white feathers.

The princess ran to the window, but the pigeon was soon lost to sight in the blue of the sky. She stretched out her arms and began to weep. Her parents tried to comfort her, but she would not listen to their words. She only wanted the handsome young prince who had come and gone away again so soon.

That night, when all was still in the palace, the princess crept from her bed, stole down the stairs, and out of a small door at the back of the palace. She had made up her mind to search the wide world through until she found this prince whom she had promised to wed.

She had left the town far behind her when she came to a great wood. Here she met a fox. The fox, seeing how sad she looked, asked if he might

guide her through the forest. "Yes," she replied, "for I am very lonely, and I search for one I cannot find."

So the princess and the fox walked on together—but by and by the princess grew weary and lay down upon the mossy carpet beneath the trees. So weary was she that, before many minutes had passed, she was fast asleep. She did not wake until roused by the twitter of the birds in the trees above, and then she lay still to listen, for their songs were very sweet.

"Can you understand what they say?" asked the fox.

"No," replied the princess. "I only know their songs are music to my ears. Tell me of what they sing."

The fox began to chant in slow, even tones, "They sing of a prince who was under a spell.

"They sing that for seven long years he must take the form of a serpent.

"They sing of the days that passed one by one until the seven long years were all but gone.

"They sing of how the prince fell in love with a king's daughter—of how, one day, he was alone with her, and for one moment cast off his skin, that he might stand before her in his true form."

"Ah!" cried the princess; and the word was almost a moan. "Tell me the rest quickly. What became of the prince? Was the spell broken?"

The fox went on with his tale, still in the same sing-song voice. " They sing of how the spell would have been broken, because of the love the princess bore him, but that her mother, for her daughter's sake, rushed into the room and cast the skin upon the fire, and so made things worse than before."

" But why worse ? " asked the princess.

" Because the prince was then obliged to take the form of a pigeon, in order to escape. He flew through the window and was so badly cut that he is likely to die. Listen ! Do you not hear how sad the song of the birds has become ? That is because of their grief that such a handsome young prince should die."

" Is there no means by which he may be cured ? " asked the princess.

" Only one," replied the fox. " Could the maiden he loves but take a tail feather from each of the birds that sing of him, and lay it upon his wounds, he would be cured. There is no other way."

When she heard this, the princess begged the fox to take a feather from each of their tails and give it to her. " Do this, and I will always think of you as the best friend I ever had," she pleaded.

The fox replied, " I will try, but it will need patience, for these birds are shy and swift of wing. We must wait until night, and then, when the

birds have gone to roost, I will climb the tree and pull a feather from each of their tails."

The princess and the fox spent the day in the forest. To the waiting princess, the hours seemed to pass very slowly ; but at last the sun set in trails of crimson glory and the dusk fell. The birds began to twitter gently among the branches, as they went to roost ; then all was still.

As soon as the fox was sure the birds were all asleep, he softly climbed the tree ; and, before they had time to wake and fly away, he pulled a tail feather from each of the two birds that had sung of the prince.

" Dear Daddy Fox," cried the princess, " how can I ever thank you ? " She took the feathers and ran swiftly as a deer to where the fox told her she would find the palace of the young prince.

As soon as she came to the door, she sent word to the king that she had come to cure the prince of his wounds. But the king only laughed. " How should a maiden," he said, " be able to cure where all the doctors in the kingdom have failed ? "

But when the princess begged, on her knees, that she might try, the king said, " Well, it can do no harm. He is at death's door even now, so you cannot make him any worse."

They went into the room where the prince lay, white and still, and only faintly breathing, upon the bed. The princess touched his wounds with the

feathers she had brought. He sighed and opened his eyes. Slowly the colour came back to his face, and in an hour he was as well as he had ever been. The king was full of joy, and the princess also.

The room was dark, so that the prince had not seen who it was had cured him. But the king, the better to look upon his son, so wonderfully cured, drew away the curtains and let the light of day stream in at the windows.

The prince sat up and looked about him. Then he saw the princess standing by the side of his bed. He took her hand, and, turning to his father, told him how he had met the princess before, and begged that he would allow him to marry her.

"My son," said the king, "it shall be as you wish, and now we will prepare for the wedding."

For many days the palace was full of bustle and hurrying feet. The cooks prepared such a feast as had never been eaten there before. The tailors made robes and gowns of a beauty yet unseen in the land. Men and maids swept and polished until the palace shone from end to end.

Then, on a morning golden with sunshine, the wedding of the prince and princess took place, and everyone will tell you it was the grandest wedding that had ever been seen in the land.

When they were married, the prince sent for the peasant and his wife, who had cared for him for so many years. He gave them a high position in

the palace, for he was very grateful for all they had done for him; and, as I hardly need to tell you, the prince and princess lived happily ever after.

THE CHILDREN OF THE FOREST

IN the palace of a great king there once lived a princess who was aunt to the king's three little children; and she was very jealous of them—so that at last she made up her mind to get rid of them. One day, when the children were at play in the grounds of the palace, she coaxed them to go into the forest with her. "I will show you the fairies dancing under the trees, if you will come with me," she said.

The children had never seen a fairy, so they gladly went to the forest with her. When they came to the very heart of the wood, she said, "Now, children, lie down under this tree and go to sleep. When you wake, you will see the fairies dancing all around you."

The three children, tired with their long walk, lay down to sleep. While they slept, the princess stole away and went back to the palace. She thought the wild beasts of the forest would soon come and devour the helpless little children.

But no sooner had she left than three fairies came flitting about among the trees. By and by

they came to the very tree under which lay the two princes and the little princess. "See what pretty children!" cried one of the fairies. "Let us each make them a present."

"Yes, indeed we will," said the second fairy. "See, they have each a star on their brows. They are very young to be all alone in the forest."

"I will send a deer to take care of them," said the first fairy.

"I will give them a purse which shall never be empty," said the second.

"And I," said the third, "will give the little girl a ring that will change colour if either she, or her brothers, should be in danger." Then the fairies flew away to their home in Fairyland.

When the children awoke, they saw no fairies; but by their side stood a deer with soft eyes and gentle face. She at once took the three little people under her care. She brought them food, and watched over them all day long to see no foe came near.

Living the free open life of the forest, the children grew from little to big; and at last there came a day when the deer said to them, "You are now nearly grown up and can live here no longer. Go, find a house where you may live as the men of your kind live; but let it be close within sight of the king's palace."

Though they were sorry that their free life in

the forest was to come to an end, the young people did as the deer bade them. They had plenty of money, for they still had the fairy's purse that could never be emptied. As the deer had advised, they bought a house which stood in front of the windows of the palace, and there they went to live.

One day the wicked aunt who had left them in the forest, saw three young people on the balcony of the house that stood opposite. She looked again and again, then she said to herself,

" Why, those must be the king's children, who I thought had been eaten by the wild beasts of the forest years ago. It *must* be they, for they all have stars upon their brows. I will go and see them. Perhaps I may then be able to find a way by which to get rid of them once more."

Without loss of time she went to the house over the way. Only the princess was at home ; but the king's wicked sister sat and talked to her as if her greatest wish was that they should be friends.

When they had talked for a while, she said, " If you want to be happy here, you ought to drink some of the dancing water. There are many balls at the palace to which you and your brothers will be invited, and then you would be able to dance better than anyone else at them. Would not you like that ? "

" Yes, indeed I should, but where is this water to be found ? " asked the princess.

" I cannot tell you, but ask your brothers to go and seek it," said the wicked aunt; then she returned to the palace, well pleased with her visit to her niece.

When her brothers came home that evening, the princess told them of the dancing water. " I should so much like to have some," she said.

" And have it you shall," replied her eldest brother, for he was very fond of his sister.

The next day he set out to find the dancing water. He did not know which road to take, but he walked on until he met a priest. " Good father," he said, " am I on the right road to find the dancing water ? "

" Yes, my son," replied the priest. " You are on the right road, but I fear you are going to your death. If you take my advice, you will return by the way you came."

But this the lad would not do. He hated to be beaten in anything he undertook. Presently he came to a hermit's cave. " Am I going the right way to find the dancing water ? " he asked, as he passed.

" Yes," was the hermit's reply. " Go to the end of the road, then climb yonder hill. At the top of the hill you will find a gate. This gate is guarded by four giants with drawn swords in their hands, but do not be afraid. They are blind and cannot see you. You have only to steal by so softly that they

do not hear. Within the gate is the fountain of dancing water."

On went the prince, up the hill, and on again to the gate where the four giants stood. It took a stout heart to walk between them ; for, he thought, " Supposing they can see after all ! "

But he did not let his fears stay him, and very soon the giants were safely passed. He opened the gate and found himself in a garden of great beauty. In the midst of the garden a fountain played.

" This must be the dancing water," he thought ; so he filled his bottle, passed safely out between the giants, and ran down the hill to his home.

His sister was charmed with the water. After having drunk of it, she could dance so well that all the men at the ball wished to dance only with her.

But this did not please the wicked aunt at all. When she saw that both her nephews were still alive, she was very angry. " I must try a fresh plan, for get rid of them I *will*," she said.

So once again she went to call on the princess. " I have come to tell you how glad I am you were able to obtain the dancing water," she said. " Now, if only you had the singing apple, you would be able to sing as well as you can dance."

" Then please tell me where the singing apple is to be found," said the princess, eager to try this also.

" It grows in the enchanted garden where the fountain of dancing water plays," she said. " Why

not ask your brothers to fetch one for you ? "

" Indeed I will," cried the princess ; and when her younger brother, who was the first to return home that evening, came in, she said to him, " Brother, will you go to the enchanted garden and fetch me a singing apple ? I am told that, if I can but eat of it, I shall be able to sing as well as I can dance."

" Aye, that I will, and this very minute," replied her brother. He walked along the road until he came to the hermit's cave. He asked the way, just as his brother had done.

" Keep straight on and climb yonder hill," was the reply. " At the top of the hill you will find a gate. To-day the gate is guarded by four lions."

" How, then, shall I pass ? " asked the prince. " I cannot fight four lions at once."

" There is no need," the hermit told him. " Above the gate hangs a pair of shears. If the shears are open, you may safely enter ; for then the lions will not attack you. But if the shears are closed, do not venture, or you will be torn in pieces before you can reach the gate. And remember, when once you enter the garden, you must not speak to man, beast, or bird."

Having said these words, the hermit went into his cave and the prince set off up the hill. At length he came within sight of the gate. The lions were there—four of the biggest, fiercest lions

he had ever seen. The prince glanced above their heads to where the shears hung. They were open.

With a sigh of relief he went forward. The lions watched him with sleepy eyes, but did not stir, and he walked safely between them. From just within the gate he could see a tree laden with rosy apples. There was no other apple tree to be seen, so he felt sure these must be the singing apples. But, while he was pulling a branch of the tree down to pick an apple, a bird called out, " The king has put your sister into prison."

In his anger, the prince quite forgot the words of the hermit's warning. " It is a lie," he cried. " The king has done nothing of the kind." Then, before he could say another word, he was turned into a pillar of stone.

At home the princess watched and waited for him in vain. When days passed, and still her brother did not return, she began to fear some mishap had befallen him. One day she looked at the ring the fairy had given her—it no longer shone brightly, but was dark and dull. " Some harm *has* come to him," she cried.

She called her elder brother to her. " Go and seek for our brother," she said. " He must be in danger, for the ring has changed colour."

The prince picked up his sword and set out. He knew his way to the enchanted garden, for he had been there before.



'The lions watched him with sleepy eyes but did not stir'—*Page* 32

Days and weeks passed ; and he, too, did not return. All day long the princess sat waiting and fearing. Every morning she looked at the ring as soon as she awoke. It was always dull, and at last there came a day when it was quite black. " Oh ! " she cried, " my brothers are either dead, or in great danger. I must go to them."

She set out along the same road as her brothers had travelled before her. When she came to the hermit's cave, she asked him, " Which way must I go to reach the enchanted garden ? "

" Straight up the hill," replied the hermit. " At the gate of the garden you will find four serpents, but do not be afraid. They will not touch you so long as you walk backwards to the gate. Only there is one thing you must bear in mind. If anyone should speak to you, do not answer."

On ran the princess. She was thinking too much of her brothers' danger to be in fear for herself ; but, when she came within sight of the gate, she turned and walked backwards. The serpents were coiled up so close on either side that she could have touched them as she passed between ; but they did not so much as lift their heads to look at her.

Through the gate and into the enchanted garden ran the princess. The beauty of the garden was such that she could not help staying for just

one moment to gaze at it; then she searched in every nook and corner for her brothers. There was no sign of them to be seen—nothing but trees, and flowers, and grass, save for two pillars of stone that stood beneath an apple tree.

All the while the princess was searching, it seemed to her she could hear voices calling, "Would you like to know what has become of your brothers? Would you not like to know where your brothers are?" But, though she greatly longed to do so, the princess would not answer, for she remembered the words of the hermit.

When she had hunted the whole garden over, the poor princess did not know what to do next. She was leaning against one of the stone pillars, feeling very, very sad, when a bird flew by, and dropped a feather as it flew. It was a very pretty feather, so the princess stooped and idly picked it up. She held it in her hand for a moment, then laid it on the stone beside her.

Now no sooner had the feather touched the stone than the pillar began to move; and, before the princess could say a word, it had changed into her elder brother. "Oh!" she cried, "so the pillar against which I leaned was really you."

"Yes," he replied, "and that other pillar is our brother. Lay the feather upon it, and perhaps he, also, will be restored to life."

The princess at once touched the stone pillar

with the feather. The stone began to move and her second brother stood before her. "I am so glad you are both safe," she said. "Let us get away from this horrid enchanted garden, before some further harm befalls us."

"First, we will eat some of the singing apples," said her elder brother. "It would be too bad to leave without doing that."

They plucked the apples and ate them; then ran down the hill, singing gaily as they went.

Now it chanced that the king was riding that way. He heard their songs and paused to listen, for never had he heard such sweet singing before.

On came the three singers, until they were face to face with the king as he sat upon his horse.

The king looked at them and saw the stars upon their brows. "Why," he cried, "you must be my own long-lost children. Come with me to the palace. Your mother has been grieving for you all these years and will be glad indeed to see you."

The three young people went with the king gladly enough. Their mother met them with open arms and wept for joy that her children were thus restored to her. They took their place as princes and princess of the realm, but the wicked aunt was cast into prison for the rest of her life.

THE KING'S GOOSE-GIRL

ONCE upon a time there lived a certain king who had three daughters. One day he said to them, "I wonder how much you love me?"

"I love you as much as the bread we eat," replied the eldest.

"I love you as much as the wine we drink," said the second.

"*I* love you as much as the salt that savours your bread," said the youngest. She knew that her father always liked to have plenty of salt with his food, so she thought this would please him and show how great was her love.

But it did not please the king at all. He thought his daughter was laughing at him, and so he was very angry with her. "If you will not treat your father with respect, you must be made to do so," he said, with a grim frown upon his face. He had her shut up in the highest room of the tower of the palace, and made her work hard all day long.

If she failed to do the tasks he set her, she had to go without food. The little princess did her best. Though tired, cold, and hungry, she slaved away at the spinning, weaving, or scrubbing he had given her to do. But, being a princess, she was not used to doing any work at all, let alone hard work such as this; and at length she became so ill she could work no more.

That day the king had given her an even harder task than usual. The poor girl could not set about it at all; so that, when the king came at evening, he found the work just as he had left it at sunrise. "What is this?" he cried. "Do you refuse to do the work I set you? Well, if you will not work, you must die."

He then gave the princess into the charge of a servant-man and told him to take her into the woods and kill her. The man bound the princess with ropes and dragged her to the wood. He pulled off her rich robes and dressed her in rags; then he took from his belt the knife with which he was going to kill her.

But the princess pleaded hard for her life. "Do not kill me, for I have done you no harm," she cried, and she looked so pretty and so good, as she knelt before him with her hands clasped, that the man had not the heart to slay her.

He untied the ropes with which she was bound; then put the clothes he had taken from her into her hand, saying, "In spite of my master's orders, I cannot kill you. Go where you will, and may the good God protect you!" Then he turned and left her.

The princess, full of joy that her life had been spared, ran far into the wood. She fed upon berries and nuts, slept upon a bed of moss under the shade of the trees, and was happy.

But there came a time when there were no more berries to be found, and the winds blew chill when she lay down to sleep. " I must now go and earn my bread the same as poor folks do," she thought. " I will try and find a house where they will give me work to do."

On and on, over hill and dale, she walked ; but could find no one who had any work for her. At last she came to the palace of a king ; for, by this time, she was far beyond her father's kingdom. She went up to the door and knocked. " Is the king in need of a maid ? " she asked, when the door was opened.

" No, indeed," was the reply. " He has already so many men and maids to work for him that there is hardly room for them all in the palace. We do not want any more maids here."

The princess turned sadly away. Just outside the palace she saw a large flock of geese. They were running this way and that, and were eating all the young green plants in the king's garden. There did not seem to be anyone to look after them.

Once again the princess went to the door of the palace and knocked. This time she asked if she might see the king. When she was taken into his presence, she said, " Please, your Majesty, will you let me be your goose-girl ? I can see you are in need of a goose-girl, even if you are not in need of maids."

"Well," said the king, as he looked out of the window, "the geese *do* seem to be running rather wild. I do not know what has become of the lad who looks after them. Yes, you may stay, if you wish, and mind the geese; but I cannot pay you more than a penny a day and your meals, which you will ask for at the kitchen."

The princess did not mind about the money, so long as she had food enough to eat. "Thank you kindly, your Majesty," she said. "I will look after the geese well."

Thus it was that a princess became the king's goose-girl. Day after day, and week after week, she minded the geese in the grounds of the king's palace. She made friends of her flock and gave them all names. It was only a very little while before they knew their names and would come at her call.

Sometimes she saw the king's son ride by. He rode well, and always looked so merry and gay that she used to watch for his coming. One day he threw her a rose; and after that he often called out a few cheery words as he rode by.

So the days passed, each one so like the last that the princess could not have told you how many there had been since she became a goose-girl in the king's service.

At last, the week of the carnival drew near. Now in Italy this is the time which both rich and poor love best of all. They look forward to it all



'One day he threw her a rose'—*Page* 40

the year, and those who live in the country flock into the towns, where all is so merry and bright.

While she minded her geese, the lonely goose-girl watched the people as they hurried by to the town, all dressed in their best, and all with bright smiles upon their faces. "I, too, will go to the carnival," she thought. "Perhaps I shall meet the prince there."

For the first time since she had left her father's palace, she put on her rich silk gown and red slippers. She combed her hair and washed her face and hands; then she tied a mask over her face so that no one should know her.

When all the other folks at the palace had started for the carnival, the princess went to the stable and brought out the king's own riding horse. It was a great black steed and very fierce. But she was not afraid. She loved animals so well that they always loved her in return and would not harm her.

She hunted in the stable until she found a saddle and bridle. She put these on to the great black horse; then she rode away to the town. As soon as she came to the streets where the carnival was held, she was as merry as any of the maidens there; nor was there one among them as lovely as she.

The prince saw her and pelted her with roses, lilies, and violets. He little thought it was his

father's goose-girl to whom he was throwing all his prettiest flowers. "Come to the ball to-night," he called, as she rode past him. The princess smiled, but she did not answer.

She wanted to go to the ball very much indeed; but how could she go in the dress she had worn all day? She had no clothes that were fit for a ball—that was what the princess was thinking as she rode along the road which led to the palace. No; it was no good dreaming about it, she must go back and be the king's goose-girl again.

As she led the black horse into the stable, she saw something bright and shining among the horse's fodder. She went to see what it could be, and there lay a lovely dress of silver, with shoes to match. "Whose can it be?" she thought. "Oh, how I should like to wear it at the ball!"

She dared not even touch it; but what she dared not do the great black horse did for her. He did not like such stuff among his food, so he picked up the dress in his teeth and flung it away from the manger. The dress fell into the arms of the princess.

"Surely it must be meant that I should wear it," she thought, as she gazed with longing eyes at the dainty silver gown. "I will try it on; and, if it fits, I shall know that some kind fairy has sent it for me to wear at the ball."

She slipped the dress over her head. It fitted

her exactly. She put on the slippers. They, also, fitted her like a pair of gloves. " Yes, they must indeed have been meant for me," cried the princess, and clapped her hands with glee.

She had no carriage in which to drive to the ball, so once more she rode upon the king's black horse and soon reached the hall where the ball was to be held. When she went into the great ballroom, she looked so maidenly and so lovely that all the other maidens gazed upon her with envy.

" Who can she be ? " they asked each other. " Where does she come from ? " But no one could say, though there were many who tried to find out.

As for the prince, he had eyes for nobody else. He danced with her and talked with her, and she was so happy that the hours seemed like minutes.

All at once a clock began to strike. The princess looked up with fear in her eyes. " What is the hour ? " she asked.

" It is the hour of midnight that strikes," replied the prince. " But let us dance again. The ball is not over yet."

" No, no, I must go at once. I dare not stay a moment longer," she cried. She knew she must put the black horse back in its stable before the king reached home, and she knew also that he would be at the palace soon after twelve o'clock ; so, with one last smile to the prince, she turned and fled.

The prince ran after her; but, so fleet were her steps, he could not catch her up. She was down the wide flight of stairs and out of the door like a flash of light. But on the last step she left one of the little silver slippers; for, when it fell off, she dared not stay to pick it up.

The prince, who was close behind, saw the slipper gleaming in the moonlight. He picked it up and put it in his pocket. "She whose foot will fit this shoe shall be my wife, and none other," he said. The people who stood round heard his words, and they began to wonder to whom the shoe could belong.

The next day the prince sent heralds all through the town to proclaim that the maiden whose foot would fit the silver shoe should be his wife.

All that day maidens young, and maidens old, maidens pretty, and maidens ugly, made their way to the palace. Some rode in carriages and some came on foot. Some wore rich clothes and some were but poorly clad; but they had all come to try on the silver slipper.

Yet, of all the maidens who went in at the great door of the palace that day, there was not one who could force her foot into the shoe, for it was very tiny. Some of them tried to do so until they were red in the face; but it was of no use—the shoe was much too small for them.

"Where *can* this maiden be?" cried the prince,

at length. "It was but little more than twelve hours ago she left the ball, yet it seems that now she cannot be found. But not yet will I despair." He sent out men and bade them search far and wide for other maidens, who had not yet been to the palace.

But the men came back one after the other, and all with the same tale. "We can find no other maids. Every maiden in the town seems to have already been to the palace to try on the shoe," they said.

But at last came one of the king's gardeners He said, "Your Highness, the only maiden who has not yet tried on the slipper is the goose-girl of His Majesty the King. But she is only a poor girl, and all in rags. It is not likely *she* can have been at the ball."

"Never mind," said the prince. "Bring her here to me."

So the goose-girl came and tried on the slipper. It fitted her exactly. The prince looked into her face, which was all rosy with blushes; and then he cried, "Yes, it was with you I danced at the ball. Next we will dance at our own wedding."

So the prince and princess were married, and lived happily ever after, as the princes and princesses in fairy tales always do.

That is good Book

EDITOR'S NOTE

This truly delightful little collection of fairy tales and folk stories acquaints us with some of the prime favourites of the little people of Italy ; and, children being much the same all the world over in their likes and dislikes, we doubt not that our own young folks will equally revel in what their good friend, Miss TAPSELL, has done for them so very nicely.

There is a vein of humour in both *The Fairy's Cure* and *Beppo and the Goblin* (particularly the latter), which makes them pleasant reading. Curiously enough, humour is a comparatively infrequent element in the fairy tales of most nations. Plenty of fantastic imagination, romance, adventure, and so forth—but little or nothing of a sense of the funniness of things ! As might be expected, however, the Irish folk tale is not seldom a *humoresque ;* and some amusing examples will be found in MARSHALL'S *Some Celtic Folk Stories* (No. 144 of this Series).

The romantic element is well represented in *The Serpent Prince* and *The Children of the Forest*—pervaded, as these are, with the appropriate atmosphere of the " region of stories," where the range of possibilities is so immense, and where spells and enchantments, a serpent turning into a prince, and a prince flying out of the window in the form of a pigeon, also wise animals speaking with the voice of a man and giving good advice, are all so very feasible and actual that they do not need accounting for, any more than say, an electric light needs accounting for. Yet, not so *very* many generations back, the idea of electric lighting would have been thought so fantastically impracticable as to pertain only to fairyland.

The last tale, *The King's Goose-Girl*, will be all the more interesting to the children for the fact that, when they get well into it, they will find some remarkable resemblances to their very old and well-beloved friend, *Cinderella*. The vogue of this story, in one form or another, is truly extraordinary ; it has been estimated by folklorists that there are between three and four hundred versions of it, and that practically every nation in the world has its *Cinderella* tradition.

That is Good Story

QUESTIONS

THE FAIRY'S CURE

1 Who was Bianca ?

2 What cured the princess of her bad temper ?

3 How did the princess treat Bianca when she found her ?

BEPPO AND THE GOBLIN

1 How did Beppo escape from the goblin ?

2 Write down as shortly as you can how the goblin came to an end.

THE SERPENT PRINCE

1 What tasks did the king say must be performed before he would give his daughter to the serpent ?

2 What prevented the spell from being completely broken when the prince cast the serpent's skin ?

3 How did the princess learn the story of the prince's enchantment ?

4 Tell me how the prince was cured of his wounds.

THE CHILDREN OF THE FOREST

1 What gifts did the fairies give to the children in the wood ?

2 Tell me how the elder brother obtained the dancing water.

3 How was it that the brothers did not return when they went in search of the singing apple ?

4 Describe shortly how the princess rescued her brothers.

THE KING'S GOOSE-GIRL

1 What answers did the king's three daughters give when their father asked how much they loved him ?

2 Why did the king order his youngest daughter to be killed ?

3 Tell me what other story, that you know well, is rather similar to this.

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