



Silver Bells

Charles Sellers

Portuguese

Intermediate
8 min read

It was in a lovely pine-wood that little Mirabella wandered lonely and hungry. The sand under her feet was very cool, and the tufted pine-trees sheltered her from the fierce rays of the sun.

Through an avenue of tall but bare pine-trees she could see the big sea, which she looked upon for the first time. Faint and hungry as she was, she could not help wishing to be nearer the waves; but she recollected what her father had once told her, that little children should be careful not to go too near the sea when they are alone.

Her father, however, was dead. He was King of the Silver Isles, and for his goodness had been loved by all his subjects. Mirabella was his only child; and her mother having married again, she wanted to get rid of Mirabella, so that her little boy Gliglu might inherit the crown. So she ordered one of her servants to lead Mirabella into the pine-wood far away and leave her there, hoping the wolves would find her and eat her.

When Mirabella was born, her aunt, who was a fairy, gave her a silver bell, which she tied around the child's neck with a fairy chain that could not be broken. In vain did her mother try to take it from her; no scissors could cut through it, and her strength could not break it, so that wherever Mirabella went the silver bell tinkled merrily.

Now, it so happened that on the second night on which she was out the silver bell tinkled so loudly, that a wolf who happened to be near, hearing it, approached her and said—

“Silver bell, silver bell, do not fear;
To obey you, Mirabella, I am here.”

At first the little girl was very much afraid, because she had heard of the cruelty of wolves; but when he repeated the words, she said—

“Dear Mr. Wolf, if you would be so kind as to bring me my mamma, I would be so obliged.”

Off ran the wolf without saying another word, and Mirabella commenced jumping for joy, causing her silver bell to tinkle more than ever. A fox, hearing it, came up to her and said—

“Silver bell, silver bell, do not fear;
To obey you, Mirabella, I am here.”

Then she said, “Oh, dear Mr. Fox, I am so hungry! I wish you would bring me something to eat.”

Off went the fox, and in a short time he returned with a roast fowl, bread, a plate, knife, and fork, all nicely placed in a basket. On the top of these things was a clean white cloth, which she spread on the ground, and on which she placed her dinner. She was indeed thankful to the fox for his kindness, and patted his head, which made him wag his thick brush. She enjoyed her dinner very much; but she was very thirsty. She thought she would try tinkling her bell, and no sooner had she done so than she heard the tinkling of another bell in the distance, coming nearer and nearer to her. She stood on tiptoe, and she saw a stream of water flowing towards her, on which floated a pretty canoe. When it got up to her it stopped, and inside the canoe was a silver mug; but on the bows of the canoe was hanging a silver bell just like her own.

“Silver bell, silver bell, do not fear;
When thy mother comes, step in here.”

So sang the canoe; but she could not understand why she should get into the canoe if her mother came, because she loved her mother, and thought her mother loved her. Anyhow she took hold of the mug, and, filling it with water, drank it up. Water, which is always the most refreshing of all drinks, was what the tired little girl most needed, and as her father had brought her up very carefully and properly, she had never tasted anything stronger; but her thirst made her enjoy the water more than she ever had.

Suddenly she heard some one screaming for help, and the screams came nearer and nearer to her. She turned round and saw the wolf bearing her mother on his back, and however much she tried to get off she could not,

because the wolf threatened to bite her. Springing up to Mirabella's side, the wolf said—

“Silver bell, silver bell, do not fear;
To obey you, Mirabella, I am here.”

The wicked mother now jumped off his back, and commenced scolding Mirabella for having sent for her. She said that as soon as she got back to the palace she would make a law that all the wolves should be killed, and that if Mirabella ever dared return she should be smothered. The poor little girl felt very miserable, and was afraid that her mother might kill her, so she stepped into the canoe, and said—

“Bear me where my father dwells,
Tinkle, tinkle, silver bells.”

The stream continued to flow, and as the canoe moved on she saw her mother turned into a cork-tree, and she bid good-bye to the wolf and the fox. On sped the boat, and it soon neared the big sea; but Mirabella felt no fear, for the stream struck out across the ocean, and the waves did not come near her. For three days and nights the silver bells tinkled and the canoe sped on; and when the morning of the fourth day came, she saw that they were approaching a beautiful island, on which were growing many palm-trees, which are called sacred palms. The grass was far greener than any she had ever seen, for the sun was more brilliant, but not so fierce, and when the canoe touched the shore—oh, joy!—she saw her dear father.

“Silver bell, silver bell, do not fear;
To protect thee, Mirabella, I am here.”

She was so pleased to see her father again and to hear him speak. It was so nice to be loved, to be cared for, to be spoken kindly to. Everything seemed to welcome her; the boughs of the sacred palms waved in the summer breeze, and the humming-birds, flitting about, seemed like precious stones set in a glorious blaze of light. Her father was not changed very much; he looked somewhat younger and stronger, and as he lifted her in his arms his face seemed handsomer and his voice more welcome. She felt no pang of sorrow, she had no fears, for she was in her father's arms, to which the fairy silver bells had led her.

Farther up in the island she saw groups of other children running to meet her, all with silver bells around their necks; and some there were among them whom she had known in the Silver Islands. These had been playmates of hers, but had left before her.

So periods of light sped on, in which joy was her companion, when, looking into a deep but very clear pond,

she saw a gnarled cork-tree, which seemed to have been struck by lightning. Long did she stand there gazing into it wondering where she had seen that tree. All at once she spied a canoe passing close by the tree, in which stood a young man, whom she recognized as her step-brother Gliglu. He seemed to cast a sorrowful look at the tree, and then she recollected the fate of her mother. At this moment her silver bell fell off, and, sinking into the pond, it went down—down, until it reached the tree, and, tinkling, said—

“Take thy shape again, O queen!”

Then Mirabella saw her mother step into the canoe; and tinkling bells in a short space of time told her that others dear and near to her had arrived, and, running down to the shore, she cried out—

“Silver bells, O mother, wait you here,
Nought but joy with father, nought to fear.”

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com