

The Prince Who Wanted to See the World

Andrew Lang's Fairy Books

Portuguese

Intermediate
14 min read

There was once a king who had only one son, and this young man tormented his father from morning till night to allow him to travel in far countries. For a long time the king refused to give him leave; but at last, wearied out, he granted permission, and ordered his treasurer to produce a large sum of money for the prince's expenses. The youth was overjoyed at the thought that he was really going to see the world, and after tenderly embracing his father he set forth.

He rode on for some weeks without meeting with any adventures; but one night when he was resting at an inn, he came across another traveller, with whom he fell into conversation, in the course of which the stranger inquired if he never played cards. The young man replied that he was very fond of doing so. Cards were brought, and in a very short time the prince had lost every penny he possessed to his new acquaintance. When there was absolutely nothing left at the bottom of the bag, the stranger proposed that they should have just one more game, and that if the prince won he should have the money restored to him, but in case he lost, should remain in the inn for three years, and besides that should be his servant for another three. The prince agreed to those terms, played, and lost; so the stranger took rooms for him, and furnished him with bread and water

every day for three years.

The prince lamented his lot, but it was no use; and at the end of three years he was released and had to go to the house of the stranger, who was really the king of a neighbouring country, and be his servant. Before he had gone very far he met a woman carrying a child, which was crying from hunger. The prince took it from her, and fed it with his last crust of bread and last drop of water, and then gave it back to its mother. The woman thanked him gratefully, and said:

‘Listen, my lord. You must walk straight on till you notice a very strong scent, which comes from a garden by the side of the road. Go in and hide yourself close to a tank, where three doves will come to bathe. As the last one flies past you, catch hold of its robe of feathers, and refuse to give it back till the dove has promised you three things.’

The young man did as he was told, and everything happened as the woman had said. He took the robe of feathers from the dove, who gave him in exchange for it a ring, a collar, and one of its own plumes, saying: ‘When you are in any trouble, cry “Come to my aid, O dove!” I am the daughter of the king you are going to serve, who hates your father and made you gamble in order to cause your ruin.’

Thus the prince went on his way, and in course of time he arrived at the king’s palace. As soon as his master knew he was there, the young man was sent for into his presence, and three bags were handed to him with these words:

‘Take this wheat, this millet, and this barley, and sow them at once, so that I may have loaves of them all tomorrow.’

The prince stood speechless at this command, but the king did not condescend to give any further explanation, and when he was dismissed the young man flew to the room which had been set aside for him, and pulling out his feather, he cried: ‘Dove, dove! be quick and come.’

‘What is it?’ said the dove, flying in through the open window, and the prince told her of the task before him, and of his despair at being unable to accomplish it. ‘Fear nothing; it will be all right,’ replied the dove, as she flew away again.

The next morning when the prince awoke he saw the three loaves standing beside his bed. He jumped up and dressed, and he was scarcely ready when a page arrived with the message that he was to go at once into the king's chamber. Taking the loaves in his arm he followed the boy, and, bowing low, laid them down before the king. The monarch looked at the loaves for a moment without speaking, then he said:

'Good. The man who can do this can also find the ring which my eldest daughter dropped into the sea.'

The prince hastened back to his room and summoned the dove, and when she heard this new command she said: 'Now listen. To-morrow take a knife and a basin and go down to the shore and get into a boat you will find there.'

The young man did not know what he was to do when he was in the boat or where he was to go, but as the dove had come to his rescue before, he was ready to obey her blindly.

When he reached the boat he found the dove perched on one of the masts, and at a signal from her he put to sea; the wind was behind them and they soon lost sight of land. The dove then spoke for the first time and said, 'Take that knife and cut off my head, but be careful that not a single drop of blood falls to the ground. Afterwards you must throw it into the sea.'

Wondering at this strange order, the prince picked up his knife and severed the dove's head from her body at one stroke. A little while after a dove rose from the water with a ring in its beak, and laying it in the prince's hand, dabbled itself with the blood that was in the basin, when its head became that of a beautiful girl. Another moment and it had vanished completely, and the prince took the ring and made his way back to the palace.

The king stared with surprise at the sight of the ring, but he thought of another way of getting rid of the young man which was surer even than the other two.

'This evening you will mount my colt and ride him to the field, and break him in properly.'

The prince received this command as silently as he had received the rest, but no sooner was he in his room than he called for the dove, who said: 'Attend to me. My father longs to see you dead, and thinks he will kill you by this means. He himself is the colt, my mother is the saddle, my two sisters are the stirrups, and I am the bridle. Do not forget to take a good club, to help you in dealing with such a crew.'

So the prince mounted the colt, and gave him such a beating that when he came to the palace to announce that the animal was now so meek that it could be ridden by the smallest child, he found the king so bruised that he had to be wrapped in cloths dipped in vinegar, the mother was too stiff to move, and several of the daughters' ribs were broken. The youngest, however, was quite unharmed. That night she came to the prince and whispered to him:

'Now that they are all in too much pain to move, we had better seize our chance and run away. Go to the stable and saddle the leanest horse you can find there.' But the prince was foolish enough to choose the fattest: and when they had started and the princess saw what he had done, she was very sorry, for though this horse ran like the wind, the other flashed like thought. However, it was dangerous to go back, and they rode on as fast as the horse would go.

In the night the king sent for his youngest daughter, and as she did not come he sent again; but she did not come any the more for that. The queen, who was a witch, discovered that her daughter had gone off with the prince, and told her husband he must leave his bed and go after them. The king got slowly up, groaning with pain, and dragged himself to the stables, where he saw the lean horse still in his stall.

Leaping on his back he shook the reins, and his daughter, who knew what to expect and had her eyes open, saw the horse start forward, and in the twinkling of an eye changed her own steed into a cell, the prince into a hermit, and herself into a nun.

When the king reached the chapel, he pulled up his horse and asked if a girl and a young man had passed that way. The hermit raised his eyes, which were bent on the ground, and said that he had not seen a living creature. The king, much disgusted at this news, and not knowing what to do, returned home and told his wife that, though he had ridden for miles, he had come across nothing but a hermit and a nun in a cell.

'Why those were the runaways, of course,' she cried, flying into a passion, 'and if you had only brought a scrap

of the nun's dress, or a bit of stone from the wall, I should have had them in my power.'

At these words the king hastened back to the stable, and brought out the lean horse who travelled quicker than thought. But his daughter saw him coming, and changed her horse into a plot of ground, herself into a rose-tree covered with roses, and the prince into a gardener. As the king rode up, the gardener looked up from the tree which he was trimming and asked if anything was the matter. 'Have you seen a young man and a girl go by?' said the king, and the gardener shook his head and replied that no one had passed that way since he had been working there. So the king turned his steps homewards and told his wife.

'Idiot!' cried she, 'if you had only brought me one of the roses, or a handful of earth, I should have had them in my power. But there is no time to waste. I shall have to go with you myself.'

The girl saw them from afar, and a great fear fell on her, for she knew her mother's skill in magic of all kinds. However, she determined to fight to the end, and changed the horse into a deep pool, herself into an eel, and the prince into a turtle. But it was no use. Her mother recognised them all, and, pulling up, asked her daughter if she did not repent and would not like to come home again. The eel wagged 'No' with her tail, and the queen told her husband to put a drop of water from the pool into a bottle, because it was only by that means that she could seize hold of her daughter. The king did as he was bid, and was just in the act of drawing the bottle out of the water after he had filled it, when the turtle knocked against and spilt it all. The king then filled it a second time, but again the turtle was too quick for him.

The queen saw that she was beaten, and called down a curse on her daughter that the prince should forget all about her. After having relieved her feelings in this manner, she and the king went back to the palace.

The others resumed their proper shapes and continued their journey, but the princess was so silent that at last the prince asked her what was the matter. 'It is because I know you will soon forget all about me,' said she, and though he laughed at her and told her it was impossible, she did not cease to believe it.

They rode on and on and on, till they reached the end of the world, where the prince lived, and leaving the girl in an inn he went himself to the palace to ask leave of his father to present her to him as his bride; but in his joy at seeing his family once more he forgot all about her, and even listened when the king spoke of arranging a marriage for him.

When the poor girl heard this she wept bitterly, and cried out, 'Come to me, my sisters, for I need you badly!'

In a moment they stood beside her, and the elder one said, 'Do not be sad, all will go well,' and they told the innkeeper that if any of the king's servants wanted any birds for their master they were to be sent up to them, as they had three doves for sale.

And so it fell out, and as the doves were very beautiful the servant bought them for the king, who admired them so much that he called his son to look at them. The prince was much pleased with the doves and was coaxing them to come to him, when one fluttered on to the top of the window and said, 'If you could only hear us speak, you would admire us still more.'

And another perched on a table and added, 'Talk away, it might help him to remember!'

And the third flew on his shoulder and whispered to him, 'Put on this ring, prince, and see if it fits you.'

And it did. Then they hung a collar round his neck, and held a feather on which was written the name of the dove. And at last his memory came back to him, and he declared he would marry the princess and nobody else. So the next day the wedding took place, and they lived happy till they died.

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