



STORIES FROM  
CHAUCER

THE CANTERBURY TALES



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# Stories from Chaucer

## The Canterbury Tales



*Edited by W. T. STEAD : Illustrated by EDITH EWEN*

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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY  
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## PREFACE

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER was an English poet who lived in the fourteenth century. For nearly five hundred years he has ministered to the mirth and gladness of the English-speaking world. In the *Canterbury Tales* the fourteenth century rises from the grave, so to speak; and Chaucer's pilgrims—a motley band—are almost the only men of his time who live and breathe immortalized by the genius of the poet. Never again, we fear, will Merrie England see the friendly social gathering of knight and squire, of stately dame and low-born cook, of merchant, miller, and friar, spending the evening together in listening to such tales as these. Some of them, no doubt, were coarse enough to make one wonder how they could be told in the hearing of ladies and of priests.

Chaucer's *Tales* may be regarded as the first and most popular of the short stories that have won for themselves so prominent a place in literature. His *Canterbury Tales* are the first miscellany of poetry and fiction in our tongue that has achieved world-wide popularity. Their age in itself is no small addition to their charm. These stories, which are now being scattered broadcast over the English-speaking world, were familiar to the men who fought the Wars of the Roses. They cheered the youth of the Reformers, they were the favorite reading of the heroes of the Elizabethan age; and down to our own time these short stories in verse have been the solace and the amusement of successive generations of our race.





# THE CANTERBURY TALES

## SIMPLY TOLD FOR CHILDREN

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MANY years ago it was a common thing for men and women to go on pilgrimages. If they had been sick, they journeyed to the shrine of a favorite saint to give thanks for their recovery; if they wished to receive some blessing, they asked the same saint to intercede on their behalf, that it might be granted them. And perhaps the time of year when it was most usual to undertake these pious journeys was in the spring, when the birds were singing, and the April showers had made the roads pleasant to walk upon, after the dust of March.

In the reign of Richard II. it happened that a poet, called Geoffrey Chaucer, started on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, and before he began his journey, he put up for the night in an inn in Southwark, in the south of London. The inn was called the "Tabard." There were assembled in the same inn a number of other travelers of all classes of life, twenty-nine of them, who were bound on the same religious duty.

The host, as they called the landlord of the inn, was a merry fellow, and when he saw this goodly assembly met together, a brilliant idea seized him, which he lost no time in putting before the company. He said, they were all going on a long and dangerous journey (for traveling in those days was a serious business, I can tell you), and would it not be well to beguile the weary hours by entertaining each other. Every one must know and be able to tell at least one good story, and he proposed that each should take it in turn to provide amusement for the others, by telling, as best he could, some history, true or otherwise. Let them draw lots, said he, to decide who should begin, and then each in turn do his best, and when all

the stories were told, he who had done best should be entertained at supper by the others. The host himself offered to accompany them, to show them the road, and said he would be their leader, and whoever refused to obey his orders should be obliged to pay for entertainment for the rest. This proposal was agreed to by them all, and they went to bed, intending to start in the morning as soon as the sun rose.

Before I go any farther I will tell you who the company were, and describe them to you as well as I can.

First, there was a knight, a noble gentleman, who from his earliest youth had loved chivalry, truth, honor, liberty, and courtesy. He had been in many wars in different countries, and was renowned for his valour. But he was modest and simple in his manners, and never spoke harshly to any one. Chaucer calls him a "very perfect gentle knight." He had just returned from a voyage, and was going to the shrine at Canterbury to return thanks for his preservation from so many dangers.

With him was his son, a young squire, about twenty years of age, tall, strong, and handsome. He had already begun to follow in his father's footsteps, and had been on some short fighting expeditions in France, where he had done his best to acquit himself bravely, that he might win the favor of the lady he loved. He could ride well, and also write and sing songs, draw and dance. And with all this he was modest and courteous in his behavior, as all gentlemen should be.

The knight brought with him one servant, called a yeoman. He was dressed in green, and carried a mighty bow and arrows, besides a sword and buckler, dagger and horn.

Another pilgrim was a nun, a prioress, who was called Madame Eglantine. She had a sweet, simple, frank face, and was a clever woman. She could sing very sweetly, and speak French, such as was taught at Stratford, near London, for she knew nothing of Parisian French, so no doubt her accent was not very good. Chaucer describes at great length her pretty manners at table, how daintily and nicely she behaved in eating; for I am sorry to tell you that it was no unusual thing at that time to see people, and gentle people too, eating their food in a manner that would shock us now. The prioress was so kind-hearted and pitiful that she would weep if a mouse

were caught in a trap, or if any one should beat her little pet dogs. She was accompanied by another nun, and three priests attended them.

Then there was a monk, fat and jolly, who loved hunting, and did not think it was either right or pleasant for a religious man to be always shut up in a cloister. He had good horses, and knew how to ride them, and he kept greyhounds for coursing after the hares. His robe was bordered with grey fur, and he had a curious gold pin to fasten his hood. His head was bald and shining, and his whole appearance showed that he loved good living and pleasant company. A monk, as no doubt you all know, was a priest who lived in a monastery, with others like himself. This monk was the head or lord of his house, and had other monks under him, who were bound to obey him.

There was also a friar, whose name was Hubert. A friar was a priest who wandered about the country, having no settled home or means of living, but depending for his bread on the charity of the people living in the towns and villages he visited, whom he would repay by giving consolation to the sick and dying, marrying their young people, and baptizing their babies. The friar I am telling you about was a very engaging man, and much beloved by every one; possibly this was because he was very lenient to their faults, and did not order them to do hard penances or punishments.

Then there was a merchant, with a forked beard, and a high Flanders hat. He was a good practical man of business, and his name I cannot tell you.

Next came a clerk from Oxford, riding on a very thin, half-starved-looking horse. This clerk looked no better fed than his horse, for his cheeks were hollow and his clothes threadbare; for although he hoped to be a priest some day, he had not as yet had a living given to him, and had to depend for his daily bread and the cost of his education on the bounty of his friends. But he loved learning more than rich books, or furniture, or jewels. He was very silent and thoughtful.

Another pilgrim was a law sergeant, very grave and wise in appearance, who was noted for skill in his profession; and although he was a very busy man, yet he could find time to fulfil the pious duty of visiting the shrine at Canterbury.

Another was a franklin; that is to say, he was a rich country gentleman, father of a family. This one was a ruddy old gentleman with white hair, fond of comfortable living. He was renowned for his hospitality, and always welcomed any traveler at his well-spread board. He had been sheriff for his county, and was much respected.

Others were a haberdasher or draper, a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, and another tradesman, who all belonged to the same guild, and therefore wore the same costume. Guilds were the societies in which the tradespeople of the Middle Ages banded themselves together in order to support and help each other, as, united, they might be able to put a stop to grievances, which they could not fight against single-handed. These shopkeeper pilgrims were well-to-do townspeople, who could well afford to spare the time to go on a pilgrimage.

There was also a sailor, who came from the west country, probably Dartmouth. He was on horseback, but, like all sailors, did not ride very well. He was brown and weather-beaten, and a jolly fellow, who knew every seaport from Scotland to Finisterre.

Next came a doctor, who would be able to physic his companions, should any be taken ill on the journey.

Then there was an old lady from Bath, called the Wife of Bath. She was very much a wife, as Chaucer tells us she had had five husbands. She was, however, a worthy woman, and skillful in cloth-making, and had also been a great traveler, having visited Jerusalem three times, as well as Rome, Cologne, and Boulogne.

Chaucer next mentions a poor town parson; that is to say, he was poor in worldly goods, but rich in mind and noble qualities. He was kind and hard-working, patient in trouble, and ever ready to share the little he had with the needy. His parish was large, and he had no horse, but did not let either thunder or rain keep him from visiting the sick and unfortunate in his flock, however far away they might live. He lived an upright life himself, and taught more by example than precept. But although he was so good and holy himself, he did not despise the wicked, but rather tried to lead them gently to alter their ways, by his good example and loving teaching. With him was his brother, a ploughman, in a smock-frock. He was



a good, honest fellow, and there is nothing further to tell you about him.

Another jolly fellow was a miller, big and fat, with a broad, ugly face and a red beard. He wore a white coat and a blue hood, and had a bagpipe which he blew before the others to lead them out of town.

Another was called a reeve. He was a thin, bad-tempered man, with a shaven face and close-cropped head. He had long legs like sticks, and rode upon a grey horse whose name was "Scot." He was called Oswald, and he lived in Norfolk.

Then there came a sumpner, or summoner. He summoned people who were in debt, or had been guilty of any misdemeanor, to appear at court. He had a round, red, surly face, and frowned so much that little children would run away from him. He had adorned his head with a garland, and carried a cake to serve as a shield, which seems very funny.

A pardoner was there, too. He carried about with him relics of the saints, and when people paid him a certain sum of money he allowed them to touch these relics, which he professed were able to pardon their sins. Of course we know better than that, and are not so foolish as to believe that to touch the bones of a holy man, long dead, could take away sin; but at the time of which I am speaking the country people were sadly ignorant and superstitious.

Such were the pilgrims who were on their way to Canterbury, and I must mention, also, the poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, who tells us all about them, and the worthy landlord of the inn who accompanied them as their leader.

Very early the next morning, when the day was dawning, the merry company set forth on their journey, and as soon as they had got a little way out of the town the host stopped, and suggested that they should draw lots, and whoever drew the shortest should begin to entertain the others with a story. This was done, and it happened that the lot fell to the knight, who, like the true gentleman that he was, made no demur, but told at once the following story:



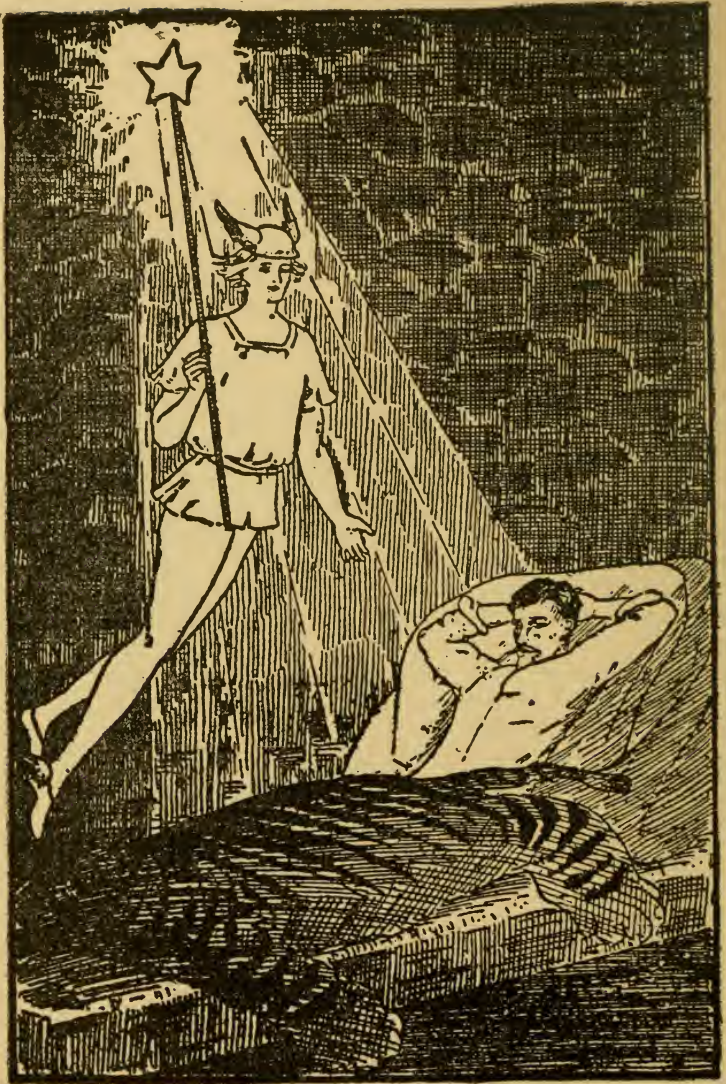
EMILY IN THE PALACE GARDEN

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

THERE were, once upon a time, two knights, called Palamon and Arcite, who had been taken prisoners by Duke Theseus, of Athens, and were confined in a tower which overlooked the palace garden.

One morning, as Palamon was looking out of his window he saw a beautiful maiden walking there, who was the Duke's sister-in-law, Emily. She had long yellow hair, which hung down in a plait more than a yard long, and she was walking up and down singing, and gathering flowers. She was so lovely that Palamon fell deeply in love with her, and cried out loudly with surprise, which attracted Arcite's attention. He therefore looked out of the window also, and when he saw the maiden fell in love with her, just as his companion had done. Then these knights, who had always loved each other as brothers, began to quarrel about the lady, until Arcite sensibly said that as they were both shut up in prison, and not likely ever even to speak to Emily, it was absurd to dispute over what neither of them could have. So they made up their disagreement, although each still felt secretly jealous of the other.

Some time after this an old friend of the Duke's came to pay him a visit, and as he had known Arcite since he was a child, when he heard he was a prisoner in the tower, he persuaded Theseus to set him free. The Duke therefore sent to Arcite to tell him he might go wherever he chose, on condition that he never returned to Athens; if he did so, and should be again taken prisoner, then he would be condemned to lose his head. Arcite, instead of being glad that he was free, wept and bemoaned himself more than ever, because he would be parted from his beloved Emily, and thought Palamon's lot was better than his own, as he might still gaze upon her from the window. Palamon, however, when left behind all alone, envied Arcite with all his heart, thinking



ARCITE'S DREAM



that he might gather an army together, make war on the Duke, and carry off Emily by force.

Arcite went back to his native place, but was so filled with grief that he could neither eat nor sleep, and after some time grew pale and thin. One night, when he had fallen into a restless doze, after hours of weary tossing about, the god Mercury appeared to him in a dream, and told him to go back to Athens, and that his troubles would soon be at an end. On waking, he looked at himself in a mirror, and found that he was so much changed by all he had suffered that no one would know him. Dressing himself as a poor page, he returned to Duke Theseus' court, and offered himself to the chamberlain as a servant. He was fortunate enough to be engaged as page to Emily herself, and served her with so much devotion that he was soon beloved by all. Although in his humble position he dared not speak to Emily of love, he was happy in being near her, and able to see her every day.

Meanwhile, poor Palamon was still in prison; but, some time after this, in the month of May, he managed to escape, with the help of one of the jailers, and fled to a wood, where he hid himself among some bushes.

On that very morning Arcite happened to come to the wood also, to gather green branches for the May garlands, and when he had collected enough he sat down close to the grove where Palamon lay hidden. He then began to sigh and complain of the position in which he found himself—he, a noble knight, Arcite, to be in a servant's position, and still as far from winning the love of the lady Emily as ever, though he was bearing so much for her sake. On hearing this, Palamon could contain himself no longer, but, springing from his hiding-place, began to reproach Arcite for deceiving the Duke and coming back to Athens. A quarrel ensued which became so violent that at last they decided that they must fight; and as Palamon had no weapons, Arcite went back to the palace, returning with armor and swords for them both. Then a fierce combat began, in which probably one or both of them would have been killed had they not been interrupted.

The Duke, who was out on a hunting expedition with his



wife, his sister, and many lords and ladies, happened to ride up to the spot where the knights were fighting, and commanded them to stop at once, and tell him what their quarrel was about. Palamon, humbly acknowledging that each of them deserved to die, confessed everything; how both he and Arcite had loved the lady Emily so dearly that they would brave anything in order to be near her. When the Duchess heard this romantic tale, she and all the ladies were full of compassion, and implored Duke Theseus to spare their lives. He graciously consented, and, moreover, proposed to give Emily to one of them as his wife. She could not wed them both, therefore the matter should be decided by a tournament, to take place in a year's time. Each of the knights should bring a hundred others with him to join in a mock fight, and whichever won the victory should receive Emily's hand in marriage. To this Palamon and Arcite joyfully consented, and went away to collect their friends together to fight for them.

When the appointed day arrived, the Duchess, Emily, and all the ladies of the court took their places on a grandstand, hung with cloth of gold, to watch the tournament. It was a gorgeous sight, the handsome knights clad in glittering armor, the flying pennons and flashing swords. A long conflict took place, and after much struggling for the victory,



Edith Rwen.

THE DEATH OF ARCITE

the unfortunate Palamon was at last overcome and taken prisoner. Thereupon the Duke proclaimed that Arcite was the conqueror, and should have Emily, whom he had fairly won. He, full of joy, was riding gaily up to his bride when his horse stumbled and pitched him forward on to the pommel of his saddle. It pierced through the joints of his armor, and made a fearful wound in his breast. He was picked up unconscious and borne to the palace, where his wound was dressed and every care was bestowed upon him. Nothing, however, could save his life; and when he knew this, he sent for his lady-love, the beautiful Emliy, and his old friend Palamon.

Emily, weeping, clasped him for the first time in her gentle arms, and at last Arcite had won the dearest wish of his heart. With many tender words he told her he must die and leave her, and then telling her what a brave, noble knight Palamon was, and how dearly he loved her, asked her not to forget him if she should ever become a wife. After this his speech failed, he could say no more, but, with Emily's name on his lips, passed away. He was borne to the grave with due honor, and for many a long day Emily wept for her lost lover, and refused to be comforted. Palamon, too, forgot his jealousy, and mourned for his friend with all his heart.

At length there came a day when Duke Theseus, sending for Palamon and Emily, told them the time for mourning was over, and he thought now that his sister should wed Palamon, who had loved her so long and truly. Emily bowed her head in assent, and Palamon, happy at last, placing a ring upon her finger, promised to make her a faithful, loving husband. Accordingly, they were married, and passed the rest of their days in great happiness, for Emily in time came to love her husband as dearly as she had done the lost Arcite.





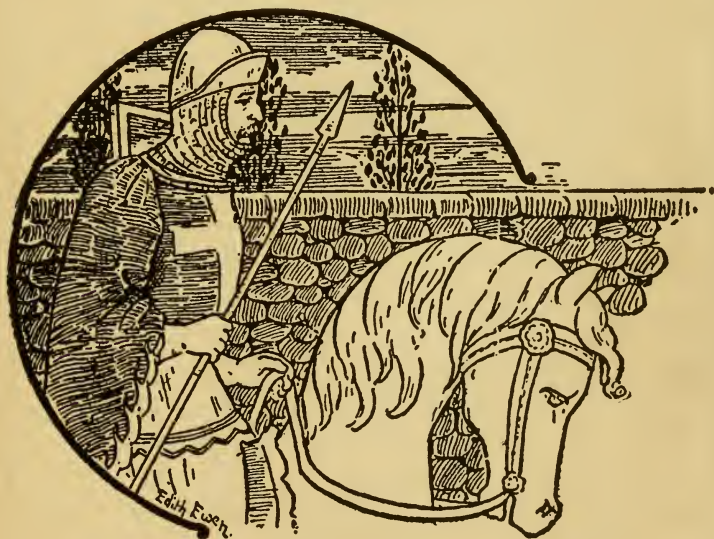
EMILY AND PALAMON



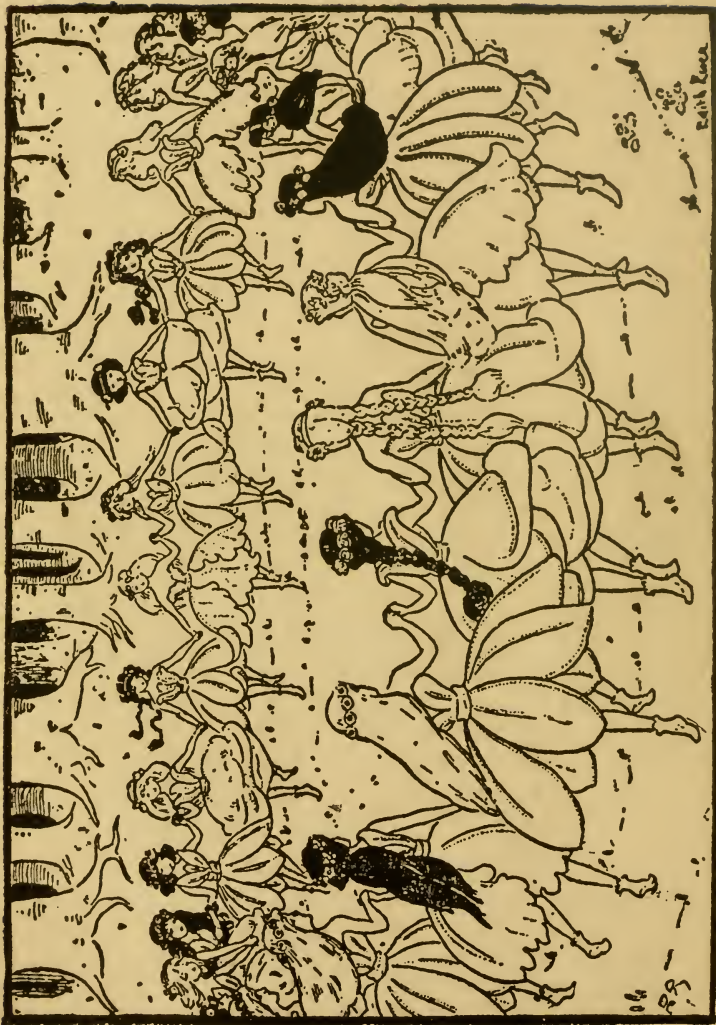
THE KNIGHT'S OFFENCE

## THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

ONCE upon a time, in the reign of good King Arthur, a knight, riding along the riverside, saw a maiden walking by herself. As she was very pretty, the knight stole a kiss from her, and King Arthur, being the soul of chivalry and honor, punished all such offences with death. Therefore, when the



maiden complained of the way in which she had been treated, the unfortunate knight was tried and condemned to lose his head. He was young and handsome, so the Queen felt very sorry for him, and after much pleading from her, the King delivered the knight into her hands, to treat in whatever manner she chose. The Queen thanked her husband with all her



WHAT THE KNIGHT SAW IN THE WOOD



heart, and after thinking for a short time, told the knight what she had decided.

"I will grant you your life," she said, "if you can tell me what it is that women most desire, and to find it out you may have a year and a day's grace; if, then, you still have not learned the answer, you must die."

So the knight went forth into the world, seeking the answer to this riddle, which he found indeed a puzzling one. He asked all whom he met what it was, in their opinion; but this did not help him much, for he found hardly any two people who gave him the same answer. Some said women loved riches, some rank and high estate, some pleasure and gaiety, some fine clothes. Some said women's hearts might best be won with flattery and praises; and, again, others said that their chief delight was in being free and able to have their own way. The poor knight therefore grew quite bewildered with all these different suggestions, and at last was obliged to turn homeward again without having discovered anything.

But as he was riding through a forest, he saw a number of ladies, four-and-twenty or more, dancing in a ring in a little open space in the wood. He imagined that they were fairies, so drew near, hoping that they could tell him what he wished to know. But before he got up to them they vanished away, and the only living creature he could see was an ugly old woman, like a witch, sitting on the grass.

She got up when she saw him, and asked him if he were in any difficulty to tell her what it was, as often old people were able to give good advice. Then said the knight, "My good mother, I must lose my life unless I can tell what it is that women love best. If you could tell me that, I would pay you well for the information."

"Promise to grant me the next request I make of you," said the witch, "and I will tell you what you want to know."

"I promise," replied the knight.

She then whispered something in his ear, and afterwards accompanied him to the court, where the Queen and all the ladies were assembled together to hear what answer he would give. On being asked if he could answer the Queen's question, the knight replied without any hesitation that what

women liked best was to have the upper hand in their own homes, both over their husbands and the rest of their households. All the ladies of the court, from the Queen herself downwards, were silent, for they were quite unable to contradict what the knight said, and it was decided that he had answered truly, and therefore his life should be spared. Upon this the old witch started up, and claimed from the knight, according to his promise, that he should make her his wife.



“Alas! and well-a-way!” said he; “I acknowledge that I did make this promise, but for heaven’s sake ask of me something else; take all my wealth, but let me keep my freedom.”

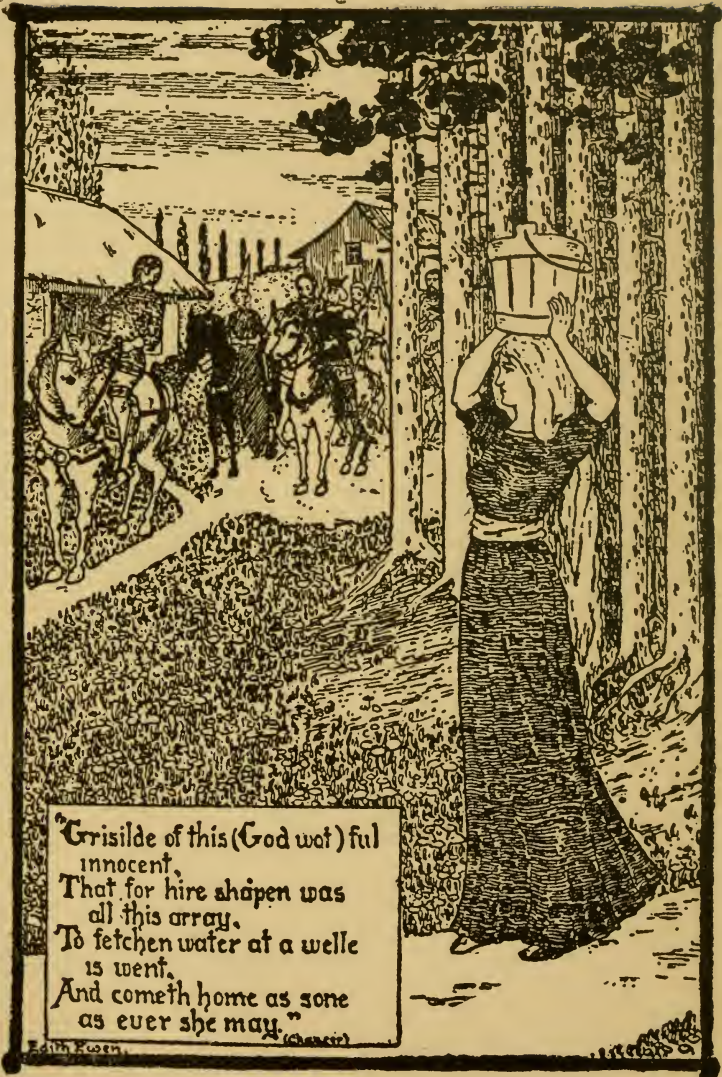
However, the old woman would not be denied; she was determined to have the handsome knight for her husband, and in the end he was obliged to marry her, though sorely against his will. He made no secret of his unwillingness, but

looked so cross and unhappy that the old woman began to chide him with great gentleness and wisdom. She said although she was so old and ugly, yet she loved him truly, and would do anything to give him pleasure; neither would she be unfaithful to her husband, as might be fairer, younger women. She ended by asking him which he would prefer, that she should be young and lovely, but at the same time bad-tempered and unfaithful, or old and ugly, but always kind and true, "for," said she, "I can be whichever you wish."

When the knight heard how wisely she could argue, he said:

"Dear wife, you indeed know better than I do, therefore you choose for me, and I will abide by your decision."

At this speech of the knight's the spell which had been cast over his wife was broken, and she was restored to her natural self, becoming a beautiful young girl. She explained that she had been made to look old and ugly by a wicked enchanter, who said that she must remain so until she had wed a handsome knight, who would yield his own will to hers. Now the spell was broken, the knight clasped his lovely young wife in his arms, and they lived happily for the rest of their lives.



"Grisilde of this (God wot) ful  
 innocent,  
 That for hire shapen was  
 all this array,  
 To fetchen water at a welle  
 is went,  
 And cometh home as sone  
 as ever she may."



## THE CLERK'S TALE.

THERE was once a certain marquis called Walter, young, strong, and handsome, and as he owned large estates, his people wished him to marry, that he might have a son to inherit his land.

Not far from the Marquis's palace was a village where poor people lived, and among them, almost the poorest, was a man called Janicola, who had a beautiful young daughter, Griselda by name. She was not only beautiful, but good and industrious also, and the Marquis had often noticed her as he rode through the village, and made up his mind that if he should ever wed, he would make her his wife.

At nine o'clock one morning the Marquis put on royal apparel, and with a following of lords and ladies rode to the village. Griselda had gone early to fetch water at the well, and when she returned to the cottage, to her great astonishment the Marquis came forward and called her by name. She fell on her knees before him, and meekly waited to hear what he would say. He spoke gently to her, and asked her where her father was, so Griselda went to fetch him. Then Lord Walter took Janicola by the hand, saying that he had come to ask him to give him Griselda for his wife. The old man's astonishment can easily be imagined; he could hardly speak for surprise at first, but at last managed to say that his lord's wishes were as his own, and his only desire was to please him. The Marquis then said:

"Griselda, your father consents that you shall be my wife, but before I marry you I must ask if you will be willing to give up your will to mine in everything, and whatever I demand of you to do it cheerfully and readily."

Griselda replied that she was a poor maiden, quite unworthy to become the wife of so great a Marquis, but if he wished really to wed her, she would be a true and obedient wife, and promise never to cross her lord's will.



"That is enough, my Griselda," said the Marquis, and taking her by the hand, he led her out to the assembled lords and ladies, saying that this was his chosen wife, and they must honor and love her for the future as their liege lady.

That she might arrive at the palace in suitable attire, the ladies were called upon to take her to her room, pull off her coarse clothing, and dress her in rich apparel, which the Marquis had ordered them to bring with them. Accordingly she was clad in bright silken raiment, her beautiful hair was combed and plaited, a crown set upon her head, and when so adorned, no princess could surpass her in loveliness.

The Marquis had brought a ring with which to wed his wife, and after the ceremony she was put upon a snow-white horse, and taken to the palace, followed by crowds of rejoicing people.

The new Marchioness bore her unaccustomed honors so nobly, and had such sweet and gracious manners, that even



GRISELDA AND HER DAUGHTER

the people who had seen her grow up began to forget her humble birth, and loved and looked up to her as the greatest lady in the land. After some time a daughter was born to Lord Walter and Griselda, and the cup of the mother's happiness seemed full.

Too full, indeed, to last; for I am sorry to tell you that Lord Walter was unhappily possessed of a gloomy, suspicious nature, and when his little daughter was only a few weeks' old he made up his mind to put Griselda to a cruel test to see if she were indeed as submissive as she had promised to be. He therefore went to his wife, and after reminding her of her lowly origin and promise to give up her will to his in all things, asked her if she were still willing to keep that promise. Griselda meekly replied that she was. And you would have thought that the Marquis would have been satisfied with such a gentle answer; but not at all. He had not, indeed, the heart to tell his wife what he intended to do, but after he left her sent a servant to her, commanding her to give up her baby. Poor Griselda! this was a cruel trial for her; but after kissing and blessing her child, she gave her up, believing that she was to be put to death. This, however, was not the Marquis's intention; he sent the little girl to Boulogne, and gave her into the charge of his sister, the Countess of Pavia, to whom he sent a message, asking her to bring up his child with gentleness and care, and to keep secret from every one who she was. After he had done this, the suspicious Marquis observed his wife carefully, expecting that she would be changed in her manner to him, but he could find no difference in her at all; she was still as cheerful and modest as ever, busy always with the loving care of himself and his household, nor did she even mention her baby, though no doubt she was always longing to have her little one again.

Four years went by, and then a little son was born to them, and great were the rejoicings in the land. When the child was about two years old, his father again was seized with a cruel desire to try his patient wife still further. He went to her, therefore, saying:

"Griselda, the people do not think it right that a child



descended from so humble a person as Janicola should inherit the estate, so I must ask you to give him up, as you did his sister."

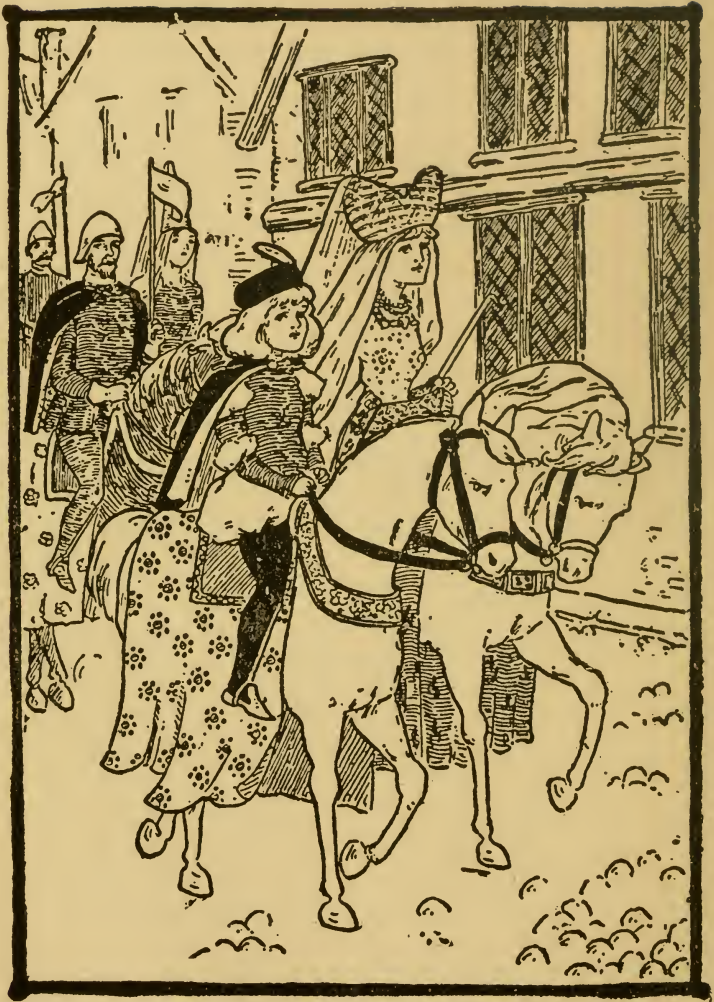
Griselda replied that she agreed to whatever her lord commanded, and was ready at all times to do his will. The suspicious Marquis himself was surprised at the great patience of his beautiful wife, and loved her all the more in his heart, though he did not give up his cruel intentions. The same ugly servant, therefore, who had before taken away Griselda's daughter, came and carried off her little son, not indeed to put him to death, but to take him to Boulogne, to be under the care of his aunt. The Marquis knew how dearly his wife had loved her children, and watched her carefully to see if she showed any resentment to himself, but found her ever the same, loving and cheerful.

Years went on, and the Marquis made up his mind to try his wife yet once again. His daughter was now twelve years old, and in those days a maiden of that age was thought old enough to be married. Lord Walter had many influential friends, and he persuaded them to give him a document, purporting to come from the Pope, which allowed him to divorce his wife and marry another woman. He then sent a messenger to his sister, desiring her to send back his little son and daughter, but on no account to let them or any one else know who they were, but to say the maiden was to become the wife of the Marquis Walter. The damsel, accordingly, arrayed in beautiful attire, adorned with jewels, with her little brother riding at her side, and a retinue of lords and ladies, set out for her father's estate.

Meanwhile the Marquis went to his poor patient wife, saying:

"Griselda, you have indeed pleased me well by your goodness, truth, and obedience, but men of my high estate are obliged to listen to the voice of their people, and are not able to do as they please. My subjects are crying out for me to take another wife, and the Pope has given his consent to it, so a high-born maiden is now on her way to take your place, and you must go back to your father's house."

Griselda, though overcome with grief agreed, as usual,



ARRIVAL OF THE STRANGERS

to all that her cruel though beloved husband demanded, and, with many of her servants weeping after her, returned sadly to her father's cottage, where she resumed her old busy life, never complaining of the way in which she had been treated, or allowing her father to do so.

The Earl of Pavia, meanwhile, arrived from Boulogne, bringing with him the supposed new Marchioness and her brother, and when they drew near the Marquis sent a message to Griselda, desiring her presence at the castle. He wished her to prepare exerything suitably for the reception of his bride, and there was no one but herself whom he could trust to do it properly. Accordingly she cheerfully began her customary household duties, ordering and arranging all things in the best possible way, and going about in her coarse, common clothing as willingly as she had done when she was the royal mistress of the house.

When the beautiful maiden arrived, the people were so charmed by her beauty and grace that they forgot all about their kind, gentle mistress Griselda, and received her with acclamation, declaring that she was indeed a suitable wife for Lord Walter. A great feast was prepared, and when all were seated at table, the Marquis called Griselda to him, asking her what she thought of his bride. She answered that she had never seen a fairer maid, and prayed with all her heart that they might be happy. Then Lord Walter was at last satisfied, and, drawing her into his arms, told her who the maiden really was, explaining that all had been done to put her wifely submission to the test. Now he was satisfied, and would spend the rest of his life in making up to her for all she had suffered.

How great, then, was Griselda's joy, not only in still possessing the love of her husband, but in having her dearly-loved children restored to her in full health and beauty. She clasped them in her arms, and then was taken to be clad once more in royal robes, and to have a coronet placed upon her head. Her husband allowed her to have her old father to live in the castle, and the rest of her life was spent in the greatest happiness.



### THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

ONCE upon a time, there was a King of Tartary called Cambuscan, who had three children, two sons, Algarcif and Camballo, and a daughter, Canace.

When Cambuscan had been reigning for twenty years, he made a great feast to celebrate his birthday, and while they were all seated at table, suddenly the door opened, and a knight rode into the hall. You may think it was rather strange for a horse to come indoors at all, but stranger still when I tell you that the horse was not a living one, but made entirely of brass, so all were much astonished when they saw it prancing into the banqueting room. The knight carried a mirror in his hand, wore a gold ring upon this thumb, and a sword at his side. He saluted the King and Queen and all the high-born guests, and addressed them thus:

“My liege lord, the King of Arabia, sends me to salute you on this festal day, and to beg that you will accept the presents that I bring, namely: this brazen steed, the mirror in my hand, the ring upon my thumb, and the sword at my side. If you touch a spring, the horse is able to carry you





PRINCESS CANACE AND THE FALCON

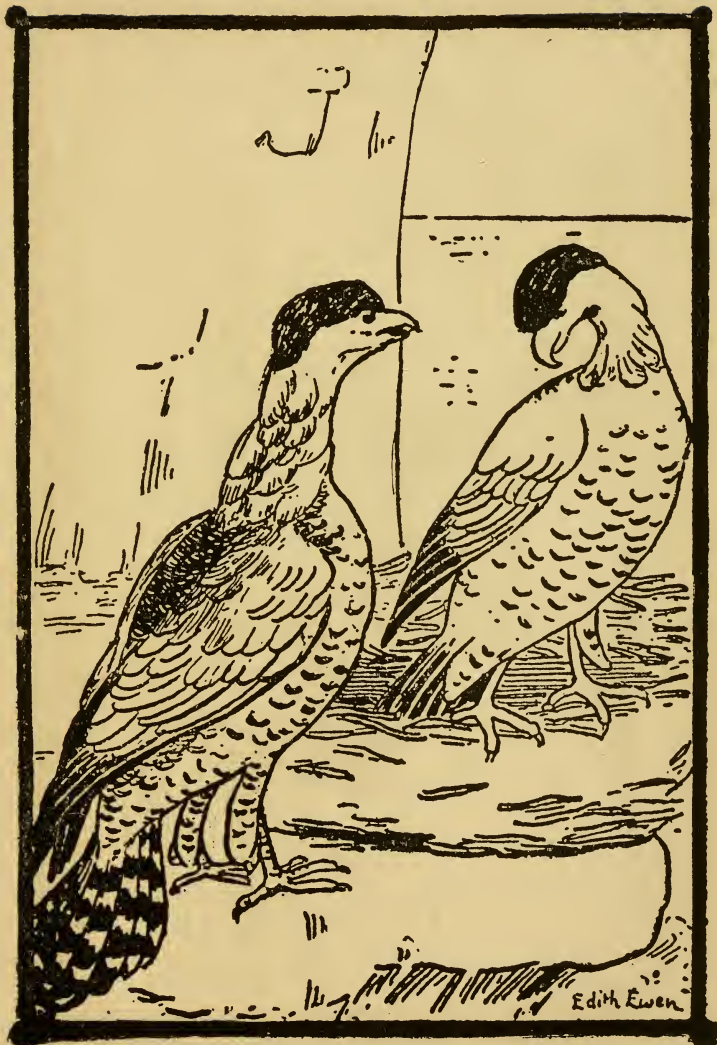
wherever you wish to go. The mirror also is a magic one, for any lady who looks into it can see whether her lover is true to her or not; and this my master sends to your daughter Canace, with the golden ring, which, when she wears it, will enable her to understand the language of the birds. This sword is for your sons, and it is able with one stroke to cut through anything whatever, even the thickest trunk of a tree; and any one wounded with it will never be healed, except by the sword itself, for if a wound is stroked with the flat part of it, it will heal itself at once."

When the knight had delivered his message, he rode out of the hall, and alighted from his steed; he was taken to a bedroom to change his dress, and then returned to join in the feast. The presents—that is, the mirror and the sword—were carefully put away, and the ring was taken to Canace as she sat at table, and she immediately put it upon her finger.

The knight afterwards accompanied the King and his daughter to the ball-room, and the whole day was passed in fun and merriment. The festivities ended with a grand supper, and were kept up till a late hour in the night.

The next morning the Princess woke up very early, and her first thoughts were about the magic mirror and the wonderful ring which she possessed. She could not rest in bed, so got up, and went out in the fresh morning air, the sun being only just risen. She wandered into the forest, and after a time sat down under a tree to rest. As she sat there she noticed in the branches above her head a falcon, who seemed to be very unhappy. She was beating herself with her wings, and pecking at her breast until she had wounded herself sadly, uttering bitter cries of woe the whole time. She was a very beautifully marked and shaped bird, and appeared to come from a foreign country. Princess Canace, who was wearing upon her finger the ring by which she could understand bird language, felt her heart wrung with pity, and implored the poor bird to tell her the cause of her grief. The falcon dropped from the tree into Canace's lap, and soon told her sad tale to the kind-hearted princess.

"I was brought up in a comfortable nest on a rock," she said, "and was so tenderly cared for that I did not know what



THE FALCON AND THE HAWK





trouble meant. When I was grown up and able to fly, a hawk who lived near me began to court me, in order to win me for his bride. At first I would not listen to him, but he persuaded me so earnestly that at last I was won over, and consented to become his wife. I soon loved him as much as even he desired. I felt I would rather die than see him sad; and what he wished me to do I agreed to without any demur. This lasted for a year or two, and then my happiness came to an end. He came to me one day, saying that he was obliged to go away for a time, and you can easily imagine how great was my distress. When we parted he seemed to be as sorrowful as I was, and I quite believed that he was indeed grieving to leave me, and would soon come back again. After exchanging vows of eternal fidelity, we parted, but, alas! he never returned, and I soon learned the real cause of his absence; he had ceased to love me, and transferred his affection to a kite instead. Men, they say, are always fickle, and cannot long remain constant to one. So this kite now is married to him who was to have been my husband, and I am left forlorn and despairing." And again the poor falcon began to cry out, and swooned away in her distress.

Canace felt the utmost sympathy for the unfortunate bird, and carried her tenderly home with her, where she nursed her with the greatest care, and had a cage placed for her by her own bed, which she covered with blue velvet, blue being an emblem of woman's constancy.

## THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

ONCE upon a time, on the coast of Brittany, there lived a knight called Arviragus, and his wife Dorigen, who were the happiest couple imaginable. The knight, however, when they had been married about a year, was obliged to go to England, to join in the war. Dorigen, his wife, was in the deepest grief at the separation from her beloved husband, and for a long time would do nothing but weep, and bewail her unhappy lot. Nevertheless, grief, however great, cannot continue for ever, and when she had received letters from her husband, cheerfully looking forward to their reunion before long, she began to listen to the advice of her friends, and to dry her tears. They therefore entreated her to come out with them and enjoy the fresh air. The knight's castle was built by the sea, and Dorigen and her friends walked on the rocky shore; but when she saw the dark, cruel rocks along the coast, she began to weep, fearing that her husband's vessel returning home might strike on one of them, and he would be drowned.

Her friends, therefore, seeing that the sight of the sea only made her grief worse, took her into pretty gardens, where young people were amusing themselves with dancing and games. Among them was a young squire, called Aurelius, who, although he was dancing and making merry, was very sad at heart, for he had loved the lady Dorigen for many a long year. Now, however, that her husband had been gone so long, he thought it was hardly likely that he would ever return, so when he saw Dorigen admiring his graceful dancing, he went up to her, and ventured to declare his love, entreating her to become his wife.

Dorigen, though she had no room in her heart for any other than her husband, yet in her own sorrow was not unfeeling for the sorrow of others, so, instead of refusing Aurelius' offer absolutely, she put him off in this way.



AURELIUS DECLARES HIS LOVE



DORIGEN WITH HER FRIENDS BY THE SEA-SIDE



"If," she said, "you will clear away all the rocks on the coast of Brittany, then I will marry you."

Aurelius turned away sad at heart, for he believed the task imposed on him was an impossible one. Soon after this Arviragus returned, much to the joy of his loving wife. The castle was filled with feasting and revelry, and no one gave poor Aurelius a thought. He was so full of grief that he made himself quite ill, and his brother who lived with him could not bear to see him in this unhappy state. Remembering that, when a student at Orleans, he had heard a great deal about a wizard renowned for his magic arts, he persuaded his brother to go and consult him. Aurelius was much comforted at the idea, and they both set out at once for Orleans. On reaching their destination, they found the magician, who entertained them most hospitably, and showed them all sorts of wonderful things. They saw that his power was very great, and entreated him to exercise it on Aurelius' behalf, and cause the rocks to disappear from the shore. The magician promised to do it, on condition that Aurelius paid him a thousand pounds. This was agreed to, and they all three journeyed back to Brittany, and went down to the seashore. The magician stretched out his wand, and spoke a few words of incantation, when immediately the rocks sank down, and only a smooth stretch of sand remained.

Now indeed the miracle was accomplished, and Aurelius, in great joy, went to the lady Dorigen, telling her he had finished the task she had set him, and now claimed the fulfilment of her promise. My little readers must remember that the country was heathen at that time, and it was not uncommon for a man to give up his wife to another, if she chose to leave him and marry again, although now we should think such a thing very dreadful. Poor Dorigen, therefore, although her husband had returned to her, and she felt it would break her heart to leave him, yet acknowledged that she was bound to fulfil her promise, and did not know how to answer him. Aurelius left her for the time, and as she thought over the matter she became more and more unhappy. Her husband had gone out hunting, so she had no one to consult, and wept and bemoaned herself until he re-



THE MAGICIAN STRETCHED FORTH HIS WAND OVER THE SEA



DORIGEN WEPT AND BEMOANED HERSELF



turned. He, finding her in such a state of grief, asked her what was the matter, and soon learned the whole truth. Then indeed was Arviragus unhappy also, thinking he must lose his dearly loved wife; for as she had promised, he said she must keep her word, and he would give her up to Aurelius. So Dorigen, going to Aurelius, meekly consented to be his wife, telling him how her husband had agreed to give her up rather than let her break her word.

Now Aurelius had obtained his long-cherished desire, but when he saw Dorigen's grief he refused to accept her sacrifice, and, releasing her from her promise, sent her back to Arviragus. Dorigen went down on her knees to thank him, and then joyfully returned to her husband, determining to make no such rash promises in future.

Aurelius was left despairing; he could never win Dorigen now, and, besides, he owed a thousand pounds to the magician, and would have to give up all he possessed in order to pay it. Even then he had not enough money by him, so went to the magician with half the sum, asking him if he would wait a year or two for the remainder.

"Did I not keep my agreement with you?" said the wizard, "and have you not won the lady for your wife?"

"Alas! no," said the poor squire, and went on to explain how, although her husband had consented to give Dorigen



up, he felt he could not take advantage of such generosity, so had sent her back again to Arviragus.

Then the magician was much moved by the conduct of both the knight and the squire, and not willing to be outdone in kindness of heart, refused to take any money from Aurelius at all.

This is the end of my story, and you must decide for yourselves which was the most generous, the knight, the squire, or the magician.



THE PRINCESS MEETS WITH THE LORD CONSTABLE

## THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

THE Sultan of Syria having heard of the great beauty of Constance, daughter of the Emperor of Rome, fell deeply in love with her, and sent to demand her hand in marriage, promising to become a Christian, with all his household, if she were given to him. The Emperor consented, and sent his daughter to Syria, with a large sum of money as dowry, and an escort of lords and ladies.

Now, the Sultan had a mother, who was not at all pleased at the marriage her son was about to make, but very angry at being obliged to change her religion. She therefore gathered together a council of courtiers, who were no better pleased at this enforced Christianity than she was herself,



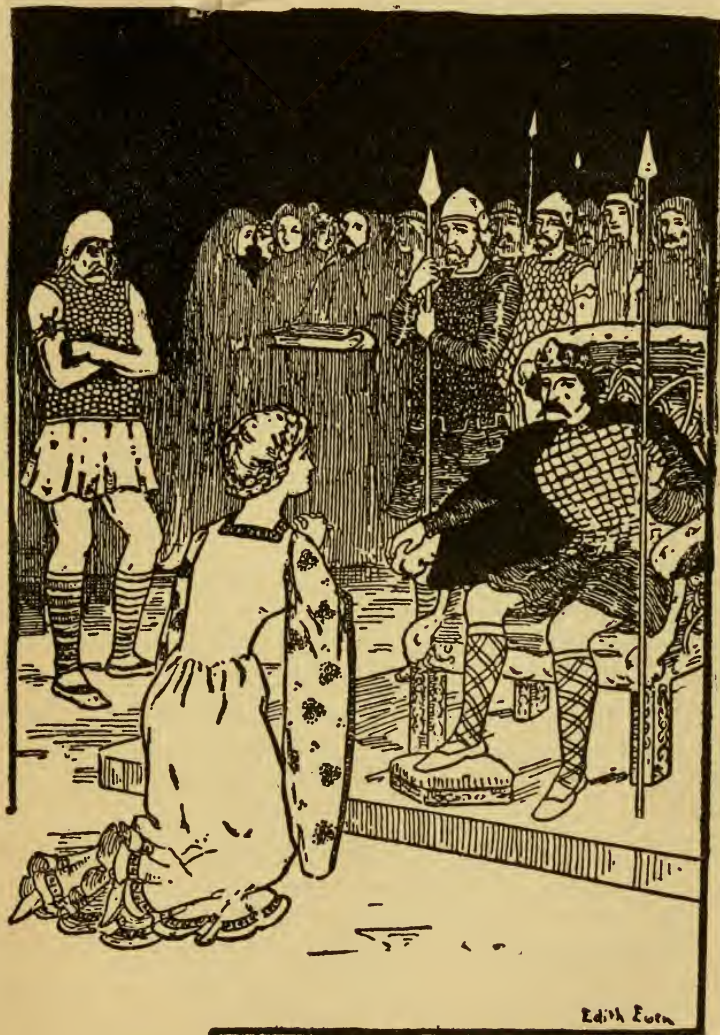
and asked if they would stand by her in all she proposed to do, as she hoped, if they would, to be able to get rid of the bride. They all promised to do what she should command, and she advised them to be baptized duly with the others, outwardly making no objection, and wait until she should give them further orders.

Then this deceitful woman went to her son and asked him if she might have the honor of receiving these Christians at a feast in her own house. The Sultan willingly granted her request, and when the foreign vessel reached the shore, the Sultana accompanied her son to the landing-place to meet the Princess. She was received with due honor, and rode by the side of the old Sultana to her palace. There a banquet was prepared, and the Sultan and the members of Constance's train sat long over it. While they were reveling, the unfortunate Princess was seized by the wicked old Sultana's followers, put in a small open boat without oars or rudder, and pushed out to sea.

She commended herself to the mercy of God, and was miraculously preserved in the little boat until it was driven ashore on the coast of Northumberland. It happened that the lord Constable of the castle was walking by the sea, and found her in her wretched plight. Being filled with pity for her, he took her home to his wife, Dame Hermegyld, who received her with much kindness. She stayed on with them at the castle, and made herself beloved by all for her kindness and gentleness.

Although the Princess had gone through so many hardships, she had not lost her beauty, and a knight who lived in the neighborhood became very much in love with her. She, however, did not return his affection, and when she refused to have anything to do with him he was very angry, and made up his mind that she should die a shameful death. With this object he carried out a horrible plan. One night, when her husband was away, he came into Dame Hermegyld's sleeping-room and stabbed her to death; then he went into Constance's room, and laid the knife, all covered with blood, beside her. Soon after this the Constable returned home, and found to his horror that his dearly loved wife had been





Edith Egan

CONSTANCE FELL ON HER KNEES BEFORE THE KING

cruelly murdered, and Constance was accused of the crime. Alla, the King of the country, accompanied the Constable to his castle, and when he saw Constance standing meek, innocent, and lovely before her accuser he was moved with compassion for her. The people also murmured among themselves, for they knew how kind, gentle, and good she was, so could not believe her guilty. The only one who spoke against her was the wicked knight, who had himself done the deed, and when the good King looked on his evil, malicious face, he began to be suspicious, and to inquire further into the matter. Poor Constance fell on her knees, crying to God to prove her innocence, upon which King Alla called for a Bible, and declared that the knight should swear upon it that he knew her to be guilty, before he could believe it. On the book being handed to him, the false knight kissed it, and vowed that Constance had committed the crime, upon which an invisible hand struck him, and he fell to the ground, both his eyes falling out. At the same time a voice was heard, saying:

“Thou hast maligned a daughter of the Holy Church, and how can heaven be silent?”

The King and all the people were filled with astonishment at this wonderful answer to Constance's prayer, and she was at once pronounced innocent. The wicked knight was put to death, and soon after King Alla made Constance his wife.

For a few months they were very happy, and then it happened that the King was obliged to go on a journey to Scotland. He put his beloved wife in the charge of the lord Constable, and while he was away a little son was born to them, who was baptized in the name of Maurice.

Now Alla's mother, Dornegild, was jealous of the beautiful young Queen, and hated her for the influence she possessed over her husband. So she determined to get rid of Constance in her husband's absence, if by any possibility she could manage it.

Of course when little Maurice was born, the Constable wrote a letter to King Alla to inform him of the happy event, and before the messenger set out with the letter he called at



ADRIFT ON THE OCEAN



Edith Ewen

THE KING FINDS HIS LOST WIFE AND SON



Dornegild's house to ask if she had any message to send her son. Dornegild persuaded the man to stay at her house for the night before he started, and while he slept she stole the letter, and wrote another in its place, saying that a son had been born in his absence, who was such a deformed, hideous creature that every one declared the mother must be a witch. The King was naturally much grieved to hear that his baby was so mis-shapen and ugly; but as for believing that his dear Constance was a witch, that he laughed to scorn, and wrote back, thanking God for giving him a son at all, whether ugly or pretty, and charging the Constable to take every care of the child and his mother until his return.

The messenger again stayed at Dornegild's house on his way home, and she, as before, stole the letter he was bearing, and when she had read it, substituted another in its place, ordering the Constable to put Queen Constance and her little son into the same open boat in which she had come to Northumberland, and send her out to sea.

When the good Constable read this cruel order, he was filled with horror, but dared not disobey his master's commands; and although poor Constance could not understand what she had done to deserve such treatment, she meekly submitted to her husband's will. She entreated her old friend the Constable to kiss her little son for his father's sake, and, saying farewell to him and all her friends, got into the boat and was soon lost to sight.

Not long afterwards the King returned, and naturally asked at once for his wife and child, whereupon the Constable was much afraid, and began to suspect that there was some mistake. He told the King what he had done according to his own order, and showed him the letter he had received. How great now was the King's grief and horror; the messenger was sent for and questioned, and it was at last discovered that the King's own mother was guilty of this dreadful crime. She was put to death, but no punishment could remedy what she had done, and poor Alla was very sad and desolate without his much-loved wife and child.

Constance, however, was not drowned, but she and her baby drifted here and there on the sea for about five years.



IN THE TAVERN

How they lived I do not know, but perhaps the sea-gulls brought them food. You remember that her father was the Roman Emperor; and it happened that one of his senators, who was in command of a ship returning from fighting in a distant land, encountered Constance's little boat, and took her and her child on board. She did not, however, tell them who she was, or anything about herself; and they supposed that all she had gone through had taken away her memory. So the senator took Constance home with him, and received her into his household.

Now King Alla, feeling very unhappy at the loss of his wife, made up his mind to go on a pilgrimage to Rome, and when it was known that so great a King proposed to visit the city, the Emperor ordered that he should be received with suitable honor. The senator therefore went to meet the King at the gates of the city, and entertained him at his own house with great ceremony, little Maurice being among his pages. When the King saw him, he asked who he was, the beautiful child being so like his mother that Alla could not help being struck with the resemblance. The senator then told the King how the child and his mother had been found, and at the same time said much in praise of the beauty and virtue of Constance. Alla at once thought that this might be his own dear wife, and asked if she might be sent for. When Constance appeared she fainted away, overcome at the sight of her husband, and he could not restrain his tears when he thought how cruelly she had been treated. Claspng her in his arms, he told her of the wicked deceit that had been practiced on them, and how great had been his grief to lose her so. And when all had been explained, how happy they were to be again united, with such a sweet little son for their own.

Constance then made herself known to her father, the Emperor, who was overjoyed to recover his long-lost daughter. The child Maurice was appointed the Emperor's heir. Constance and Alla went back to England, and lived happily for a year. Then Alla died, and Constance, all her adventures over, went back to Rome, to her father and son, and lived quietly and happily till her death.

## THE PARDONER'S TALE.

THERE were once three young men, who, as they sat gambling one evening in a tavern, heard a bell tolling, and on looking out of the window, saw a dead man being carried to his grave.

"Who is this man?" they asked, and were told it was one who had sat drinking like themselves in a tavern, when he was suddenly struck down by Death, an old thief who often seized people unawares in this way. Now these three roysterers had drunk a good deal of wine, so were full of false



courage, and they swore with a mighty oath that they would go and look for Death, and when they found him put an end to him. They set out from the town in a jovial manner, and when they had gone a short distance, met an old man, who meekly gave them God-speed. The rudest of the three spoke jeeringly to the poor old fellow, asking what he meant by living so long. He answered that although he was ready to die, yet Death did not come to seek him, whereupon the young men refused to let him go until he told them where this Death whom he spoke of was to be found.

"Go on, sirs," said the aged man, "and you will find Death in that little grove under an oak."



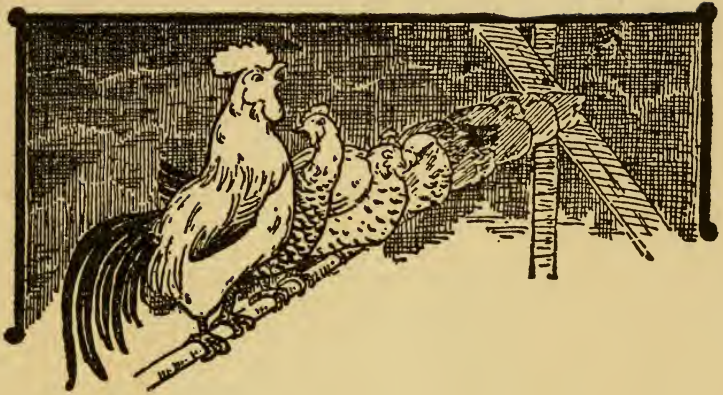


Accordingly they went on to the appointed place, and there found, not Death, as they expected, but a jar full of golden florins. They were so delighted at finding such a treasure that they forgot all about the person they were looking for, and all sat down to decide what they would do with the money. They made up their minds that it would not do to carry so much gold into the town by daylight, or some one might claim it and oblige them to give it up, so agreed to watch by it until nightfall, one returning to the town to buy some food and wine, while the other two remained to guard the money. As soon as their companion had started, the two left behind began to plan how they might deprive him of his share, and have the whole booty for themselves, and determined to set upon him when he returned, stab him to death, and, after hiding his body in the wood, make off with the gold.

No doubt you are feeling very sorry for the poor fellow who was being so treacherously plotted against by his companions, but he himself deserved no pity, for on his way into the town the thought struck him that if he could only do away with his two friends he would have all the money, and be rich for the rest of his life. He went to a chemist's shop, and obtained some poison, which he mixed with the wine he bought, taking care to leave one bottle untouched for himself.

On returning to his companions, they fell upon him unawares, as they had arranged, and stabbed him to the heart. Then they fell to upon the provisions he had brought, intending, when they were refreshed, to bury the body of their comrade, but as soon as they drank the poisoned wine, they both fell dead upon the spot. So, as the old man had told them, they met with Death under the oak. Death comes in many strange shapes, and they did not recognize him in a jar of treasure. The love of money, indeed, in their case, proved the root of all evil.





### THE PRIEST'S TALE.

THERE was once a poor widow who lived in a village, and earned an humble living for herself and two daughters by keeping a few pigs, sheep, and poultry. She had a yard fenced round with a hedge of dry sticks, where lived a cock called Chanticleer, and his seven plump wives. Chanticleer was a beautiful bird, with feathers like gold and a brilliant red comb. Among his wives the one he loved best was Partlet, the prettiest hen of them all, and he always gave her the fattest worms and the daintiest morsels he found.

Well, one night when Chanticleer was roosting on his comfortable perch, he had a dreadful dream, and woke up screaming out for fright.

"What can be the matter with you?" cried Partlet, alarmed also. "For shame to wake us all up in this way!"

Then he told her that he was terrified by what he had seen in his sleep. He thought he was scratching about in the yard as usual, when suddenly he saw an animal something like a dog, with a red coat, long, bushy tail, and eyes like fire. He quite expected to be eaten up by this fearful beast (who was a fox, as no doubt you will guess), and cried out in terror, when he awoke, and it was only a dream. Never-

theless, he could not help feeling that it was an evil omen, and he feared something was going to happen to him.

Partlet, however, laughed at her husband, saying he must have eaten something that disagreed with him, and advising him next day to take some medicinal herbs. "As for dreams," she said, "no sensible person would take any notice of them."

Chanticleer did not agree with her, and gave many historical instances of dreams being sent for a distinct purpose, mentioning Joseph's dreams and Pharaoh's, among others, and he related two stories which are told by Cicero, about dreams coming true. However, Partlet refused to be convinced, until at last Chanticleer began to think he must be mistaken, and when the sun rose he jumped off his perch, with his wives, and went scratching round the yard as usual.

Now hidden among some big leaves was a fox, who had come there to carry off poor Chanticleer to make a meal for his wife and cubs; and as the cock went clucking about, followed by his family, he came in time quite close to where the sly animal lay hidden, and suddenly, to his





horror, caught the gaze of those piercing eyes fixed on him. Chanticleer was in a great state of fear, and was about to run away, when the fox spoke kindly to him, saying that he had come there to hear him sing, for he had heard so much about his beautiful, clear voice. The fox flattered Chanticleer to such an extent that the unfortunate bird forgot his terror, and prepared to crow, in order to gratify his soft-tongued admirer. He stood on tip-toe, stretching his long neck to the fullest extent, and closing his eyes, began to crow at the top



ters came running out of the house to see what was the matter of his voice; but directly his eyes were shut, the cunning fox sprang upon him, seized him by the throat, and rushed away with him to his den.

Now when the hens saw what had happened they made such a commotion in the yard that the widow and her daughter. To their horror they saw the wicked fox making off across the fields with poor Chanticleer in his mouth, and be-



A COMMOTION IN THE FARM YARD

gan to run after him, being joined by the farm servants and some men working on the road, all screaming with all their might.

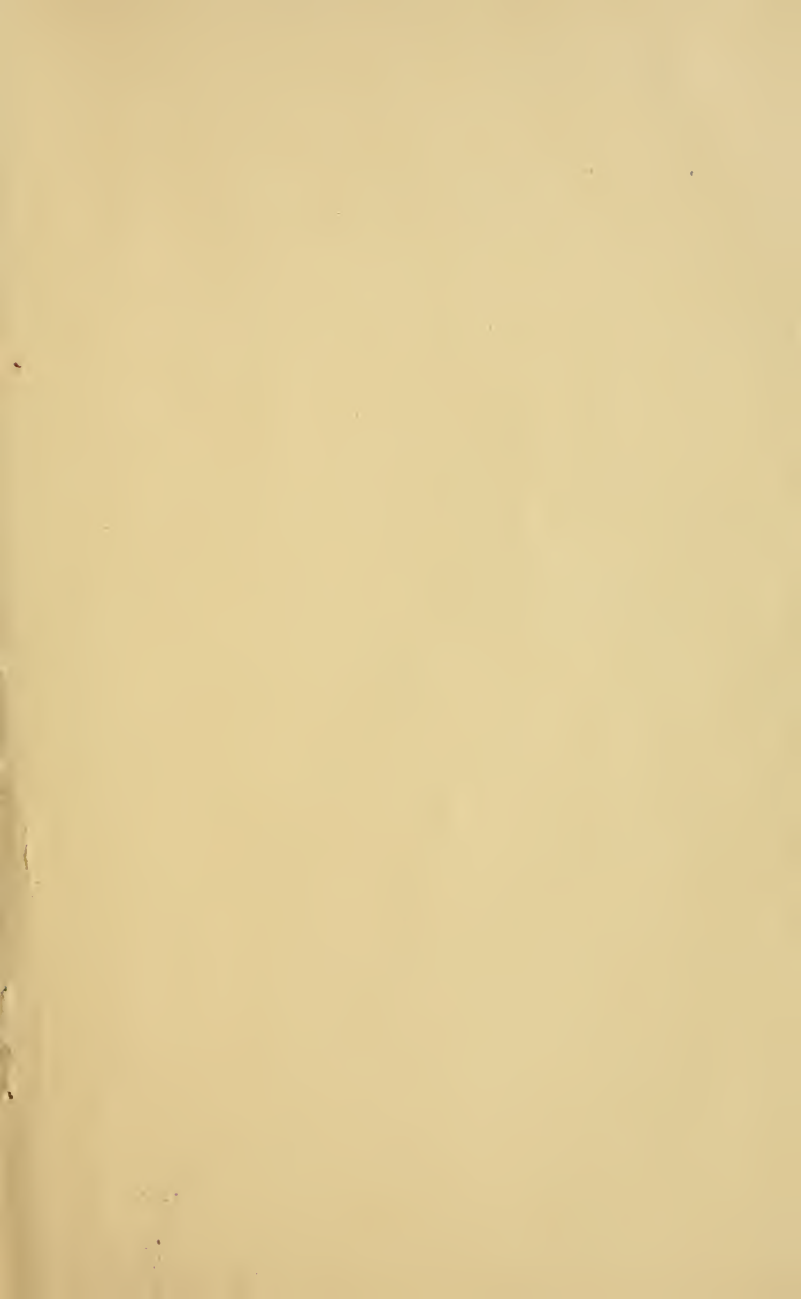
When Chanticleer heard it he said to the fox, "Why don't you laugh at them, and tell them such a noise is quite useless? You can run faster than they, and by the time they get to the wood, you will be safe in your den, and I shall be eaten up."

The fox opened his mouth to do what the clever bird advised, and in doing so of course let fall Chanticleer, who flew off, and got high up on a tree, out of his enemy's way. Although the fox tried to persuade him to come down, the cock was not so silly as to be taken in by flattery a second time, but instead of paying any more attention to Reynard, he flew home again to his wives.

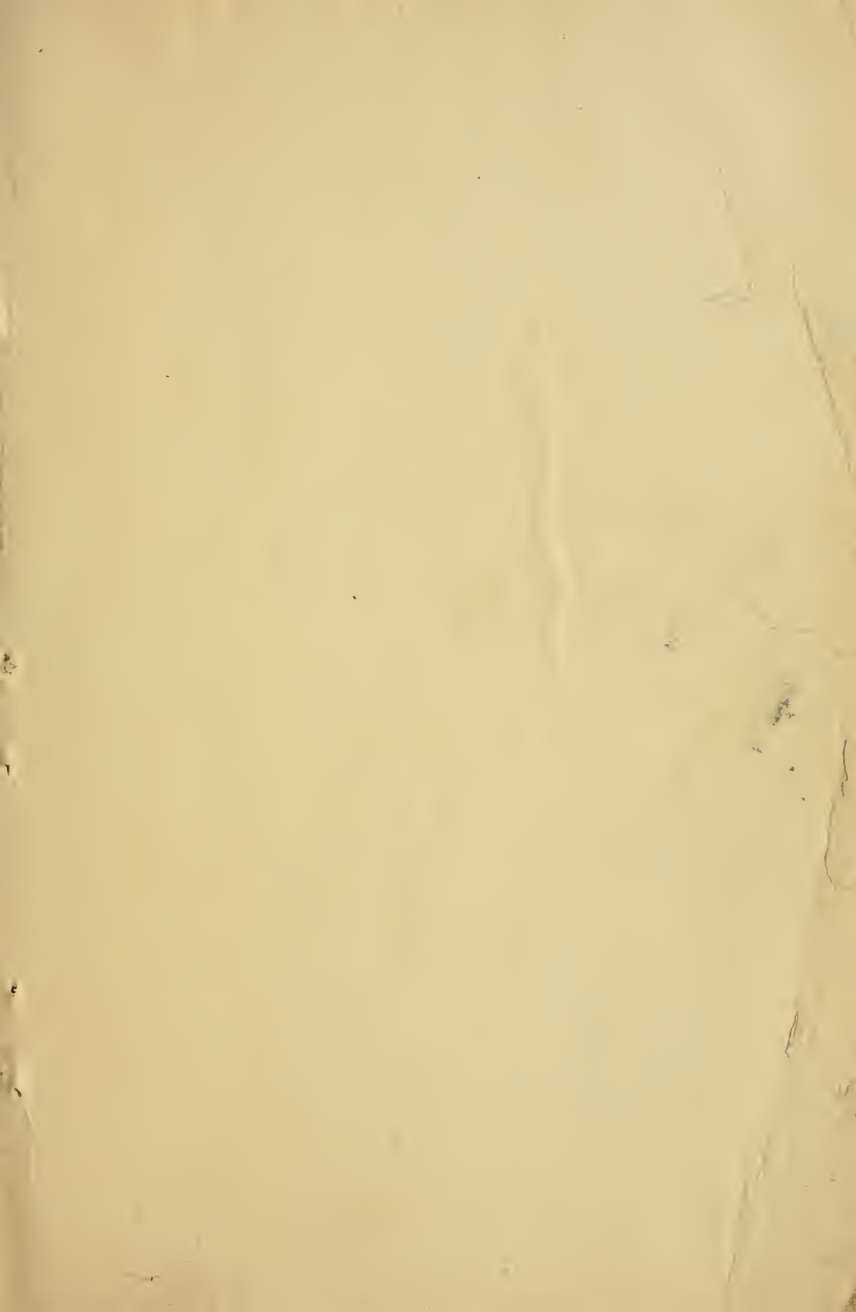
After this the widow had a stone wall put round the yard, so that the fox could not get among the poultry again, and Chanticleer lived happily with his seven wives to a good old age, amusing the little chickens, on many a wet afternoon, by the wonderful story of his escape from the fox.







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