

THE ENCHANTED MICE.

ILLUSTRATED
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THE ENCHANTED MICE.



OLD WOMAN AT THE DOOR—MICE DANCING.

ONCE upon a time, on a bright sunny afternoon in Summer, an old woman sat spinning away at her cottage door; now and then her attention was taken from her wheel, but in the secluded district where she lived there were very few passers-by, and little else but a hot dusty road for the old dame to gaze at. The cottage was far away from either village

or town—the busy hum of bees, and the lowing of distant cattle, was all the good dame could hear in that lonely spot. She was just wishing for some one to speak to, when a low vague piping of music met her ear. She peered curiously forth at first to no effect; but, after rubbing her spectacles bright, and setting them on her nose, she saw, looking more



DEPARTURE OF THE OLD LADY.

intently, a really very funny sight, and her amazement in a moment or two gave place to a hearty fit of laughter.

There in the middle of the road stood a company of Mice, dressed in short blue jackets ornamented with gold lace, loose red trousers, and white turbans. Some were dancing in a ring, performing strange antics, and squeaking time to the music played by four of their companions.

Whilst the old woman was still laughing, one of the Mice advanced with a small platter to receive donations; she gave him a couple of farthings, and then kindly invited the whole party to refresh themselves with a supper of candle-ends and chopped-up beetles. They gladly assented, and partook heartily of the repast.

After some conversation their hostess ventured to ask the most majestic and dignified of the Mice, and who was



MEETING THE HUNTSMAN IN THE WOOD.

evidently the chief of the company, who and what they were? "Good dame," he replied, "I am an unfortunate Prince of a neighbouring island. My father, the King, offended, unknowingly, the fairy Malice, who forthwith killed him, and changed me and the noblemen of the court into mice; and as she likewise metamorphosed the rest of my father's subjects into fierce cats, we were obliged to flee for our safety, leaving behind all our money and jewels,—and glad we were to escape with nothing but the clothes we had on. We are, therefore, compelled to degrade ourselves by dancing before the public gaze for daily food."

"Dear heart?" exclaimed the Dame, "can nothing be done for your sad case?" The chief Mouse shook his head sadly, whilst he wiped the tears from his eyes with his tail. One of his retinue, however, replied that, in his opinion, if



GIVING THE ARROW TO THE BOATMAN.

the fairy Mercy knew their sad condition she would interfere in their behalf with her wicked sister; but she lived far away, on the Island of Goodness, and there were too many dangers that way from terriers, weasels, and cats, who were sworn allies to the fairy Malice—to say nothing of the enchanted forest they should be obliged to pass through before reaching the sea—for them to dare to go, and they had no friend to take the trouble, fatigue, and danger for them.

The old woman said it was true enough that the unfortunate had few friends, but still there were kind hearts left in the world; and that, as they had no better advocate, *she* herself would try to free them from their wretched condition.

The Mice would not listen to her proposal at first; but she was so decided upon the subject, that they were at length glad to give in.



GIVING THE ARROW TO THE WOMAN

The lady knew their condition and would interfere in their behalf with her wicked sister; but she lived far away on the island of goodness, and there were too many dangers that way from torments, wars, and cats who were sworn allies to the lady's sister—to say nothing of the enchanted forest they would be obliged to pass through before reaching the spot—so they refused to go, and they had no friend to take the trouble, fatigue, and danger for them.

The old woman said it was true enough that the unfortunate had few friends, but still there were kind hearts left in the world; and that as they had no better advocate, she herself would try to help them from their wretched condition. And so Alice would not listen to her proposal at first; but she was so devoted upon the subject that they went at length

glad to give up



OLD WOMAN AND WOMAN ROWING OFF

"Why, my little fellows, I'll see what can be done for you!"
 he cried; "I'm a goodly body, for certain, but, old as I am,
 I can do a bit of good yet—every one can if they will try; no
 matter how poor they are. You must make this cottage your
 home until I return; I'll leave you plenty of food and
 drink in the cupboard, with a bit of nice cheese for you to
 make for your supper; and here are three pounds of 'dips'
 of the best tallow for a treat on Sundays; and be sure to keep
 the doors locked and the windows fastened, for a stranger
 has been lurking about the house for many a day." The
 old woman, after putting a little bread and butter and a few
 articles of clothing up in a basket, and dressing herself in her
 best black bonnet and scarlet cloak, departed with a kind last
 word, the three locking the door after her, according to her
 admonition.



OLD WOMAN AND BOATMAN ROWING OFF.

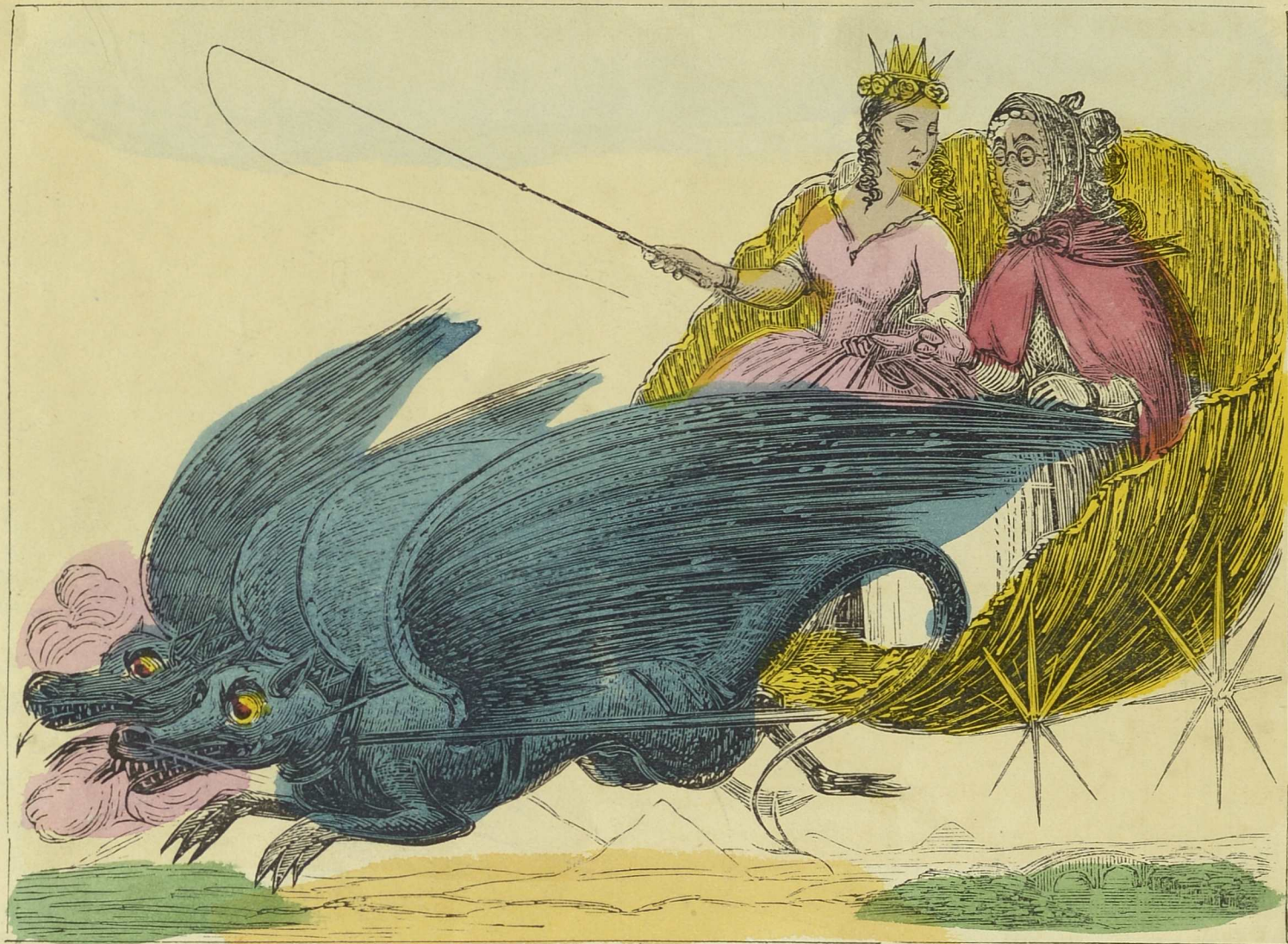
“Aye, my little fellows, I’ll see what can be done for you!” she cried; “I’m a poor old body, for certain, but, old as I am, I can do a bit of good yet—everyone can if they will try, no matter how poor they are. You must make this cottage your home until I return; I’ll leave you plenty of bread and treacle in the cupboard, with a bit of nice cheese for you to toast for your suppers; and here are three pounds of ‘dips’ of the best tallow for a treat on Sundays; and be sure to keep the doors locked and the windows fastened, for a strange cat has been lurking about the house for many a day.” The old woman, after putting a little bread and cheese and a few articles of clothing up in a basket, and dressing herself in her best black bonnet and scarlet cloak, departed with a kind last word, the Mice locking the door after her according to her admonition.



FAIRY MALICE.

The good Dame had no adventures until she reached the enchanted forest. Soon after entering the gloomy wood, she saw a man in the dress of a hunter leaning idly against a tree, his bow, unstrung, lying on the ground at his feet. As he seemed to have no business on hand, she asked him to show her the way through the forest; and though he had a stern look and large flashing eyes, he did not refuse her request, but walked by her side until she had passed through the enchanted wood. He enquired, however, what she wanted there, and she forthwith told him the circumstances that had caused her journey. "Well," said he, "perhaps I can help you; give this,"—taking an arrow from the quiver at his side—"to the captain of the ship you go by, it may do you some service." The old woman turned to thank him—but he was gone! she could see him nowhere—and she

The good Prince had no relatives until he reached the enchanted forest. Soon after entering the forest, he saw a man in the dress of a hunter, hunting in the forest. This man, observing, being on the ground at his feet, it seemed to have no business on hand, she asked him to show her the way through the forest, and though he had a long and large flashing eye, he did not refuse her request. She walked by his side until she had passed the edge of the enchanted forest. She enquired, however, what he wanted there, and she forthwith told him the reason—namely, that she wished to see her father. "Well," said the hunter, "I can help you, but this is a long journey, and you must be patient. As to the captain of the ship, you go by, at midnight you will see him. The old woman turned to thank him, but he was gone! she could see him nowhere—indeed



GOOD FAIRY AND THE OLD WOMAN IN CHARIOT.

hastened on her way frightened and bewildered, until at last, to her great joy, she beheld the sea shore: there she found a vessel just ready to sail to the Island of Goodness. She applied at once to the captain, a fierce-looking fellow, with one eye, a cocked-up nose, and a wooden leg. "Well, old black-bonnet! so you want to visit the fairy, Mercy, do you?" said he, "she's a kind mistress, but mighty particular; I should not advise you to go—there's a tiresome ordeal to pass through before you can embark, and you might not come out of it very well, d'ye see? But what is that in your hand, eh? an arrow! you were to give it to me. Why, old woman, you've been with the Green Huntsman! lucky it is for you you made friends with him. Why, this arrow is a free pass; come along, my friend, step on board."

As they pushed off, two bloodhounds came tearing down to the water-side. "Back, Sin! back, Sorrow!" shouted

the captain to them, as they bayed out with an angry noise. "Ah, dame," he said, "if you had not met with the Green Huntsman, you must have been confronted with those hounds before you could have gone with me ; and then woe to you if you had Envy, Hatred, or Malice, as your friends, they would have torn you limb from limb." The good woman was thankful to have escaped such a terrible ordeal ; but, as she said, a brave heart and a good cause would have carried her even through that.

As soon as they reached the island, the captain sent the arrow by a trusty messenger to the palace, and the fairy immediately summoned the Dame to her presence, and, upon hearing her request, she promised to see her sister Malice, and try to prevail upon her to end the enchantment of the Mouse Prince and his followers ; and, in the meantime, the old woman was to remain her guest.

After four days had past, the Dame was once more sent for by the fairy. "I have prevailed with my sister to recall her unjust decree : and now, my worthy woman, I will accompany you to your abode." Here a chariot of gold appeared, drawn by flying dragons, into which they stepped, and, in short time, they were at the cottage door.

Alarmed at the noise made by the dragons as they alighted, the Mice were peeping wistfully through the windows. How overjoyed they were to see their preserver alight from the carriage you can imagine.

The fairy immediately caused them to take their own forms once more ; and they were then all whisked through the air in the fairy chariot to the Prince's island. The cats were changed to their original condition, and nothing was heard in the kingdom for many weeks but merriment and rejoicing.

The old woman lived at the Palace, the Prince thinking nothing too good for her ; and, for the rest of their lives, they were all very happy.

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