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White Cat.

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10, Cloth Fair, West Smithfield.

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The White Cat

THE SURPRISING STORY
OF THE
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With a beautiful Engraving.

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THE WHITE CAT.

A KING had three sons ; some wicked courtiers made him believe that the princes were impatient to wear his crown, and were contriving a plot to deprive him of his authority. The king had no inclination to resign his power ; and therefore determined to employ the princes in such a manner, as at once to give each of them the hope of succeeding to the throne, and fill up the time they might otherwise spend so undutifully.

“ My dear children,” said he, “ my great age prevents me from attending to state affairs, I therefore desire to resign my crown to one of you ; but it is no more than just you should procure me some amusement in my retirement,—a little dog, that should be handsome, faithful and engaging, would be the very thing to amuse me ; so that, without bestowing a preference on either of you, I declare that he who brings me the most perfect little dog shall be my successor ; and the king appointed that day twelvemonth for their return.

Each took a different road ; but we intend to relate the adventures of only the youngest. He found himself in a forest ; night suddenly came on, and with it a violent tempest : he

lost his path, and could find no way out: he espied a light, pursued his way toward it, and soon arrived at the gates of a magnificent palace. The door that opened into it was of gold, covered with sapphire stones, which shone with resplendent brightness; the walls of the building were of transparent porcelain, and represented the history of all the fairies that had existed from the beginning of the world; at the door there was a deer's foot fastened to a chain of diamonds: he pulled the chain, the door opened, but he perceived nothing but twelve hands in the air, each holding a torch. The prince felt himself pushed gently on by some other hands from behind him; he entered a vestibule inlaid with porphyry, when a most melodious voice chanted the following words:—

Welcome, prince, no danger fear,
Mirth and love attend you here;
You shall break the magic spell,
That on a beauteous maiden fell;
Welcome, prince, no danger fear,
Mirth and love attend you here.

The prince advanced, wondering what these words could mean; the hands moved him forward toward a large door of coral, which opened into an apartment of mother-of-pearl, through which he passed into others so richly adorned with paintings and jewels, and so resplendently lighted, that he ima-

gined them the work of enchantment. When he had passed through sixty apartments, he was stopped by the hands, and a large easy chair advanced of itself towards the chimney : the fire immediately lighted of itself ; and the hands, which he observed were extremely white and delicate, took off his wet clothes, and supplied their place with the finest of linen, and then added a commodious wrapping gown, embroidered with gold and enriched with pearls ; the hands next brought him a dressing table, and combed his hair so gently that he scarcely felt their touch ; they held before him a beautiful bason, filled with perfumes, to wash his face and hands, and afterwards took off the wrapping gown and dressed him in a suit of clothes of still greater splendour. When his dress was complete, they conducted him to an apartment he had not yet seen ; a table appeared spread for a repast, and every thing upon it was of the purest gold, adorned with jewels. He observed there were only two covers set ; and was wondering who was to be his companion, when a great number of cats marched, by two and two, into the room, and placed themselves in an orchestra at one end of it ; some had music books, others guitars ; and one of them held a roll of paper with which he began to beat time, while the rest played a concert.

His attention was caught by a figure, not a foot in height, which advanced towards him ; it was covered with a black veil, and supported by two cats dressed in mourning, with swords by their sides ; they were followed by a retinue of cats, some carrying cages full of rats, and others mouse-traps full of mice. The little figure throwing aside her veil, he beheld a most beautiful white cat,—addressing herself to the prince, she said : “ Prince, you are welcome ; your presence affords me the greatest pleasure.” “ Madam,” replied the prince, “ I would fain thank you for your generosity, nor can I help observing that you must be a most extraordinary creature, to possess, with your present form, the gift of speech, and the magnificent palace I have seen.” “ What you say is very true,” answered the beautiful cat ; “ but I am not fond of compliments : let us therefore sit down to supper.”

The trunkless hands then placed the dishes on the table ; the first dish was a pie made of young pigeons, and the next a fricasee of mice : the view of the one made the prince almost afraid to taste the other ; till the white cat assured him that there were certain dishes at table in which there was not a single morsel of either rat or mouse, and that these had been dressed purposely for him ; the

prince perceived that the white cat had a portrait set in gold hanging to one of her feet; and what was his astonishment to see the portrait exactly resemble himself! At length the white cat wished him a good night, and he was conducted by the hands to his bed chamber. In the morning, the hands took him out of bed, and put on him a handsome hunting jacket; he looked into the court-yard, and perceived more than five hundred cats, all busily employed in preparing for the field; the white cat having politely inquired after his health, invited him to partake of their amusement; the prince mounted a wooden horse, richly caparisoned, which had been prepared for him, and which he was assured would gallop to admiration; the white cat put on a dragoon's bonnet, and mounted a monkey, which made her look so fierce that all the rats and mice ran away in the utmost terror. Every thing being ready, the horns sounded, and away they went: the cats ran faster than the hares and rabbits. The hunting over, the white cat exchanged her dragoon's cap for her veil, and sat down to supper with the prince; such entertainments often repeated, made him forget that he was to procure a little dog for the old king. At length the twelvemonth was nearly expired; the white cat reminded

THE WHITE CAT.

him that he had but three days longer to look for a perfect little dog. The prince began to afflict himself; the cat told him not to be so sorrowful, since she would not only provide him with a little dog, but also with a wooden horse which should convey him safely in less than twelve hours. "Look here," said she, shewing him an acorn, "this contains what you desire." The prince put the acorn to his ear, and heard the barking of a little dog; transported with joy he thanked the cat a thousand times, and the next day set out on his return.

On his arrival he went to the palace. The dogs of the two eldest princes were laying on cushions, and curiously wrapped round with embroidered quilts. The youngest prince, taking the acorn from his pocket, a little dog appeared which could go through the smallest ring, and was besides a miracle of beauty. The king was not yet inclined to part with his crown; he could think of nothing more to his purpose than telling his sons that since they had all succeeded so well, he could not but wish they would make a second attempt: he therefore begged they would take another year and endeavour to procure him a piece of cambric, so fine as to be drawn through the eye of a small needle.

The youngest arrived at the palace of the

white cat, who received him joyfully, while the trunkless hands helped him, as before ; the prince gave an account of the admiration which had been bestowed on the beautiful little dog, and informed her of his father's further injunction. " Make yourself easy, dear prince," said she : " I have in my palace some cats that are particularly expert in making such cambric as the king requires ; so you have nothing to do but to give me the pleasure of your company while it is making, and I will take care to procure you all the amusement possible." The twelvemonth passed away ; the cat reminded the prince of his duty in proper time ; looking into the court-yard, he saw a superb car, ornamented all over with gold, silver, pearl, and diamonds, drawn by twelve horses as white as snow, and harnessed in the most sumptuous trappings ; and behind the car a thousand guards richly apparelled. She presented him a nut : you will find in it," said she, " the piece of cambric I promised : do not break the shell till you are in the presence of the king your father. His brothers had just arrived before him ; the eldest unwrapped a piece of cambric that was indeed extremely fine ; but when the king tried to draw it through the eye of a needle, it would not pass. Then came the second prince ; his piece of cambric

was exquisitely fine, yet it could not be drawn through the eye of the needle. The youngest advanced, and opening a magnificent little box, inlaid with jewels, took out a walnut and cracked the shell; but what was his astonishment to see nothing but a filbert! he cracked the filbert, and it presented him with a cherry-stone; he cracked the cherry-stone, which was filled with a kernel: he divided it, and found in the middle a grain of wheat, and in that a grain of millet seed. He could not help muttering, "Oh! white cat, white cat, thou hast deceived me!" At this instant he felt his hand scratched by the claw of a cat; and, opening the grain of millet seed, he drew from it a piece of cambric four hundred yards in length, and fine enough to be drawn, with perfect ease, through the eye of the needle. When the king found he had no pretext left for refusing the crown to his youngest son, it was plain that he was not yet tired of governing: "My sons," said he, "it is so gratifying to the heart of a father to receive proofs of his children's love and obedience, that I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of requiring of you one thing more. You must undertake another expedition; and whichever, by the end of the year, shall bring me the most beautiful lady, shall marry her, and obtain my crown.

The youngest was too dutiful to complain of the injustice he had suffered: took leave of the king, and in less than twelve hours arrived, in his splendid car, at the palace of his dear white cat, who received him as before. He told her of the new request of his father. "Never mind it," said she, "I engage to provide you with what you want; in the meantime let us be merry." Only one day remained of another year, the white cat addressed him: "To-morrow you must present yourself at the palace of your father; it depends only on yourself to conduct thither the most beautiful princess ever yet beheld: you must cut off my head and tail, and throw them into the fire." "I! I cut off your head and tail!" answered the prince hastily, "you surely mean to try my affection." "I do not doubt your regard," said she; "but if you wish to see me in any other form than that of a cat, you must do as I desire." The prince's eyes filled with tears as she spoke: he drew his sword, cut off her head and tail, and threw them into the fire. No sooner was this done, than the most beautiful lady he had ever seen stood before him,— "Do not imagine, dear prince, that I have been always a cat. My father was the monarch of six kingdoms; he tenderly loved my mother: her prevailing passion was to travel; a short time before my birth, having heard

of some fairies, who were in possession of the largest gardens filled with the most delicious fruits, she had so strong a desire to eat some of them, that she set out for the country in which they lived. Arrived at their abode, she knocked a long time at the gates ; but no one came, nor could she perceive the least sign that it had any inhabitant ; she ordered her attendants to place tents close to the door of the palace, to watch for an opportunity of speaking to the persons who should go in and out, and remained in them for six weeks with her whole court. But in all this time not a single creature had passed the door : the queen fell sick of vexation, and her life was despaired of. One night, as she lay half asleep, she perceived a little deformed old woman, seated in the easy chair by her bed-side. ‘ I, and my sister fairies,’ said she, ‘ take it extremely ill that your majesty should so obstinately persist in getting some of our fruit ; but we consent to give you as much as you can carry away with you, provided you will give us in return the child as soon as she shall be born ; adding, that they should take care to make her the most accomplished princess. The fairy immediately touched her with a small gold wand, telling her she would now be able to see the door open ; ‘ our palace is well filled with inha-

bitants, and they pass in and out continually, though your majesty had not the gift of seeing them.' My mother instantly entered the palace and satisfied her longing; she said nothing to my father: when the time arrived that she expected my birth, she grew extremely melancholy; being pressed by the king, she declared to him the truth.

"Nothing could exceed his affliction, he bore it, however, as well as he could, believing he should find some means of keeping me in a place of safety. As soon as I was born, he had me conveyed to a tower in the palace, to which there were twenty flights of stairs, and a door to each, of which my father kept the key. The fairies sent to demand me; and on my father's refusal, they let loose a monstrous dragon, whose breath destroyed every thing, so that the trees and plants began to die in great abundance. The grief of the king was extreme: and finding that his whole kingdom would in a short time be reduced to famine, he determined to give me into their hands. I was accordingly laid in a cradle of mother-of-pearl, richly ornamented, and carried to their palace. The fairies placed me in a tower magnificently furnished, to which there was no door; whoever approached me was obliged to come by the windows, which were a prodigious height

from the ground : my clothes were extremely splendid, and I was instructed in every accomplishment. They visited me, seated on the back of the dragon, they called me their child : my only companions were a parrot and a little dog, both had the gift of speech.

“ One day I perceived a young gentleman, I had never seen a man but in pictures, I thought him a very pleasing object, and he at length bowed in a most respectful manner, addressing me through a speaking trumpet, and informing me he should be very unhappy if he did not pass his life in my company. I dared not reply ; but I threw him some flowers. He begged permission to come every day at the same hour. I threw down a ring, at the same time making a sign for him to withdraw hastily, as I heard the approach of the fairy Violent on her dragon. The first words she uttered, after getting in at the window, were, ‘ I smell the voice of a man.’ Imagine my terror. Finding no one, she appeared satisfied and withdrew, leaving me a new distaff, and recommended me to employ myself more in spinning. No sooner was she gone, than I again placed myself at the window ; and having a spying-glass in my tower, I discovered my new acquaintance at some distance, richly dressed, and surrounded by a number of attendants. He sent back

my parrot, a ring, and a picture of himself, of which he begged my acceptance. The fairies resolved to chose a husband for me from their own race, my parrot began to tell me how much she should pity me if the fairies obliged me to marry Migonnet, 'for,' said she, 'he is a dwarf not two feet high; has a hunch upon his back; his head is larger than his whole body; his nose is so long that twenty birds may roost upon it; he has the feet of an eagle, and walks on stilts.' I resolved to find some means of escaping. I begged the fairies to bring me a netting-needle, a mesh, and some cord, saying, I wished to make some nets to amuse myself with catching birds at my windows. In a short time I completed a ladder long enough to reach the ground. I sent my parrot to the prince, to beg he would come to the usual place, finding the ladder he mounted it, when all at once the fairy Violent, on the dragon's back, rushed in, followed by the hideous Migonnet in a chariot of fire, and a troop of guards, each upon the back of an ostrich.

"My beloved prince thought of nothing but how to defend me, but their numbers overpowered him, and the fairy Violent had the barbarity to command the dragon to devour him before my eyes; the fairy then touched me with a wand, and I instantly became a white cat; she conducted me to this

palace, and gave me a train of cats for my attendants, together with the twelve hands which waited on you, and pronounced that I should not be restored to my natural figure, till a young prince, the perfect resemblance of him I had lost, should cut off my head and tail, and cast them in the fire. You, my prince, are that perfect resemblance; and, accordingly, you have ended the enchantment."

The prince and princess at once set out in a car of still greater splendour than before, and reached the palace just as the two brothers had arrived with two beautiful princesses. The king began to think of some new expedient to delay the time of resigning his crown; but the princess who accompanied the youngest, perceiving his thoughts, stepped majestically forward, and thus addressed him:—"I am fortunate enough to have six kingdoms in my possession. Permit me to bestow one on each of the elder princes, and to enjoy the remaining four in the society of the youngest. And may it please your majesty to keep your own kingdom, and to make no decision concerning the beauty of the three princesses." The air resounded with applauses: the young prince and princess embraced the king, and next their brothers and sisters; and the nuptials of the whole three immediately took place.

THE END.

THE WHITE CAT.

A King once feared, at least it is so said,
His sons would take his crown from off his head :
That he might such calamity prevent,
To visit foreign lands the youths were sent,
At the year's end, which brought, it was agreed,
The smallest dog, should to the throne succeed.
The day had closed, the sun his rays withdrawn,
In a thick forest, lonely and forlorn,
The youngest found himself, without a clue
How he might best its winding paths pursue :
A palace, built with china, caught his sight,
With golden doors, studded with jewels bright,
Tied to a diamond string suspended hung
A red deer's foot, by which the bell was rung,
The gates flew open, splendour blazed around,
But human beings, none could there be found :
Twelve trunkless hands upon the prince attend,
And, tho' a stranger, treat him like a friend ;
Two covers lay, - soft music then he hears, -
A WHITE CAT veiled, to welcome him appears ;
The banquet o'er they chat the time away,
Thus pleasure held him fast from day to day,
The year revolved, the tiny dog he sought
The WHITE CAT to him in an acorn brought :
The courtiers all declared, without disguise,
The youngest Prince had fairly won the prize ;
But as the King to keep his rank designed,
An equal claim in each he chose to find.
'Twas then agreed fresh efforts they should make
To seek, so fine a needle's eye would take,
A piece of muslin ; - back the youngest went,
Another year with his WHITE CAT was spent.
Again the Princes with each other vie,
None but the youngest's passed the needle's eye,
The King to rule still felt himself inclined,
'Twas now which should the fairest princess find.
The WHITE CAT said, " Still Prince you shall prevail,
" But you must first cut off my head and tail ;"
Reluctant he complied. - the deed was done, -
A Princess thanked him, charming as the sun.

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