


BLUE

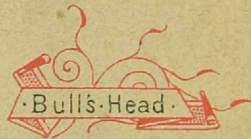
BEARD



With J & J Gelman's Compts of the Season

J. & J. COLMAN

Mustard, Starch, Blue & Corn Flour



MANUFACTURERS

108. Cannon St, London. E.C.

BLUE BEARD.

IN ancient times, in a far-off land,
A castle stood on a rocky strand ;
And in this castle, beside the sea,
Suliman dwelt with his daughters three,
Now, one day it came into Suliman's head,
That his daughters were old enough to wed ;
And so, for the three, he sought to find
Three husbands who should be to his mind.
So he sends forth his herald, who loudly proclaims
That three maidens are ready to change their names ;
And, according to customs which then did prevail,
This simply meant offering his daughters for sale.

Now, among the suitors who came to woo,
There was a man whose beard was blue ;
But he said, " I must have the best of the three,
The money, of course, is no object to me."
'Twas not easy for Blue Beard to find a wife,
For he'd had about ten in the course of his life.
This seemed very strange, but be that as it may,
Folks whispered, " They'd all been put out of the way."
But Blue Beard was rich, and Blue Beard was bold.
And Suliman had a great love for gold ;
So he bade his three daughters prepare for a guest,
Who would choose as his wife the one he liked best.



So the maidens retired, their dress to prepare,
They painted their faces and powdered their hair ;
And wondered which maid he would choose of the three,
And what sort of man this suitor would be.
At last the three maidens, in festal array,
Into the drawing-room wended their way ;
And Zuleika, Fatima, and sister Ann,
Each gently reclined on a silken divan.
When the suitor appeared, so great their surprise
At the sight of his beard, they scarcely could rise ;
He perceived their dismay, and said, " Pray keep your seat,
A lover's right place is at his lady's feet."
" And O ! maidens fair, it is hard to decide
Which one of the three I shall take for my bride ;

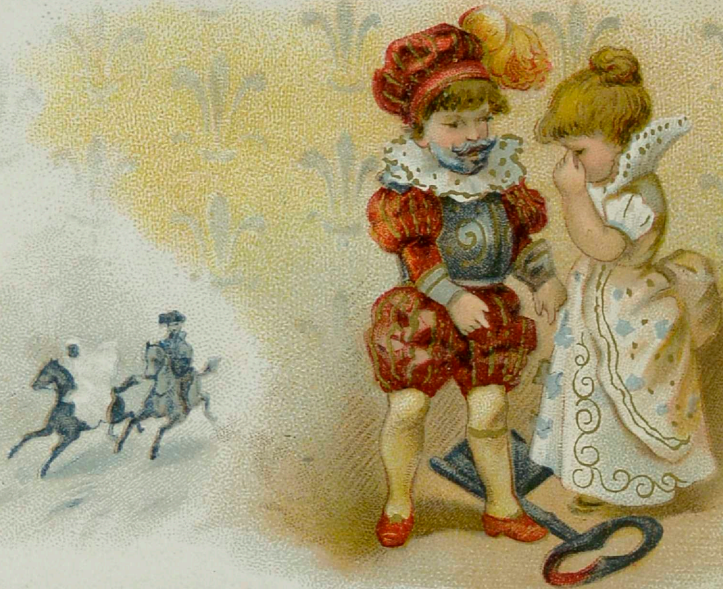
But having observed you, I choose without haste,
And say, Lady Fatima is most to my taste."
Then he went and sat down by the maiden's side,
And said, " My fair lady I claim you as bride ;
To-morrow at noon the wedding shall be,
And as soon as it's over you'll come home with me."
When Blue Beard was gone, quoth sister Ann,
" You may say what you please, but I don't like the man."
Said Zuleika, " No wonder, neither do I " ;
Whereupon poor Fatima began to cry.
Then sister Ann said, " Don't cry, there's a love,
Before you leave home I will give you my dove ;
And if ever you happen in danger to be,
Round her throat tie a message, she'll fly straight to me."

When Blue Beard arrived the next day at noon,
Fatima was not ready a minute too soon ;
But she stood gaily robed in bridal array,
With her father beside her to give her away.
Then after the wedding and breakfast were o'er,
The couple drove off in a carriage-and-four ;
But the journey was long and the hour was late
By the time they arrived at the Castle Gate.
Fatima with dread heard the portcullis drop,
And thought that outside she would much rather stop ;
But she followed Blue Beard, who presently led
The way to the Hall, where a banquet was spread.
Then he said to his wife " I like my own way ;
I expect that you'll honour me, love and obey ;



So just do your duty, and then you will find
Though I've got a blue beard I can be very kind."
So things went on smoothly till Blue Beard, one day,
Told his wife that business called him away,
And as he knew not how long it would be
Before he returned, he gave her a key,
Saying, "Fatima, this is the key of the door
Of the room to the right on the second floor ;
I wish no one to know what inside it I keep,
So be sure while I'm gone that you don't take a peep."
But as soon as he'd left, she looked at the key
And said, "He shall have no secrets from me ;
From his wife a good husband ought nothing to hide,
Besides, I shan't tell him I've been inside."

She ran to the door, turned the key in the lock,
And inside the room saw an axe and a block ;
And ten headless wives, all fixed to the wall,
The sight was so ghastly she let the key fall.
When she came to herself, she looked on the floor,
And there lay the key all covered with gore ;
She picked it up quickly and rubbed all in vain,
It seemed as if nothing would take off the stain.
By the look of the key, she knew Blue Beard would guess
That she'd peeped in the chamber, so in her distress
She sent off the dove to her sister Ann,
Recounting the deeds of the terrible man.
Now two gallant knights, named Hafed and Ivan,
Were courting Zuleika and sister Ann ;



So before Ann left home she wrote to them, and said,
" Ride to Blue Beard's with speed and save Fatima's head."
When Fatima the dove to her sister had sent,
She sat down at leisure her haste to repent ;
And when Blue Beard returned, the very same night,
She thought she should faint, so great was her fright.
He wished her " Good evening," and asked for the key,
Then she said, " It's up-stairs, after supper I'll see ;
I am not quite sure, but I fear it's mislaid."
But Blue Beard said " Madam, I will be obeyed."
Now, outside the door, in her cloak and her hood,
Like a sentry on duty there sister Ann stood ;
When Fatima came out, she said, " Hush ! my dear,
Your wicked old husband does not know I'm here."

So they ran to the turret and bolted the door,
And Ann told her sister that ere night was o'er
She hoped Hafed and Ivan at the Castle to see.
Then they heard Blue Beard call, "Come, bring me that key."
Fatima replied, "Wait a minute or two."
Then she said to her sister, "O! what shall I do?"
Ann answered, "You'd better run down with the key,"
And I'll watch till Hafed and Ivan I see."
When the poor girl got down, she scarcely could stand,
But just managed to put the key in his hand;
And it needed but one single glance to reveal
She'd found out the secret he wished to conceal.
Then, with terrible look, Blue Beard sternly did say,
"Like my other ten wives, you have dared disobey."

Now go to your chamber, and for your doom prepare,
For to-morrow at noon their fate you will share."
Next morn at the casement, with eager eyes,
Stood sister Ann watching to see the sun rise ;
And Fatima kneeling, cried " Dear sister, say
Do you see your true knights riding this way ? "
Sister Ann made answer, " The road is quite clear,
And nought but the bleating of sheep do I hear."
The hour grows late. " Ah ! sister Ann, say
Do you see your true knights riding this way ? "
The hour grows later, and all too soon,
As though borne on wings, time flies towards noon.
" Sister Ann ! Sister Ann ! Are they coming this way
Too late they will be if they longer delay."

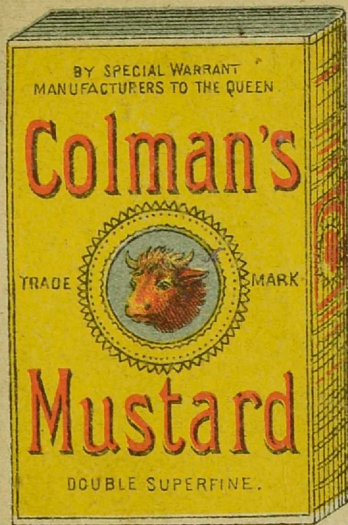


Then sister Ann answers, " I see a great cloud."
As she speaks Blue Beard's voice is heard, angry and loud ;
" Block and axe are both ready, it's getting quite late,
So come down at once, I'm in no mood to wait."
" Sister Ann ! Sister Ann ! say, what do you see ? "
" The cloud draws nearer, and nearer to me.
Ah, joy ! see, two horsemen are riding with speed,
They are coming to help in our hour of need."
Then Blue Beard is heard at the foot of the stair,
He comes up and drags her down by the hair ;
But she does not lose courage, for now, sharp and clear,
The tramp of the horses quite close she can hear.
Hark ! down falls the drawbridge, and over they ride,
Then Hafed and Ivan stand at Blue Beard's side ;

With their bright scimitars they cut off his head.
And at Fatima's feet her husband lies dead.
Soon Fatima's story was spread through the land,
And suitors from far off and near sought her hand ;
But they sued all in vain, for the lady's reply
Invariably was, " Once bitten twice shy."
But it frequently happens, at least so I find,
That ladies are given to alter their mind ;
And at last she decided to marry a Prince,
With whom she's lived happily ever since.

T. E. M.

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