

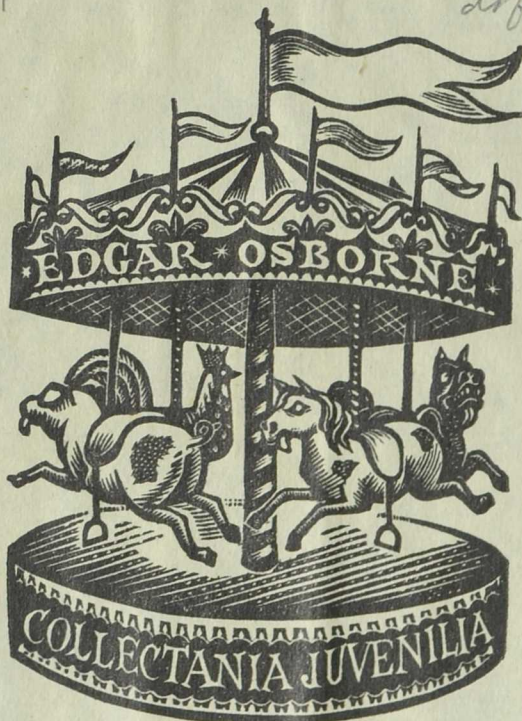
THE WHITE CAT



PUBLISHED BY A. PARK, LEONARD ST. LONDON

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THE WHITE CAT



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THE
ENTERTAINING STORY
OF
THE WHITE CAT,
OR THE
KING AND HIS THREE SONS.

THERE was a king who had three sons, all handsome brave young gentlemen; but jealous that they should desire to reign before his death, he caused several reports to be spread abroad, that they endeavoured to procure themselves creatures to deprive him of his crown. The king found himself very old, but his sense and capacity of government no ways decayed; so that he cared not to resign a place he filled so worthily, and thought that the best way for him to live at quiet, was to amuse them by promises. To this end he took them into his closet, where, after he had talked to them with great candour, he said, "You will agree with me, my children, that my great age will not allow me to apply myself to the affairs of state with as much care as formerly; and I am afraid my subjects will not be so well pleased with my administration: therefore I intend to resign my crown to one of you. But as it is very just that you should strive to please me with such a present, and as I design to retire into the country, I should be very glad to have a pretty little dog to keep me company. Therefore, without having more regard to my eldest than my youngest, I declare, that he who brings me the most curious and interesting little dog, shall be my successor."

These princes were very much surprised at their father's fancy for a little dog. For the two younger, they were extraordinary well pleased at the proposal; and for the elder, he was either too timorous or respectful to represent his right. However, they took their leaves of the king, who gave them money and jewels, telling them that they must all return without fail in a year's time, on a certain day, with their dogs.

But before they set out on this search, they all went to a castle three leagues off, where they made an entertainment, and invited their most trusty friends and confidants, before whom the three brothers swore an

eternal friendship to one another, promising not to be jealous of each other's good fortune; but that the most successful should let the other two partake with him, appointing that castle for their place of rendezvous, and from thence go altogether to the king.

They every one took a different road without any attendants; and for the two eldest, they had a great many adventures: but as the particulars are not so well known to me, I shall pass over them in silence, and speak only of the youngest, who was the most accomplished prince of the age.

Not a day passed, but he bought dogs of some kind or other that were pretty, keeping always the most beautiful, and letting the others go; for it was impossible for him to keep all the dogs he had purchased, since he had neither gentleman, page, nor any other person along with him: however, he kept going on, without fixing on any certain place; when he was surprised one night in a large forest, where he could find no shelter, by a storm of thunder, lightning, and rain. Still he persued the road, and went a long way, when seeing a small light, he persuaded himself some house was nigh, where he might get a lodging that night. Following the lights, he arrived at the gates of a stately castle, which were all of massy gold; in which were carbuncles, which gave that extraordinary light which the prince saw so far off. The walls were of fine china, whereon the histories of all fairies since the creation of the world were represented; but the rain and ill weather would not suffer our prince to stay to examine them all, though he was charmed to find the adventures of Prince Latin, who was his uncle, among the rest.

He returned to the gate, after having rambled some paces off, and there found a deer's foot at the end of a chain of diamonds, which made him admire the magnificence. He pulled the chain, and soon heard a bell, which, by the sound, he judged to be either gold or silver. In a few moments the door opened; but he perceived nothing but twelve hands in the air, each holding a torch; at which sight he was very much surprised, and was in dispute whether or no he should proceed any further, when, to his great amazement, he felt some others behind him, which pushed him forwards; whereupon he advanced with his hand on his sword, though very uneasy, and, as he thought, in some danger: when going into a wardrobe of porphyry and jasper, he heard two sweet voices sing these words:—



“With unconcern behold these hands,
And dread no false alarms;
If you are sure you can withstand
The force of Beauty's charms.

He could not believe he was invited so kindly to suffer any injury, which made him, finding himself forced forwards, to go to a great gate of coral, which opened as soon as he approached it, and he went into a hall of mother-o'-pearl, and thence into several chambers adorned and enriched with paintings and jewels: a vast number of lights that were let down from the ceiling of the hall, contributed to light some part of the other apartments, which besides were hung round with glass sconces. In short, the magnificence was almost incredible. After having gone into sixty chambers, the hands that conducted him stopped him, and he saw a great easy chair make up towards him; the fire light of itself, and the hands, which were both white and finely proportioned, undress him, he being wet, and in some danger of catching cold. A fine shirt, and a night-gown of gold brocade, with cyphers and small emeralds, were given him, and a table and toilet brought by these hands. Every thing was very grand: the hands combed out his hair with a lightness that gave him pleasure, and afterwards dressed him in extraordinary fine clothes, while he not only silently admired them, but at last began to be in some little fright. When he was dressed, that he seemed as beautiful as Adonis, they conducted him into a stately hall richly furnished, where he saw in fine painting, the stories of the most famous cats.

In this apartment there was a table spread for a repast, garnished with gold plate, with beaufets set out with a vast number of glasses and cups, made of valuable stones. The prince observed that there were two covers set and was wondering who was to be his companion, when his attention was attracted to a small figure not a foot high, which just then entered the room, and advanced toward him. It had on a long black veil, and was supported by two cats dressed in mourning, with swords by their sides, and were followed by a numerous retinue of cats; some carrying rats, and some mice in traps and cages.

The prince was at a loss what to think. The little figure now approached, and throwing aside her veil, he beheld a most beautiful white cat; she seemed young and melancholy, and addressing herself to the prince, for she had a human voice, she said, "Prince, you are welcome; your presence affords me great pleasure."

"Madam," replied the prince, "I would fain thank you for your generosity; but you will pardon me for expressing the astonishment I feel, that under your present form you should possess the gift of human speech, and the magnificent palace I see." "All this is very true," answered the beautiful cat "but, prince, I am not fond of talking; and least of all, do I like compliments; let us, therefore, sit down to supper."

The hands then placed the dishes on the table, and the prince and the white cat seated themselves. The first dish was a pie made of young pigeons, and the next was a fricasee of the fattest mice; the view of one made the prince almost afraid of the other; till the white cat assured him that there were certain dishes at table, in which there was not a morsel of either rat or mouse, which had been dressed on purpose for him. Accordingly he ate heartily of such as she recommended him. When

supper was over, the prince perceived that the white cat had a miniature portrait set in gold, suspended to one of her feet. He begged her permission to look at it, and to his astonishment, found that it was the portrait of a young man exactly like himself.

He thought this was very extraordinary; but, as the white cat sighed, and looked very sorrowfully, he did not venture to indulge his curiosity by asking any question. He conversed with her on many different subjects, and found that her mind was highly accomplished, and her knowledge correct upon almost all the affairs of the world.

When the night was far advanced, the white cat wished him good-night, and he was conducted by the hands to a bed-chamber which differed from all the apartments he had yet seen in the palace, being hung with the wings of butterflies, mingled with the most curious feathers. The bed hangings were of velvet, lined with gauze, fastened with wreaths of flowers, and the looking-glass reached from the floor to the ceiling, and the pannels between represented, in carved work, thousands of cupids. The prince was undressed and put into bed by the hands, but not a word was spoken. He, however, slept but little; and in the morning was awakened by a confused noise.

The hands took him out of bed, and put on him an elegant hunting-dress. He looked out of the window into the court-yard, and perceived about five hundred cats, some leading greyhounds, and others blowing horns; it being that day a great feast, whereon the cat had a mind to go a hunting. Presently the white cat came to his apartment, and having politely inquired after his health, she invited him to partake of their amusement. The hands presented to him a wooden horse, that had a good speed and easy paces, which he made some scruple to mount, alledging, they took him for Don Quixote; but his refusal signified nothing, they set him on the wooden horse, which was finely caparisoned, with a saddle and housing of gold, beset with diamonds. The cat rode on a most beautiful ape; having thrown off her veil, and put on a hat and feather, which gave so bold an air, as frightened all the mice that saw her. Never was there better sport; the cats outran the hares and rabbits, and whenever they took one, they were immediately hunted into the presence of the white cat, who gave them their fees. For the birds, they were not in much greater security; the cats climbed the trees, and the ape carried the white cat up to the eagles' nests.

When the chase was over, she took a horn, of about a finger's length, which, when sounded, was so loud, that it might be heard some leagues; and as soon as she blowed, she had presently all the cats in the country about her, some mounted in chariots in the air, and some in boats, but all in different habits, which made a fine show. With this pompous train she and the prince returned to the castle, who thought it favoured much of sorcery - but was more surprised at the cat's speaking, than all the rest.

As soon as he came home, she put on her black veil again, and supped with the prince, whom the fresh air had got a good stomach; the hands brought him fine liquors, which he not only drank of with pleasure, but

made him forget the little dog he was to procure for his father. He thought only of pleasing the dear little creature who had received him so courteously. He sometimes even regretted that he was not a cat, so great was his regard for his beautiful companion. "Alas!" said he to the cat, "how it will afflict me to leave you! Either make yourself a lady, or let me become a cat." She smiled at the prince's wish, but made no reply.

Thus a year slipped away free from care and pain. The white cat knew the time he was to return; and as he did not think of it, put him in mind thereof. "Don't you know," said she, "that you have but three days to find a little dog in, and that your brothers have got some very fine ones?"

The prince began to lament how he had neglected his duty. "By what secret charm," cried he, "have I forgot the only thing in the world, that is of the greatest importance to me? What will become of my honour and fortune? Where shall I find a little dog beautiful enough to gain a kingdom, and a horse swift enough to make diligent search after one?" "But the white cat told him not to afflict himself, since she would not only provide him with a little dog, but also with a horse, which should safely convey him in less than twelve hours.

"Look at this," said she, showing him an acorn, "this contains what you desire." The prince put the acorn to his ear, and heard the barking of a little dog. Filled with joy, he thanked the white cat a thousand times; and the next day, having bade her adieu, he set out on his return.

The young prince arrived first at the place which had been agreed upon by him and his two brothers, who followed soon afterwards. They began to give each other an account of their success; but the youngest took care to conceal the truth of his, and showed them only an ugly turnspit, telling them that he thought him very pretty: at which, though they were very good friends, the two eldest conceived a secret joy.

The next day they all three went together in the same coach to the king. The two eldest carried their dogs in baskets so white and delicate, that none durst hardly touch them; and the youngest had his poor despicable turnspit in a string, and every one was surprised that the prince could hope to receive a crown for such a present. The king having examined the two little dogs of the elder princes, declared that he thought they were so equally beautiful, that he knew not to which he could with justice give the preference. They accordingly began to dispute, when the youngest prince taking the acorn from his pocket, soon terminated their contentions; for a little dog appeared which could with ease go through the ring of a lady's finger, and never touch it, and was, moreover, a miracle of beauty. The prince set it on the ground, and presently it began to dance a saraband with castanets, as nimble and as well as the best Spaniard. It was of a mixture of several colours, its ears and long hairs reached to the ground. The king was very much surprised, and though it was impossible to meet with any thing so beautiful as "Tonton," by which name it was called, yet he was not ready to part with his crown, the last gem of which was dearer to him than all the dogs in the world. He told his sons, that he was very well pleased with the pains they had

taken; but they had succeeded so well in the first thing he had desired, that he had a mind to make further proof of their abilities before he performed his promise: and that was, he would give them a year to find out a web of cloth fine enough to go through the eye of a small working needle. They all stood surprised and concerned that they were to go again upon another search; however, the two elder seemed the more ready, and all three parted without making so great a profession of friendship as they did the first time, for the story of the turnspit had somewhat abated it.

Our prince mounted his wooden horse again, and without looking after any other assistance, than what he might expect from the friendship of the white cat, returned all in diligence to the castle, where he had been so well received; where he not only found all the doors open, but the windows, walls, and walks illuminated. The hands came and met him, held his horse's bridle, and led him into the stable, while the prince went to the white cat's chamber, who was laid in a little basket, on a quilt of satin.



When she saw the prince, she made a thousand skips and jumps, to express her joy, and said, "Whatever reason I might have, prince, to hope for your return, I must own I durst not flatter myself with it, since I am generally unhappy in what I most desire, therefore this most surprises me." The prince, full of acknowledgment, caressed her often, and told her the success he had in his journey, which she was not unacquainted with, and that the king required a web of cloth so fine, as it might be drawn through the eye of a needle, which he believed was a thing impossible; but that, however, he would not fail to try to procure such a one, relying on her friendship and assistance.

The White Cat, putting on a grave air, told him it was an affair that required some consideration, that by good fortune she had in her castle some cats that spun very fine, that she would do what she could to forward that work, so that he might stay there, and not trouble himself to search elsewhere, it being unlikely for him to meet with any so easily.

Soon after the hands appeared, carrying flambeaus, and the prince followed the White Cat into a magnificent gallery that looked on to a river, upon which there were some artificial fire-works, made to burn four cats, who had been convicted of eating some roast meat, designed for the White Cat's supper, with some cheese and milk; and besides, for conspiring against her person with Martafax and Lermite, two famous rats in that country. But as they thought there was a great deal of injustice done them, and that most of the witnesses were suborned, the prince obtained their pardon; notwithstanding, the fire works were let off, which gave the prince very great diversion. Afterwards a repast was served up, which gave the prince more pleasure than the fire, for his riding had got him an extraordinary stomach.

For the rest of the time, he spent it in agreeable entertainments, with which the ingenious White Cat diverted her guest, who was perhaps the first mortal that was so well entertained by cats, without any other company. Indeed the White Cat had a ready wit, and could discourse on any subject, which often put the prince into a great consternation, and made him say to her, "Certainly, all this that I observe so wonderful in you, cannot be natural; therefore tell me by what prodigy you think and speak so justly?" "Forbear asking me any questions, prince," said she, "for I am not allowed to answer them, but you may conjecture what you please, let it suffice that I have used you with respect, and that I interest myself tenderly in what regards you."

The second year rolled away insensibly, as well as the first; the prince wished for nothing, but the diligent hands brought it to him, whether books, jewels, fine pictures, or antique medals; when the White Cat, who was very watchful for the prince's interest, informed him that the time of his departure drew nigh; but that he might be easy concerning the web of cloth, for she had a wonderful fine one made; and added withal, that this time she would give him an equipage suitable to his birth, and without waiting for answer, obliged him to look into the great court of the castle, in which there waited an open chariot of embossed work in gold, in several gallant devices, drawn by twelve milk white horses, four a-breast, whose harnesses were covered with velvet of fire-colour, which was the same as the lining of the chariot, beset with diamonds, and the buckles of gold. An hundred coaches with eight horses, full of the lords of his retinue, magnificently clothed, followed this chariot, which was guarded besides by a thousand body-guards, whose clothing was so full of embroidery, that the cloth was hardly discovered; and what was very singular, the White Cat's picture was seen every where; both in the devices on the chariot, and on the guards.

"Go, prince," said she, "and appear at the king your father's court, in so stately a manner, that your magnificence may serve to impose on him, that he may refuse you no longer the crown you deserve. Take this walnut, be sure to crack it in his presence, and you will find in it such a web as you want."

"Lovely White Cat," said he, "I own I am so penetrated with your

bounty, that if you will give your consent, I will prefer passing my days with you, before all the grandeur I may promise myself elsewhere." "Prince," replied she, "I am persuaded of the kindness of your heart, which is a rare thing among princes, who would be respected by all the world, and love none but themselves; but you show me this rule is not general. I make great account of the attachment you have for a little white cat, that in the main is fit for nothing but to catch mice." At that the prince kissed her paw, and went away.

Nothing could surpass the speed with which the horses conveyed this fortunate prince to his father's palace, where his brother's had arrived before him; who seeing he was not come, rejoiced at his negligence, and said to one another, "How fortunate is this! he is either sick or dead, and will not come to rival us in this important business." Thereupon they pulled out their webs, which indeed were very fine, and passed them through the eye of a large needle, but not a small one; which pretext of refusal the king embracing, went and fetched the needle he proposed, which the magistrates, by his order, had carried to the treasury, and locked up carefully. This refusal raised a great murmuring: those that were friends to the princes, and particularly the eldest, whose web was the finest, said it was all a trick and evasion, and the king's creatures maintained, that he was not obliged to keep any other conditions than what were proposed; when to put an end to this difference, there was heard a sounding of trumpets, which came before our prince.

The king and his sons were all surprised at this magnificence. The prince, after he had respectfully saluted his father, and embraced his brothers, took out of his box covered with rubies, a walnut, which he cracked, thinking to find the web so much boasted of: but only saw a small hazel nut, which he cracked also, and, to his surprise, found only a kernel of wax. The king and every body laughed to think, that the prince should be so credulous as to think to carry a web of cloth in a nut; but had they recollected themselves, they might have remembered the little dog that lay in the acorn. However, he peeled the kernel, and nothing appeared but the pulp itself, whereupon a great noise was heard all over the room, every one having in his mouth what a fool the prince was made of; who, for his part, returned no answer to all the pleasantries of the courtiers, but broke the kernel, and found in it a grain of wheat, and in that a millet seed. At the sight of this he began to distrust, and muttered to himself, "O White Cat! White Cat! thou hast deceived me." At that instant he felt a cat's paw upon his hand, which scratched him, and fetched blood; he knew not whether it was to encourage or dismay



him. However, he opened the millet seed, and to the amazement of all present, drew out a web of cloth four hundred yards long; and what was more wonderful, there were painted on it all sorts of birds, beasts and fish, fruits, trees and plants, rocks, and all manner of rare shells of the sea; the sun, moon, stars, and planets; and the pictures of all the kings and princes of the world, with those of their wives, mistresses, and children, all dressed after the fashion of their own country.

When the king saw this piece of cloth, he turned as pale as the prince was red in looking for it, and the needle was brought, and it was put through five or six times; all which time the king and his two sons were silent, though afterwards, the beauty and rarity of the cloth was so great, they said it was not to be matched in the whole world. The king fetched a deep sigh, and turning himself towards his children, said to them, "Nothing gives me so much comfort in my old age, as to be sensible of the deference you have for me, which makes me desirous of putting you to a new trial. Go and travel another year, and he that brings me the most beautiful damsel, shall marry her, and be crowned king; there being an absolute necessity that my successor should marry: and I swear and promise, I will no longer defer the reward."

Our prince suffered all his injustice: the little dog and the web of cloth rather deserved ten crowns than one; but he was of so sweet a disposition, that he would not thwart his father's will, so without delay, he got into his chariot again, and with his train returned to his dear white cat, who knowing the day and moment he would come, had the roads strewn with flowers. She was laid on a Persian tapestry, under a canopy of cloth of gold, in a gallery, from whence she could see him return. He was received by the hands that always served him, and all the cats climbed upon the gutter to congratulate his return by a concert of mewing.

"Well, prince," said she to him, "I see you are come back without your crown." "Madam," replied he, "by your bounty I was in a condition of gaining it, but I am persuaded the king is more loth to part with it, than I am fond of having it." "No matter for that," said she, "you must neglect nothing to deserve it, I will assist you on this occasion: and since you must carry a beautiful damsel to your father's court, I will look out for one which shall gain you the prize; but in the interim, let us be merry and divert ourselves. I have ordered a sea fight between my cats and the most terrible rats of the country. My cats perhaps may be hard set, for they are afraid of the water: however, they will have advantage enough; we cannot expect it in every thing." The prince returned her thanks, and said several handsome things on her conduct and prudence. Afterwards they went upon a terrace which looked on to the sea. The cats' vessels consisted of great pieces of cork, on which they floated very commodiously; and those of the rats of egg-shells joined together. The fight was very obstinate; the rats threw themselves into the water, and swam better than the cats; insomuch, that they as often conquered, as they were conquered, when Minagrobis, the admiral of the cats, reduced

the rattish race to the utmost despair, by eating up the admiral of their fleet, who was an old experienced rat, that had made three voyages round the world in very good ships, in which he was neither captain nor sailor, but only a kind of interloper. But the White Cat was so prudent, that



she would not absolutely destroy these poor unfortunate rats, thinking that if there were no rats nor mice, her subjects would live in an idleness that might become prejudicial to her.

The prince passed this year as he had done the two first, in hunting, fishing, and such diversions, and often at a game of chess, which the White Cat played extraordinary well at; but he could not forbear often questioning her, to know by what miracle she spoke. He asked her if she was a fairy, or if by any metamorphosis she was turned into a cat. But as the White Cat was always capable of saying what she had a mind to, she returned him an answer so insignificant, that he perceived she was not willing to communicate this secret to him.

As nothing passes away so quick as happy days, if the White Cat had not been so careful as to remember the time the prince was to return, 'tis certain he would have quite forgot it. She told him of it the night before, and withal, that the hour of destroying the fatal work of the fairies was come; and therefore he must resolve to cut off her head and tail, and throw them presently into the fire. "What!" cried he, "shall I, my lovely White Cat, be so barbarous as to kill you? You have undoubtedly a mind to make proof of my heart, but be assured it is incapable of wanting that friendship and acknowledgment due to you." "No, prince," continued she, "I don't suspect you of ingratitude; I know your merit; but neither you nor I can prescribe to fate. Do what I desire you, we shall be happy; and you shall know, upon the word of a cat of worth and honour, that I am really your friend." Tears started two or three times in the young prince's eyes, to think that he must cut off the head of his pretty cat, that had been so kind to him; he said all that he could think most tender to engage her to dispense with him. To which

she answered obstinately, she would die by his hand, and that was the only way to hinder his brother from having the crown. In short, she pressed him so earnestly, that he trembling, with an unsteady hand, cut



off her head and tail, and threw them presently into the fire; and at the same time saw the most charming metamorphosis imaginable. The body of the White Cat grew presently large, and changed all on a sudden to a fine lady so accomplished, as exceeds description. Her eyes committed thefts on all hearts, and her sweetness kept them; her shape was majestic, her air noble and modest, her wit flowing, her manners engaging; in a word, beyond every thing that was lovely.

The prince, at the sight of her, was in so agreeable a surprise, that he thought himself enchanted. He could not speak or look at her, and his tongue was so tied, that he could not explain his amazement; which was much greater, when he saw an extraordinary number of gentlemen and ladies, holding their cat-skins over their shoulders, come and prostrate themselves at the Queen's feet, to testify their joy to see her again in her natural state. She received them with all the marks of bounty, which sufficiently discovered the sweetness of her temper. After having spent some time in hearing their compliments, she ordered them to retire, and leave her alone with the prince; to whom she spoke as follows:—

“Think not, Sir, that I have always been a cat, and that my birth is obscure. My father was king of six kingdoms, loved my mother tenderly and gave her liberty to do what she pleased. Her most prevailing inclination was to travel; and a short time before I was born, she undertook to go to see a mountain, of which she had heard a most surprising account. As she was on the road, she was told there was nigh the place she was then at, an ancient castle of fairies, which was the finest in the world, or at least said to be so; for as no person was ever admitted into it, there could not be any positive judgment passed thereon: but for the gardens, they were known to contain the best fruits that ever were eat—and the queen, my mother, who longed to taste them, went thither. But when she came to the gate of this stately edifice, which shined again with blue enamelled with gold, no body came, though she knocked a long time; and her desire increasing the more, by reason of the difficulty, she sent for ladders to scale the walls: but they growing visibly to a great height of themselves, they were forced to fasten the ladders to another, to lengthen them; and whenever any one went up them, they broke under their weight, so that they were either killed or lamed.

“The queen was in the utmost despair to see trees loaded with such delicious fruits, and not to taste of them, which she was resolved to do, or

die. insomuch that she ordered some rich tents to be pitched before the castle, and stayed there six weeks, with all her court. She neither slept nor eat, but sighed continually, and was always talking of the fruit. In short, she fell dangerously ill, and no remedy could be found out; for the inexorable fairies never appeared from the time she came there. All her court were very much grieved; there was nought to be heard but sighs and lamentations, while the dying queen was continually asking those that were in waiting upon her, for fruit; but would eat of none but what came out of this garden.

One night, after having got a little sleep, when she awakened she saw a little ugly decrepid old woman seated in an elbow-chair by her bolster, and was surprised that her women should suffer a stranger so near her; when she said to her, 'We think your majesty very importunate to be so stubborn in your desires for eating our fruit; but since your valuable life is in danger, my sisters and I have consented to give you as much as you can carry away, and to let you eat of them as long as you stay here, provided you will make us one present.' 'Ah! my good mother,' said the queen, 'name it; I will give you my kingdoms, heart and soul, to have some of the fruit: I cannot buy it too dear.'

" 'We would have your majesty,' said she, 'give us the first daughter you have. As soon as she is born, we will come and fetch her; she shall be brought up by us and we will endow her with all virtues, beauties, and sciences: in short, she shall be our child, and we will make her happy. But your majesty must observe, that you must never see her any more till she is married. If you will agree to this proposition, I will cure you immediately, and carry you into our orchards, where notwithstanding 'tis night, you shall see well enough to choose what you would have; but if what I say displeases your majesty, good night.' 'Though what you impose on me,' replied the queen, 'is very hard, yet I accept it rather than die; for certainly if I cannot live, my child must be lost; therefore, skilful fairy,' continued she, 'cure me, and let me not be a moment debarred of the privileges I am entitled to thereby.'

"The fairy touched her with a little golden wand, saying, 'Your majesty is free from all illness.' And thereupon she seemed as if she had thrown off a heavy garment that had been troublesome and incommodious to her. She ordered all the ladies of the court to be called, and with a gay air told them she was extraordinary well, and would rise, since that the gates of the fairies' palace, which were so strongly barricaded, were set open for her to eat of the fruit, and to carry what she pleased away. The ladies thought the queen delirious, and that she was then dreaming of the fruit she longed so much for; insomuch, that instead of returning any answer, they fell a-crying, and called in the physicians; which delays put the queen in the utmost despair. She asked for her clothes, and they refusing her them, put her into a passion, which they looked upon as her fever. In the interim the physicians came, who, after having felt her pulse, and made their enquiries, could not deny but that she was in perfect health. The ladies seeing the fault they had committed through their great

zeal, endeavoured to repair it by dressing her quickly. They every one begged her pardon, which she granted, and hastened to follow the old fairy, who waited for her. She went into the palace, where nothing was wanting to make it the finest in the world; which you will more easily believe, Sir, (added the new metamorphosed queen,) when I shall tell you 'twas this we are now in. Two other fairies not quite so old as she that conducted my mother, received her favourably at the gate; she desired them to carry her presently into the garden, and to those trees that bore the best fruits. They told her they were all equally good, and that unless she would have the pleasure of gathering them herself, they would call them to her. 'I beg,' said the queen, 'that I may have the pleasure of seeing so extraordinary an event.' Whereupon the elder of the three put her fingers into her mouth, and blew three times, and then cried, apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, cherries, pears, melons, grapes, apples, oranges, lemons, gooseberries, currants, strawberries, raspberries, come all at my call. 'But,' said the queen, 'these fruits are not all ripe in the same season.' 'Oh,' said they, 'in our gardens we have all sorts of fruit always ripe and good, and they never diminish.'

"At the same time they came rolling to them without any bruises; and the queen, who was impatient to satisfy her longing, fell upon them, and took the first that offered, which she rather devoured than eat. When her appetite was somewhat satisfied, she desired the fairies to let her go to the trees, and have the pleasure to gather them herself: to which they gave their consents: but said to her, at the same time, you must remember the promise you have made us, for you will not be allowed to run back from it. 'I am persuaded,' replied she, 'it is so pleasant living with you, and this palace is so charming, that if I did not love the king, my husband, dearly, I would offer myself; therefore you need not fear my retracting from my word.' The fairies, who were very well satisfied, opened the doors of their gardens, and all their inclosures, and the queen stayed in them three days and nights without ever stirring out, so delicious she found them. She gathered fruit for her provision, and as they never wasted, loaded four hundred mules she brought along with her. The fairies added to their fruit, baskets of gold of curious work to carry them in, and many other valuable rarities. They promised to educate and make me a complete princess, and to choose me out a husband, and to inform my mother of the wedding.

* The king was overjoyed at the queen's return, but often asked her what country she had been in, to bring home such good things, to which she gave him many evasive answers. He enquired of those that went with her, but they were all forbid to tell any thing of the matter.

"At length, the queen, when her time was at hand, grew very melancholy, and the king being very much concerned, urged the queen to disclose the cause of her depression, who confessed the truth. Nothing could exceed his affliction, when he heard that, whenever he should be blessed with an infant of his own, it was to be given to the fairies. He endured it, however, as well as he could, that he might not augment my

mother's distress; hoping, also, that he might find some mode of preventing this event. As soon as I was born, he had me conveyed to a tower in the palace, to which there were twenty flights of stairs, each having a door; but my father kept the key of them all, so that no one came near me without his knowledge. When the fairies understood what had been done, they first sent to demand me, and on my father's refusal, they let loose in his dominions a large and dreadful dragon. This enormous reptile destroyed men, women and children; and even the vegetation of every kind began to die throughout the kingdom. The king's distress was increased by this devastation; and finding that in a short time his whole empire would be annihilated, he consented to resign me.

"All the bands and rolls of my swaddling clothes were buckled with large pearls; four and twenty princesses of the blood carried me on a kind of light litter, all dressed in white, to resemble my innocence, and were followed by the whole court, according to their ranks. While they were going up a mountain, they heard a melodious symphony; and afterwards the fairies appeared to the number of six and thirty, for the three had invited all their friends, each in a shell of pearl as large as that wherein Venus arose out of the sea, and drawn by sea-horses, in as great pomp as if they had been the first queens in the world. When they took me, it was with such extraordinary caresses, that it seemed as if they only lived to make me happy.



"The dragon which was the instrument of their revenge against my father, followed them bound in chains of diamonds. Afterwards the devouring dragon came forwards, the two fairies to whom my mother promised me, placed themselves upon him, and set my cradle between them then striking the dragon with a wand, he presently displayed his large wings, and carried them to their palace. The fairies placed me in a turret of the palace elegantly furnished, but it had no door; so that access to me could only be obtained through the windows. I had, however, the liberty to go out into a delightful garden. There I was educated by the fairies, who certainly behaved to me with great kindness. Indeed, I think, that if I had never seen any person but them, I should have been happy.

"One of the windows of my tower overlooked a long avenue that led to the palace, but I had never seen in it a human being. One day, however, as I was talking to my birds, I perceived a young gentleman who was listening to me. As I had never before seen any person but the fairies, I thought him very pleasing. He looked at me, and bowed with respect, but seemed afraid to speak to me, as he knew I was in the palace of fairies. When it became evening, he went away, but I was unable to see

by which road he departed. The next morning, almost as soon as light appeared, I placed myself at the same window, and saw that the young gentleman had returned to his former spot. He now ventured to speak to me, and said a great deal about the happiness my society would give him.

"I resolved to find some means of escaping, and requested the fairies to allow me a netting-needle, a mesh, and some cord, that I might make some nets, and amuse myself with catching birds at my window. This request they readily complied with; and in a short time I completed a ladder long enough to reach the ground. When the young gentleman next came under my window, I told him what I had done, and invited him to come into my room, to which he rapturously consented. Whilst we were talking, one of the fairies, mounted on a dragon, rushed in at the window of my room. The young gentleman thought only to defend me from their fury, for I had related to him my history, but he was soon overpowered, and the fairy had the cruelty to command the dragon to devour him, even before my eyes. One of them then touched me with a wand, and I instantly became a White Cat. I was then conducted to this palace, and a train of cats were allowed me for my attendants, together with the twelve hands which waited on you, my prince.

"The same fairy then informed me of the death of my parents, and pronounced upon me as a sentence, 'that I should not be restored to my natural form until a young prince, the exact resemblance of him whom I had already seen and lost, should cut off my head and tail, and cast them into a fire.' You, my prince, are that exact resemblance, and you have dissolved the enchantment."

The prince and princess set out together, in a car of extraordinary splendour, and reached their destination just as the two brothers had arrived, each with a beautiful lady. The king having heard that all his sons had succeeded in finding and obtaining what he had exacted, again began to think of some fresh expedient to procrastinate the surrender of his crown. The elder princes felt indignation that such beautiful and interesting young ladies as had consented to accompany them should be subjected to such unmerited disappointment.

At that instant the princess advanced, and addressed the old monarch. "I lament that your majesty who is so capable of governing, should have thought of resigning the crown. I am so fortunate as to have six kingdoms included in my empire. Permit me to bestow one on each of the elder of your two princes, and to enjoy the remaining four with your youngest son. And may it please your majesty, to keep your own kingdom, and make no decision concerning the beauty of the princesses before you, each of whom will live happy with their respective prince."

The king and all the court were not able to express their joy and amazement. The marriage of the three Princes and their Princesses were celebrated at the same time, and the court spent several months in pleasure and diversion; after which they all went to their dominions, and the White Cat gained as great honour by her bounty and generosity, as by her rare merit and beauty.

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