

The Sleeping Beauty





The Sleeping Beauty.

LONG, long ago, in the days of the fairies, there lived a King and Queen, who were so powerful and rich that they had everything in the world they could desire, except one thing, and the want of this one thing grieved them so sorely that they could not enjoy all the beautiful objects with which they were surrounded, for they would have given all the treasures in their palace just to hear the pitter-patter of a little child's footsteps upon the marble staircase.

At length it pleased God to send them a dear little daughter. The King was so grateful and so delighted that he determined the baby should have the grandest christening feast that had ever been known, and all the poor for miles around should join in the festivities.

As soon as the date of the christening was fixed, invitations were sent to all the fairies in the land, seven in number, asking them to be the little Princess's Godmothers. To this

they willingly consented, and promised also, as was the custom of good fairies in those days, that each of them would bestow a good gift upon their Godchild.

The day of the christening arrived, and, after the ceremony, the guests went into the great hall, where the magnificent feast was spread. Before each of the seven fairies a beautiful cover of pure gold, studded with precious stones, was placed. Just as the head cook had served up the first course, in walked an ugly old fairy, whom no one had even heard of for the last fifty years, for she had shut herself up in her strong tower, and everyone supposed her to be dead.

The King was greatly troubled, and ordered the best cover that could be found to be placed before her without delay. Unfortunately it was simply of silver, for only seven gold dishes had been specially made for the seven fairies. This displeased the elderly fairy very much, and she made up her mind to be revenged for what she chose to consider a slight.

Fortunately one of the younger fairies chanced to overhear her muttered grumblings and, guessing that she meant mischief to her pretty Godchild, hid herself behind the tapestry in the hall, so that all the others might bestow their gifts first. She





THE CHRISTENING.

reserved hers until the last, hoping to prevent any harm happening to the little one.

The six good fairies having finished their repast, stepped up to the baby's cradle and, gently kissing the child, gave her their gifts. The first bestowed the gift of beauty; the second, sweet temper; the third, grace; the fourth, the voice of a nightingale; the fifth willed her to dance as lightly as the thistle-down; and the sixth gave her every accomplishment under the sun.

Then the old fairy's turn came. "You have given the child wonderful gifts, no doubt," she said spitefully, "but they will be of little use to her, for *I* will that as soon as she grows into a maiden she shall prick her hand with a spindle and die of the wound."

There was a terrible outcry when the old woman ceased speaking, and the Queen fell fainting into her husband's arms. But the wise little fairy stepped from behind the tapestry and bade them hush their grief. "For the Princess shall *not* die," she said sweetly. "I have reserved my gift until the last, and, although I cannot prevent part of the ill wish being fulfilled, I will not allow her to die. When the Princess pricks her finger she shall fall into a deep sleep, which will last for a hundred years. At the end of that time, a king's son shall awaken her with a kiss." As she ceased speaking the fairies vanished, and for many years were heard of no more.

The King, hoping to prevent his daughter's doom, at once ordered every spinning-wheel in the kingdom to be destroyed. But it was all in vain.

The Princess grew up to be a beautiful little maiden,



beloved by everyone, and the darling of her parents' hearts. On her fifteenth birthday she went with her mother and father to visit one of their distant castles, and whilst wandering about at her will, came upon an ancient tower, in which dwelt a very old woman, so old and infirm that she had been unable to leave her little room for many years, and so had never heard the King's order about the spinning-wheels, and was busy at hers when the Princess popped her golden head in at the door.

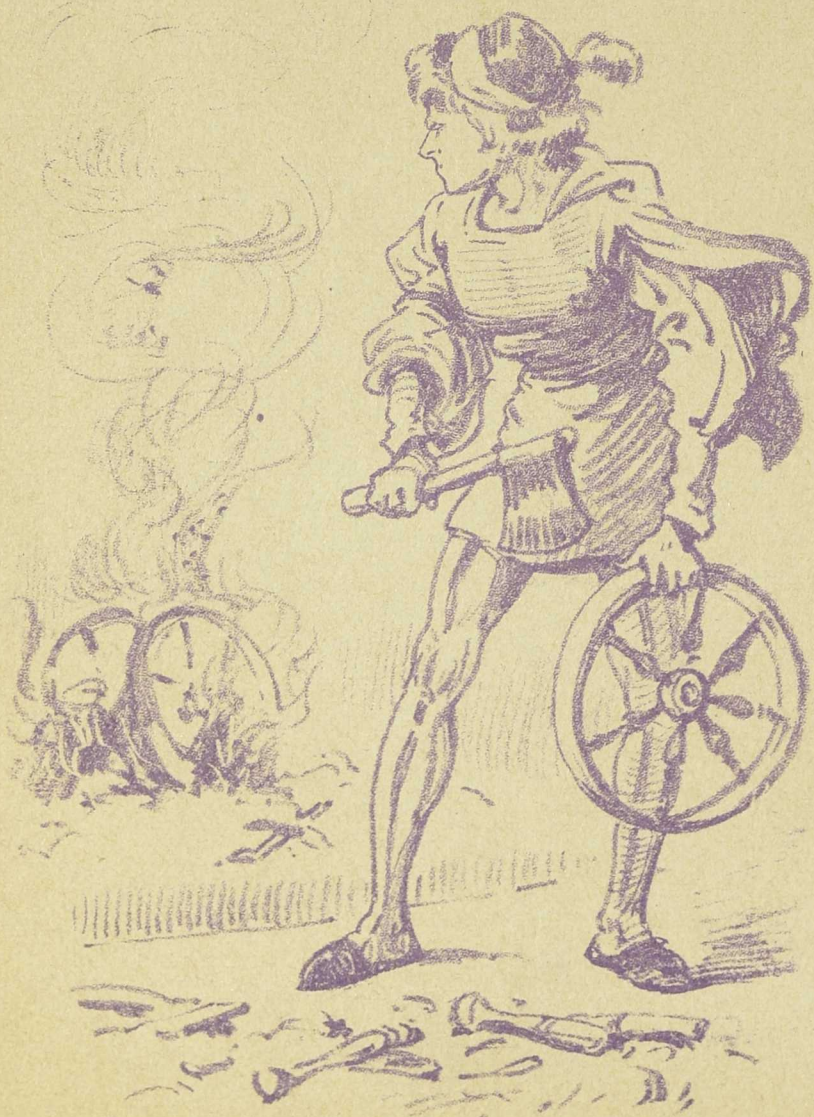
"What are you doing, Goody?" said the little maid.

"Spinning, my little lady," answered the old woman.

"May I try if I can spin also?" And as the old woman nodded, the Princess took the spindle in her hand. Alas! she handled it so carelessly that the point pierced her finger, and immediately she fell fainting to the floor.

The poor old woman was terribly frightened, and called loudly for help, but although the ladies-in-waiting came at once and tried every means in their power to restore her, all their care

was useless. The Princess lay with her eyes closed, the soft colour a little paled in her beautiful face, and her bosom gently heaving. Her parents knowing that regret was idle, for the cruel fairy was more powerful than any mortal king or queen, laid her tenderly upon her bed, and, sending away the physicians and attendants, watched by their darling's side, with grief-stricken faces and sorrowing hearts. They knew their child was not dead, but it was not likely that either of them would live to behold her awakening.



up and gone to sleep by his mistress's side. The very spits before the kitchen fire ceased turning, and over the whole castle reigned the silence of sleep.

The King and Queen, having kissed and wept over their daughter, left the castle with the good fairy, and scarcely were they out of the grounds than there sprang up, all around, a wood so thick and dense that neither beast nor man could penetrate it, and only from a distance could the turrets of the castle be seen above the mass of forest. This the fairy had willed, so that curious folk should not come to spy upon the sleeping Princess.

Many changes came to pass in the hundred years. The King and Queen died, and the kingdom passed into another royal family, and so at length the story of the poor Sleeping Beauty was forgotten.

One day the son of the reigning King, when out hunting, wandered away from his companions and lost his way.

After riding many weary miles, he was stopped at length by an exceedingly thick wood.

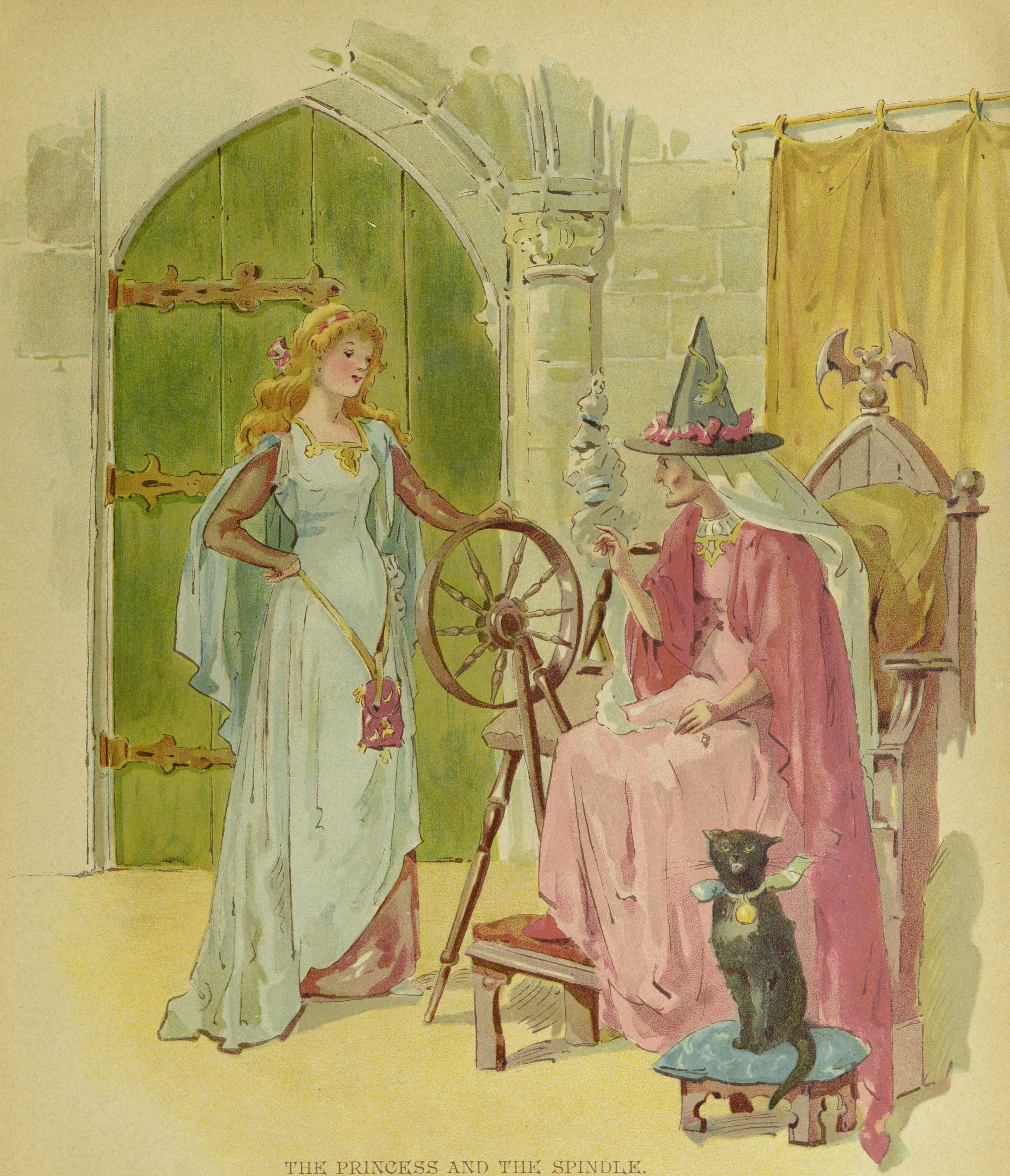
He enquired of some peasants what wood it was and whose castle lay beyond it.

No one could answer him for certain, but they believed it to be the home of an ogre.





THE PRINCE COMING TO THE CASTLE.



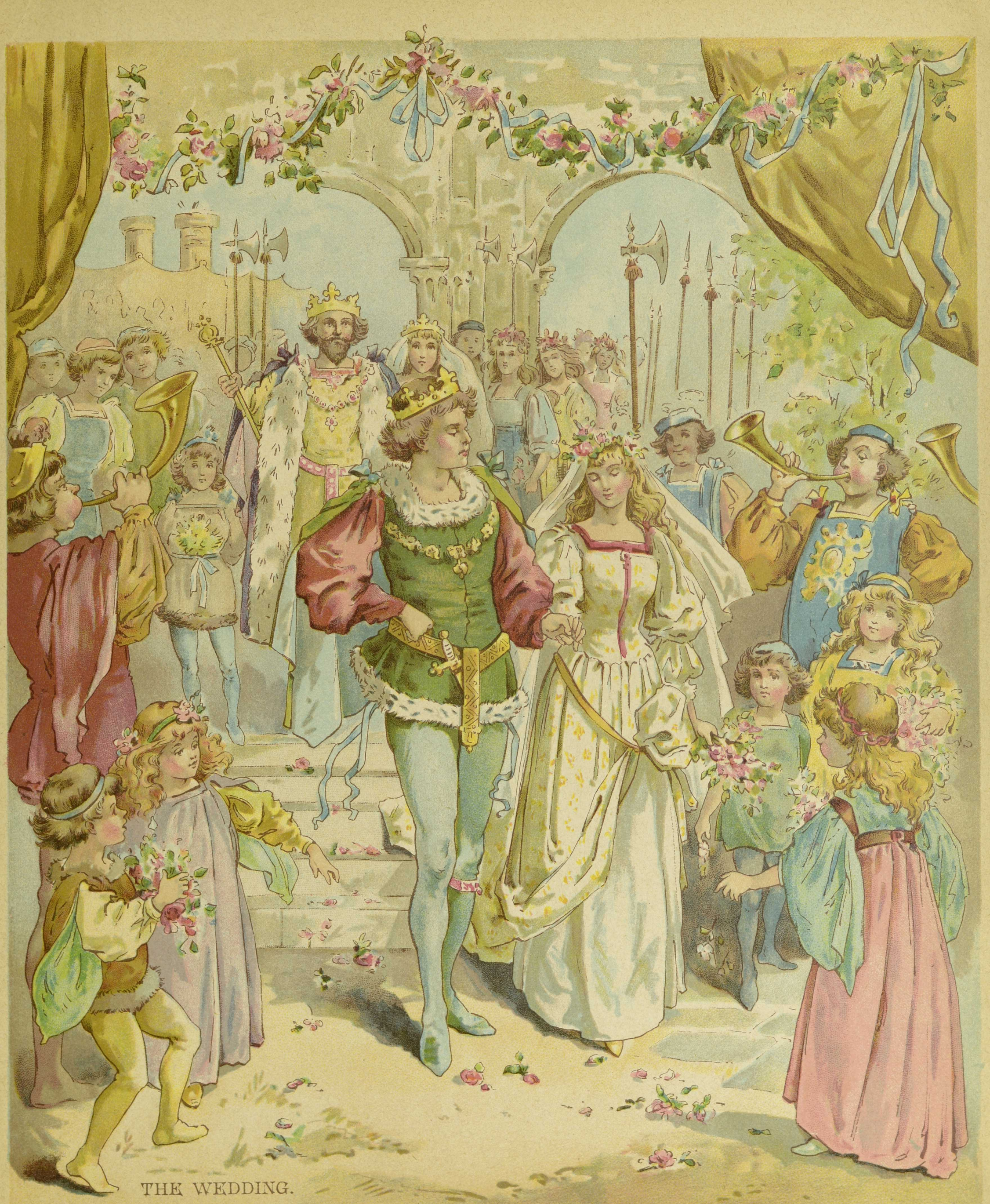
THE PRINCESS AND THE SPINDLE.

At this time the good fairy was in the country of Matakín, twelve thousand leagues away, but she was told of the misfortune by a kind little dwarf, who had a pair of seven-league boots; so she came at once to the palace, seated in her fiery coach drawn by six dragons. She sought to console the sorrowing parents, approved of all they had done, and then told them of a plan which, if carried out, would prevent the Princess feeling lonely or embarrassed when she awoke after her hundred-years sleep.

She then waved her wand gently, and at once everyone and everything in the castle, with the exception of the King and Queen, fell into a deep sleep. The Princess's governess, the lords- and ladies-in-waiting, the cooks and maids, pages, footmen, and grooms—all fell fast asleep in an instant.

The butler, who was raising a cup of wine to his lips, fell asleep with the cup in his hand. The cook began to snore loudly in the very act of boxing the ears of the little scullery boy; even the cat went to sleep with a little mouse almost under her nose, and mousie himself slumbered with the rest. The Princess's lap-dog, Jewel, at the first wave of the fairy's wand, had curled himself





THE WEDDING.



castle awoke to life once more.

Jewel stretched himself, yawned, and commenced barking at the Prince, the lords and ladies went on with their various amusements and occupations, as though they had never been interrupted.

The head cook *nearly* boxed the scullery boy's ears, but thought better of it and let him off, and the wee mouse, waking up just half a second before puss, got safely away to

his hole. The Prince and Princess were so charmed with each other's company that they did not notice how time was flying.

But the rest of the inhabitants of the castle also had awakened from their hundred-years sleep, feeling remarkably hungry, so that one of the ladies-in-waiting at length ventured to remind the Princess that dinner was served.

The Prince therefore gave his hand to the Princess and conducted her to the dining-hall, and before the meal was ended he had fallen so deeply in love with her that he begged her to be his bride.

The Princess consenting, they were married immediately, for, although the lady's apparel was of very ancient date, it became her so well that her lover did not deem it

At last, an old peasant came forward, who said he remembered hearing his grandfather say that a Princess, beautiful as an angel, lay sleeping within the wood, and that, when a hundred years had passed by, she would be awakened by a king's son, who would become her bridegroom.

This determined the Prince, who was a gallant and adventurous young gentleman, to find out the truth for himself.

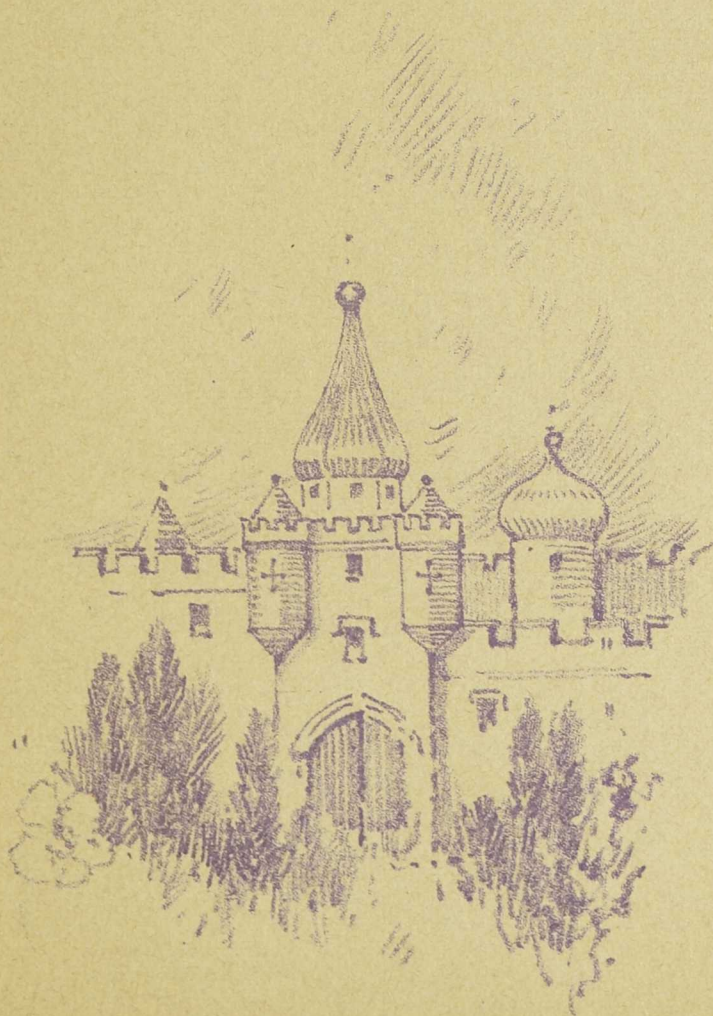
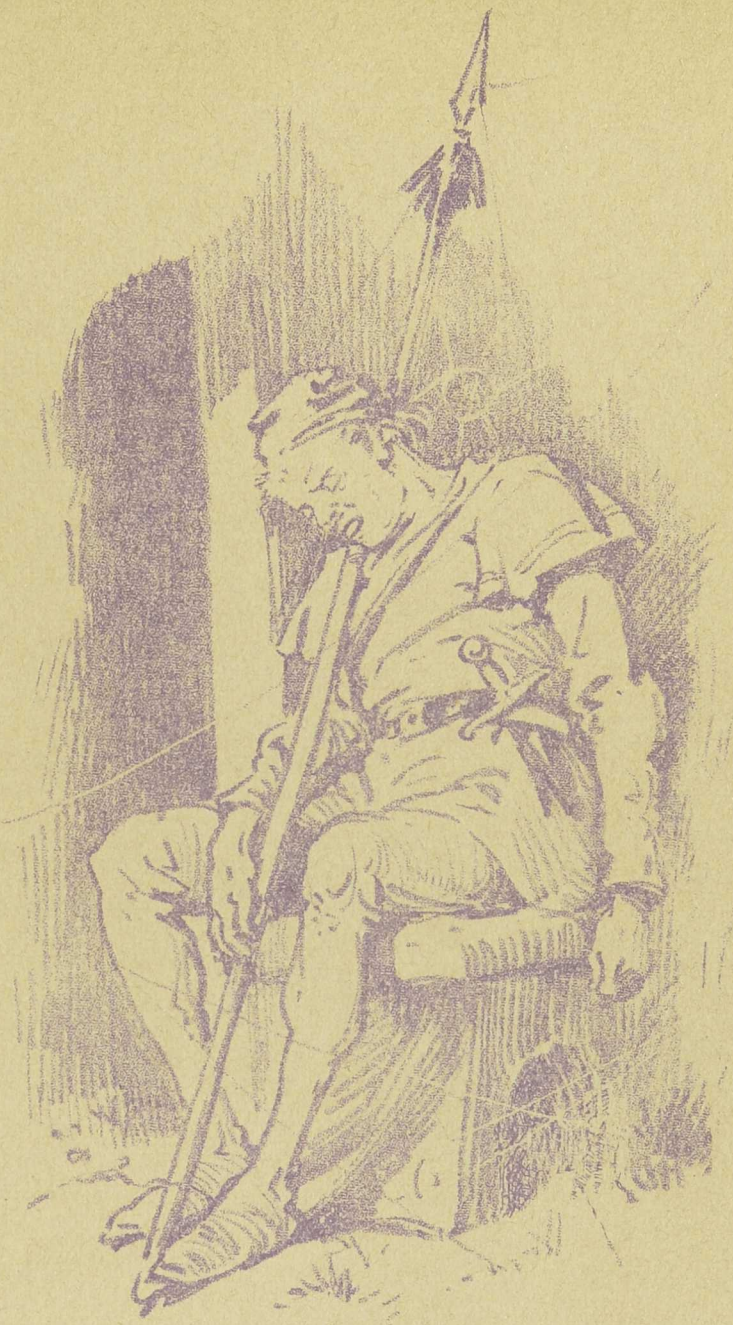
He sprang from his horse and began to force a way through the thick wood, but, to his surprise, the prickly bushes gave way before him, and he passed through without scratch or hurt. Having passed the wood, he came upon a sight which filled him with awe as well as amazement.

The courtyard of a great castle lay before his astonished eyes, peopled, apparently, by figures of stone.

As he drew nearer he saw that the men and women, horses and dogs were all lying or standing fast asleep.

Next he came upon a row of guards presenting arms, all fast asleep and snoring.

He entered the castle and passed through chambers where ladies and gentlemen, dressed in costumes of a past century, were sleeping peacefully,



some in the act of embroidering, some with their fingers resting upon the strings of a harp, and some with a smile upon their faces, as though they had gone to sleep in the midst of a hearty laugh.

On and on the Prince passed, until at length he came to an inner apartment. Pausing for just an instant upon the threshold, he then entered, and beheld the fairest sight his eyes had ever rested upon.

A young girl of exquisite beauty lay sleeping upon a bed of softest cushions, with roseleaves, fresh as on the day they were plucked, scattered all around her.

Tremblingly the Prince approached, and, kneeling beside her, gazed at her with loving eyes, till at length, unable to resist the temptation, he bent and kissed her rosy lips.

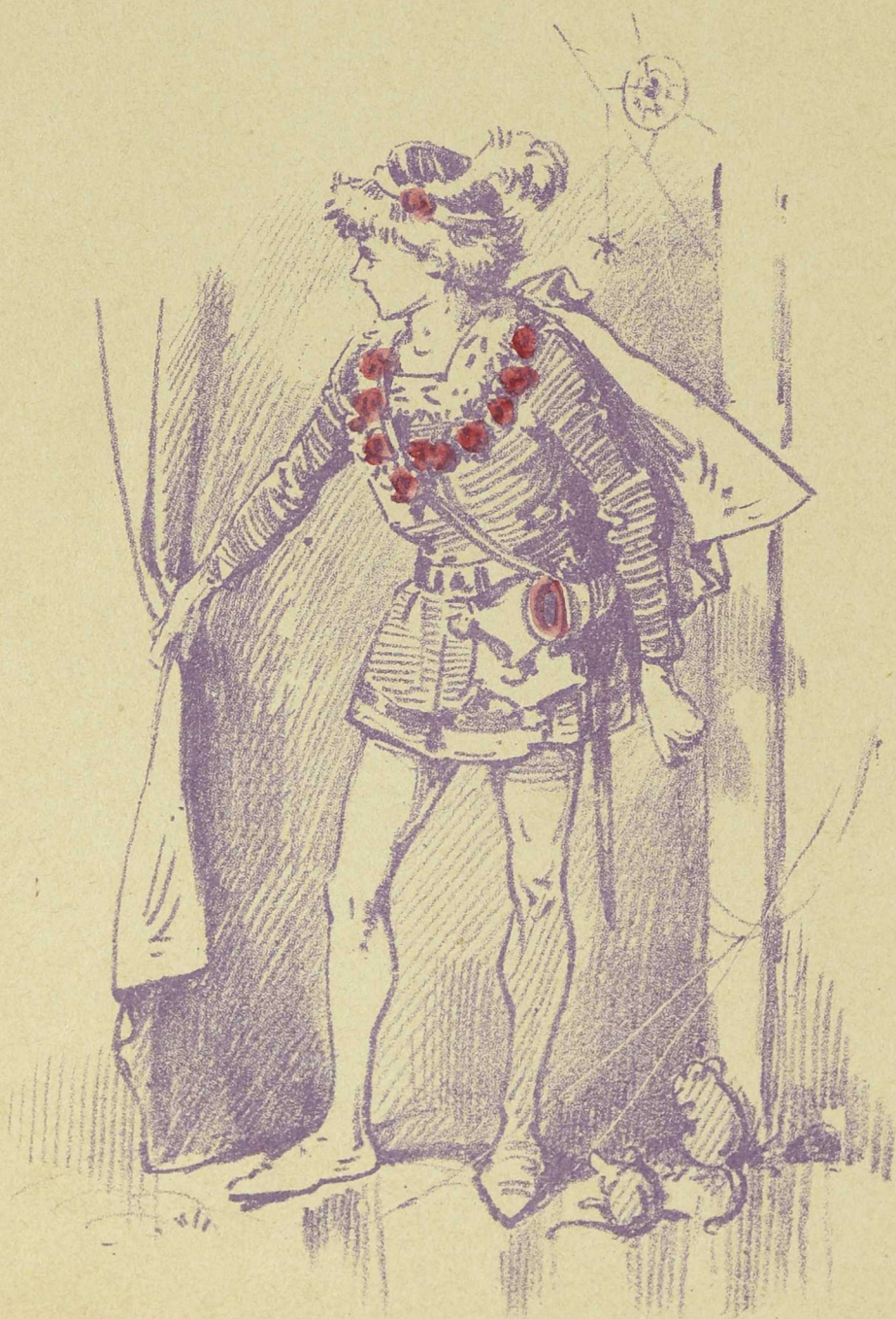
The spell was broken!

A smile rippled over the Princess's lovely face, she opened her sweet blue eyes, and saw the Prince kneeling by her.

"My Prince," she said tenderly, "you have come at last; I have waited for you very long."

You see the Princess had been dreaming of her Prince for a hundred years, so that he was no stranger to her.

Meantime, the enchantment being over, the whole



necessary to wait whilst more fashionable garments were made for her.

As soon as the marriage ceremony was over, the Princess and her husband mounted two snow-white steeds and rode away to the Court of the Prince's father.

Scarcely had they left the enchanted wood than castle, grounds, and everything belonging to it vanished, nor were they ever seen again.

The Prince and Princess lived long and happily, and when, after the death of the Prince's parents, they ascended the throne, they ruled so wisely and well that they were beloved by all their subjects, and, dying at a great age, were regretted by all.



