

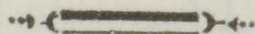
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The Rose.

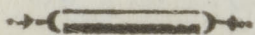
THE ROSE.

A FAIRY TALE.

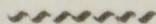


BY MRS. SHERWOOD,

Author of "Little Henry and his Bearer," &c. &c.



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THE ROSE.



IT happened one night, in my younger days, that I went to bed with spirits so airy and gay, that I could by no means sleep. So I arose from my bed, and as the moon shone as bright as day, I walked out upon the lawn.



It was in the fine month of May, and the soft breezes shook the leaves of the aspen tree, which grew beside my cottage. The lawn was covered with dew, and the little flowers had closed their coloured cups as it were in sleep. I walked across the lawn, and wandered into the wild wood beyond.

There I could see the soft light of the moon no longer, save where here and there it was admitted through the openings of the trees; and, as I proceeded into the wood, the shade became deeper: yet I heard the sweet voice of the nightingale before me, so I would not turn back, and, at length, I lost my way, and wandered further and further into the wood, till,



at last, I came into an open space, where the light of the moon was seen again through the trees. There the turf was so short and so soft to my feet, that it felt like velvet, and, not far from me, I saw a circle of the same soft grass, bounded by a fence of prickly gorse.



“Surely,” said I, “this must be a fairy ring!” And, while I still looked upon it, behold, a light, brighter than the moon, shone upon this circle; and I heard a sound as it were of silken wings in the air. I withdrew into a bower of thick-leaved trees to hide myself; and soon I saw a large train of pigmy ladies alight upon the lawn: they were dress-



ed in white velvet robes, with borders of precious stones, and their laced head-dresses were finer than the finest cobweb. They had stomachers blazing with precious stones, and every seam in their dress was wrought with threads of gold.

The first of these ladies was taller than the rest, by, at least, the tenth part

of an inch, and she was wonderfully graceful and dignified in her air. On her head was a crown of diamonds, and the name of Gloriana was wrought in pigmy characters upon the band which encircled it. I saw that she had a rose, instead of a sceptre, in her hand.

The fairies soon, by their magic art, raised a throne for their queen, upon which she seated herself with remarkable grace and majesty; while twelve of her maids of honour held a canopy over her head, formed of the expanded cup of the water-lily.

When the queen was seated, they all cried with one voice, "Long live our queen! long live the great Gloriana!"



Three times they repeated these words, and the queen as many times bowed her head: and when they ceased, she addressed them in a voice so sweet, that it was like the music of the Eolian harp.

“Ladies of fairy land,” said her majesty, “this is the night when we,

your queen, intended to bestow the never-fading Rose on her who has spent the last twelve months in the most profitable manner. Let those who have been most industrious, stand before our throne, and answer our questions; those who have been idle, we caution not to present themselves as candidates for the Rose."

Now I was surprised to see, that out of a number which could not be less than two or three hundred, not above eleven came near the throne; and as they approached, they all bent very low before the queen.

"Magnifica," said the queen to the first of these, "how have you spent

your time since our last annual meeting?"

Magnifica bowed very profoundly before her majesty. "I have a very fine garden, please you, noble queen," she answered; "and I spend all my time in teaching fountains to play, in making waterfalls, in raising hills and sinking valleys, in pruning my trees and smoothing my lawns; and my garden is, without question, the finest in fairy land."

"Aiquillina," asked the fairy queen, "how has your time been employed?"

"I have a large palace," said she, "all hung with tapestry, which I have

wrought myself. It is the finest tapestry in fairy land."

"Hyacintha," said the great Gloriana, addressing a third fairy, who presented herself before the throne, "how have your hours been employed this last year?"

"I spend my time, most gracious queen," answered she, "in pranking the beautiful race of flowers in fresh liveries: I paint the dainty eye-bright with new colours, I variegate with my tiny pencil the painted cup of the primrose, and infuse a deeper bloom into the rose."

The queen gently inclined her head,

and turning to another fairy, "And thou, Marina," she asked, "how dost thou employ thyself?"

"I have a grotto," said Marina, "in the deep acclivity of a rock, which no mortal foot hath ever polluted; and I dress the grotto with the shells which I gather upon the sea-shore, and the brilliant stones which I pick out of the earth. It is all bright with various colours. I have enriched it with columns of polished crystal, with beryl, and onyx; I have taught the green emerald, the amethyst, and ruby, to assume the shape of flowers; and when the sun visits my grotto, its rays are reflected from ten thousand sparkling stones of various colours.

My grotto is the wonder of fairy land."

"Harmonica," said her majesty, "and how hast thou been engaged?"

"I have a voice so strong and sweet, great queen," replied she, "that none can listen to me unmoved. All day long I sing. The woods and groves re-echo with my song. In the lone valley I often call to echo, and listen to her sweet responses. I sing myself to sleep, and salute the morning with a song. I am called the sweetest singer in fairy land."

The queen then addressed herself in the same words to the next.

“I love melody,” replied Cithara, “no less than my sister Harmonica. I touch the chords of the harp with so much skill, that no one can rival me in fairy land, and every hour of the day I devote to music.”

“And how does Cotillina employ herself?” said the fairy.

“Night and day,” said Cotillina, “I dance. I can dance so lightly, that my foot would not discompose the thistle down.”

Her majesty then spoke to the solemn and sage Musidora, and required an account of her employments.

“In a deep dark cavern, by a light of ever-burning phosphorus, I pore perpetually over the works of ancient sages,” answered she. “No one in thy realms, O queen, is so well skilled in ancient lore, as myself.”

The queen then addressed the ninth fairy, by the name of Mirza, and asked her the same questions.

“Glorious queen,” she answered, “I deserve the Rose more than these, for I employ my time in training the youthful fairies to every perfection. I teach them to imitate, in rich embroidery, every flower and every herb. I teach them to sing sweetly, to weave with grace the light dance,

and bid the harp utter sweet strains of melody. My pupils are the most accomplished fairies of our famed country."

"I," said another fairy, stepping briskly forwards, "have an imagination wild and fertile as that of the great magician Merlin; and I employ my time in weaving in the web of fancy, tales so curiously formed, so gay and fascinating, that they are the delight of all fairy land."

And now the queen addressed a little fairy, who, as she cast her eyes upon her, drew back. "Approach, Rosetta," said her majesty, "and tell me how thou hast spent thy time?"

“Twelve years, most mighty queen,” she answered, “have scarcely rolled away, since I first beheld the light of the moon; and, as yet, I know but little, and can do little good. But I have a kind and sage parent, who teaches me, that, now, in my youthful days, I must seek every means of improvement, and implore from heaven, assistance in overcoming every evil and selfish feeling; that when I become older, I may employ the gift of fairyism in doing good, and making those about me happy.”

While Rosetta spoke, the queen smiled, and her smile was bright and gladdening as a ray of light.

“ But how,” asked she, “ does your mother instruct you in the employment of your time?”

“ When I first was able,” answered Rosetta, “ to follow my mother through the air, she taught me to bind, with tiny bands, the broken wing of the humming-bird, to help the loaded bee to bear her sweet burden to her cell, to take the fly out of the fell snare of the spider, and to feed the young birds who had lost their mothers. But now, that I am become older, she has promised to take me with her, when she visits the humble race of mortals. Then will she teach me, by sweet dreams, to comfort those who are sad at heart; to fan, with cool

gales, those who labour within the torrid zone; to mix healthy juices with the potions of the sick; to frighten the wicked man from his purpose, by fearful omens; and to perform other labours of love as are permitted us."

"Go, little Rosetta," said the queen, "the Rose which is destined for thee, is now a little bud, which has just appeared in the garden of the royal palace. Some time hence, it will be a full-blown Rose; and then, thou, my child, shalt wear it, and it shall give thee immortal beauty, and never-fading honour. But where is thy mother?"

As the queen spoke these words,

there came from amidst the rest of the fairies, a sweet benignant lady, of a beautiful countenance. “Miranda,” said the queen, “wherefore didst thou not offer thyself a candidate for the Rose?”

“Most glorious queen,” she answered, “I am an humble fairy, little known in fairy land; and my palace is the least adorned of any in thy noble kingdom. My time is spent in training my children, as far as I am able, to wisdom and knowledge; and I direct them where they may find assistance in the acquirement of virtuous habits. I teach my daughters to love home, and to render themselves useful in retirement, rather than to seek admira-

tion abroad: and it is my great desire that they should use the powers which they inherit, in doing good to others, rather than in pleasing themselves. Yet, what I have been able to do," added the fairy, "is but little—not worthy to be spoken of, but in obedience to the commands of your majesty."

Miranda ceased, and bowing, retired a few steps. The queen arose. "To the fairy Miranda," she said, "we adjudge the prize of industry. And while we do so," she added, looking round her, "we would take occasion to point out to these our subjects, the ladies of our court, that industry is never commendable, but when em-

ployed in the cause of virtue, and as the handmaid of true wisdom.

“Miranda, for ever wear this immortal Rose; it is a brighter ornament than the richest jewel.”

As she spoke, she fixed the Rose on the good fairy's head; and I perceived that it gave a lustre to her features, which made her far excel in beauty all the other fairies her companions.

FINIS.

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