

1845

The Popular Story of
BLUE BEARD
OR,
FEMALE CURIOSITY.

Embellished with Beautiful Cuts.



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THE HISTORY OF BLUE BEARD.



THERE was a man who had fine houses, both in town and country, a deal of silver and gold plate, embroidered furniture, and coaches gilded all over with gold. But this man had the misfortune to have a blue beard, which made him so frightfully ugly, that all the women and girls ran away from him.

One of his neighbours, a lady of quality, had two daughters, who were perfect beauties. He desired of her one of them in marriage, leaving to her the choice which of the two

BLUE BEARD.

she would bestow on him. They would neither of them have him, and sent him backwards and forwards from one to another, not being able to bear the thoughts of marrying a man who had a blue beard. And what, besides, gave them disgust and aversion was, his having already been married to several wives, and nobody ever knew what became of them.

Blue Beard, to engage their affections, took them, with the lady their mother, and three or four ladies of their acquaintance, with other young people of the neighbourhood, to one of his country seats, where they continued a whole week. There was nothing then to be seen but parties of pleasure, fishing, mirth, and feasting; and all passing the night in rallying and joking with each other. In short, every thing so well succeeded, that the youngest daughter began to think the master of the house not to have a beard so very blue, and that he was a mighty civil gentleman.

So soon as they returned home, the marriage was concluded. About a month afterwards, Blue Beard told his wife that he was obliged to take a country journey for six weeks, at least, about affairs of very great consequence, desiring her to divert herself in his absence, sending for her friends and acquaintance, carry them into the country, if she pleased, and make good cheer wherever she was. "Here," said he, "are the keys of the two great wardrobes, wherein I have my best furniture; these are my silver and gold plate; these open my strong boxes, which hold my money, both gold and silver; these my casket of jewels; and this is the master-key to all my apartments; but as for this little one here, it is the key of the closet at the end of the great gallery on the ground floor. Open them all, go into all and every one, except that little closet, which I forbid you, and forbid it in such a manner, that if you happen to open it, there is nothing but what you may expect from my just anger and resentment." She promised to observe exactly whatever he had ordered; when, after having embraced her, he got into his coach, and proceeded on his journey.

Her neighbours and good friends did not stay to be sent for by the new-married lady, so great was their impatience to see all the rich furniture of her house, not daring to come while her husband was there, because of his blue beard, which frightened them. They ran through all the rooms, closets, and wardrobes, which were all so rich and fine, that they



Blue Beard going to be Married.

seemed to pass one another. After that, they went into the two great rooms, which were the best and richest furniture; they could not sufficiently admire the number and beauty of the tapestry, beds, couches, cabinets, stands, tables, and looking-glasses, in which you might see yourselves from head to foot: some of them were framed with glass; others with silver, plain and gilded, the finest and most magnificent ever seen. They ceased not to extol and envy their happiness of their friend, who, in the mean-time, no way diverted herself in looking upon all these rich things, because of the impatience she had to go and open the closet on the ground-floor. She was so much pressed by her curiosity, that, without considering that it was very uncivil to leave her company, she went down a little back staircase, with such excessive haste, that she had twice or thrice like to have broken her neck.

Being come to the closet door, she made a stop for some time, thinking upon her husband's orders, and considering what unhappiness might attend her if she was disobedient, but the temptation was so strong, she could not overcome it; she took then the little key, and opened it, trembling, but could not at first see any thing plainly, because the windows were shut. After some moments, she began to perceive that the floor was all covered over with clotted blood, on which lay the bodies



Blue Beard introducing his wife to his Mansion.

of several dead women, ranged against the walls; these were all the wives which Blue Beard had married and murdered, one after another. She thought she would have died for fear, and the key, which she pulled out of the lock, fell out of her hand.

After having somewhat recovered her surprise, she took up the key, locked the door, and went up stairs into her chamber, to recover herself; but could not, so much was she frightened. Having observed that the key of the closet was stained with blood, she tried two or three times to wipe it off, but the blood would not come out; in vain did she wash it, and even rub it with soap and sand; the blood still remained, for the key was a fairy, and she could never make it quite clean; when the blood was gone off from one side, it came again on the other.

Blue Beard returned from his journey the same evening, and said he had received letters upon the road, informing him that the affair he went about was ended to his advantage. His wife did all she could to convince him that she was extremely glad of his speedy return. Next morning he



Blue Beard's Wife in the Blue Chamber.

asked her for the keys, which she gave him, but with such a trembling hand, that he easily guessed what had happened. "What!" said he, "is not the key of my closet among the rest?" "I must certainly," answered she, "have left it above upon the table." "Fail not," said Blue Beard, "to bring it to me presently."

After several going backwards and forwards she was forced to bring him the key. Blue Beard, having attentively considered it, said to his wife, "How comes this blood upon the key?" "I do not know," cried the poor woman, paler than death. "You do not know," replied Blue Beard; "I very well know, you were resolved to go into the closet, were you not? Mighty well, madam! you shall go in, and take your place among the ladies you saw there!"

Upon this she threw herself at her husband's feet, and begged his pardon, declaring she would never more be disobedient. She would have melted a rock, so beautiful and sorrowful was she; but Blue Beard had a heart harder than any rock. "You must die, madam," said he, "and that presently." "Since I must die," answered she, looking upon him with her



Blue Beard's Wife returning the Key.

eyes all bathed in tears, "give me some little time to say my prayers." "I give you," replied Blue Beard, "half a quarter of an hour, but not one moment more."

When she was alone, she called out to her sister, and said to her, "Sister Anne," for that was her name, "go up, I beg you, upon the top of the tower, and look if my brothers are not coming; they promised me that they would come to-day; and if you see them, give them a sign to make haste." Her sister went upon the top of the tower, and the poor afflicted wife cried out from time to time, "Anne, sister Anne, do you see any one coming?" And sister Anne said, "I see nothing but the sun, which makes a dust, and the grass, which looks green."

In the mean while Blue Beard, holding a great cimeter in his hand, cried out, as loud as he could bawl, to his wife, "Come down instantly, or I shall come up to you." "One moment longer, if you please," said his wife; and then she cried out very softly, "Anne, sister Anne, dost thou see any body coming?" and sister Anne answered, "I see nothing but the sun, which makes a dust, and the grass looking green." "Come down quickly," cried Blue Beard, "or I will come,



Ann waving her Handkerchief to her Brothers.

up to you." "I am coming," answered his wife; and then she cried, "Anne, sister Anne, dost thou not see any one coming?" "I see," replied sister Anne, a great dust which comes on this side here." "Are these my brothers?" "Alas! no, my dear sister, I see a flock of sheep." "Will you not come down?" cried Blue Beard. "One moment longer," said his wife; and then she cried out, "Anne, sister Anne, dost thou see any one coming?" "I see," said she, "two horsemen coming, but they are a great way off." "God be praised!" replied the poor wife joyfully, "they are my brothers." "I am making them a sign," said sister Anne, "as well as I can, for them to make haste." Then Blue Beard bawled out so loud, that he made the whole house tremble.

The distressed wife came down, and threw herself at his feet, all in tears, with her hair about her shoulders. "This signifies nothing," says Blue Beard, "you must die;" then, taking hold of her hair with one hand, and lifting up his cimeter with the other, he was going to take off her head. The poor gentlewoman, turning about to him and looking at him with dying eyes, desired him to afford her one little moment to recollect



The Brothers killing Blue Beard, to save their Sister's Life.

herself. "No, no," said he, "recommend thyself to God;" and was just ready to strike. At this very instant, there was such a loud knocking at the gate, that Blue Beard made a sudden stop. The gate was opened, and presently entered two horsemen, who, drawing their swords, ran directly to Blue Beard:

He knew them to be his wife's brothers, one a dragoon, the other a musketeer; so he ran immediately to save himself; but the two brothers pursued so closely, that they overtook him before he could get to the steps of the porch, when they ran their swords through his body, and left him dead.

The poor wife was almost as dead as her husband, and had not strength enough to rise and welcome her brothers. Blue Beard had no heirs, and so his wife became mistress of all his estate. She made use of one part of it to marry her sister Anne to a young gentleman, who had loved her a long while; another part, to buy captains' commissions for her brothers; and the rest, to marry herself to a very worthy gentleman, who made her forget the ill time she had passed with Blue Beard.

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