

# The Blue Bird

by Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baroness d'Aulnoy

Once upon a time there lived a King who was immensely rich. He had broad lands, and sacks overflowing with gold and silver; but he did not care a bit for all his riches, because the Queen, his wife, was dead. He shut himself up in a little room and knocked his head against the walls for grief, until his courtiers were really afraid that he would hurt himself. So they hung feather-beds between the tapestry and the walls, and then he could go on knocking his head as long as it was any consolation to him without coming to much harm. All his subjects came to see him, and said whatever they thought would comfort him: some were grave, even gloomy with him; and some agreeable, even gay; but not one could make the least impression upon him. Indeed, he hardly seemed to hear what they said. At last came a lady who was wrapped in a black mantle, and seemed to be in the deepest grief. She wept and sobbed until even the King's attention was attracted; and when she said that, far from coming to try and diminish his grief, she, who had just lost a good husband, was come to add her tears to his, since she knew what he must be feeling, the King redoubled his lamentations. Then he told the sorrowful lady long stories about the good qualities of his departed Queen, and she in her turn recounted all the virtues of her departed husband; and this passed the time so agreeably that the King quite forgot to thump his head against the feather-beds, and the lady did not need to wipe the tears from her great blue eyes as often as before. By degrees they came to talking about other things in which the King took an interest, and in a wonderfully short time the whole kingdom was astonished by the news that the King was married again to the sorrowful lady.

Now the King had one daughter, who was just fifteen years old. Her name was Fiordelisa, and she was the prettiest and most charming Princess imaginable, always gay and merry. The new Queen, who also had a daughter, very soon sent for her to come to the Palace. Turritella, for that was her name, had been brought up by her godmother, the Fairy Mazilla, but in spite of all the care bestowed upon her, she was neither beautiful nor gracious. Indeed, when the Queen saw how ill-tempered and ugly she appeared beside Fiordelisa she was in despair, and did everything in her power to turn the King against his own daughter, in the hope that he might take a fancy to Turritella. One day the King said that it was time Fiordelisa and Turritella were married, so he would give one of them to the first suitable Prince who visited his Court. The Queen answered:

'My daughter certainly ought to be the first to be married; she is older than yours, and a thousand times more charming!'

The King, who hated disputes, said, 'Very well, it's no affair of mine, settle it your own way.'

Very soon after came the news that King Charming, who was the most handsome and magnificent Prince in all the country round, was on his way to visit the King. As soon as the Queen heard this, she set all her jewellers, tailors, weavers, and embroiderers to work upon splendid dresses and ornaments for Turritella, but she told the King that Fiordelisa had no need of anything new, and the night before the King was to arrive, she bribed her waiting woman to steal away all the Princess's own dresses and jewels, so that when the day came, and Fiordelisa wished to adorn herself as became her high rank, not even a ribbon could she find.

However, as she easily guessed who had played her such a trick, she made no complaint, but sent to the merchants for some rich stuffs. But they said that the Queen had expressly forbidden them to supply her with any, and they dared not disobey. So the Princess had nothing left to put on but the little white frock she had been wearing the day before; and dressed in that, she went down when the time of the King's arrival came, and sat in a corner hoping to escape notice. The Queen received her guest with great ceremony, and presented her to her daughter, who was gorgeously attired, but so much splendour only made her ugliness more noticeable, and the King, after one glance at her, looked the other way. The Queen, however, only thought that he was bashful, and took pains to keep Turritella in full view. King Charming then asked if there was not another Princess, called Fiordelisa.

'Yes,' said Turritella, pointing with her finger, 'there she is, trying to keep out of sight because she is not smart.'

At this Fiordelisa blushed, and looked so shy and so lovely, that the King was fairly astonished. He rose, and bowing low before her, said—

'Madam, your incomparable beauty needs no adornment.'

'Sire,' answered the Princess, 'I assure you that I am not in the habit of wearing dresses as crumpled and untidy as this one, so I should have been better pleased if you had not seen me at all.'

'Impossible!' cried King Charming. 'Wherever such a marvellously beautiful Princess appears I can look at nothing else.'

Here the Queen broke in, saying sharply—

'I assure you, Sire, that Fiordelisa is vain enough already. Pray make her no more flattering speeches.' The King quite understood that she was not pleased, but that did not matter to him, so he admired Fiordelisa to his heart's content, and talked to her for three hours without stopping.

The Queen was in despair, and so was Turritella, when they saw how much the King preferred Fiordelisa. They complained bitterly to the King, and begged and teased him, until he at last consented to have the Princess shut up somewhere out of sight while King Charming's visit lasted. So that night, as she went to her room, she was seized by four masked figures, and carried up into the topmost room of a high tower, where they left her in the deepest dejection. She easily guessed that she was to be kept out of sight for fear the King should fall in love with her; but then, how disappointing that was, for she already liked him very much, and would have been quite willing to be chosen for his bride! As King Charming did not know what had happened to the Princess, he looked forward impatiently to meeting her again, and he tried to talk about her with the courtiers who were placed in attendance on him. But by the Queen's orders they would say nothing good of her, but declared that she was vain, capricious, and bad-tempered; that she tormented her waiting-maids, and that, in spite of all the money that the King gave her, she was so mean that she preferred to go about dressed like a poor shepherdess, rather than spend any of it. All these things vexed the King very much, and he was silent.

'It is true,' thought he, 'that she was very poorly dressed, but then she was so ashamed that it proves that she was not accustomed to be so. I cannot believe that with that lovely face she can be as ill-tempered and contemptible as they say. No, no, the Queen must be jealous of her for the sake of that ugly daughter of hers, and so these evil reports are spread.'

The courtiers could not help seeing that what they had told the King did not please him, and one of them cunningly began to praise Fiordelisa, when he could talk to the King without being heard by the others.

King Charming thereupon became so cheerful, and interested in all he said, that it was easy to guess how much he admired the Princess. So when the Queen sent for the courtiers and questioned them about all they had found out, their report confirmed her worst fears. As to the poor Princess Fiordelisa, she cried all night without stopping.

'It would have been quite bad enough to be shut up in this gloomy tower before I had ever seen King Charming,' she said; 'but now when he is here, and they are all enjoying themselves with him, it is too unkind.'

The next day the Queen sent King Charming splendid presents of jewels and rich stuffs, and among other things an ornament made expressly in honour of the approaching wedding. It was a heart cut out of one huge ruby, and was surrounded by several diamond arrows, and pierced by one. A golden true-lover's knot above the heart bore the motto, 'But one can wound me,' and the whole jewel was hung upon a chain of immense pearls. Never, since the world has been a world, had such a thing been made, and the King was quite amazed when it was presented to him. The page who brought it begged him to accept it from the Princess, who chose him to be her knight.

'What!' cried he, 'does the lovely Princess Fiordelisa deign to think of me in this amiable and encouraging way?'

'You confuse the names, Sire,' said the page hastily. 'I come on behalf of the Princess Turritella.'

'Oh, it is Turritella who wishes me to be her knight,' said the King coldly. 'I am sorry that I cannot accept the honour.' And he sent the splendid gifts back to the Queen and Turritella, who were furiously angry at the contempt with which they were treated. As soon as he possibly could, King Charming went to see the King and Queen, and as he entered the hall he looked for Fiordelisa, and every time anyone came in he started round to see who it was, and was altogether so uneasy and dissatisfied that the Queen saw it plainly. But she would not take any notice, and talked of nothing but the entertainments she was planning. The Prince answered at random, and presently asked if he was not to have the pleasure of seeing the Princess Fiordelisa.

'Sire,' answered the Queen haughtily, 'her father has ordered that she shall not leave her own apartments until my daughter is married.'

'What can be the reason for keeping that lovely Princess a prisoner?' cried the King in great indignation. 'That I do not know,' answered the Queen; 'and even if I did, I might not feel bound to tell you.'

The King was terribly angry at being thwarted like this. He felt certain that Turritella was to blame for it, so casting a furious glance at her he abruptly took leave of the Queen, and returned to his own apartments. There he said to a young squire whom he had brought with him: 'I would give all I have in the world to gain the good will of one of the Princess's waiting-women, and obtain a moment's speech with Fiordelisa.'

'Nothing could be easier,' said the young squire; and he very soon made friends with one of the ladies, who told him that in the evening Fiordelisa would be at a little window which looked into the garden, where he could come and talk to her. Only, she said, he must take very great care not to be seen, as it would be as much as her place was worth to be caught helping King Charming to see the Princess. The squire was delighted, and promised all she asked; but the moment he had run off to announce his success to the King, the false waiting-woman went and told the Queen all that had passed. She at once determined that her own daughter should be at the little window; and she taught her so well all she was to say and do, that even the stupid Turritella could make no mistake.

The night was so dark that the King had not a chance of finding out the trick that was being played upon him, so he approached the window with the greatest delight, and said everything that he had been longing to say to Fiordelisa to persuade her of his love for her. Turritella answered as she had been taught, that she was very unhappy, and that there was no chance of her being better treated by the Queen until her daughter was married. And then the King entreated her to marry him; and thereupon he drew his ring from his finger and put it upon Turritella's, and she answered him as well as she could. The King could not help thinking that she did not say exactly what he would have expected from his darling Fiordelisa, but he persuaded himself that the fear of being surprised by the Queen was making her awkward and unnatural. He would not leave her until she had promised to see him again the next night, which Turritella did willingly enough. The Queen was overjoyed at the success of her stratagem, and promised herself that all would now be as she wished; and sure enough, as soon as it was dark the following night the King came, bringing with him a chariot which had been given him by an Enchanter who was his friend. This chariot was drawn by flying frogs, and the King easily persuaded Turritella to come out and let him put her into it, then mounting beside her he cried triumphantly—

'Now, my Princess, you are free; where will it please you that we shall hold our wedding?'

And Turritella, with her head muffled in her mantle, answered that the Fairy Mazilla was her godmother, and that she would like it to be at her castle. So the King told the Frogs, who had the map of the whole world in their heads, and very soon he and Turritella were set down at the castle of the Fairy Mazilla. The King would certainly have found out his mistake the moment they stepped into the brilliantly lighted castle, but Turritella held her mantle more closely round her, and asked to see the Fairy by herself, and quickly told her all that had happened, and how she had succeeded in deceiving King Charming.

'Oho! my daughter,' said the Fairy, 'I see we have no easy task before us. He loves Fiordelisa so much that he will not be easily pacified. I feel sure he will defy us!' Meanwhile the King was waiting in a splendid room with diamond walls, so clear that he could see the Fairy and Turritella as they stood whispering together, and he was very much puzzled.

'Who can have betrayed us?' he said to himself. 'How comes our enemy here? She must be plotting to prevent our marriage. Why doesn't my lovely Fiordelisa make haste and come hack to me?'

But it was worse than anything he had imagined when the Fairy Mazilla entered, leading Turritella by the hand, and said to him—

'King Charming, here is the Princess Turritella to whom you have plighted your faith. Let us have the wedding at once.'

'I!' cried the King. 'I marry that little creature! What do you take me for? I have promised her nothing!'

Say no more. Have you no respect for a Fairy?' cried she angrily.

Yes, madam,' answered the King, 'I am prepared to respect you as much as a Fairy can be respected, if you will give me back my Princess.'

'Am I not here?' interrupted Turritella. 'Here is the ring you gave me. With whom did you talk at the little window, if it was not with me?'

'What!' cried the King angrily, 'have I been altogether deceived and deluded? Where is my chariot? Not another moment will I stay here.'

'Oho,' said the Fairy, 'not so fast.' And she touched his feet, which instantly became as firmly fixed to the floor as if they had been nailed there.

'Oh! do whatever you like with me,' said the King; 'you may turn me to stone, but I will marry no one but Fiordelisa.'

And not another word would he say, though the Fairy scolded and threatened, and Turritella wept and raged for twenty days and twenty nights. At last the Fairy Mazilla said furiously (for she was quite tired out by his obstinacy), 'Choose whether you will marry my goddaughter, or do penance seven years for breaking your word to her.'

And then the King cried gaily: 'Pray do whatever you like with me, as long as you deliver me from this ugly scold!'

'Scold!' cried Turritella angrily. 'Who are you, I should like to know, that you dare to call me a scold? A miserable King who breaks his word, and goes about in a chariot drawn by croaking frogs out of a marsh!'

'Let us have no more of these insults,' cried the Fairy. 'Fly from that window, ungrateful King, and for seven years be a Blue Bird.' As she spoke the King's face altered, his arms turned to wings, his feet to little crooked black claws. In a moment he had a slender body like a bird, covered with shining blue feathers, his beak was like ivory, his eyes were bright as stars, and a crown of white feathers adorned his head.

As soon as the transformation was complete the King uttered a dolorous cry and fled through the open window, pursued by the mocking laughter of Turritella and the Fairy Mazilla. He flew on until he reached the thickest part of the wood, and there, perched upon a cypress tree, he bewailed his miserable fate. 'Alas! in seven years who knows what may happen to my darling Fiordelisa!' he said. 'Her cruel stepmother may have married her to someone else before I am myself again, and then what good will life be to me?'

In the meantime the Fairy Mazilla had sent Turritella back to the Queen, who was all anxiety to know how the wedding, had gone off. But when her daughter arrived and told her all that had happened she was terribly angry, and of course all her wrath fell upon Fiordelisa. 'She shall have cause to repent that the King admires her,' said the Queen, nodding her head meaningly, and then she and Turritella went up to the little room in the tower where the Princess was imprisoned.

Fiordelisa was immensely surprised to see that Turritella was wearing a royal mantle and a diamond crown, and her heart sank when the Queen said: 'My daughter is come to show you some of her wedding presents, for she is King Charming's bride, and they are the happiest pair in the world, he loves her to distraction.' All this time Turritella was spreading out lace, and jewels, and rich brocades, and ribbons before Fiordelisa's unwilling eyes, and taking good care to display King Charming's ring, which she wore upon her thumb. The Princess recognised it as soon as her eyes fell upon it, and after that she could no longer doubt that he had indeed married Turritella. In despair she cried, 'Take away these miserable gauds! what pleasure has a wretched captive in the sight of them?' and then she fell insensible upon the floor, and the cruel Queen laughed maliciously, and went away with Turritella, leaving her there without comfort or aid. That night the Queen said to the King, that his daughter was so infatuated with King Charming, in spite of his never having shown any preference for her, that it was just as well she should stay in the tower until she came to her senses. To which he answered that it was her affair, and she could give what orders she pleased about the Princess.

When the unhappy Fiordelisa recovered, and remembered all she had just heard, she began to cry bitterly, believing that King Charming was lost to her for ever, and all night long she sat at her open window sighing and lamenting; but when it was dawn she crept away into the darkest corner of her little room and sat there, too unhappy to care about anything. As soon as night came again she once more leaned out into the darkness and bewailed her miserable lot.

Now it happened that King Charming, or rather the Blue Bird, had been flying round the palace in the hope of seeing his beloved Princess, but had not dared to go too near the windows for fear of being seen and recognised by Turritella. When night fell he had not succeeded in discovering where Fiordelisa was imprisoned, and, weary and sad, he perched upon a branch of a tall fir tree which grew close to the tower, and began to sing himself to sleep. But soon the sound of a soft voice lamenting attracted his attention, and listening intently he heard it say—

'Ah! cruel Queen! what have I ever done to be imprisoned like this? And was I not unhappy enough before, that you must needs come and taunt me with the happiness your daughter is enjoying now she is King Charming's bride?'

The Blue Bird, greatly surprised, waited impatiently for the dawn, and the moment it was light flew off to see who it could have been who spoke thus. But he found the window shut, and could see no one. The next night, however, he was on the watch, and by the clear moonlight he saw that the sorrowful lady at the window was Fiordelisa herself.

'My Princess! have I found you at last?' said he, alighting close to her.

'Who is speaking to me?' cried the Princess in great surprise.

'Only a moment since you mentioned my name, and now you do not know me, Fiordelisa,' said he sadly. 'But no wonder, since I am nothing but a Blue Bird, and must remain one for seven years.'

'What! Little Blue Bird, are you really the powerful King Charming?' said the Princess, caressing him.

'It is too true,' he answered. 'For being faithful to you I am thus punished. But believe me, if it were for twice as long I would bear it joyfully rather than give you up.'

Oh! what are you telling me?' cried the Princess. 'Has not your bride, Turritella, just visited me, wearing the royal mantle and the diamond crown you gave her? I cannot be mistaken, for I saw your ring upon her thumb.'

Then the Blue Bird was furiously angry, and told the Princess all that had happened, how he had been deceived into carrying off Turritella, and how, for refusing to marry her, the Fairy Mazilla had condemned him to be a Blue Bird for seven years.

The Princess was very happy when she heard how faithful her lover was, and would never have tired of hearing his loving speeches and explanations, but too soon the sun rose, and they had to part lest the Blue Bird should be discovered. After promising to come again to the Princess's window as soon as it was dark, he flew away, and hid himself in a little hole in the fir-tree, while Fiordelisa remained devoured by anxiety lest he should be caught in a trap, or eaten up by an eagle.

But the Blue Bird did not long stay in his hiding-place. He flew away, and away, until he came to his own palace, and got into it through a broken window, and there he found the cabinet where his jewels were kept, and chose out a splendid diamond ring as a present for the Princess. By the time he got back, Fiordelisa was sitting waiting for him by the open window, and when he gave her the ring, she scolded him gently for having run such a risk to get it for her.

'Promise me that you will wear it always!' said the Blue Bird. And the Princess promised on condition that he should come and see her in the day as well as by night. They talked all night long, and the next morning the Blue Bird flew off to his kingdom, and crept into his palace through the broken window, and chose from his treasures two bracelets, each cut out of a single emerald. When he presented them to the Princess, she shook her head at him reproachfully, saying—

'Do you think I love you so little that I need all these gifts to remind me of you?'

And he answered—

'No, my Princess; but I love you so much that I feel I cannot express it, try as I may. I only bring you these worthless trifles to show that I have not ceased to think of you, though I have been obliged to leave you for a time.' The following night he gave Fiordelisa a watch set in a single pearl. The Princess laughed a little when she saw it, and said—

'You may well give me a watch, for since I have known you I have lost the power of measuring time. The hours you spend with me pass like minutes, and the hours that I drag through without you seem years to me.'

'Ah, Princess, they cannot seem so long to you as they do to me!' he answered. Day by day he brought more beautiful things for the Princess—diamonds, and rubies, and opals; and at night she decked herself with them to please him, but by day she hid them in her straw mattress. When the sun shone the Blue Bird, hidden in the tall fir-tree, sang to her so sweetly that all the passersby wondered, and said that the wood was inhabited by a spirit. And so two years slipped away, and still the Princess was a prisoner, and Turritella was not married. The Queen had offered her hand to all the neighbouring Princes, but they always answered that they would marry Fiordelisa with pleasure, but not Turritella on any account. This displeased the Queen terribly. 'Fiordelisa must be in league with them, to annoy me!' she said. 'Let us go and accuse her of it.'

So she and Turrítella went up into the tower. Now it happened that it was nearly midnight, and Fiordelisa, all decked with jewels, was sitting at the window with the Blue Bird, and as the Queen paused outside the door to listen she heard the Princess and her lover singing together a little song he had just taught her. These were the words:—

*'Oh! what a luckless pair are we,  
One in a prison, and one in a tree.  
All our trouble and anguish came  
From our faithfulness spoiling our enemies' game.  
But vainly they practice their cruel arts,  
For nought can sever our two fond hearts.'*

They sound melancholy perhaps, but the two voices sang them gaily enough, and the Queen burst open the door, crying, 'Ah! my Turrítella, there is some treachery going on here!'

As soon as she saw her, Fiordelisa, with great presence of mind, hastily shut her little window, that the Blue Bird might have time to escape, and then turned to meet the Queen, who overwhelmed her with a torrent of reproaches.

'Your intrigues are discovered, Madam,' she said furiously; 'and you need not hope that your high rank will save you from the punishment you deserve.'

'And with whom do you accuse me of intriguing, Madam?' said the Princess. 'Have I not been your prisoner these two years, and who have I seen except the gaolers sent by you?'

While she spoke the Queen and Turrítella were looking at her in the greatest surprise, perfectly dazzled by her beauty and the splendour of her jewels, and the Queen said:

'If one may ask, Madam, where did you get all these diamonds? Perhaps you mean to tell me that you have discovered a mine of them in the tower!'

'I certainly did find them here,' answered the Princess.

'And pray,' said the Queen, her wrath increasing every moment, 'for whose admiration are you decked out like this, since I have often seen you not half as fine on the most important occasions at Court?'

'For my own,' answered Fiordelisa. 'You must admit that I have had plenty of time on my hands, so you cannot be surprised at my spending some of it in making myself smart.'

'That's all very fine,' said the Queen suspiciously. 'I think I will look about, and see for myself.'

So she and Turrítella began to search every corner of the little room, and when they came to the straw mattress out fell such a quantity of pearls, diamonds, rubies, opals, emeralds, and sapphires, that they were amazed, and could not tell what to think. But the Queen resolved to hide somewhere a packet of false letters to prove that the Princess had been conspiring with the King's enemies, and she chose the chimney as a good place. Fortunately for Fiordelisa this was exactly where the Blue Bird had perched himself, to keep an eye upon her proceedings, and try to avert danger from his beloved Princess, and now he cried:

'Beware, Fiordelisa! Your false enemy is plotting against you.'

This strange voice so frightened the Queen that she took the letter and went away hastily with Turritella, and they held a council to try and devise some means of finding out what Fairy or Enchanter was favouring the Princess. At last they sent one of the Queen's maids to wait upon Fiordelisa, and told her to pretend to be quite stupid, and to see and hear nothing, while she was really to watch the Princess day and night, and keep the Queen informed of all her doings.

Poor Fiordelisa, who guessed she was sent as a spy, was in despair, and cried bitterly that she dared not see her dear Blue Bird for fear that some evil might happen to him if he were discovered.

The days were so long, and the nights so dull, but for a whole month she never went near her little window lest he should fly to her as he used to do.

However, at last the spy, who had never taken her eyes off the Princess day or night, was so overcome with weariness that she fell into a deep sleep, and as soon as the Princess saw that, she flew to open her window and cried softly:

*'Blue Bird, blue as the sky, fly to me now, there's nobody by.'*

And the Blue Bird, who had never ceased to flutter round within sight and hearing of her prison, came in an instant. They had so much to say, and were so overjoyed to meet once more, that it scarcely seemed to them five minutes before the sun rose, and the Blue Bird had to fly away.

But the next night the spy slept as soundly as before, so that the Blue Bird came, and he and the Princess began to think they were perfectly safe, and to make all sorts of plans for being happy as they were before the Queen's visit. But, alas! the third night the spy was not quite so sleepy, and when the Princess opened her window and cried as usual:

*'Blue Bird, blue as the sky, fly to me now, there's nobody nigh,'*

She was wide awake in a moment, though she was sly enough to keep her eyes shut at first. But presently she heard voices, and peeping cautiously, she saw by the moonlight the most lovely blue bird in the world, who was talking to the Princess, while she stroked and caressed it fondly.

The spy did not lose a single word of the conversation, and as soon as the day dawned, and the Blue Bird had reluctantly said good-bye to the Princess, she rushed off to the Queen, and told her all she had seen and heard.

Then the Queen sent for Turritella, and they talked it over, and very soon came to the conclusion that this Blue Bird was no other than King Charming himself.

'Ah! that insolent Princess!' cried the Queen. 'To think that when we supposed her to be so miserable, she was all the while as happy as possible with that false King. But I know how we can avenge ourselves!'

So the spy was ordered to go back and pretend to sleep as soundly as ever, and indeed she went to bed earlier than usual, and snored as naturally as possible, and the poor Princess ran to the window and cried:

*'Blue Bird, blue as the sky, fly to me now, there's nobody by!'*

But no bird came. All night long she called, and waited, and listened, but still there was no answer, for the cruel Queen had caused the fir tree to be hung all over with knives, swords, razors, shears, bill-hooks, and sickles, so that when the Blue Bird heard the Princess call, and flew towards her, his wings were cut, and his little black feet clipped off, and all pierced and stabbed in twenty places, he fell back bleeding into his hiding place in the tree, and lay there groaning and despairing, for he thought the Princess must have been persuaded to betray him, to regain her liberty.

'Ah! Fiordelisa, can you indeed be so lovely and so faithless?' he sighed, 'then I may as well die at once!' And he turned over on his side and began to die. But it happened that his friend the Enchanter had been very much alarmed at seeing the Frog chariot come back to him without King Charming, and had been round the world eight times seeking him, but without success. At the very moment when the King gave himself up to despair, he was passing through the wood for the eighth time, and called, as he had done all over the world:

'Charming! King Charming! Are you here?'

The King at once recognised his friend's voice, and answered very faintly: 'I am here.'

The Enchanter looked all round him, but could see nothing, and then the King said again: 'I am a Blue Bird.'

Then the Enchanter found him in an instant, and seeing his pitiable condition, ran hither and thither without a word, until he had collected a handful of magic herbs, with which, and a few incantations, he speedily made the King whole and sound again.

'Now,' said he, 'let me hear all about it. There must be a Princess at the bottom of this.'

'There are two!' answered King Charming, with a wry smile.

And then he told the whole story, accusing Fiordelisa of having betrayed the secret of his visits to make her peace with the Queen, and indeed saying a great many hard things about her fickleness and her deceitful beauty, and so on. The Enchanter quite agreed with him, and even went further, declaring that all Princesses were alike, except perhaps in the matter of beauty, and advised him to have done with Fiordelisa, and forget all about her. But, somehow or other, this advice did not quite please the King.

'What is to be done next?' said the Enchanter, 'since you still have five years to remain a Blue Bird.'

'Take me to your palace,' answered the King; 'there you can at least keep me in a cage safe from cats and swords.'

'Well, that will be the best thing to do for the present,' said his friend. 'But I am not an Enchanter for nothing. I'm sure to have a brilliant idea for you before long.'

In the meantime Fiordelisa, quite in despair, sat at her window day and night calling her dear Blue Bird in vain, and imagining over and over again all the terrible things that could have happened to him, until she grew quite pale and thin. As for the Queen and Turritella, they were triumphant; but their triumph was short, for the King, Fiordelisa's father, fell ill and died, and all the people rebelled against the Queen and Turritella, and came in a body to the palace demanding Fiordelisa.

The Queen came out upon the balcony with threats and haughty words, so that at last they lost their patience, and broke open the doors of the palace, one of which fell back upon the Queen and killed her. Turritella fled to the Fairy Mazilla, and all the nobles of the kingdom fetched the Princess Fiordelisa from her prison in the tower, and made her Queen. Very soon, with all the care and attention they bestowed upon her, she recovered from the effects of her long captivity and looked more beautiful than ever, and was able to take counsel with her courtiers, and arrange for the governing of her kingdom during her absence. And then, taking a bagful of jewels, she set out all alone to look for the Blue Bird, without telling anyone where she was going.

Meanwhile, the Enchanter was taking care of King Charming, but as his power was not great enough to counteract the Fairy Mazilla's, he at last resolved to go and see if he could make any kind of terms with her for his friend; for you see, Fairies and Enchanters are cousins in a sort of way, after all; and after knowing one another for five or six hundred years and falling out, and making it up again pretty often, they understand one another well enough. So the Fairy Mazilla received him graciously. 'And what may you be wanting, Gossip?' said she.

'You can do a good turn for me if you will;' he answered. 'A King, who is a friend of mine, was unlucky enough to offend you—'

'Aha! I know who you mean,' interrupted the Fairy. 'I am sorry not to oblige you, Gossip, but he need expect no mercy from me unless he will marry my goddaughter, whom you see yonder looking so pretty and charming. Let him think over what I say.'

The Enchanter hadn't a word to say, for he thought Turritella really frightful, but he could not go away without making one more effort for his friend the King, who was really in great danger as long as he lived in a cage. Indeed, already he had met with several alarming accidents. Once the nail on which his cage was hung had given way, and his feathered Majesty had suffered much from the fall, while Madam Puss, who happened to be in the room at the time, had given him a scratch in the eye which came very near blinding him. Another time they had forgotten to give him any water to drink, so that he was nearly dead with thirst; and the worst thing of all was that he was in danger of losing his kingdom, for he had been absent so long that all his subjects believed him to be dead. So considering all these things the Enchanter agreed with the Fairy Mazilla that she should restore the King to his natural form, and should take Turritella to stay in his palace for several months, and if, after the time was over he still could not make up his mind to marry her, he should once more be changed into a Blue Bird.

Then the Fairy dressed Turritella in a magnificent gold and silver robe, and they mounted together upon a flying Dragon, and very soon reached King Charming's palace, where he, too, had just been brought by his faithful friend the Enchanter.

Three strokes of the Fairy's wand restored his natural form, and he was as handsome and delightful as ever, but he considered that he paid dearly for his restoration when he caught sight of Turritella, and the mere idea of marrying her made him shudder.

Meanwhile, Queen Fiordelisa, disguised as a poor peasant girl, wearing a great straw hat that concealed her face, and carrying an old sack over her shoulder, had set out upon her weary journey, and had travelled far, sometimes by sea and sometimes by land; sometimes on foot, and sometimes on horseback, but not knowing which way to go.

She feared all the time that every step she took was leading her farther from her lover. One day as she sat, quite tired and sad, on the bank of a little brook, cooling her white feet in the clear running water, and combing her long hair that glittered like gold in the sunshine, a little bent old woman passed by, leaning on a stick. She stopped, and said to Fiordelisa: 'What, my pretty child, are you all alone?'

'Indeed, good mother, I am too sad to care for company,' she answered; and the tears ran down her cheeks.

'Don't cry,' said the old woman, 'but tell me truly what is the matter. Perhaps I can help you.'

The Queen told her willingly all that had happened, and how she was seeking the Blue Bird. Thereupon the little old woman suddenly stood up straight, and grew tall, and young, and beautiful, and said with a smile to the astonished Fiordelisa:

'Lovely Queen, the King whom you seek is no longer a bird. My sister Mazilla has given his own form back to him, and he is in his own kingdom. Do not be afraid, you will reach him, and will prosper. Take these four eggs; if you break one when you are in any great difficulty, you will find aid.'

So saying, she disappeared, and Fiordelisa, feeling much encouraged, put the eggs into her bag and turned her steps towards Charming's kingdom. After walking on and on for eight days and eight nights, she came at last to a tremendously high hill of polished ivory, so steep that it was impossible to get a foothold upon it. Fiordelisa tried a thousand times, and scrambled and slipped, but always in the end found herself exactly where she started from. At last she sat down at the foot of it in despair, and then suddenly bethought herself of the eggs. Breaking one quickly, she found in it some little gold hooks, and with these fastened to her feet and hands, she mounted the ivory hill without further trouble, for the little hooks saved her from slipping.

As soon as she reached the top a new difficulty presented itself, for all the other side, and indeed the whole valley, was one polished mirror, in which thousands and thousands of people were admiring their reflections. For this was a magic mirror, in which people saw themselves just as they wished to appear, and pilgrims came to it from the four corners of the world. But nobody had ever been able to reach the top of the hill, and when they saw Fiordelisa standing there, they raised a terrible outcry, declaring that if she set foot upon their glass she would break it to pieces. The Queen, not knowing what to do, for she saw it would be dangerous to try to go down, broke the second egg, and out came a chariot, drawn by two white doves, and Fiordelisa got into it, and was floated softly away.

After a night and a day the doves alighted outside the gate of King Charming's kingdom. Here the Queen got out of the chariot, and kissed the doves and thanked them, and then with a beating heart she walked into the town, asking the people she met where she could see the King. But they only laughed at her, crying:

'See the King? And pray, why do you want to see the King, my little kitchen-maid? You had better go and wash your face first, your eyes are not clear enough to see him!' For the Queen had disguised herself, and pulled her hair down about her eyes, that no one might know her. As they would not tell her, she went on farther, and presently asked again, and this time the people answered that to-morrow she might see the King driving through the streets with the Princess Turritella, as it was said that at last he had consented to marry her. This was indeed terrible news to Fiordelisa. Had she come all this weary way only to find Turritella had succeeded in making King Charming forget her?

She was too tired and miserable to walk another step, so she sat down in a doorway and cried bitterly all night long. As soon as it was light she hastened to the palace, and after being sent away fifty times by the guards, she got in at last, and saw the thrones set in the great hall for the King and Turritella, who was already looked upon as Queen.

Fiordelisa hid herself behind a marble pillar, and very soon saw Turritella make her appearance, richly dressed, but as ugly as ever, and with her came the King, more handsome and splendid even than Fiordelisa had remembered him. When Turritella had seated herself upon the throne, the Queen approached her.

'Who are you, and how dare you come near my high-mightiness, upon my golden throne?' said Turritella, frowning fiercely at her.

'They call me the little kitchen-maid,' she replied, 'and I come to offer some precious things for sale,' and with that she searched in her old sack, and drew out the emerald bracelets King Charming had given her.

'Ho, ho!' said Turritella, those are pretty bits of glass. I suppose you would like five silver pieces for them.'

'Show them to someone who understands such things, Madam,' answered the Queen; 'after that we can decide upon the price.'

Turritella, who really loved King Charming as much as she could love anybody, and was always delighted to get a chance of talking to him, now showed him the bracelets, asking how much he considered them worth. As soon as he saw them he remembered those he had given to Fiordelisa, and turned very pale and sighed deeply, and fell into such sad thought that he quite forgot to answer her. Presently she asked him again, and then he said, with a great effort:

'I believe these bracelets are worth as much as my kingdom. I thought there was only one such pair in the world; but here, it seems, is another.'

Then Turritella went back to the Queen, and asked her what was the lowest price she would take for them.

'More than you would find it easy to pay, Madam,' answered she; 'but if you will manage for me to sleep one night in the Chamber of Echoes, I will give you the emeralds.'

'By all means, my little kitchen-maid,' said Turritella, highly delighted.

The King did not try to find out where the bracelets had come from, not because he did not want to know, but because the only way would have been to ask Turritella, and he disliked her so much that he never spoke to her if he could possibly avoid it. It was he who had told Fiordelisa about the Chamber of Echoes, when he was a Blue Bird. It was a little room below the King's own bed-chamber, and was so ingeniously built that the softest whisper in it was plainly heard in the King's room. Fiordelisa wanted to reproach him for his faithlessness, and could not imagine a better way than this. So when, by Turritella's orders, she was left there she began to weep and lament, and never ceased until daybreak.

The King's pages told Turritella, when she asked them, what a sobbing and sighing they had heard, and she asked Fiordelisa what it was all about. The Queen answered that she often dreamed and talked aloud.

But by an unlucky chance the King heard nothing of all this, for he took a sleeping draught every night before he lay down, and did not wake up until the sun was high.

The Queen passed the day in great disquietude.

If he did hear me,' she said, 'could he remain so cruelly indifferent? But if he did not hear me, what can I do to get another chance? I have plenty of jewels, it is true, but nothing remarkable enough to catch Turritella's fancy.'

Just then she thought of the eggs, and broke one, out of which came a little carriage of polished steel ornamented with gold, drawn by six green mice. The coachman was a rose-coloured rat, the postilion a grey one, and the carriage was occupied by the tiniest and most charming figures, who could dance and do wonderful tricks. Fiordelisa clapped her hands and danced for joy when she saw this triumph of magic art, and as soon as it was evening, went to a shady garden-path down which she knew Turritella would pass, and then she made the mice gallop, and the tiny people show off their tricks, and sure enough Turritella came, and the moment she saw it all cried:

'Little kitchen-maid, little kitchen-maid, what will you take for your mouse-carriage?'

And the Queen answered: 'Let me sleep once more in the Chamber of Echoes.'

'I won't refuse your request, poor creature,' said Turritella condescendingly.

And then she turned to her ladies and whispered, 'The silly creature does not know how to profit by her chances; so much the better for me.'

When night came Fiordelisa said all the loving words she could think of, but alas! with no better success than before, for the King slept heavily after his draught. One of the pages said: 'This peasant girl must be crazy;' but another answered: 'Yet what she says sounds very sad and touching.'

As for Fiordelisa, she thought the King must have a very hard heart if he could hear how she grieved and yet pay her no attention. She had but one more chance, and on breaking the last egg she found to her great delight that it contained a more marvellous thing than ever. It was a pie made of six birds, cooked to perfection, and yet they were all alive, and singing and talking, and they answered questions and told fortunes in the most amusing way. Taking this treasure Fiordelisa once more set herself to wait in the great hall through which Turritella was sure to pass, and as she sat there one of the King's pages came by, and said to her:

'Well, little kitchen-maid, it is a good thing that the King always takes a sleeping draught, for if not he would be kept awake all night by your sighing and lamenting.'

Then Fiordelisa knew why the King had not heeded her, and taking a handful of pearls and diamonds out of her sack, she said, 'If you can promise me that to-night the King shall not have his sleeping draught, I will give you all these jewels.'

Oh! I promise that willingly,' said the page.

At this moment Turritella appeared, and at the first sight of the savoury pie, with the pretty little birds all singing and chattering, she cried:— 'That is an admirable pie, little kitchen-maid. Pray what will you take for it?'

'The usual price,' she answered. 'To sleep once more in the Chamber of Echoes.'

'By all means, only give me the pie,' said the greedy Turritella. And when night was come, Queen Fiordelisa waited until she thought everybody in the palace would be asleep, and then began to lament as before.

'Ah, Charming!' she said, 'what have I ever done that you should forsake me and marry Turritella? If you could only know all I have suffered, and what a weary way I have come to seek you.'

Now the page had faithfully kept his word, and given King Charming a glass of water instead of his usual sleeping draught, so there he lay wide awake, and heard every word Fiordelisa said, and even recognised her voice, though he could not tell where it came from.

'Ah, Princess!' he said, 'how could you betray me to our cruel enemies when I loved you so dearly?' Fiordelisa heard him, and answered quickly: 'Find out the little kitchen-maid, and she will explain everything.'

Then the King in a great hurry sent for his pages and said: 'If you can find the little kitchen-maid, bring her to me at once.'

'Nothing could be easier, Sire,' they answered, 'for she is in the Chamber of Echoes.'

The King was very much puzzled when he heard this. How could the lovely Princess Fiordelisa be a little kitchen-maid? or how could a little kitchen-maid have Fiordelisa's own voice? So he dressed hastily, and ran down a little secret staircase which led to the Chamber of Echoes. There, upon a heap of soft cushions, sat his lovely Princess. She had laid aside all her ugly disguises and wore a white silken robe, and her golden hair shone in the soft lamp-light. The King was overjoyed at the sight, and rushed to throw himself at her feet, and asked her a thousand questions without giving her time to answer one. Fiordelisa was equally happy to be with him once more, and nothing troubled them but the remembrance of the Fairy Mazilla. But at this moment in came the Enchanter, and with him a famous Fairy, the same in fact who had given Fiordelisa the eggs.

After greeting the King and Queen, they said that as they were united in wishing to help King Charming, the Fairy Mazilla had no longer any power against him, and he might marry Fiordelisa as soon as he pleased. The King's joy may be imagined, and as soon as it was day the news was spread through the palace, and everybody who saw Fiordelisa loved her directly. When Turritella heard what had happened she came running to the King, and when she saw Fiordelisa with him she was terribly angry, but before she could say a word the Enchanter and the Fairy changed her into a big brown owl, and she floated away out of one of the palace windows, hooting dismally. Then the wedding was held with great splendour, and King Charming and Queen Fiordelisa lived happily ever after.

# The Golden Bird

## by The Brothers Grimm

A certain king had a beautiful garden, and in the garden stood a tree which bore golden apples. These apples were always counted, and about the time when they began to grow ripe it was found that every night one of them was gone. The king became very angry at this, and ordered the gardener to keep watch all night under the tree. The gardener set his eldest son to watch; but about twelve o'clock he fell asleep, and in the morning another of the apples was missing. Then the second son was ordered to watch; and at midnight he too fell asleep, and in the morning another apple was gone. Then the third son offered to keep watch; but the gardener at first would not let him, for fear some harm should come to him: however, at last he consented, and the young man laid himself under the tree to watch.

As the clock struck twelve he heard a rustling noise in the air, and a bird came flying that was of pure gold; and as it was snapping at one of the apples with its beak, the gardener's son jumped up and shot an arrow at it. But the arrow did the bird no harm; only it dropped a golden feather from its tail, and then flew away. The golden feather was brought to the king in the morning, and all the council was called together. Everyone agreed that it was worth more than all the wealth of the kingdom: but the king said, 'One feather is of no use to me, I must have the whole bird.'

Then the gardener's eldest son set out and thought to find the golden bird very easily; and when he had gone but a little way, he came to a wood, and by the side of the wood he saw a fox sitting; so he took his bow and made ready to shoot at it. Then the fox said, 'Do not shoot me, for I will give you good counsel; I know what your business is, and that you want to find the golden bird. You will reach a village in the evening; and when you get there, you will see two inns opposite to each other, one of which is very pleasant and beautiful to look at: go not in there, but rest for the night in the other, though it may appear to you to be very poor and mean.'

But the son thought to himself, 'What can such a beast as this know about the matter?' So he shot his arrow at the fox; but he missed it, and it set up its tail above its back and ran into the wood. Then he went his way, and in the evening came to the village where the two inns were; and in one of these were people singing, and dancing, and feasting; but the other looked very dirty, and poor. 'I should be very silly,' said he, 'if I went to that shabby house, and left this charming place'; so he went into the smart house, and ate and drank at his ease, and forgot the bird, and his country too.

Time passed on; and as the eldest son did not come back, and no tidings were heard of him, the second son set out, and the same thing happened to him. He met the fox, who gave him the good advice: but when he came to the two inns, his eldest brother was standing at the window where the merrymaking was, and called to him to come in; and he could not withstand the temptation, but went in, and forgot the golden bird and his country in the same manner.

Time passed on again, and the youngest son too wished to set out into the wide world to seek for the golden bird; but his father would not listen to it for a long while, for he was very fond of his son, and was afraid that some ill luck might happen to him also, and prevent his coming back. However, at last it was agreed he should go, for he would not rest at home; and as he came to the wood, he met the fox, and heard the same good counsel. But he was thankful to the fox, and did not attempt his life as his brothers had done; so the fox said, 'Sit upon my tail, and you will travel faster.' So he sat down, and the fox began to run, and away they went over stock and stone so quick that their hair whistled in the wind.

When they came to the village, the son followed the fox's counsel, and without looking about him went to the shabby inn and rested there all night at his ease. In the morning came the fox again and met him as he was beginning his journey, and said, 'Go straight forward, till you come to a castle, before which lie a whole troop of soldiers fast asleep and snoring: take no notice of them, but go into the castle and pass on and on till you come to a room, where the golden bird sits in a wooden cage; close by it stands a beautiful golden cage; but do not try to take the bird out of the shabby cage and put it into the handsome one, otherwise you will repent it.' Then the fox stretched out his tail again, and the young man sat himself down, and away they went over stock and stone till their hair whistled in the wind.

Before the castle gate all was as the fox had said: so the son went in and found the chamber where the golden bird hung in a wooden cage, and below stood the golden cage, and the three golden apples that had been lost were lying close by it. Then thought he to himself, 'It will be a very droll thing to bring away such a fine bird in this shabby cage'; so he opened the door and took hold of it and put it into the golden cage. But the bird set up such a loud scream that all the soldiers awoke, and they took him prisoner and carried him before the king. The next morning the court sat to judge him; and when all was heard, it sentenced him to die, unless he should bring the king the golden horse which could run as swiftly as the wind; and if he did this, he was to have the golden bird given him for his own.

So he set out once more on his journey, sighing, and in great despair, when on a sudden his friend the fox met him, and said, 'You see now what has happened on account of your not listening to my counsel. I will still, however, tell you how to find the golden horse, if you will do as I bid you. You must go straight on till you come to the castle where the horse stands in his stall: by his side will lie the groom fast asleep and snoring: take away the horse quietly, but be sure to put the old leathern saddle upon him, and not the golden one that is close by it.' Then the son sat down on the fox's tail, and away they went over stock and stone till their hair whistled in the wind.

All went right, and the groom lay snoring with his hand upon the golden saddle. But when the son looked at the horse, he thought it a great pity to put the leathern saddle upon it. 'I will give him the good one,' said he; 'I am sure he deserves it.' As he took up the golden saddle the groom awoke and cried out so loud, that all the guards ran in and took him prisoner, and in the morning he was again brought before the court to be judged, and was sentenced to die. But it was agreed, that, if he could bring thither the beautiful princess, he should live, and have the bird and the horse given him for his own.

Then he went his way very sorrowful; but the old fox came and said, 'Why did not you listen to me? If you had, you would have carried away both the bird and the horse; yet will I once more give you counsel. Go straight on, and in the evening you will arrive at a castle. At twelve o'clock at night the princess goes to the bathing-house: go up to her and give her a kiss, and she will let you lead her away; but take care you do not suffer her to go and take leave of her father and mother.' Then the fox stretched out his tail, and so away they went over stock and stone till their hair whistled again.

As they came to the castle, all was as the fox had said, and at twelve o'clock the young man met the princess going to the bath and gave her the kiss, and she agreed to run away with him, but begged with many tears that he would let her take leave of her father. At first he refused, but she wept still more and more, and fell at his feet, till at last he consented; but the moment she came to her father's house the guards awoke and he was taken prisoner again.

Then he was brought before the king, and the king said, 'You shall never have my daughter unless in eight days you dig away the hill that stops the view from my window.' Now this hill was so big that the whole world could not take it away: and when he had worked for seven days, and had done very little, the fox came and said, 'Lie down and go to sleep; I will work for you.' And in the morning he awoke and the hill was gone; so he went merrily to the king, and told him that now that it was removed he must give him the princess.

Then the king was obliged to keep his word, and away went the young man and the princess; and the fox came and said to him, 'We will have all three, the princess, the horse, and the bird.' 'Ah!' said the young man, 'that would be a great thing, but how can you contrive it?'

'If you will only listen,' said the fox, 'it can be done. When you come to the king, and he asks for the beautiful princess, you must say, "Here she is!" Then he will be very joyful; and you will mount the golden horse that they are to give you, and put out your hand to take leave of them; but shake hands with the princess last. Then lift her quickly on to the horse behind you; clap your spurs to his side, and gallop away as fast as you can.'

All went right: then the fox said, 'When you come to the castle where the bird is, I will stay with the princess at the door, and you will ride in and speak to the king; and when he sees that it is the right horse, he will bring out the bird; but you must sit still, and say that you want to look at it, to see whether it is the true golden bird; and when you get it into your hand, ride away.'

This, too, happened as the fox said; they carried off the bird, the princess mounted again, and they rode on to a great wood. Then the fox came, and said, 'Pray kill me, and cut off my head and my feet.' But the young man refused to do it: so the fox said, 'I will at any rate give you good counsel: beware of two things; ransom no one from the gallows, and sit down by the side of no river.' Then away he went. 'Well,' thought the young man, 'it is no hard matter to keep that advice.'

He rode on with the princess, till at last he came to the village where he had left his two brothers. And there he heard a great noise and uproar; and when he asked what was the matter, the people said, 'Two men are going to be hanged.' As he came nearer, he saw that the two men were his brothers, who had turned robbers; so he said, 'Cannot they in any way be saved?' But the people said 'No,' unless he would bestow all his money upon the rascals and buy their liberty. Then he did not stay to think about the matter, but paid what was asked, and his brothers were given up, and went on with him towards their home.

And as they came to the wood where the fox first met them, it was so cool and pleasant that the two brothers said, 'Let us sit down by the side of the river, and rest a while, to eat and drink.' So he said, 'Yes,' and forgot the fox's counsel, and sat down on the side of the river; and while he suspected nothing, they came behind, and threw him down the bank, and took the princess, the horse, and the bird, and went home to the king their master, and said. 'All this have we won by our labour.' Then there was great rejoicing made; but the horse would not eat, the bird would not sing, and the princess wept.

The youngest son fell to the bottom of the river's bed: luckily it was nearly dry, but his bones were almost broken, and the bank was so steep that he could find no way to get out. Then the old fox came once more, and scolded him for not following his advice; otherwise no evil would have befallen him: 'Yet,' said he, 'I cannot leave you here, so lay hold of my tail and hold fast.' Then he pulled him out of the river, and said to him, as he got upon the bank, 'Your brothers have set watch to kill you, if they find you in the kingdom.' So he dressed himself as a poor man, and came secretly to the king's court, and was scarcely within the doors when the horse began to eat, and the bird to sing, and the princess left off weeping. Then he went to the king, and told him all his brothers' roguery; and they were seized and punished, and he had the princess given to him again; and after the king's death he was heir to his kingdom.

A long while after, he went to walk one day in the wood, and the old fox met him, and besought him with tears in his eyes to kill him, and cut off his head and feet. And at last he did so, and in a moment the fox was changed into a man, and turned out to be the brother of the princess, who had been lost a great many many years.



## The Lark and Her Young Ones

by Aesop

A Lark made her nest in a field of young wheat. As the days passed, the wheat stalks grew tall and the young birds, too, grew in strength. Then one day, when the ripe golden grain waved in the breeze, the Farmer and his son came into the field.

"This wheat is now ready for reaping," said the Farmer. "We must call in our neighbors and friends to help us harvest it."

The young Larks in their nest close by were much frightened, for they knew they would be in great danger if they did not leave the nest before the reapers came.

When the Mother Lark returned with food for them, they told her what they had heard.

"Do not be frightened, children," said the Mother Lark. "If the Farmer said he would call in his neighbors and friends to help him do his work, this wheat will not be reaped for a while yet."

A few days later, the wheat was so ripe, that when the wind shook the stalks, a hail of wheat grains came rustling down on the young Larks' heads.

"If this wheat is not harvested at once," said the Farmer, "we shall lose half the crop. We cannot wait any longer for help from our friends. Tomorrow we must set to work, ourselves."

When the young Larks told their mother what they had heard that day, she said:

"Then we must be off at once. When a man decides to do his own work and not depend on any one else, then you may be sure there will be no more delay."

There was much fluttering and trying out of wings that afternoon, and at sunrise next day, when the Farmer and his son cut down the grain, they found an empty nest.

*Self-help is the best help.*

# The Raven

by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.  
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—  
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;  
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.  
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow  
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—  
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain  
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;  
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating  
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—  
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—  
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,  
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;  
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,  
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,  
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—  
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,  
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;  
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,  
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"  
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"—  
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,  
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.  
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;  
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—  
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—  
'Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,  
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;  
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;  
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—  
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—  
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,  
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,  
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,  
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—  
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,  
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only  
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.  
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—  
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before—  
On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."  
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,  
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store  
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster  
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—  
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore  
Of 'Never—nevermore'."

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,  
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;  
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking  
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—  
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore  
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing  
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;  
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining  
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,  
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,  
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer  
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.  
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee  
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;  
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—  
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,  
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—  
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—  
Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!  
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—  
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—  
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!  
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!  
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!  
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,  
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—nevermore!