

very dearly. The little prince was a sweet-natured, beautiful child, but even from a baby he always seemed to be listening to something, so that the grown-up people used to say: "What can the child hear?"

Then, when he was a little older, he would spend all day among the flowers in the garden, with the same look on his face. One day, when he was old enough to speak, the king said to him, "What do you hear?" and to his great horror and amazement the little prince answered, "Spinning—spinning—spinning."

This was very bad. The court physician was called in, but he could find nothing the matter with the royal child, so he ordered him to be taken away to another palace.

It nearly broke the child's heart to be torn from his beautiful garden, but he no longer heard the sound of spinning in the new palace, only now he always seemed to be waiting for something—waiting—waiting.

This is how the old palace came to be empty, but the garden was still full of beautiful flowers. Now the prince came of age and was allowed to choose his own home, and he chose to come back to the home of his childhood, because no flowers had ever seemed to him so beautiful as the flowers in the old garden, and above all things did he love the sound of a spinning-wheel. He had never really quite forgotten, you see.

He was rather a curious young prince, and although he was brave and genteel, and loved all beautiful things, people did not always like him. Somehow, he gave them the idea that he was not always with them, and they seemed to be half afraid of him.

Some of the fine court ladies had no patience with him. They thought he was so cold and almost sarcastic, but they did not understand him at all. He was really very gentle.

The sun was just setting when the prince and his train reached the old palace. As they had ridden all day, supper was served at once, but the prince hardly ate anything. He kept laying down his knife and fork and listening,

for all the time he fancied he heard the sound of spinning—spinning—spinning. So that his followers said, "How strange he is tonight."

At last he could bear it no longer. He left the supper-table and strolled out into the garden. It was a soft green twilight. The garden was deliciously cool and dewy after the hot banqueting-room and never had the scent of the flowers seemed so strangely sweet. And the spinning—was it spinning? It seemed to the prince to be more like music—yes—it was music. Could any one of the court minstrels— But no, no court music in all the world was ever like this music, so unearthly, so beautiful, so soft. It seemed to be a part of the twilight and the flowers.

Suddenly the spinning and the music all ceased, and there came a great stillness, so that the prince could hear his own heart beating, and scarcely dared to breathe, for in the stillness he thought he heard a voice, which said, "Are you there?"

It seemed quite near to him, so that he stretched out his arms, and said under his breath, "Yes, I am here."

But he could see nothing, though he searched the garden through and through.

All that night he wandered about the garden under the stars, and all that night there was spinning—spinning—spinning, and the music, but the voice did not come again, though he listened. Oh, how he listened! Now, the prince's whole life seemed to be in these sounds. He could scarcely sleep or eat, and he no longer heard what people said to him. He grew thin and pale, so that his attendants said that he was going to die.

But the prince knew that it was not death that called him, but life.

Still, he grew very weary of waiting and listening and searching, so at last he thought he would ask the advice of a great magician who lived in the midst of a gloomy pine forest. One night, then, he set out alone to visit this magician. He was obliged to go at night, because the magician could not bear the light. He always went to sleep all day, and kept awake all night. But he was