

once, and before a twelvemonth had passed, his queen had blessed him with a pair of twins, a boy and girl, both as beautiful as the day. He was so highly delighted, that the contract he had made nearly faded from his mind. However, before another twelvemonth was gone his memory was refreshed by a visit from the stranger, who asked which of the children he was to have? The king, with a dismal face, made the awkward confession that he would rather not part with either. The boy was necessary as heir to the throne, and the girl was her mother's pet; so what was to be done? The stranger—who, of course, was the Evil One, but who clearly made good the proverb, which states that he is not so black as he is painted—was touched by the king's solicitations, and told him that he would let him have both the children for five years longer. At the end of that period, he would assuredly return.

On rolled the five years, and back came the stranger, to find the king more unwilling than ever. Hard words were spoken on both sides, till at last a compromise was effected. The stranger was not to return until the girl had completed her sixteenth year, and the king was then to give her up without resistance.

Years glided dimly away, and the father's spirits became lower and lower as he approached the sixteenth anniversary of his daughter's birthday. His increasing melancholy attracted the notice of his son, a youth of singular precocity, who did his best to learn the truth, but failed in every attempt. At last the boy bethought himself of his tutor: a priest of imminent piety: who, as soon as he had heard his pupil's report, at once proceeded to the royal sufferer.

"I have sold my daughter to the—," was the brief but pregnant confession of the melancholy king.

The priest was not courtier enough to dissemble his opinion that transactions of this kind were highly improper, but he comforted the mourner with the assurance that the case was not quite hopeless. If he only knew the exact time at which the hateful visitor was expected, he would be on the spot and prove a match for all the mysterious strangers in the world.

The specified birthday arrived, and so did the visitor: but he found the priest at the princess's chamber door, clad in all the insignia of his holy office. He durst not enter the room. An altercation ensued, which ended in the retreat of the enemy: not, however, without a declaration that he would bide his time.

As long as the worthy priest lived, the girl was well protected, and throve exceedingly, but when at the end of two years he died, she fell sick and did not long survive him. While on her death-bed, she entreated her father not to bury her at once, but to allow her to lie for a week in the church, under a strict guard. With this wish the king complied, and the princess was laid on a magnificent bier erected in the church, while a sentinel was placed at the door.

On the very first midnight, a frightful event occurred. The princess, starting from her coffin, shrieked aloud: "Where is my abominable father?" and without more ado seized on the sentinel and tore him to pieces. In the morning the church door was open, the princess was quiet in her coffin, and the remains of the sentinel lay scattered in various directions. Intelligence of these awful facts spread far and wide, and a second sentinel was not easily to be obtained. Lots, however, were cast for the appointment of a person to fill up the undesirable vacancy, and the victim thus selected was a young soldier who was in the habit of paying his devotions every evening to an image of the Holy Virgin. After fervently praying, he set off for the church, and met on his way an old woman, who, asking the cause of his melancholy, and learning the danger with which he was menaced, urged him to present himself at the altar of the Madonna when he had entered the church, and to close the rail behind him.

With this advice he complied, and when midnight arrived the princess again raised herself from the coffin. "Four-and-twenty hours have passed," she said, "since I have drunk human blood. Where is my abominable father, that I

may tear him to pieces for his dastardly promise?" Again she raged about the church; but, not perceiving the sentinel, returned to her coffin without doing further harm.

The sentinel was terribly frightened, but the king, convinced that he had got the right man in the right place, persuaded him to keep guard another night. Again the young man performed his habitual devotions, and again he met the old woman. The incidents that now occurred were nearly identical with those of the previous night, only the indicated spot of refuge was the confessional, and the deceased princess was more violent than before. It may be taken as a general rule that, in the popular stories of all nations, the second of three adventures is generally as similar as possible to the first.

The king found some difficulty in persuading the young man to perform the awful duty of guarding the princess for a third night; but his entreaties, and still more his representation that the safety of a soul was at stake, ultimately prevailed. On his way to the church, after he had prayed with unwonted fervour to his protectress, he met, not the old woman, but a stately lady, who went with him into the building, and told him to hold in his left hand a bottle of mixture which she gave him, to take the monstrance from the tabernacle, and hold it in his right hand, and thus armed to sit down close to the high altar. She also warned him of the novel circumstances for which he was to be prepared.

After the departure of the stately lady, the sentinel awaited the signal of the midnight hour in great uneasiness. At the last stroke of the clock the princess again arose, with fire darting from her eyes and mouth, cursing her father more bitterly than ever, and seeking with increased violence a victim for her wrath. Presently four men made their appearance, who seized her violently, and standing two on each side of the church, tossed her backwards and forwards like a shuttlecock. At the end of this strange performance, they spread a carpet over the altar-steps, and flinging the princess upon it, were about to chop her to pieces with a huge sword. Warned that the time for action was now come, the sentinel flung the monstrance, containing the Host, at the impious four, and they all vanished, leaving the princess gasping at his feet.

Folding the carpet, the sentinel laid the princess gently upon it, and touched her with the contents of the bottle till she fell into a profound sleep. On the following morning the king found his daughter and her guardian, neither of them awake. Causing them to be raised gently, he had them conveyed in a four-horse carriage to his palace, where he assigned to each a separate apartment. Scarcely had the princess awoke, when she called for her father and mother, who were anxiously watching at the foot of her bed, and expressed her delight that, after her long and heavy sufferings, she could once more embrace them. Next, she called for her deliverer, vowing that she would have no other husband.

On that very day the princess and the sentinel were married; and in grateful remembrance of their deliverance from peril, the image of the Madonna was placed on the altar of the chapel in the royal palace.

II.

An old man was once blessed with a gawky son, who united within himself the by no means incompatible qualities of tallness of stature and unwillingness to work. Tired of seeing him do nothing, the old man put to him the plain question: "Will you work on your own account, or will you go to service?" The latter of the two alternatives was accepted by the son, and the father told him that if the Evil One himself consented to engage him, he (the father) would feel perfectly satisfied.

One fine day, off they both went together in quest of a suitable place, and met on the road a person of singularly gentleman-like appearance, who inquiring the object of their journey, obtained a correct answer.

"I want a porter," said the gentleman, "and this young chap looks stout and hearty. What wages shall you want, my lad?"

"Threepence-halfpenny a year," was the modest reply.

"Nay, you shall have tenpence, and very little to do," returned the generous stranger. "Your only duty will be to open and shut the door; and woe betide you if you peep in!"

The situation was accepted, and the young porter was surprised to observe that although numbers of people, many of them high in station, and even his own grandfather, went in at the door at which he stood, nobody ever came out of it. At last he guessed the quality of his master, and when a year had passed, he gave notice that he was about to leave. The gentleman, knowing that he would have to look out for another porter, was very unwilling to let him go, and endeavoured to change his purpose by showing him a large chest full of gold, and telling him he might take out as much as he pleased. The porter, however, would have neither more nor less than his due; and, taking the tenpence agreed upon, stalked merrily off, and did not stop until he came to a poor man who solicited alms.

"Take twopence-halfpenny," said the man of property, "then I shall have twopence left for tobacco, twopence-halfpenny for bread, and threepence for wine." A second beggar received the same pittance as the first, which reduced the prospects of the philanthropist to three ha'porth of tobacco, and bread to an equal amount, and twopenny worth of wine. A third beggar, relieved to the same extent, caused the tobacco to be struck off the list; the remaining twopence-halfpenny, mentally appropriated to the purchase of bread, was soon bestowed on the fourth mendicant, who received the usual donation, the donor remarking at the same time that he would henceforth be relieved from the trouble of calculation. When a fifth beggar appeared, the man of charity could only inform him that there were no effects, and that most probably he himself would become a beggar in his turn. Delighted with the obviously good disposition of the penniless lover of mankind, the mendicant declared that he stood in no need of his bounty, but, on the contrary, would bestow on him any three gifts he pleased to name.

The late porter at first fancied that the beggar was joking; but, being assured to the contrary, he chose, as desirable gifts, a gun that would never miss its mark, a fiddle which would make everybody dance, and a sack into which every one would be compelled to leap at the command of its owner.

Enriched with his new property, the young porter proceeded on his journey till he saw a bird, which was flying high above his head, and would, he thought, serve as a satisfactory test of his gun. But as he was about to fire, two friars came up to him, and laughed at his attempt to make a musket do the work of a cannon; one of them offering to jump into the adjoining thicket, clad in Adam's earliest costume, and pick up the bird if the marksman succeeded in bringing it down. Down came the bird indeed, and the friar, who had undertaken to pick it up, faithfully kept his promise; whereupon the marksman took up his fiddle, and forced the two ascetics to dance. The one who had remained in the road did not fare so ill; but his brother in the thicket tore nearly all the flesh from his bones.

Both, as might be expected, were highly incensed, and informed the police of the nearest town, that a dangerous magician was practising his tricks in the neighbourhood. As soon, therefore, as the ex-porter of the Evil One showed his face within the walls, he was summoned before the commissary, and contrived to wait on that important functionary exactly at dinner-time.

The commissary was grumpy. "Stop till I have done my dinner," said he.

"That I will certainly," said the courteous vagabond, "and to make the meal more agreeable, I will accompany it with a little music." Accordingly he struck up a tune, which made not only the commissary, his wife, his children, his maid-servant, his usher, and his cat, but even the tables and chairs, the plates and dishes, join in a lively dance.