

Introduction

was a very old man then, and it is hardly likely that he lived much longer in spite of his jolly old soul and his hearty laugh. Still he must have left a happy kingdom behind him, for all those thousands and thousands of merry little children must have grown up into happy youths and happy maidens and so at last to contented men and women. Their breath was full of laughter, and tears were strangers to their hearts.

If you wish to get to the kingdom over which Old King Cole once reigned, you must be a very good little boy or girl, and listen quietly to any one who tells you a fairy story. Then at night, perhaps, when you lie on your little bed, and the stars are shining with friendly eyes down upon you, someone will come and take you on the back of the wind to this happy, happy place. It will not take you very long to get there, but you will want to stay there for ever and ever and listen to the wonderful tales there told.

Or if you like you can make a kingdom in your own home like that of Old King Cole, a kingdom without a palace and without a throne, but a kingdom of happy hearts and happy faces—with no ill-tempered words and no unkindness or rude behaviour. That is what Old King Cole always used to say to the ambassadors who came to him to find out how he managed things. "Make your children happy and good," he used to say, "and you won't have any more trouble. The kingdom which is the greatest of all is the kingdom of the happy children."

Well, some of the ambassadors went away at last and one in especial who remembered all the stories he had heard at the court of Old King Cole. When the king of that ambassador's country heard the stories, he was so pleased that he said that other kings and peoples of other kingdoms must hear the stories too, and that they must be published in a book. They *have* been published in a book, and this is the book which now you hold in your hand.

THE EDITOR.