

## The Frog Prince

In the olden time, when wishing was some good, there lived a King whose daughters were all very beautiful, but the youngest was so lovely that even the sun, that looked on many things, could not but marvel when he shone upon the girl's face.

Near the King's palace there was a large, dark forest, and in the forest, under an old lime-tree, there was a deep well. When the day was very hot, the Princess used to go into the forest and sit upon the edge of this cool well; and when she was tired of doing nothing she would play with a golden ball, throwing it up in the air and catching it again, and again. This was her very favourite game. Now on one occasion it so happened that the ball did not fall back into her hand that was stretched up to catch it, but instead, dropped to the ground and rolled straight into the well.

The Princess followed it with her eyes, but it simply disappeared from her view, for the well was so very deep that it was quite impossible to see the bottom of it. The golden ball was gone. Then she began to cry bitterly, and nothing would comfort her at all. As she was lamenting in this manner, someone called out to her and said, 'What is the matter, sweet Princess? Your lamentations would move the heart of a stone.'

She looked round towards the spot whence the voice came, and saw a Frog stretching its broad, ugly face out of the water, nearby. 'Oh, it's only you, is it, old splasher? I am crying for my golden ball which has fallen into the water.' 'Be quiet then, and stop crying,' answered the Frog. 'I know what to do; but what will you give me if I get you back your golden plaything?' 'Whatever you like, you dear old Frog,' she said. 'My clothes, my pearls and diamonds, or even the golden crown that sits upon my head.'

The Frog answered, 'I care neither for your clothes, your pearls and diamonds, nor even your golden crown; but if you will be fond of me, and let me be your playmate, sit by you at the table, eat out of your plate, drink out of your cup, and sleep in your little bed, - if you will promise to do all this, then I will go down and fetch your ball.'

'I will promise anything you like to ask, if only you will get me back my golden ball.'

She thought to herself, 'What is the silly old Frog chattering about? He lives in the well, croaking with his mates, and he can't be the companion of a real human being.' Such a silly beast.

As soon as the Frog received her promise, he ducked his head under the water and disappeared, but after a little while, back he came with the ball in his mouth, and threw it on to the grass beside her. The Princess was full of joy when she saw her pretty toy once again, picked it up, and ran off with it. 'Wait, wait,' cried the Frog. 'Take me with you; I can't run as fast as you can. Wait for me' But what was the good of his crying and croaking, as loud as he could? She did not listen to him at all, but hurried on home, and forgot all about the poor Frog; He had to go back to his well.

The next day, as she was sitting at dinner with the King and all the courtiers, eating out of a golden plate, when something came flopping up the stairs, . . . flip, flap, flip, flap, flip, flap. Reaching the top it knocked at the door, and cried: 'Youngest daughter of the King, you must let me in.' She ran to see who it was, but when she opened the door and saw the Frog she shut it again very quickly, and went back to the table, for she was very much frightened, indeed. The King saw that her heart was beating very fast, and he said: 'My child, what is the matter? Is there a giant at the door wanting to take you away?' 'Oh no! she said: 'it's not a giant, but a hideous Frog.' 'What does the Frog want with you, my Child?' 'Oh, father dear, last night, when I was playing by the well in the forest, my golden ball fell into the water, and I cried, and then the Frog got it out for me; but then, because he insisted

on it, I promised that he should be my playmate. I never thought that he would come out of the water, but there he is, and he wants to come in to see me and to play with me.' The Frog knocked at the door for the second time, and sang out loudly, . . .

'Youngest daughter of the King, Take me up, so I sing; Know'st thou not what yesterday Thou to me didst hereto say by the well in forest dell. Youngest daughter of the King, Take me up now, so I sing.' Then said the King, 'What you have promised you must also heed. Go and open the door for him.' The princess opened the door, and the Frog shuffled inside, keeping close to her feet, till he reached her chair, whereupon he cried, 'Lift me up beside you.' She hesitated, till the King finally ordered her to do it. When the Frog was put on the chair, he demanded to be placed upon the table, and then he said, 'Push your golden plate nearer that we may eat together.' She did as he asked her, but very unwillingly, as could easily be seen by all. The Frog made a good dinner, but the Princess could not swallow a morsel. At last he said, 'I have eaten enough, and I am tired, carry me into your bedroom and arrange your silken bed, that we may go to sleep for the night. The Princess began to cry, for she was afraid of the clammy, cold Frog, which she did not dare to touch, and which was not to sleep in her pretty little silken bed if she could help it. Then the King grew very angry, and said quietly; 'You must never despise any one who has helped you out in your time of need.' So she seized the frog with two fingers and carried him upstairs, where she put him in a corner of her room. When she got into bed, he crept up to her, and said; 'I am tired, and I want to go to sleep as well as you. Lift me up, or I will tell your father on you.' By then, she was very angry, picked him up, and threw him with all her might against the wall, saying; 'You may rest there as well as you can, you hideous and most disgusting Frog.' But when he fell to the ground, he was no longer the hideous Frog, but rather a handsome Prince with beautiful, friendly and warm eyes. He told her that a wicked fairy had bewitched him, and nobody could have released him from the spells but she herself. And at her father's wish he became her most beloved companion and her husband.

The next morning, when the sun rose, a coach drove up, drawn by eight milk-white horses, with white ostrich plumes on their heads, and golden harnesses. Behind them stood faithful Henry, the Prince's own body-servant. The old and faithful fellow had been so distressed when his master was changed to a Frog, that he had caused three iron bands to be placed all around his heart, lest it should break from grief and the intolerable pain. The coach had come to carry the young pair back into the Prince's own kingdom and the faithful Henry helped both of them into the coach and mounted again behind, delighted at his master's deliverance. They had only gone a little way when the Prince heard a cracking behind him, as if something were breaking. He turned round, and cried in alarm . . .

"Henry, the coach is giving way!" "Oh no, Sir, the coach is safe, I say, A band from my heart has fall'n in twain, For long I suffered woe and pain, While you were a frog within a well Enchanted, by the old witch's spell!" Once more the Prince heard the same snapping and cracking, and then again, and again. The Prince thought it must be some part of the carriage giving way, but of course it was only the bands round faithful Henry's heart which were snapping, because of his great joy at his master's deliverance and final happiness that he was a frog, no longer.