



The enchanted whistle

Description

There was once a rich and powerful king who had a daughter of remarkable beauty. When she came of age to marry, he was enjoined, by an ordinance shouted with the sound of a trumpet and posted on every wall, upon those who had any pretensions to marry her, to assemble in a vast meadow. There, the princess would throw a golden apple into the air, and whoever succeeded in seizing it would only have to solve three problems; after which, he would become the husband of the princess and, therefore, the king having no son, the heir to the kingdom.

On the appointed day, the meeting took place: the princess threw the apple into the air; but the first three who seized it had accomplished only the easiest task, and none of the three even attempted to undertake what remained to be done.

Finally, the apple, thrown a fourth time by the princess, fell into the hands of a young shepherd boy, who was the most beautiful but also the poorest of all the suitors. The first problem, far more difficult to solve than a mathematical problem, was this: The king had locked up a hundred hares in a stable; whoever managed to lead them to graze in the meadow where the assembly was held, and, having led them there in the morning, brought them all back in the evening, would have solved the first problem. When this proposal had been made to the young shepherd, he asked for a day to think it over; the next day he would answer affirmatively or negatively.

The request seemed so just to the king, that it was granted. He at once took the road to the forest, in order to meditate there at his ease on the means to be employed for success. He was following slowly and with his head bowed a narrow path, skirting a stream, when, on this very path, he met a little old woman with white hair, but with a still lively eye, who asked him the cause of her sadness. The young shepherd replied, shaking his head: « Alas, no one can help me, and yet I want to marry the king's daughter. – Don't despair so quickly, » replied the little old woman; « tell me what is bothering you, and perhaps I can help you out. Our young shepherd had such a heavy heart that he did not hesitate to tell her everything. – Is that all? » asked the little old lady. In that case, you are very good to be sorry.

She took an ivory whistle from her pocket and gave it to him. This whistle looked like all whistles; so the shepherd, thinking that there must be a special way of using it, turned to the little old woman's side

to ask her some questions; but she had already disappeared.



Ludwig Richter

However, full of confidence in her whom he regarded as a good genius, he went the next day to the palace, and said to the king: – I accept, sire, and come and fetch the hares to lead them to graze in the meadow. Then the king got up and said to his minister of the interior: – Bring out all the hares from the stable. The young shepherd stood in the doorway to count them, but the first one was already far away when the last one was set free, so that when the shepherd arrived in the meadow, he did not have a single hare with him. He sat down pensively, not daring to believe in the virtue of his whistle. However it was necessary for him to have recourse to this last resource; he thus pressed it to his lips and blew in it with all his forces. The whistle made a sharp and prolonged sound.

At once, to his great astonishment, from the right, from the left, in front, behind, on all sides at last, came running the hundred hares, which quietly began to graze around him.



The king was told what was going on, and how the young shepherd would probably solve the problem of the hundred hares. The king referred the matter to his daughter. Both were greatly upset; for, if the young shepherd succeeded in the other two problems as he was likely to succeed in the first, the princess would become the wife of a simple peasant, which could not have been more humiliating to the royal pride.

– That's fine, said the princess to her father, advise on your side, I will advise on mine. The princess went home, disguised herself in such a way as to make herself unrecognizable; after which she had a horse brought to her, mounted it, and went to the young shepherd.

The hundred hares pranced happily around him.

– Would you sell me one of your hares? » asked the young princess. – 'I wouldn't sell you one of my hares for all the gold in the world,' replied the shepherd; 'but you can earn one. – At what price? » asked the princess. – By getting off your horse, sitting on the grass and spending a quarter of an hour with me. The princess made some difficulties; but, as there was only this way to obtain the hare, she put her foot down and sat down near the young shepherd. After a quarter of an hour, during which the young shepherd told her a thousand tender things, she got up claiming her hare, and, faithful to his promise, the young shepherd gave it to her. The princess happily enclosed it in a basket tied to the saddle tree and rode back to the palace.

But scarcely had she gone a quarter of a league, when the shepherd brought the whistle to his lips and whistled, and at this sound, which called him back imperiously, the hare lifted the lid of the basket, jumped to the ground, and fled with all his legs.

A moment later, the shepherd saw coming to him a peasant mounted on a donkey; it was the old king, who had also disguised himself, and who had gone out of his palace with the same purpose as his daughter. A large bag was hanging from his donkey's pack-saddle. – Will you sell me one of your hares? » he asked the shepherd. – My hares are not for sale, said the shepherd; they are to be won. –

And what must be done to win one? The shepherd searched for a moment. – You must kiss your donkey's behind three times, » he said. This strange condition was very repugnant to the old king, who did not want, by all means, to submit to it. He offered up to fifty thousand francs of one of the hares, but the shepherd held out. Finally the king, who absolutely wanted his hare, went through the imposed condition, so humiliating it was for a king. He kissed his donkey's behind three times, very surprised that a king would do him such an honor, and the shepherd, faithful to his promise, gave him the hare he had asked for so insistently. The king stuffed the hare into his sack and set off at full trot on his donkey. But no sooner had he gone a quarter of a league, than a whistle sounded, and when the whistle blew, the hare scratched so hard that he tore a hole in his sack and ran away.

– Well? asked the princess to the king when she saw him return to the palace.

– What can I tell you, my daughter? » replied the king. He is a very stubborn boy, who, at no price, wanted to sell me a hare. But, rest assured, he will not get out of the other two trials as easily as he did this one. Needless to say, the king did not speak any more about the condition with which he had for a moment held his hare than the princess herself had spoken about it. – It is absolutely like me, said the princess, I could not get one of his hares either for gold or for money.

In the evening, the shepherd returned with his hares; he counted them before the king: there was neither one more nor one less; they were handed over to the minister of the interior, who sent them back to their stables.

The king then said:

-The first trial is resolved. It is now a question of triumphing over the second. Pay close attention, young man. The shepherd listened.

– 'I have upstairs in my granary,' continued the king, 'a hundred measures of peas and a hundred measures of lentils; lentils and peas are mixed together; if you manage, tonight, to separate them without light, you will have solved the second problem.'

– I will make it my business, replied the shepherd. And the king called his minister of the interior, who led the boy to the attic, locked him in and handed the key to the king. As it was already dark and that, for such a task, there was no time to lose, the shepherd took his whistle and whistled. Immediately five thousand ants came and began to move the lentils and peas until they were separated into two piles. The next day, the king, to his great astonishment, saw that the work was done; he would have liked to make difficulties, but there was not the slightest objection to raise. It was thus necessary for him to count on this rather doubtful chance, after the first two victories, that the shepherd would succumb in the third test. However, as it was the hardest of all, the king did not despair.

– It is now a matter, he said to her, of going, at nightfall, to the panneterie of the palace, and eating in one night the bread baked for the whole week; if tomorrow morning there is not a crumb of it left, I shall be pleased with you and you shall marry my daughter.

That same evening the young shepherd was led to the breadstack, which was so full, that only a tiny empty space near the door remained.

But at midnight, when all was quiet in the palace, the shepherd took his whistle and whistled.

At once came thousands of mice, which began to gnaw the bread in such a way, that the next day there was not a crumb left. Then the young man knocked with all his strength at the door and shouted:

– Hurry and open, please, I am hungry.

So the third trial was as victoriously accomplished as the other two. However, the king tried to seek a quarrel with the winner. He had a sack brought to him containing six measures of wheat, and, having assembled a good many of his courtiers: - Tell us, he said to him, as many lies as can fit into this sack, and when the sack is full, you shall have my daughter. Then the shepherd told all the lies he could find; but he was halfway through the day and at the end of his lies that the bag was far from being full. – Well, » he continued, « while I was guarding my hares, the princess came to me disguised as a peasant girl, and to get one of my hares, she allowed me to take a kiss from her. The princess, who, not suspecting what he was about to say, had been unable to shut his mouth, became as red as a cherry, so that the king began to believe that the young shepherd's lie might well be a truth.



A hare for a kiss

– The bag is not yet full, cried the king, though you have just dropped a very big lie into it; go on. The shepherd saluted and continued: – A moment after the princess left, I saw Her Majesty, disguised as a peasant and mounted on a donkey. She also came to buy me a hare; but when I saw that he wanted it so badly, you can imagine that I forced the king to... – Enough! enough! » cried the king, « the bag is full. »

Eight days later, the young shepherd married the princess.

date créée

02/02/2023

Auteur

cdf

contesdefees.com