

THE FISHERMAN'S SON

There was once a fisherman's son who caught a large fish, which his father proposed to present to the Sultan, in hopes of receiving a great reward. While the father went to fetch a basket, the son, in compassion, threw the fish back into the water; but fearful of his father's anger, fled from the country to a distant city, where he obtained employment as a servant. Strolling through the market one day he saw a Jew purchase a cock at a very high price, which he sent to his wife by a slave, with orders to keep it safely till his return home. The fisherman's son suspected that the Jew would not have given so high a price for the cock unless it possessed some extraordinary property; and resolved to obtain possession of it. He therefore bought two large fowls and carried them to the Jew's wife, whom he informed that her husband had sent him for the cock, which he had exchanged for the fowls. She gave him the which he took home and killed, when he found a magic ring in its entrails. He rubbed it, when a voice proceeded from it, inquiring the commands of its possessor, which should be immediately executed by the genii who were the servants of the ring.

The fisherman's son was rejoiced at his good fortune, and while meditating what use he should make of his ring, passed by the Sultan's palace, at the gate of which were suspended many human heads. On inquiring the reason, he was informed that they were those of unfortunate princes who had been put to death for failing to perform the conditions on which the Sultan's daughter had been offered them in marriage. He resolved to demand the princess's hand himself, hoping for better fortune with the aid of the ring. He rubbed it, and asked for a magnificent dress, which was instantly laid before him. He put it on and repaired to the palace, and being introduced to the Sultan, demanded the hand of his daughter. The Sultan consented on condition that his life should be forfeited unless he could remove a lofty and extensive mound of sand which lay on one side of the palace, which must be done before he could wed the princess. He accepted the condition, demanding an interval of forty days to perform his task, which was granted him.

He then took leave and repaired to his lodging, when he rubbed his ring and commanded the genii to remove the mound and to erect on the space it covered a magnificent palace, suitably furnished for a royal residence. In fifteen days the task was completed, when he was wedded to the princess and declared heir to the Sultan.

In the meanwhile the Jew whom he had tricked out of the cock and the magic ring, was making preparations to travel in search of his lost prize, when he was informed of the wonderful removal of the mound, and of the erection of the

palace. He concluded that this must have been done by means of his ring, and he devised the following stratagem to recover it. He disguised himself as a merchant, repaired to the palace and cried some valuable jewels for sale. The princess, hearing this, sent an attendant to examine them and inquire their price, when the Jew asked in exchange only old rings. When this was reported to the princess she remembered that her husband kept an old shabby looking ring in his writing stand, and as he was asleep, and she did not wish to disturb him, she took it out and sent it to the Jew, who knew it to be the ring which he had so long sought for, and eagerly gave for it all the jewels in his basket. He carried off his prize, and having rubbed the ring, commanded the genii to carry the palace and all its inhabitants, except the fisherman's son, to a distant desert island, which was done instantly.

When the fisherman's son awoke in the morning, he found himself lying on the mound of sand which had again covered the spot. He arose in terror, fearing that the Sultan would put him to death in revenge for the loss of his daughter, and fled to another kingdom as quickly as possible. Here he lived a miserable life, subsisting on the sale of some jewels which he happened to have about him at the time of his flight. As he was strolling through a town one day, a man offered him a dog, a cat, and a rat for sale. He purchased and kept them, diverting his melancholy with their tricks and uncommon playfulness. These supposed animals proved to be magicians, and in return for his kindness to them they promised their master aid in the recovery of his lost prize. He eagerly thanked them, and they all set out in search of the palace, the ring, and the princess. At length, after a long journey, they reached the ocean and perceived the island where the palace stood, when the dog swam over, carrying the cat and the rat on his back. When they reached the palace the rat entered and found the Jew asleep upon a sofa, with the ring laid before him. He took it in his mouth and returned to his companions, upon which they began to cross the sea as before; but when they were half way over, the dog expressed a wish to carry the ring in his mouth. The rat refused, lest he should drop it; but the dog threatened to dive and drown them all in the sea if he would not give it him. The rat, fearing for his life, complied with the demand, but the dog missed his aim in catching at the ring, which fell into the sea. When they landed and informed the fisherman's son of the loss, he resolved to drown himself, when just as he was about to execute his purpose a great fish appeared with the ring in his mouth, and swimming close to shore, dropped it within reach of the despairing youth, exclaiming:-

“I am the fish whom you released from captivity, and thus reward you for your generosity.”

The fisherman's son returned overjoyed to his father-in-law's capital, and when night fell he rubbed the ring and commanded the genii to convey the palace back to its old site. This being done in an instant, he entered the palace and

seized the Jew, whom he commanded to be cast alive into a burning pit, in which he was consumed. From this period he lived happily with the princess, and on the death of the Sultan he succeeded to his dominions.

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