**THE SLEEPING BEAUTY**

IN TIMES PAST there lived a King and Queen, who said to each

other every day of their lives, “Would that we had a child!” and

yet they had none. But it happened once that when the Queen was

bathing, there came a frog out of the water, and he squatted on the

ground, and said to her, “Thy wish shall be fulfilled; before a year

has gone by, thou shalt bring a daughter into the world.” And as

the frog foretold, so it happened; and the Queen bore a daughter so

beautiful that the King could not contain himself for joy, and he

ordained a great feast. Not only did he bid to it his relations,

friends, and acquaintances, but also the wise women, that they

might be kind and favorable to the child. There were thirteen of

them in his kingdom, but as he had only provided twelve golden

plates for them to eat from, one of them had to be left out.

However, the feast was celebrated with all splendor; and as it drew

to an end, the wise women stood forward to present to the child

their wonderful gifts: one bestowed virtue, one beauty, a third

riches, and so on, whatever there is in the world to wish for. And

when eleven of them had said their say, in came the uninvited

thirteenth, burning to revenge herself, and without greeting or

respect, she cried with a loud voice, “In the fifteenth year of her

age the Princess shall prick herself with a spindle and shall fall

down dead.” And without speaking one more word she turned

away and left the hall.

Every one was terrified at her saying, when the twelfth came

forward, for she had not yet bestowed her gift, and though she

could not do away with the evil prophecy, yet she could soften it,

so she said, “The Princess shall not die, but fall into a deep sleep

for a hundred years.” Now the King, being desirous of saving his

child even from this misfortune, gave commandment that all the

spindles in his kingdom should be burnt up.

The maiden grew up, adorned with all the gifts of the wise women;

and she was so lovely, modest, sweet, and kind and clever, that no

one who saw her could help loving her.

It happened one day, she being already fifteen years old, that the

King and Queen rode abroad; and the maiden was left behind

alone in the castle. She wandered about into all the nooks and

corners, and into all the chambers and parlors, as the fancy took

her, till at last she came to an old tower. She climbed the narrow

winding stair which led to a little door, with a rusty key sticking

out of the lock; she turned the key, and the door opened, and there

in the little room sat an old woman with a spindle, diligently

spinning her flax.

“Good day, mother,” said the Princess, “what are you doing?” “I

am spinning,” answered the old woman, nodding her head. “What

thing is that that twists round so briskly?” asked the maiden, and

taking the spindle into her hand she began to spin; but no sooner

had she touched it than the evil prophecy was fulfilled, and she

pricked her finger with it. In that very moment she fell back upon

the bed that stood there, and lay in a deep sleep, and this sleep fell

upon the whole castle.

The King and Queen, who had returned and were in the great hall

fell fast asleep, and with them the whole court. The horses in their

stalls, the dogs in the yard, the pigeons on the roof, the flies on the

wall, the very fire that flickered on the hearth, became still, and

slept like the rest; and the meat on the spit ceased roasting, and the

cook, who was going to pull the scullion’s hair for some mistake he

had made, let him go, and went to sleep. And the wind ceased, and

not a leaf fell from the trees about the castle.

Then round about that place there grew a hedge of thorns thicker

every year, until at last the whole castle was hidden from view,

and nothing of it could be seen but the vane on the roof. And a

rumor went abroad in all that country of the beautiful sleeping

Rosamond, for so was the Princess called; and from time to time

many Kings’ sons came and tried to force their way through the

hedge; but it was impossible for them to do so, for the thorns held

fast together like strong hands, and the young men were caught by

them, and not being able to get free, there died a lamentable death.

Many a long year afterwards there came a King’s son into that

country, and heard an old man tell how there should be a castle

standing behind the hedge of thorns, and that there a beautiful

enchanted Princess named Rosamond had slept for a hundred

years, and with her the King and Queen, and the whole court. The

old man had been told by his grandfather that many Kings’ sons

had sought to pass the thorn-hedge, but had been caught and

pierced by the thorns, and had died a miserable death. Then said

the young man, “Nevertheless, I do not fear to try; I shall win

through and see the lovely Rosamond.” The good old man tried to

dissuade him, but he would not listen to his words.

For now the hundred years were at an end, and the day had come

when Rosamond should be awakened. When the Prince drew near

the hedge of thorns, it was changed into a hedge of beautiful large

flowers, which parted and bent aside to let him pass, and then

closed behind him in a thick hedge. When he reached the castleyard,

he saw the horses and brindled hunting-dogs lying asleep,

and on the roof the pigeons were sitting with their heads under

their wings. And when he came indoors, the flies on the wall were

asleep, the cook in the kitchen had his hand uplifted to strike the

scullion, and the kitchenmaid had the black fowl on her lap ready

to pluck. Then he mounted higher, and saw in the hall the whole

court lying asleep, and above them, on their thrones, slept the King

and the Queen. And still he went farther, and all was so quiet that

he could hear his own breathing, and at last he came to the tower,

and went up the winding stair, and opened the door of the little

room where Rosamond lay.

And when he saw her looking so lovely in her sleep, he could not

turn away his eyes; and presently he stooped and kissed her, and

she awaked, and opened her eyes, and looked very kindly on him.

And she rose, and they went forth together, the King and the

Queen and whole court waked up, and gazed on each other with

great eyes of wonderment. And the horses in the yard got up and

shook themselves, the hounds sprang up and wagged their tails,

the pigeons on the roof drew their heads from under their wings,

looked round, and flew into the field, the flies on the wall crept on

a little farther, the kitchen fire leapt up and blazed, and cooked the

meat, the joint on the spit began to roast, the cook gave the scullion

such a box on the ear that he roared out, and the maid went on

plucking the fowl.

Then the wedding of the Prince and Rosamond was held with all

splendor, and they lived very happily together until their lives’

end.

**THE END**