

FOR EVERY BOY AND GIRL



By Marian Burton.

ONCE upon a time, in a dainty little kingdom all parks and rivers and cottages and flowers, there lived a jolly, red-faced king named Rudolpho. Every one of his subjects loved him, the surrounding kings were his loyal friends, and the neighboring kingdoms were on the best of terms with him.

Yet, strange as it may seem, with all these blessings—a rich kingdom, faithful subjects, and a loving wife—this good king was not happy. There was one cloud, a very pretty silver-edged cloud, but yet a cloud, which hung just in front of the sun of his happiness and cast a great big shadow.

The king had a daughter, the Princess Madge, his only child; and though she was obedient in everything else, she just wouldn't, wouldn't, marry.

Of course there were plenty of princes and dukes

sitting-room. He held a tangle of golden hair in one hand and a sheet of blue note-paper in the other.

"My dear, my dear, what do you think has happened? Here, written by her own hand, the hand of the Princess Madge, are the happy words which drive away all our fears. She will marry, my dear, she will marry; and listen: she cares not what may be his rank or age or condition—he must be a contented man, that is all. Oh, what a child, what a child!"

"Oh, Rudolpho, my love, is it true? Why, why, I am so happy! Is it really true? Do give me my fan. Yes, thank you. Fan me, dear; a little faster. It quite took my breath away. Just to think of that! Now go at once and issue a royal edict summoning every contented man in this kingdom and in all the surrounding kingdoms to a grand feast here in the palace. After the feast we will hold a trial, and the Princess Madge shall be the judge."

The day dawned brilliant and glorious. How the contented men jostled each other, and frowned at each other, and scolded each other as they thronged

in this court. You say you are contented—happy, unselfish, and satisfied with what the gods have given you. Answer me this! Why, then, do you scowl and jostle one another? Why do you want to marry any one—least of all, a princess with half the riches of a great kingdom as a dowry, to spoil your happiness? Greedy fortune-hunters! Do you call that contentment?"

The contented men stood a moment in baffled silence, then turned, one and all, and slowly marched out of the room. As the door closed upon the last one of the disappointed suitors, the princess picked up her pretty kitten and, turning to her father and mother said:

"Would you have me marry one of those? Why, they aren't half so contented as a common, everyday pussy-cat. Good-by!" And she laughed a merry

he motioned to the turnkey to throw back the bolts, and he entered the dungeon alone.

"Why are you talking to yourself, man?" he asked.

The man answered:

"Because, soldier, I like to talk to a sensible man, and I like to hear a sensible man talk."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the king. "Pretty good, pretty good! They tell me that all things please you. Is it true?"

"I think I can safely say yes, soldier."

"And is there nothing that you want?" As the king asked this question he looked at the man in a peculiarly eager way, nor did the answer disappoint him.

"I have all of the necessaries of life and many of the luxuries. I am perfectly content. I know I have neither land nor money, but is not the whole world

Young Masqueraders



DANCING THE MINUET.



A BEAU OF THE OLD REGIME.



A COLONIAL DAME.



UNCLE RASTUS (FORGETTING HOW LONG HIS COAT IS): 'I DECLARE THE GETTIN' GO STIFF WITH RHEUMATIZ DAT I CAN'T STAN' UP STRAIGHT!'



The Princess Madge Enters

and barons and lords who would gladly have wedded the pretty princess for her own sweet sake alone, to say nothing of the prospect of being king some day, but she wouldn't have one of them.

A princess is a lonely little body, you know, and custom was so rigid in the time of the Princess Madge that she had no one to talk to excepting Pussy Willow, the royal kitten. She had no brother, no sister, no cousin, and no dearest friend. She didn't even have a chance to speak freely to her own father and mother. It is true, she took breakfast with them every morning at eleven in the great breakfast-room, but the butlers and waiters and pages and flunkies were always standing about, with their ears pricked up and their eyes bulging out, so that no one dared whisper a secret or have even the jolliest little family quarrel. It is true her royal mamma came at precisely ten o'clock to kiss her good night every evening, but there were always a dozen maids and ladies-in-waiting, and it was impossible to have a real good talk. But Pussy Willow was her constant companion, and to Pussy she told everything. That friendly cat was the only living thing in the whole kingdom that really knew that the princess intended to marry some-

"I don't care whether he is prince or pauper, high or low, handsome or plain; but he must in any case be contented. You know what contented means, Pussy—satisfied with what he has until he deserves and can get something better. If he is like that he will always be unselfish and happy. Oh, yes, and I shall be happy, too. Now I am going to write a letter to papa and tell him that I will marry if he will find me a contented man."

Half an hour later the king, with his crown comfortably pushed back on his head, and a smile very much all over his ruddy face, burst into the queen's

through the palace gates! They all gathered in the banquet-hall, where a wonderful feast was spread—

Finally it was over, and five hundred and fifty contented men assembled in the royal court-room. The king and queen were seated on their thrones, but the princess was nowhere to be seen. There was a moment of breathless waiting—then suddenly a door at the side of the court-room opened and the Princess Madge, carrying Pussy Willow, entered and was followed by her train-bearers and maids of honor. She wore a wonderful gown all white and gold down the front, with the foamiest of sea-foam green trains hanging from her shoulders away out behind her. Slowly, majestically, she walked across the room, and stopped before a table on which lay a golden gavel. A quick tap of the gavel silenced the little murmur that had arisen at her entrance. The king glanced at the queen, and they both smiled with pride in their stately daughter. The princess tapped again and began:

"Princes, baronets, honorables, commons of this kingdom and our neighboring kingdoms, I bid you welcome. You have come to sue for my hand and my fortune. I know full well, my noble men, that if I asked if you would gladly give me some great proof of your bravery and goodness—but I ask you to take no risk and make no sacrifice. I merely wish to know whether I can find in any of you that secret of all true courage and happiness—contentment. Now let every man of you who is contented, thoroughly contented, rise. Remember, there are no degrees in contentment; it is absolute."

The black-robed throng arose—some eagerly, some impatiently, some disdainfully, some few slowly and thoughtfully, but they all stood and waited in utter silence.

"As I put the test question, if there is any one who cannot answer it, let him go quietly out through yonder door and never again show his discontented face

laugh, threw a kiss at the astonished king and queen, and ran from the room.

III.

At luncheon one day many months after the dismissal of the discontented suitors, the prime minister entered the dining-room and announced to the king that a man had been found within the palace gates without a royal permit, and had been immediately put in the dungeon. He was a handsome fellow, the prime minister said, but very poorly clad. He made no resistance when he was taken prisoner, but earnestly requested that his trial might come off as soon as possible, as he rather wanted to make a sketch of the palace and gardens, and he couldn't see very well from the slit in the top of the dungeon; but he begged them not to put themselves nor the king to any inconvenience, as he could just as well remain where he was and write poems.

"In sooth, your Majesty," said the prime minister, in conclusion, "from all we have heard and seen, it seemeth that at last we have found a contented man." As soon as the king finished his royal repast he disguised himself in the long cloak and hat of a sol-

mine? Can even the king himself take from me my delight in the green trees and the greener fields, in that dainty little cloud flecking heaven's blue up yonder like a bit of foam on a sunlit sea? Oh, no! I am rich enough, for all nature is mine—"

"And I am yours," said a sweet young voice. The man looked up in surprise, and there before him, holding out her pretty hands toward him, stood the Princess Madge, who had slipped into the cell unnoticed by either the prisoner or her father.

The man sprang to his feet, clasped the little hands in his, and said:

"I know not what you mean, sweet lady, when you say that you are mine; but oh, you are passing beautiful!"

"Papa," called the princess, "this is quite dreadful. Quick, take off that ugly soldier's coat and tell him who we are and all about it!"

The king, starting as if from a dream, threw off the rough coat and hat and stepped forth into the beam of sunlight, resplendent in gold and ermine.

"Thou dost not know me, my man? I am the king. Hast thou not read our last proclamation?"



Came at precisely ten o'clock to kiss her goodnight

dier and went with the prime minister and the turnkey to catch a glimpse of the prisoner. As they approached the dungeon they heard a rich bass voice singing:

"Let the world slide, let the world go!
A fig for care, and a fig for woe!
If I must stay, why, I can't go,
And love makes equal the high and low."

The king drew nearer, stooped, and peeped through the keyhole. Just opposite the door, on a three-legged stool, sat the prisoner. His head was thrown back and he was looking at the sky through the bars in the top of his cell. The song had ceased and he was talking softly to himself. The king, in a whisper, told the prime minister to bring the princess and have her remain hidden just outside the door. Then

"No, your Majesty; I never do read proclamations." "Then thou didst not know that the hand of the princess is offered to the first contented man who enters the palace?"

"No, your Majesty; I knew it not."

"Then know it now, and know, too, that thou art the man. To thee, my son, I give my daughter in marriage, together with one-half my kingdom. No, no—not a word. She is thine. Thou deservest her. May you be happy!"

The prisoner, almost dumb with astonishment, almost dazed with joy, knelt and kissed the princess' white hands, then looked into her eyes and said:

"Ah, well it is for me that I saw you not until now, for I should have been miserably discontented until you were mine!"