



The Wicked Fairies

France

Once upon a time, there were two young Fairies named Carabosse and Follette. They were both so malicious and wicked that the Fairy Queen banished them from her Court. So they fell to earth and wandered around, seeing how much mischief they could do to mortals.

Now it happened that they arrived at a country where there were many rich farms, on which were splendid crops of grain, and large fields of vegetables, and acres of fruit trees heavily laden. When Carabosse and Follette saw these they were filled with spite. They listened to what the farmers were saying to one another, and soon learned that the unhappy people were dissatisfied with the abundance growing on their land, and that they wished for all the wealth of the whole world.

Carabosse and Follette laughed mockingly; and when it was quite dark they touched with their wands everything that grew.

Instantly all was changed.

The ears of Corn, ripening so beautifully, no longer waved their yellow tassels, but were changed into ears studded with precious gems. Each stalk of grain was changed into a tube of gold or silver, surmounted by a cluster of Diamonds. The trees became columns of alabaster or crystal, with leaves of Emerald and fruits of Topaz, Rubies, Pearls, and Amethysts. The grapevines were hung with bunches of Garnets and Rubies. In fact, every growing thing was changed into gold, silver, or precious stones.

When the people woke in the morning and saw their fields and orchards sparkling with a thousand coloured rays, they shouted with joy and ran about picking basketfuls of jewels, and breaking off branches of alabaster or crystal. They made themselves collars and girdles of Diamonds, Rubies, and Pearls; and they plaited gold crowns for their heads, and embroidered their garments with every kind of gem.

The Summer passed and Autumn came. There were no cool, spreading trees to sit under. There were no delicate blossoms breathing fragrance. There were only stiff emerald leaves and hard precious stones, whose brilliance burned the eyes.

The farmer's sickle was broken against tubes of gold and silver, and there was no grain for the mill to grind into flour. The vines and orchard trees, instead of being full of ripe Grapes, juicy Apples, and velvety Peaches, broke beneath tons of precious gems. No one could sell anything, for everybody had so much wealth that he needed no more.

Soon the food was all gone. The children cried for bread, and there was none.

The malicious Carabosse and Follette, not content with all this misery they had caused, flew from brook to brook and fountain to fountain, touching them with their wands. Instantly the brooks ran molten gold, and the fountains cast up silver spray.

There was no water. The children cried for some to drink, and there was none. Everybody was starving and dying of thirst.

The desperate people, in their agony, threw off their rich robes embroidered with gems, and cast away their golden crowns, and tore off their collars and girdles of Diamonds, Rubies, and Pearls.

'Oh, give us bread and water!' they cried. But there was none.

Now, there was just one poor man in all that country who was content with his lot. He lived in a little cottage surrounded by a small patch of ground. And because he was contented Carabosse and Follette had not been able to change anything that was his.

When he heard the children crying from hunger and thirst he ran into his garden and picked all his fresh fruit and vegetables. These he gave to the children, and left none for himself.

Immediately the Fairy Queen's voice was heard crying out:

'Take thy reward!'

A great crashing noise was heard. A rushing Wind blew away all the emerald leaves and jewel-fruits. Red and yellow flames played over the brooks and fountains. The fields of grain shook violently. And in the twinkling of an eye, green leaves rustled on the trees, while ripe fruit appeared on the branches. Delicious vegetables stood in rows in the garden. The fields were yellow with waving grain. The brooks ran pure water, and the fountains cast up cooling spray.

Then the Fairy Queen's voice was heard crying out:


'Die, Carabosse! Die, Follette!'

And with a terrible noise the two wicked young Fairies burst into a thousand bubbles.

The people went nearly mad with joy. The mill wheels began to turn, grinding flour for bread. The children, clapping their hands, ran into the gardens to pick fruit, while the maids brought home pitchers of cold, fresh water from the brooks. In fact, everybody had all that he wanted to eat and drink.

And, every year after that, the farmers had rich and abundant crops, and were never unhappy nor discontented again. □

Adapted by Francis Jenkins Olcott (1919).

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Comments

The only objection we could make to this story would be the grim fate that falls on Carabosse and Follette, a punishment that is always excessive, unedifying and not exemplifying. But we must keep in mind

that this story was adapted at the beginning of the 20th century by Frances Jenkins Olcott. She did a great job compiling stories related to nature for its educational use. But, understandably in her time, overlooked details that today, after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, we would not consider appropriate. In any case, it will be enough for the educator or the storyteller to change the final punishment of the wicked fairies, transforming it into a severe reprimand by the Fairy Queen, followed by a sincere repentance by Carabosse and Follette.

Sources

Olcott, F.J. (1919). The wicked fairies. In *The Wonder Garden: Nature Myths and Tales from all the World Over for Story-telling and Reading Aloud and for the Children's Own Reading* (pp. 283-286). Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Associated text of the Earth Charter

Preamble: The Challenges Ahead.- Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more.

Other passages that this story illustrates

Principle 7f: Adopt lifestyles that emphasize the quality of life and material sufficiency in a finite world.

