

A ROYAL BETROTHAL.

BY CLO. GRAVES.

Who does not know San Salino, that southern seaboard Elysium where health and pleasure seekers of all types, grades, degrees and nationalities do congregate, arrayed in bath towel, shod with rope sandals, and crowned with broad leaved palm leaf hats? Here the Bordeaux merchant lays down his cares, oblivious of the rise in glucose or the increased import tax on logwood. Here the American millionaire shifts for a while the burden of his millions, the English peer is said to occasionally forget that he is somebody, and here the crowned heads of Europe play at being nobodies with more or less success.

The high, yellow cliffs that guard the coast are honeycombed with caves and broken by sandy bays and little coves, rock girt Avalons of pine and sea scented healing and repose. Before you, the Atlantic thunders upon miles of jagged reefs, and, behind, the verdurous country undulates to the pine clad foothills of the Pyrenees. The harbor lies on the southern side of a grim promontory crowned by the ruins of a Saracenic castle and the Etablissement des Bains, and the Casino, the theatre, and the sandy golf links have in the season—a comprehensive one—their crowds of devotees. Beyond the town, with its huge hotels and cosmopolitan boarding houses, set in cactus starred, ilex shaded gardens, are the bungalows and villas of monarchs, crowned and uncrowned. There is a sheltered cove on the northern side of the castled promontory which is in especial favor with children, and here two little people, a grave, fair boy of eight and a black eyed girl of seven, found themselves alone one June day. On the bronze colored border of wet sand left by the retreating tide the girl was dancing, some shells of the razorfish serving her as castanets, clicking the accompaniment to her improvised cachucha.

"Snow, snow!" she sang; "fairy snow" as the breakers thundered on the honeycombed reef ridges and spent themselves in hissing sheets of dazzling whiteness.

The boy, who wore a bonnet of Basque tartan upon his fair curls, a crimson string sash about his coarse linen blouse, and peasant shoes of rope upon his slim, bare feet, stood looking doubtfully at the girl, who danced on to her shell music, and seemed to take no heed of him. She, too, wore a short, loose frock of unbleached linen, but it was curiously embroidered at the throat, hem and sleeves, with silk of bright, barbaric hues, and gaudy tassels adorned her hempen footgear. Her slim, brown arms and legs, like the fair limbs of the boy, were bare, and her rich chestnut brown locks danced as she did, without restraint, for her broad leaved palm hat had fallen off and lay upon the sands, where the little pink crabs were scuttling amid the ripple marks, and the air bubbles of hidden shellfish quivered and shone like bells of crystal in the hot, bright sunshine.

"Fairy snow!" she went on singing; "fairy fairy, fairy snow!"

The boy was not sure whether he liked her or not. Certainly she was pretty—but, then, to dance like one of the Basque peasant girls, out in the open air upon the sands, with the sky and the sea and the cliff martens looking on! It seemed "unbecoming." That was a word the boy was weary of. It was ever on the lips of his governors and tutors. Only that morning Professor X. had used it because the boy had made a little, little mistake in geography. "It is unbecoming your majesty." Ah! the boy could hear the pedagogue's grating voice and see his long, hooked nose as plainly as one does see and hear things one hates to remember! "Your majesty must be aware that it is unbecoming that a monarch should be inadequately informed as to the extent of the colonial possessions pertaining to his crown. Your majesty will condescend to write 'The Laffarin Islands' in your copybook fifty times over." For the fair, pale boy of eight was the King of Ibera, and the small hand that played with a Basque stick, oddly ornamented in the peasant fashion with rings of metal, would one day wield a sceptre. He was weary of lessons and lectures, and that day seemed very dim and far off; but the sun was shining, and there were lovely shells and weeds lying on the sands at his very feet, and one could forget the multitude of things that were unbecoming if one had some one to play with. At home, at the palace, there was Enrique, the head gardener's son, who sometimes was allowed to share the King's amusements. Enrique, too, talked of things that were "unbecoming," and was a dull, tame kind of boy; but, when one had no other boy to play with, even Enrique was better than nobody. He wondered what Enrique would have thought of this queer little dancing girl. Then, for courtesy was a branch of education in which the King had never needed instruction, he moved forward and picked up the hat that lay upon the sands, beside the print of a tiny foot half filled with sea water.

As the King did this, the girl-child stopped dancing, tossed back her curls and smiled. At least there was a gleam of small white teeth between the scarlet lips as the King took off his bonnet with a pretty grace and held the hat out to her, saying in French, "It was getting wet, mademoiselle, lying there; and that out beyond"—he pointed to the breakers—"I got snow, only foam. And—there are no such things as fairies. They do not exist!"

"Ah, bah! As if I did not know that!" said the girl, still panting from the dance. Her eyes were of an odd agate color, and fringed with wonderfully thick, black lashes, and her chestnut colored eyebrows were traced on her delicate temples as though a fine pencil had drawn them. And her flushed face was like a ripe nectarine. "One pretends—when one wishes to amuse one's self. And here it is so triste and dull!"

The King opened his blue eyes at this. She had seemed so happy, and all the while she had been pretending! Now she cried out with admiration that seemed quite unfeigned, "Oh, la, la! The stick—the lovely stick! Who gave you that?"

"It is a Basque stick, mademoiselle," the King explained. "The peasants make them, and I bought this—it was not given to me." He stopped, for the girl's eyes asked for it, begged for it, entreated for it, coaxed for it.

"Monsieur, I beg of you, let me have it in my hands! How pretty it is! How happy you must be to possess such a stick!" She hugged it to her breast, as though she could not part with it, and, though the gaudy, new possessor was dear to the boy, he yielded it.

"Keep it, mademoiselle." He did not say, "I will buy another," for they kept him very short of pocket money, and permission to spend what he received was a concession gained with trouble. "To fritter away money upon trifles is unbecoming a King." To break or spoil or give those trifles away was unbecoming also. But to refuse a lady's request, that would be impossible, the King felt. And the agate eyes asked, if the red lips did not.

"You may keep the stick, mademoiselle," he said gently.

The agate eyes sparkled with delight. "How good of you! But why call me mademoiselle? I am Marie. Oh, look at the beautiful red flowers!"

The glowing trail of weed she pointed to lay stranded at the seabrink one moment. The next wave might snatch it back into the treasury of ocean. The King sprang toward the prize and snatched it up as the wave broke and hissed about his little white ankles. Then he brought the long scarlet trail in triumph back to Marie.

"Hold my hat and stick!" she said imperiously. Then, with a few deft thrusts and turns, she made a wreath of the seaweed and set it on her rebellious curls, and looked at him, smiling, crowned with the fantastic splendor. He knew there are no such things as fairies out of childish books, but if Marie had spread gossamer wings and taken flight he would hardly have been surprised. "I will make you a crown, too," she said, with a little, gurgling laugh, "and then we can play at being a king and queen. Come, let us look for more of the red flowers!"

But the King held back. "Crowns are not made of seaweed or of flowers—at least, those that are worn by kings," he said. "They are of heavy metal, and hurt the head."

"They are of gold and jewels," cried Marie, tossing her lovely head. "As though I did not know that! I wanted to make believe, and you will not help me. We could have built a palace out of sand, and played at reigning over a kingdom together."

The King's face grew grave and earnest. "Mademoiselle, we are too young to reign. There is the minority, during which a regent occupies the throne. If you were a queen, you would not be allowed to play at reigning. You would study under your governors and tutors almost all the time, so that you should know how to reign in earnest when the time came. You would!"

But Marie, looking into the anxious face, burst into a delighted giggle.

"You are such a solemn little boy!" she cried, when she could speak. "Of course, it must be very stupid, all that; but I am not a queen, nor are you a king, so it does not matter!" She shrugged her pretty shoulders.

The King realized that, to this dazzling little creature—a commoner herself—he, too, was a commoner. The ignominy he relished; it was intolerable to be called a solemn little boy. He caught his breath, and began eagerly:

"Mademoiselle!"

"Call me Marie."

"Marie, I do amuse myself. There are many things . . . military manoeuvres, evolutions, ceremonies, and so on, that interest me." His dreamy eyes brightened. "Sometimes early in the morning—before lessons begin—I stand at the open window when they are changing the guard in the Pal—in the courtyard. And I listen to the music and watch the movements of the soldiers, and if one has burnished his breastplate badly or buckled his belt awry I send for the officer, and the man is punished, for soldiers should obey the Regulations."

Marie clapped her hands. "Go on, go on!" she cried. "Just now you said you didn't believe in fairies, and now you are telling a fairy tale. You are the very queerest little boy! You sending for the officer! Oh, do go on! Make up more!"

"I will go on, but I do not make up," the boy said. He pointed to a rock with an overhanging canopy fringed with algae. "Let us sit down."

"It looks just like a throne!" Marie threw herself down upon the sun warmed stone. "Sit here at my feet," she commanded. And the King obeyed. He looked at the bare, brown, tiny feet.

"I will tell you something else since you wish it. Last Maundy Thursday I washed the feet of twelve old men and twelve old women."

The proud little nostrils dilated with disgust. "Oh! That is a horrid story!"

"No; it is true—quite true! It was at the Cathedral of San Ignacio. The Cardinal-Archbishop held the silver basin, and there was a solemn mass. I gave the people new clothing and food; salted fish and ham and cheese, a dose of so much to each, besides gold and silver in little crimson bags. It is the royal offering. Then, the next day, came the royal pilgrimage. The whole court, dressed in deep mourning goes out on foot to visit all the churches in the city, led by the King and Queen. Whether it rains or hails, it would be the same. This year it rained. My mother said, when I showed her how the wet dripped off my sleeve, 'My son, the Monarch of Monarchs went shelterless in all weathers that our souls might find shelter through Him. Shall the King of Ibera grumble, then, at a few drops of rain?'"

"The King of Ibera!" Marie, who had thrown herself almost at full length upon her rock, sat up with a sudden accession of primness.

"The King of Ibera? I know all about him."

"Pardon, Mademoiselle; I think not," said the King.

Marie screamed with laughter.

"Oh, you stiff, stiff, poky little prig! Must nobody know anything but yourself?"

The King rose, very pale, and took off his cap.

"Mademoiselle Marie, you are unjust, and, what is nearly as bad, you are rude, and I will leave you." He bowed and turned away, but a sob broke from him, and the blue eyes brimmed with tears that were sternly kept back. Marie jumped up.

"Come back!" She stamped one small, rosy foot imperiously, then uttered a shriek of pain, for a spiny, dried sea apple had punished the poor foot severely. The King forgot his resentment, and ran back to her.

"Ah, the horrid, nasty, spiky thing!" she cried, and hurled the echinus from her vengefully. Then she sat down, and the King knelt beside her. The wounded foot was solemnly inspected.

"It bleeds," said Marie, with quivering lips, as a tiny, bright red bead followed the withdrawal of a prickle.

"I am so, so sorry! I wish I knew what to do to make it well."

"At home . . . they would kiss it," suggested Marie, with demurely dropped lashes.

"I will kiss it if you wish. Do you wish me, truly?"

She nodded, catching her breath, between a whimper and a giggle, as the boy stooped his fair head and touched the pink foot with his pale lips.

"It is nicer than kissing the beggars' feet, as I did at San Ignacio," he said as he rose.

"I am tired of that make believe. Don't do it any more," ordered Marie. "I prefer to talk about myself for a little. Once, I ran away from the Schloss!"

"Where is the Schloss?"

"At home, in Germany." . . .

"So you are German? I'm sorry," said the King pensively.

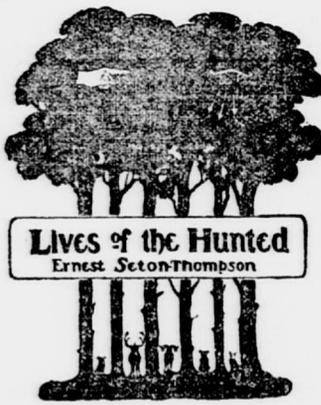
"Germans are nice. Why are you sorry?"

"Oh, because. . . . Tell me why you ran away?"

"I was tired of my gouvernante, Mme. von Bern. . . . I wanted to go to school with the

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village children. So I ran away. . . . I got to the school just as they began to sing. The schoolmaster got so red in the face when I walked in and took my place with the other children, and joined in—as loud as I could. But Gretchen, papa's head bailiff's little girl, didn't seem pleased. . . . She came and pulled me by the sleeve and said, 'Highness, it is unbecoming that the daughter of a prince should sing about going to the Himmel with the village kinder.' And then a carriage drove up and my gouvernante rushed in like mad and carried me away. And they—but I won't tell you how they punished me."

The King was silent. Then he asked—

"But why did the head bailiff's little girl say 'A prince's daughter?'"

"Because papa is a prince, goose!"

"It is not like a princess," said the King, "to call names."

"Do you know any other princesses?" said Marie, with some hauteur.

The King smiled.

"There are my sisters, Sofia and Estevana."

"And don't they ever call names?"

"Never! It would not be etiquette."

"Sofia and Estevana" repeated Marie. "Such odd names! . . . What is your name?" she added, as an after thought.

"Carlos Eduardo Cristiano Godofredo," the King enumerated obediently.

"Mine is Marie Sophie Charlotte, but I don't believe you are really called Carlos Eduardo, and all the rest," said Marie. "The name belongs to somebody else quite different—somebody who is really what you played at being just now." Her eyes grew dreamy. "They say he is a beautiful boy, and that one of these days . . . What? Are you really going? Why?"

For the King, with a clouded aspect, had risen to his feet.

"Mademoiselle, you doubted my honor just now. You said you did not believe me!"

"About the name?" Marie dimpled into smiles.

"Don't be cross, but come back and sit by me again. Of course, more people than one may be christened by the same name. Tell me, why don't you call me Marie? I said you were to!"

The admission came.

"Because I don't like Marie, or Sophie, or Charlotte. It is a secret why not."

"Tell me!" cried Eve, leaning over and taking hold of the crimson sash. Then, as the King moved nearer, she rubbed her round, velvet cheek against the shoulder of the linen blouse, repeating, "Tell me!"

The King, yielding, held down his chin and bashfully whispered into the chestnut curls.

"Because the government and the people say that I am to marry her when I grow up."

"Oh, you story!—at least, I didn't mean that! Perhaps your Marie Sophie Charlotte is another girl."

"She is the hereditary Princess of Hochwitz-Altenlied," said the King sadly. "I am to marry her when I grow up," he repeated. "It is for reasons of State, and I must do my duty." He put his arm around Marie's waist, and pressed his pale cheek against the chestnut curls. "But I had rather marry you, dear!"

But Marie pushed his arm away, and sat regarding him quite sternly.

"You are telling another of those things you don't like to be accused of telling," she said, "and you make me sorry I apologized just now. For my papa is the hereditary Prince of Hochwitz-Altenlied, and I am his only child—so there! And presently, when I am old enough, I am to make an alliance with Carlos Eduardo Cristiano Godofredo, King of Ibera. And I don't think you as nice as I did, and I am going to look for my gouvernante. I was never left alone so long in all my life before!"

"Oh, Marie!" pleaded the King. "Oh, Marie! Alone, when you're with me!"

Marie relented, and moved a little nearer.

"What pretty curls!" she said, and put up her hand and stroked them. "Tell me your real, true name, and I won't be angry any more. I should like to know it," she added, "to remember you by when I go away back to the Schloss; for I haven't any one to play with except the Herr Cancellarius's little girl and she's a stupid head. I'm tired of her. I'm tired of everything they let me do, and all the other things that seem as if they would be interesting are unbecoming a princess. I darsay it's unbecoming a princess to be sitting like this, with my head on the shoulder of a boy I never saw before."

"No, dear," said the King.

"They would say so," asserted the princess.

"Not if they knew that I was the King of Ibera!" said Carlos proudly, and kissed Marie upon the cheek. She doubted no more.

"How queer, our meeting like this!" she said, leaning her cheek to his.

The children looked in each other's eyes, in

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the background, behind a conveniently situated rock buttress of gigantic size, penetrated with loopholes suitable for spying purposes, a lady and gentleman of middle age, dignified appearance, and lofty manners, who from this vantage had been witnesses of the meeting, exchanged a significant glance.

"The plan succeeds beyond dreaming!" ejaculated the lady, who was the princess's gover-nante, the Baroness von Bern. "The prince of Hochwitz-Altenlied will be overjoyed!"

"And her majesty the Queen of Ibera," said the King's governor, Professor Don José Alejandro de Sanchez Pachilla, "will be enchanted when I inform her that the conduct of his majesty during this trying interview, the fruit of so much correspondence, anxiety and diplomacy has been in no way unbecoming to a King."

(Sketch.)

THE "FATHER" OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

From The London Chronicle.

To have been an active parochial clergyman for seventy years, of which sixty-three were passed in the same parish, constitutes a wonderful record; and in point of age combined with length of service the Rev. G. D. Grundy, vicar of Hey, near Oldham, whose death has just taken place, might well have been regarded as the "Father" (in the Parliamentary sense) of the Church of England. Some of his interesting reminiscences were recalled yesterday by his son, the Rev. C. H. Grundy, in preaching at St. Peter's, Breckley, of which he is vicar. At Oxford, where he was a contemporary of Mr. Gladstone, the late Mr. Grundy came under the influence of the evangelical movement, and he used to recall how the authorities at Brasenose (of which college he was a scholar), in their horror of the new ideas, altered the dinner hour in order to prevent the undergraduates from attending outside services. In illustration of the irreverent tone of the undergraduates of those days, the late clergyman told a story of a member of his college who, the chapel at Brasenose being somewhat dimly lighted, made a bet that he would lie in front of the communion table during the whole of a service without being discovered by any of the dons. He won the bet!