

THE SEVEN FOALS

Chapter IV.



When the foal and Jack, with the other six foals close behind them, got up close to the trunk they could see a door behind it. It opened very slowly as they approached. They could see, just inside, a small room, in which there were a few pieces of furniture.

There was a fireplace, a couple of benches, a great rusty sword and a little pitcher.

"Can you brandish the sword?" asked the foals as soon as they were all inside.

"No," said Jack. "It is much too heavy for me."

"Oh, try," said the foals.

So Jack tried and tried and tried.

At last he could brandish it!

"Now," said the foals, "you must take this sword and cut off our heads



with it. Do this on your wedding day. We are brothers of the Princess whom you wish to marry. We are not foals at all. We are Princes! But, you see, a wicked spirit has cast a spell over us and changed us into foals. When you have hewn off our heads, see that you place each head behind the body to which it belongs. Then the spell will be broken."

Jack promised to do all that, and they started on their journey again.

"Do you see anything?" asked the foal who was carrying Jack.

"No," answered Jack.

So they traveled a while.

"Do you see anything?" again asked the foal.

"No," said the boy.

They traveled a long way in silence again.

"Don't you see anything?" the foal at last asked again.

"Yes, now I see something which looks like a blue stripe on the ground."

"It is a great river," said the foal. "We are going to cross it!"

As they crossed, Jack saw something very black against the horizon.

"What's that?" he asked of the youngest foal.

"That is the steeple of a church," he answered.

First they crossed a high, high bridge. Then they went into the church. A priest was in there. He blessed the foals, who turned into Princes as they crossed the threshold!

Then he gave them wine and a wafer to eat!

Jack took some of the wine and one of the wafers as they all went out of the church again. He noticed, with surprise, that each prince turned into a foal again as he stepped out of the church.

Then they went back to the king's palace. It was almost dark, but the king was waiting.

(To Be Continued.)