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The Two Pendragons

By TUDOR JENKS.

"FATHER," said the young magician, "I believe my mustache is beginning to show."

"I am very glad to hear it," replied the old magician, "for I am becoming older every day, and the fountain of youth has run dry. When you grow up you will find that a long beard—especially after it is white—is one of the most valuable parts of a magician's stock in trade."

"But, father," the young magician went on, as the other turned away and opened a large book of charms, "I wish you would listen to me for a minute. I only spoke of my mustache because—well, because I feel that I might go out into the world and do something for myself."

The old magician only sniffed. The young magician talked a little while longer, but his father wouldn't even pay any attention, and went on reading the big book as quietly as if there was no one else around. Seeing this the young magician suddenly turned on his heel and left the room, muttering angrily to himself and slamming the door so violently that the old magician started and dropped his spectacles.

"Goodness me!—how noisy children are!" said the old gentleman. Then, without rising from his chair, he stretched out his hand and took his wand from the corner of the table before him. He waved the wand in a circle and then tapped it seven times on the floor.

A whiff of blue smoke curled from a Japanese jar that stood on a shelf near by, and formed itself into a tiny figure in Japanese costume.

"Puff," said the magician, "my son, Pendragon, Jr., has just left the room in a rage, slamming the door in a most unpleasant manner. I think he means to run away from home. Will you be kind enough to make yourself invisible and go after him? Let me know what he is doing. Don't stop him, but report to me all he does."

"Yes, master," Puff answered, and disappeared.

The old magician went on with his reading for a short time, and then was interrupted by the smell of perfumed smoke.

"Ah, Puff," he said, raising his head, "are you back already?"

"Yes, master," was the answer, though nothing was visible in the room. "Master Pendragon has taken your second-best wand."

"But it was in the secret cupboard."

"He opened it."

"How?"

"He just opened it," said Puff.

"Ah, the boy does know something," said the old magician, uneasily.

"Yes, master," Puff answered, "and then he went to his own room, packed a knapsack, returned, went to the courtyard, changed the house-dog into a flying griffin."

"Very clever," the old man interrupted.

"And flew southwest," Puff concluded.

"Very good. Get back into your jar."

Then the old magician rose, took his wand again from the table, changed himself into a dragon fly, and flew through the window.

Meanwhile Pendragon, Jr., was on his way to Wales, where he meant to try his fortune as a magician on his own account. The griffin flew at the rate of 83 miles an hour, and before long had descended upon the top of Mount Snowdon, where Pendragon, Jr., alighted, and drawing from his knapsack a sandwich and a cold flask of magic lemonade, refreshed himself after his journey.

As he rested there a large dragon fly came and lit upon a flower stalk near him, waving its wings up and down as naturally as possible.

When Pendragon, Jr., had finished his lunch he rose and descended the mountain, using the second-best magic wand as a walking-stick. The dragon fly fitted along in the same direction not coming too near, but never losing sight of the young man.

As the young magician came to the foot of the mountain he turned into a thick grove of trees, and then proceeded to tear great jagged tatters in his clothing. He then took off his shoes and rubbed them with rough stones and clay until they were apparently worn and stained by long travel. His clothes likewise were powdered and soiled until he looked like a youth who had been begging his way from door to door.

The dragon fly, who had been watching all this from under a broad leaf, remarked to itself, in a tiny voice: "This is very surprising, indeed!"

Having made himself look like a beggar lad, Pendragon, Jr., came from the grove into the valley below, and soon after entered a little village, and stopped at the door of a poor cottage thatched with straw. He knocked at the door, and a gentle voice from within cried: "Pull the string, raise the latch, and come in!"

Pendragon, Jr., entered, and the door was closed so quickly behind him that a dragon-fly who followed just escaped being caught between door and door-post.

Pendragon, Jr., found himself within the little cottage, and in the presence of an old, old woman, and a beautiful young girl. He took off his tattered cap, and bowed low. "May I rest here for awhile?" he asked.

"Who are you, and where are you from?" asked the old woman.

"A homeless young man," he replied,

"who has only his head, his hands, and this good staff wherewith to make his way in the world."

"But you have a pair of feet," said the old woman, sharply, "and you might let them carry you on to those who have better means of making you comfortable."

"Nay, granny," said the maiden; "the young man seems weary. 'Tis true we have little, but that little may be a blessing to him with less. Let him stay."

"He's but a wandering vagabond," said the old woman. "Let him go about his business, if he has any. If he has none, let him find some. I am too old to feed more than one kilder."

The maiden flushed and glanced at her spinning-wheel, the bobbin of which was filled with fine thread. She seemed about to speak, but sighed and said nothing.

"Dame," said Pendragon, Jr., to the old woman, "you have a bitter tongue. But it may be that I can convince you. I am no idling vagabond. I said I had only my good staff to depend upon; but still there are worst friends than a good staff. Mine has a virtue greater than many another. Let me give you a notion of its powers."

So saying, Pendragon, Jr., stepped to the door, and seeing the dragon-fly resting on the fence-rail, he suddenly waved the wand and pronounced a few magic words. This was done so quickly that even if the dragon-fly had known what was to be done it could hardly have escaped. As it was, the insect could not move before it was changed into a beautiful little white pig, which squealed with astonishment and rage.

Pendragon, Jr., was laughing heartily at the antics of the little animal, when he was amazed to see the old woman jump toward him. He tried to avoid her, but she was as spry as a cat, and before he could get away she seized the second-best wand from his hand. Then she began to wave it over her head and to dance about with glee.

"Oho and aha!" she cried; "a brave young man art thou, O Pendragon, Jr.! Thou wouldst be wiser than thy father; and see what thou hast done! Thou hast changed thy old father into a white pig! Oho and aha! Now shall the young fool go to join the old fool!"

The old woman waved the wand over her head, and behold! Pendragon, Jr., became a white pig, Jr., and squealed with rage and astonishment, just as the elder Pendragon had done only a few moments before. As soon as the change was accomplished the old woman tried to drive the two pigs into the pen that stood near the cottage.

Now, all pigs are hard to drive; but two magicians that have been changed into pigs against their will are the hardest of all to drive. One ran this way, and the other ran the other way, and the old woman chased them until she was tired and ready to drop. Then she called to the maiden who stood near, looking very sad, and very solemn at the same time.

"Come, Betty, thou jazybones, help me to drive these two little squealing porkers into the pen. Else will it be the worse for thee!"

"Give me the stick, then, Granny," said Betty; and without remembering that it was a magic wand the old woman handed Betty the slender stick.

As soon as Betty held the magic wand safely in her hand she seemed changed from a quiet country maiden into a proud princess. She faced the old woman, and with a terrible look said, "Now, thou wicked witch, thou art about to receive punishment for all thy wrong-doing! Behold, I command thee to become a cross old cat!"

The old woman could not help herself, and so when Betty waved the wand there suddenly appeared instead of the old woman a very ugly old cat, who spat and clawed about as if she was in a very bad temper.

The two little pigs meanwhile stood perfectly still, with their eyes as wide open as pigs' eyes ever are. As soon as the old cat was gone Betty turned to them, and with a wave of the wand restored Pendragon, Jr., to his true shape, and handed him the wand again.

"I thought you would like to restore your father to his own shape yourself," she said. "It seems more dutiful."

"So it does," he replied; and in a moment more the old magician stood before them well as ever.

"Before you go," said Betty to the father and son, "I wish to give you both a word of warning. To you, Pendragon, Jr., I would say this: Remember to learn your business before you begin to practice it. If it had not been for me the old witch would have succeeded in capturing both your father and yourself. She had been the enemy of your family for many centuries, and would have been glad to ruin you both."

"Why," said the old Elspeth, the witch? asked Pendragon, Sr., much surprised.

"Yes," said Betty. "And you would have known her in a moment had you not been so silly as to leave home without your magic spectacles and your wand."

"But I was anxious about my boy," said the old magician.

"And to whom are we indebted?" Pendragon, Jr., began, when she interrupted him.

"I," said she, "am Titania, Queen of the Fairies."

And she vanished to the sound of sweet music, that grew fainter and fainter, and died away in the distance.—Woman's Home Companion, Springfield, Ohio.

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