

For Little Folks

The White Bird

By CHARLES SCHEUER

(Continued from last week)

"I should like," said he, "to be carried to where I can find the Sword of Brightness that shines in the darkness, and cuts whatever its edge is turned against." On they went for a great long while, until at last they came to a tall castle as black as your hat. In front of the castle gate lay two great fiery dragons sound asleep.

Down jumped the Prince from the great yellow horse, and there was the barley straw again. He took out the Book of Knowledge from his pocket, and this was what it said:

"Fear not the dragons nor the fierce soldiers, for they will not awaken; but take only the old leathern scabbard with the sword."

Into the castle he walked, and there sat an old man. A great keen sword lay on the table in front of him, and the light on the blade was like a flash of lightning. The Prince took the sword up from the table, and the little old man looked at him, but said never a word.

On the wall hung three scabbards: one was of gold studded all over with precious stones, another of silver that gleamed like the light of the moon in frosty weather, and the third was of nothing but old, shabby leather.

The Prince took down the silver scabbard and thrust the sword into it; and no sooner had he sheathed the sword than the old gray man began to thump on the table in front of him, and to bawl at the top of his voice: "Help! help! Here is one come to steal our Sword of Brightness!"

In ran the soldiers, but the Prince begged and prayed, and prayed and begged, that his life might be spared.

"Listen," says the old gray man at last. "If you will promise to bring me the White Bird from the black mountain, I will not only spare your life, but will give you the Sword of Brightness into the bargain."

Yes, the Prince would get the White Bird if anybody in the world could get it; and thereupon they let him go, and glad enough he was to get away. So he threw his leg over the barley straw, and away thundered the yellow horse like a storm in June.

At last they came to the black mountain, and on the top of the mountain sat an old witch with golden hair, and in her hand was the White Bird. The Prince opened his Book of Knowledge, and there he read that if one would gain the White Bird, one would have to catch the witch by her golden hair, for then she would be compelled to grant whatever was asked of her.

But how was he to climb the hill without the witch seeing him? So he turned over another leaf of the Book of Knowledge, and it said, "Crack the egg of the white hen and put on the cap."

The Prince cracked the egg, and sure enough inside of it was a little cap of feathers. He put on the feather cap, and—whisk!—as quick as a wink he was changed into a tit-mouse, which

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BUDDIE AND HIS FRIENDS

By Robt. L. Dickey



is the least of all the birds in that land.

He spread his wings, and flew, and flew, and flew, and flew, until he was close behind the witch where she sat on the black mountain. He took off his cap, and there he was in his own shape again. Then he caught the old witch by her golden hair and held her fast, and you should have seen how she twisted and turned.

"I want the White Bird," said the Prince, "and I will be satisfied with nothing else." It was all to no purpose that the old witch stormed and scolded, for what he had said he had said, and he would be satisfied with nothing else. So at last, willy-nilly, she had to give him what he asked for, and it was a white bird no longer, but the prettiest lass that ever a body's eyes looked upon, with cheeks as red as roses, and a skin as white as snow.

Then the Prince drew the barley straw out of his pocket and threw his leg over it, and he took the Princess up behind him on

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the great yellow horse, and away they clattered, until they came to the black castle.

The old gray man gave the lad the Sword of Brightness quickly enough, for the White Bird was worth that and a great deal more.

Away he rode again, with the White Bird sitting behind him, until they came to the desert place and the Tree of Happiness.

"Turn the edge of the blade against the three giants," and there they lay, all three of them, as dead as stocks, and the young Prince rode away with the Fruit of Happiness in his pocket.

By-and-by he came to the place where the two houses stood, the one on the one side of the road and the one on the other, and there he met a great crowd, and in the midst of all the rest were his two brothers, so they started home together.

By-and-by they felt weary and sat down by the roadside to rest, and as they sat there the young-

est Prince fell asleep. While he slept the elder brothers stole away the Sword of Brightness and the Fruit of Happiness. Then they awakened him and made him strip off his fine clothes, and gave him a parcel of rags and tatters fit for no one but a beggar, and he had to put them on or go without.

As for the White Bird, they made her vow that she would say nothing of all this. Then off they marched with her and the Sword of Brightness, and left the Prince with never a stitch or thread that was worth the having.

Now the White Bird did nothing but weep, and neither this brother nor that could draw the

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Sword of Brightness from its leathern scabbard, and when the King came to taste the Fruit of Happiness it was as bitter as gall; so, after all, the two gained nothing by what they had done.

But the young Prince was not for giving up all that he had lost without trying to get what he could back again. Off he marched in his rags and tatters until he came to the castle where the King his father lived.

After a while the folks came out, one by one and two by two, to walk in the garden and take the air, and all the time the Prince sat there and nobody knew him.

Last of all came the old King, and with him walked the White Bird. The King was for passing the lad as all the rest had done. But as soon as the White Bird saw him she knew who he was, and ran to him and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"Here is my own sweetheart," said she, "and he has come back to me again."

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So the Prince told the King all that had happened from beginning to end, and how it really was he who had found the White Bird, the Sword of Brightness, and the Fruit of Happiness.

Then the King saw what had happened as plain as the nose on his face, and was for punishing the elder brothers as they deserved, but nobody could find them, for as soon as they heard that the youngest Prince had come home again they packed off without waiting to learn more.

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