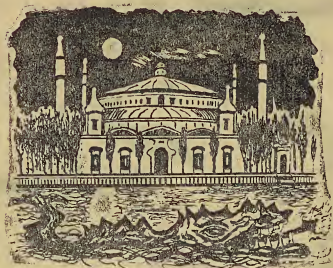


THE DRAGON
AND THE ELEMENTALS.



By MUSER.

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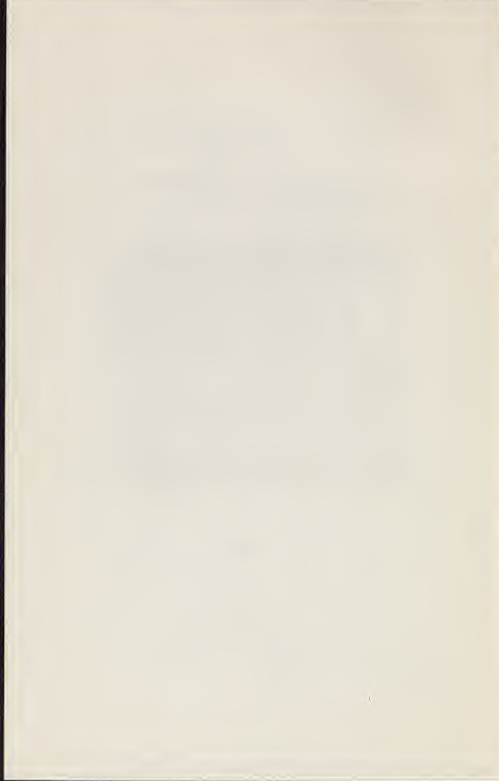
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AND THE ELEMENTALS.



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DEDICATION.

To the Brethren in the Four Groups who
Meridionally make up N.: E.: W.: S.:
this little work is sincerely dedicated.



THE DRAGON

AND THE ELEMENTALS.

The road to the Palace is difficult to describe, its weirdness can hardly be imagined. Its length is perhaps three miles, and its road covered with rich mosses, soft to the foot. Tall Cyprus trees rise majestically on either side, taking on strange shapes. The wayfarer would be startled if unacquainted with the place, for eerie beings have their habitation there. Peculiar cries echo through the night and night-birds pause hesitatingly in their flight, alarmed at the strangeness, for the night forebodes weird happenings. From afar comes the cry of the wer-wolf expectantly awaiting prey to satiate its unholy desires. The wind murmurs gently a soft ah-ee-oo, and the Cyprus trees sway understandingly. In the distance to the end of the road, the Palace rises high, casting beams of light which vivify the mossy road and contrasts strangely with the moonlight.

King Gunther and Queen Mab, Lord and Lady of Fairyland, sit upon their high throne surrounded by Courtiers and Maids of Honour. The Fairy folk are assembled outside in the Courtyard, summoned by Royal Command and are eagerly awaiting tidings from afar. For the King has decreed that all shall be present to welcome the four representatives of the Fairy Kingdom expected to attend this night to pay homage to the King.

Now the moon shines high, casting silvery beams on the surface of the lake behind the palace, and the gentle rippling of the water indicates an expectancy

equal to that of the Fairy folk. The flies of the night move swiftly through the air, glimmering their light in shady places, and the wolves howl joyously—their prey is near.

In the lake of enchantment the evil genie (transformed into a dragon for past misdeeds) slumbers. This night he is inactive, for sleep is made to come over him that the Ceremonies be not disturbed. Suddenly there is a stir amongst the Fairy folk (things always happen suddenly in Fairyland), and the road to the Palace becomes thronged with strange people. The semi-still night is fraught with joyous sound.

The King rises, and with him all others. Trumpets blare and cymbals clash in the air. This is the signal that visitors are near. A procession can be seen approaching the Palace and the Fairy folk bow their heads.

A score of Fairy people bearing four divan chairs enter the palace. Each chair is occupied but the silver curtains are drawn and the occupants cannot yet be seen. Five of the bearers are dressed in garments of Green, five in Blue, five in Silver and five in Gold. Those dressed in Green carry the King of Gnomes who represent the Earth, those in Blue carry the Queen of the Sybils who represent the Air, those in Silver carry the Queen of the Undines, who represent the Water and those in Gold carry the mighty King of the Salamanders who represent Fire.

Four members of each Kingdom approach the throne and bowing to the ground they address the King

—“O King of all Fairyland, Lord of the Invisible regions, in response to thy Royal Command we visit thee from afar to convey greetings and information from the peoples of our respective kingdoms. Our Kings and Queens have come to give thee salutation and to speak of strange things which have befallen them.”

The clarions sound and the Kings and Queens of the Elements step forward to make obeisance to the Lord and Lady of all Fairyland. King Gunther and Queen Mab warmly respond to the greetings and indicate a place for each in front of the throne. When all are comfortable about the Palace, King Gunther, eager for news, questions the Representatives in turn.

To the King of the Gnomes he says:—

“Lord of the Underworld, what tidings hast thou for us?”

The King of the Gnomes replies:—

“Your Majesty, for nigh three moons,
 Strange rumblings have been heard within the earth.
 The bears have now confined themselves to caves,
 Which is not their wont.
 The serpents have ceased to crawl when rain falls,
 And even the hare no longer takes his flight
 Across the countryside.
 The Ogre of the North, spoiled of his nightly gorge,
 Has thundered vengeance through the woods
 And all our subjects have become alarmed.
 In consequence of this, the Council to which
 The Elves were duly called, was held in Forest

Glades."

"And the result of that meeting," asked King Gunther.

"The sprite who colours Earth when morn is young,

Told us that wondrous changes soon shall come

To Earth, so that the bears and serpents shall

Again their customary functions perform.

Such tidings, Lord, I have for thee this day and do thy
counsel seek."

"Hold, said the King of all Fairyland, "until my
other subjects speak, and weighty matters then I shall
consider.

"Lady of the Fluids, what tidings hast thou? "

"Alas, Good Lord of Fairyland, I hesitate to say

What has befallen us in the Undine's world.

But by your leave and courtesy this I tell:—

The streams which swiftly move beneath the moon,

Their course have changed no power has mystic rune.

Big fish which once did feast on smaller fry,

No longer to the surface come, they die.

The waters now have lost their greeny hue,

And murky have become 'tis very true.

Your counsel, Noble Lord, we fain would seek.

We know that words of wisdom thou canst speak."

King Gunther replies:—

"Pray, Lady of the Sybils, hast thou news to heighten
or lessen these fears and alarms."

"O Lord of all the Fairy folk, 'tis passing strange,
That birds of gorgeous plumage have taken change.

Their wings which once did glisten in the sun,

Are blurred and dulled on each and every one.

The friendly wind that in the early morn,
Which once did freshen, help to ripen corn.
No longer moves at midnight or at dawn.
Wilt thou give counsel to us so forlorn."

King Gunther says:—

"A moment wait, Good Lady of the Air,
For word from Salamander over there.
O Mighty Monarch of all things hidden,
What tidings hast thy people bidden."

The King of the Salamanders approaches the throne and
thus he answers the King of all Fairyland:—

"O Lord of all the Fairy folk and Powers
Which live within the elements, their dowers,
A boon we fain would ask of thee this day
For all these sorrows we can drive away."

"Pray, King of the Fires," says the Fairyland King,
Knowest thou the cause of all that has happened to
bring alarm?"

"Aye, Noble Lord," answers the Salamander, "we of
the greater Element have strange spells worked over
all the Fairy Kingdoms that thou wouldst call thy
subjects from afar to hear their grievances, and we to
tell them all the cause."

"O tell us the cause, good Salamander," say the Palace
folk.

The Salamander responds:—

"O Mighty King, tidings have come to us that
imprisoned within the waters of the lake, behind the
Palace wall, thou hast a subject of the Fire Ether who
fain would be freed from the tortures of thy Magician

and the Palace folk."

But the King answers:—

Knowest thou that this same Dragon has much evil wrought amongst my subjects here, and on an evil day my daughter did affright, until she lost her reason. Each night her cries are fearful and I despair if reason will return."

"O Gunther, King of all the lands, my subject is just as dear to me as thy daughter is to thee, so the Queen of the Undines and I will work a spell to change the Dragon's form and bring true peace to all thy subjects dear, and reason once again to daughter fair."

"O Salamander, mighty are thy powers—thou hast stirred my heart to grant thy boon, make then this wondrous transformation to make my daughter sane like other folk."

"Aye, mighty Salamander, this transformation make," said all the Fairy folk.

"Tis now the Eleventh hour," said the Lord of Fire, "and when the hour of Twelve doth strike, my subject who resides within the lake shall take on a form both pleasing to myself and all my subjects of the Fires."

"And my daughter?" asked the King.

"She shall have her reason and, ere the dawn, the hand of a mighty Prince, wondrous fair, in marriage take."

"A Prince in marriage take," said the King.

"A Prince in marriage take," said the Fairy folk.

"Tis true," said the King Salamander, "and until the hour of midnight I would hold that the Fairy dance

take place and all rejoice."

"Tis done, on with the dance," said the King, "for a Salamander's word ne'er doth fail."

The dance was conducted by Fairies of all Kingdoms. The Gnomes danced with the Sybils, and the Salamanders danced with the Undines, and it is said that the wondrous colours blended this night lit up the countryside for miles around. The King and Queen also danced with the Courtiers and Maids of Honour and the Fairy folk who watched the gaiety applauded joyously.

Just before the stroke of Twelve the King Salamander and Queen Undine slipped away from the Palace unobserved and passed through the gardens unto the enchanted lake. High above the lake on a verandah could be seen a beautiful figure in white gazing into the waters below. This was Ursula, daughter of good King Gunther. The Salamander spat clouds of fire from his mouth and it surged in furrows through the waters which began to seethe and foam. A terrific roar accompanied the action—the Dragon had awakened. So great was the roar that the music ceased in the Palace and cries of alarm were heard.

Quickly the fire lapped up the water and the Dragon could be seen lashing his great tail furiously and opening his big mouth. Ursula still gazed into the lake as though with unseeing eyes. Soon the lake was devoid of water and great clouds of steam rose above it.

By this time most of the Fairy folk were assembled round the King Salamander who addressed them thus:—
"Behold this Dragon, here in sight of all,

Wrought evil in your lands ere ye were born.
 Yet 'twas the Lord of Ether who decreed
 That all in Fairyland a lesson learn
 Because of sin of disobedience.
 Long years ago when all the earth was young,
 The Fairy folk refused to people Earth,
 To undertake the task of colouring flowers,
 Herding beasts, moving waters on their course,
 Of guiding birds on lengthy journey bent,
 And freeing Earth of all the hidden fires.
 Because of this the Supreme did command,
 That Fairy folk should come to earth to dwell
 And do these tasks e'en though they wished it not.
 And then a Messenger to Earth was sent
 To guide and comfort all in Fairyland.
 Alas that he should be misunderstood
 By the Magician of this Palace who,
 In his ignorance and on an evil day,
 The Messenger into a Dragon changed
 Thus bringing evil fate upon ye all.
 And now by High Command my task is this
 To change the Dragon's form to that of yore
 And thus bring peace to all in Fairyland.
 On this account it is, O Noble Lord,
 That Ursula, thy loving daughter fair
 Has been bereft of reason, tragic fate.
 But summon her unto this mystic spot
 Whilst I a magic circle make for her
 Then wondrous transformation thou shalt see."

Says King Gunther:—

“ O mighty Salamander, all these tidings,
 Convince me of the reason of these chidings
 Which have been given unto Fairy folk,
 In all the different Kingdoms neath my yoke.
 Thou shalt not ask me twice to grant thy boon,
 I pray thee set about thy task and soon.”

The Fairy folk say:—

“ O Salamander, set about thy task and soon.”

The Salamander says:—

“ Lo, it shall be done when thou shalt bring
 Fair Ursula, to sit within this ring.”

Here the Salamander forms a mystic circle of his people. A maid now brings the fair Ursula and the Salamander walks to the middle of the lake and breathes Fire into the mouth of the Dragon, touching him with his staff. Instantly the Dragon was transformed into a beautiful youth dressed in robes of Gold shaped like the scales of the Dragon. Such a mysterious transformation had never before been seen in this part of Fairyland. With this change came the song of the birds and many of beautiful plumage hovered over the head of the King Salamander who came out of the lake taking the Prince to where Ursula was seated.

“ O fair Ursula,” he said, “ high born of the Gods, thy consort is here and gives thee Salutation.”

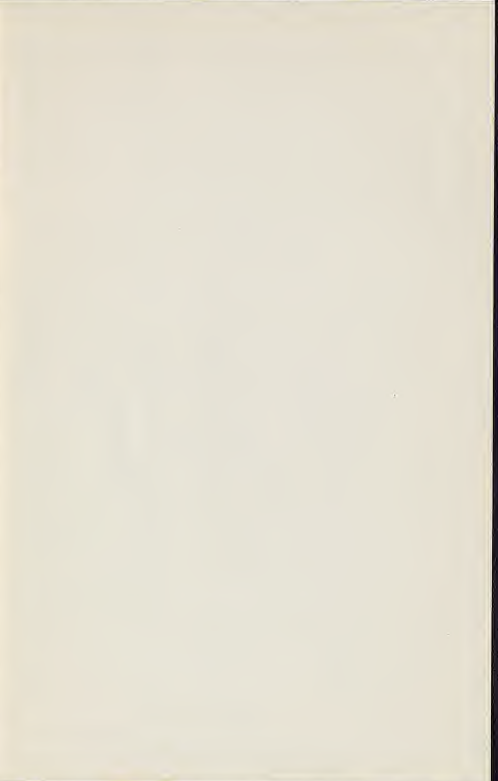
Ursula passed her hand over her brow and would have fallen had not the Prince rushed forward and caught her in his arms. As he did so his lips touched her forehead and lo, reason returned and she rested in his arms for some moments.

King Gunther and Queen Mab and all the Fairies looked on in wonder. Queen Undine then waved her Fairy wand and caused the clouds of heat to fall into the lake which became water once again.

The King and Queen of all Fairyland were overjoyed and decreed that the marriage should take place the next day, and they thanked the Salamander for his great work.

The youthful Prince and Princess were married with great pomp before the Representatives returned to their lands, and they lived long and happily and brought peace and goodwill to all Kingdoms of Fairyland.





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