

THE FAERIE QUEEN

Edmund Spenser



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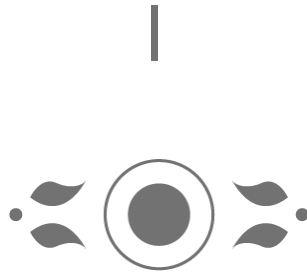


More than three hundred years ago there lived in England a poet named Edmund Spenser. He was brave and true and gentle, and he loved all that was beautiful and good.

Edmund Spenser wrote many poems, and the most beautiful of all is the one called ‘The Faerie Queen.’ He loved so dearly all things that are beautiful and all things that are good, that his eyes could see Fairyland more clearly than the eyes of other men ever could.

There are many, many stories in ‘The Faerie Queen,’ and out of them all I have told you only eight. Some day you will read the others for yourself.

JEANIE LANG.



UNA AND THE LION

Once upon a time, in a country not far from Fairyland, there lived a king and queen and their daughter, whose name was Una.

Una was one of the most beautiful princesses that ever were seen, and she was as good as she was beautiful.

She and her father and mother loved each other very dearly, and they were very happy together, until a dreadful thing happened in their kingdom and took all their happiness away.

A hideous dragon came from another country, and killed men and women and little children. With its fiery breath it turned the trees and grass and flowers into black ashes, and it slew everybody that it came across.

It would have killed Una's father and mother too, but they and some of their servants shut themselves up in a tower made of brass. The dragon tried very hard to get in and eat them up, but it could not break into a tower so

strong.

For seven years the king and queen hid in their tower, while the dragon lay outside.

Many brave knights came and fought with the horrible monster and tried to save the king and queen. But the dragon was stronger than all the knights, and killed every one of them.

At last Una made up her mind to ride to Fairyland and ask the Queen of the Fairies to send one of her knights to kill the dragon.

Una took no soldiers nor servants with her, but a dwarf carried for her the food and clothes she needed, and she rode on a little white ass.

Her dress was of white, but she covered it and her beautiful, shining, golden hair up with a black cloak to show that she felt sad. Her lovely face was very sorrowful, for she was so unhappy at the cruel things the dragon had done, and the danger her dear father and mother were in.

Una safely got to the court of the Faerie Queen, and a young knight, fearless and faithful and true, offered to come back with her to kill the dragon.

His name was George, but on the breast of his silver armour, and on his silver shield, a red cross was painted. So people called him the Red Cross Knight.

The sun shone bright, and the birds sang sweetly, as Una and her knight rode away through the woods that lay

between her father's kingdom and the lands of the Faerie Queen.

The knight's great war-horse pranced and champed at its bit, and Una's little donkey put down its dainty feet gently on the grass and wondered at the great big horse and his jingling harness as they went along side by side.

Before they had gone very far a storm came on. The sky grew dark and rain fell heavily, and they would have been drenched had they not found shelter in a thick wood. There were wide paths in this wood, and tall trees whose leafy branches grew so close that no rain could come through.

It was such a beautiful wood, and they were so happy talking together and listening to the birds' sweet song, that they rode along without noticing where they went.

So when the rain stopped and they wished to get back to the open road, they could not find the way. On and on they went, until they came to the mouth of a great dark cave.

The knight sprang from his horse, and giving his spear to the dwarf to hold, went forward to see what might be hidden in the darkness.

'Do not be so rash!' cried Una; 'I know that this is a terribly dangerous place, and that a dreadful monster stays in that black den!'

The frightened dwarf also begged him to come away, but the knight said, 'I should be ashamed to come back. If

one is good, one need have no fear of the darkness.'

So into the darkness he went, and in the faint light that came from his shining armour he saw a hideous monster. It had a great ugly head and a long speckled tail like a serpent's, and it rushed at the knight, roaring furiously. He struck at it with his sword, but it wound its horrible tail around him, until he was nearly crushed to death.

Una called to him not to fear, but to strike the monster bravely. And he, smiting it with all his might, cut off its head.

Then Una and he rode joyfully onwards, and, as evening fell, they found a way out of the wood. On the road they met an old man who looked kind and good. He asked them to stay all night in his cottage in a little valley near at hand, and they gladly went.

This old man was a wicked magician, and all he wanted was to do them harm.

When they had lain down to rest, he began to work his magic on them. So well did he do it, that he made the Red Cross Knight believe that Una was very false and wicked, and that the best thing he could do was to go away from her. Very early in the morning the knight made the dwarf saddle his horse, and they went off together and left Una asleep in the house of the wicked magician.

When she awoke and found them gone, Una could only weep bitterly at what seemed to her their cruelty.