

The Rose Prince

by

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A long, long time ago - so long ago that if one tries to think ever so far back, it is farther than that again - King Mago reigned in the Country Under the Sunset.

He was an old king, and his white beard had grown so long that it almost touched the ground; and all his reign had been passed in trying to make his people happy.

He had one son, of whom he was very fond. This son, Prince Zaphir, was well worthy of all his father's fondness, for he was as good as can be.

He was still only a boy, and he had never seen his beautiful sweet-faced mother, who had died when he was only a baby. It often made him very sad that he had no mother, when he thought other boys had tender mothers, at whose knees they learned to pray, and who came and kissed them in their beds at night. He felt that it was strange that many of the poor people in his father's dominions had mothers, whilst he, the prince, had none. When he thought thus it made him very humble; for he knew that neither power, nor riches, nor youth, nor beauty will save any one from the doom of all mortals, and that the

only beautiful thing in the world whose beauty lasts for ever is a pure, fair soul. He always remembered, however, that if he had no mother he had a father who loved him very dearly, and so was comforted and content.

He used to muse much on many things; and often even in the bright rest-time, when all the people slept, he would go out into the wood, close to the palace, and think and think on all that was beautiful and true, whilst his faithful dog Gomus would crouch at his feet and sometimes wag his tail, as much as to say -

"Here I am, prince; I am not asleep either."

Prince Zaphir was so good and so kind that he never hurt any living thing. If he saw a worm crawling over the road before him he would step over it carefully lest it should be injured. If he saw a fly fallen in the water he would lift it tenderly out and send it forth again, free of wing, into the glorious bright air: so kind was he that all the animals that had once seen him knew him again, and when he went to his favourite seat in the wood there would arise a glad hum from all the living things. Those bright insects, whose colours change hour by hour, would put on their brightest colours, and bask about in the gleams of sunlight that came slanting down between the benches of the trees. The noisy insects put on their mufflers so that they would not disturb him; and the little birds resting on the trees would open their round bright eyes, and come out and blink and wink in the light, and pipe little joyous songs of welcome with all their sweetest notes.

So is it ever with tender, loving people; the living things that have voices as sweet as man's or woman's, and who have languages of their own, although we cannot understand them, all talk to them in joyous notes and bid them welcome in their own pretty ways.

King Mago was proud of his brave, good, handsome boy, and liked him to dress beautifully; and all the people loved to see his bright face and his gay clothing. The King made the great merchants search far and near till they got the largest and finest feather that had ever been seen. This feather he had put in the front of a beautiful cap, the colour of a ruby, and fastened with a brooch made of a great diamond. He gave this cap to Zaphir on his birthday.

As Prince Zaphir walked through the streets, the people saw the great white plume nodding from far away. All were glad when they saw it, and ran to their windows and doors and stood bowing and smiling and waving their hands as their beautiful prince went by. Zaphir always bowed and smiled in return; and he loved his people and gloried in the love that they had for him.

In the Court of King Mago was a companion for Zaphir whom he loved very much. This was the Princess Bluebell. She was the daughter of another king who had been wrongfully deprived of his dominion by a cruel and treacherous enemy, and who had come to King Mago to ask for help and had died in his Court after living there for many, many years. But King Mago had taken his little orphan daughter and had her brought up as his own child.

A great vengeance had come upon the wicked usurper. The Giants had come upon his dominions and had slain him and all his family, and had killed all the people in the land, and had even destroyed all the animals, except those wild ones that were like the Giants themselves. Then the houses began to tumble down from age and decay, and the beautiful gardens to become wild and neglected; and so when after many long years the Giants grew tired and went back to their home in the wilderness, the country that Princess Bluebell owned was such a vast desolation that no one going into it would know that people had ever dwelt there.

Princess Bluebell was very young and very, very beautiful. She, like Prince Zaphir, had never known a mother's love, for her mother, too, had died whilst she was young. She loved King Mago very much, but she loved Prince Zaphir more than all the rest of the world. They had always been companions, and there was not a thought of his heart that she did not know almost before it came there. Prince Zaphir loved her too, more dearly than words can tell, and for her sake he would have done anything, no matter how full of danger. He hoped when he was a man and she a woman that she would marry him, and that they would help King Mago to rule his kingdom justly and wisely, and that there would be no pain or want in the whole country, if they could help it.

King Mago had two little thrones made, and when he sat in state on his great throne the two children sat one on each side of him, and learned how to be King and Queen.

Princess Bluebell had a robe of ermine like a Queen's, and a little sceptre and a little crown, and Prince Zaphir had a sword as bright as a flash of lightning, and it hung in a golden scabbard.

Behind the King's throne the courtiers used to gather; and there were many of these who were great and good, and there were others who were only vain and self-seeking.

There was Phlosbos, the Prime Minister, an old, old man with a long beard like white silk, and he carried a white wand with a gold ring on it.

There was Janisar, the Captain of the Guard, with fierce moustachios and a suit of heavy armour.

Then there was Tufto, an old courtier, a silly old man who did nothing but hang about the great nobles and pay them deference, and every one, high and low, despised him much. He was fat, and had no hair on all his face or head, not even eyebrows, and he looked - oh! so funny, with his big bald head quite white and smooth.

There was Sartorius, a foolish young courtier, who thought that dress was the most important thing in the world; and who accordingly dressed in the finest clothes he could possibly get. But people only smiled at him and sometimes laughed, for there is no honour due to fine clothes, but only to what is in the man himself who wears them. Sartorius always tried to push himself into the front place everywhere, in order to show

off his fine clothes; and he thought that because the other courtiers did not try to push him aside in the same way, they acknowledged his right to be first. It was not so, however; they only despised him and would not do what he did.

There was also Skarkrou, who was just the opposite to Sartorius, and who thought - or pretended to think - that untidiness was a good thing; and was as proud or prouder of his rags than Sartorius was of his fine clothes. He too was despised, for he was vain, and his vanity made him ridiculous.

Then there was Gabbleander, who did nothing but talk from morning till night; and who would have talked from night till morning if he could have got any one to listen to him. He too was laughed at, for people cannot always talk sense if they talk much. The foolish things are remembered, but the wise ones are forgotten; and so these talkers of too many things come to be considered foolish.

But no one must think that all the Court of the good King Mago were like these people. No! there were many, many good, and great, and noble, and brave men; but such is life in every country, even the Country Under the Sunset, that there are fools as well as wise men, and cowards as well as brave men, and mean men as well as good men.

Children who wish to become good and great men or good and noble women, should try to know well all the people whom they meet. Thus they will find that there is no one who has not much of good; and when they see some great folly, or some meanness, or some cowardice, or some fault or weakness in another person, they should examine themselves carefully. Then they will see that, perhaps, they too have some of the same fault in themselves - although perhaps it does not come out in the same way - and then they must try to conquer that fault. So they will become more and more good as they grow up; and others will examine them, and when these find they have not the faults, they will love and honour them.

Well, one day King Mago sat on his throne in his robes and his crown, and holding his sceptre in his hand.

At his right hand sat Princess Bluebell, with her robe and crown and sceptre, and with her little dog Smg beside her.

This dog was a great favourite. At first it was called Sumog, because Zaphir's dog was Gomus, and this was the name spelled backwards. But then it was called Smg because this was a name that could not be shouted out, but could only be spoken in a whisper. Bluebell had no need for more than this, for Smg was never far away, but always stayed close to his mistress and watched her.

At the King's left sat Prince Zaphir, on his little throne, with his bright sword and his mighty feather.

Mago was making laws for the good of his people. Round him were gathered all the courtiers, and many people stood in the hall and many more in the street without.

Suddenly there was a loud sound heard - the cracking of a whip and the blowing of a horn - and it came nearer and nearer, and the people in the street began to murmur. Loud cries arose, the King stopped to listen, and the people turned their heads to see who was coming. The crowd opened, and a messenger booted and spurred and covered with dust, rushed into the hall and knelt on one knee before the King, and held out a paper which King Mago took and read eagerly. The people waited in silence to hear the news.

The King was deeply moved, but he knew his people were anxious, so he spoke to them, standing up as he did so: -

"My people, a grievous peril has come upon our Land. We learn from this despatch from the province of Sub-Tegmine, that a terrible Giant has come out of the marshes beyond No-Man's-Land, and is devastating the country. But be not in fear, my people, for to-night many soldiers shall go forth with their arms, and by sunset to-morrow the Giant will have fallen, we trust."

The people bowed their heads with murmured thanks, and all went quietly away to their homes.

That night a body of picked soldiers went out with brave hearts to fight the Giant, and the people cheered them on their way.

All next day and next night the people as well as the King were very anxious; and the second morning they expected news that the Giant was overthrown.

But no news came till nightfall; and then one weary man, covered with dust and blood, and wounded unto death, crawled into the town.

The people made way for him, and he came before the throne and bent low and said -

"Alas! King, I have to tell you that your soldiers have been slain - all save myself. The Giant triumphs and advances towards the city."

Having said so, the pain of his wounds grew so great that he cried out several times and fell down; and when they lifted him up he was dead.

At the sad news which he told a low wail arose from the people. The widows of the slain soldiers cried loudly a little cry, and came and threw themselves before the King's throne, and raised their hands on high and said -

"Oh, King! Oh, King!" and they could say no more with weeping.

Then the King's heart was very, very sore, and he tried to comfort them, but his best comfort was in his tears - for the tears of friends help to make trouble light; and he spoke to the people and said -

"Alas! our soldiers were too few. To-night we will send an army, and perchance the Giant will fall."

That night a gallant army, with many great engines of war and with flags flying and bands playing, went forth against the Giant.

At the head of the army rode Janisar, the captain, with his armour of steel inlaid with gold shining in the glow of the sunset. The scarlet and white trappings of his great black charger looked splendid. At his side, for some distance on his way, rode Prince Zaphir on his white palfrey.

The people all gathered to wish the army success on their departure; and a lot of foolish people who believed in luck threw old shoes after them. One of these shoes struck Sartorius, who was as usual pushing into the front to show himself off, and blackened his eye, and the black of the shoe came off on his new dress and spoiled it. Another shoe - a heavy one with an iron heel - struck Tufto, who was talking to Janisar - on the top of his bald head, and cut it, and then all the people laughed.

Just fancy how a man is despised when people laugh when he is hurt. Old Tufto danced about and got quite angry, and then the people laughed all the more; for nothing is funnier than when a person is so angry that he loses all self-control.

All the people cheered as the army went off. Even the poor widows of the slain soldiers cheered; and the men going away looked at them and resolved that they would conquer or die, like brave soldiers doing their duty.

Princess Bluebell went with King Mago to the top of the tower of the palace, and together they watched the soldiers as they marched away. The king went in soon, but Bluebell stayed on, looking at the helmets glittering and flashing in the sunset till the sun sank down over the horizon.

Just then Prince Zaphir, who had returned, joined her. Then in the twilight on the top of the tower, with many thousand eager, anxious hearts beating in the city below them, and with the beautiful sky overhead, the two children knelt down and prayed for the success of the army on the morrow.

There was no sleep in the city that night.

Next day the people were filled with anxiety; and as the day wore on and there was no news they grew more anxious still.

Towards the evening they heard the sound of a great tumult far away. They knew that a battle was on; and so they waited and waited for news.

They did not go to bed that night at all; but all through the city watch-fires were lighted and everyone stayed awake waiting for the news.

But no news came.

Then the fear became so great that the faces of men and women grew as white as snow, and their hearts as cold. For a long, long time they were silent, for no man dared to speak.

At last one of the widows of the slain soldiers rose up and said -

"I shall arise and go down to the battle-field, and see how fares it there; and shall bring back the news to quiet your poor beating hearts."

Then many men rose and said -

"No! it must not be. We shall go. It were shame to our City if a woman went where men could not. We shall go."

But she answered them with a sad smile -

"Alas! I have no fear of death since my brave husband was killed. I do not wish to live. You must defend the city, I shall go."

Straightway she walked out of the city in the chill grey dawn towards the battle-field. As she moved away and faded in the distance, she seemed to the anxious people like a phantom of Hope passing away from them.

The sun rose and grew bright in the heavens till the rest time came; but men heeded it not, watching and waiting ever.

Presently they saw afar off the figure of a woman running. They ran to meet her and found it was the widow. She came amongst them and cried -

"Woe! woe! Alas! for our army is scattered; our mighty ones are fallen in the pride of their strength. The Giant triumphs, and I fear me all is lost."

There came a great wail from the people; and a hush fell on them, so great was their fear.

Then the King assembled all his Court and people, and took counsel what was best to be done. Many seemed to think that a new army should go forth of all those who were willing to die, if need be, for the good of the Country; but there was much perplexity.

Whilst they were discussing, Prince Zaphir sat silent on his little throne; and his eyes more than once filled with tears at the thought of the sufferings of his beloved people. Now he arose and stood before the throne.

There was silence till he should speak.

As the Prince stood, cap in hand, before the King, there was in his face a look of such high resolve that those who saw it could not help having a new hope. The Prince spoke -

"Oh, King, Father, before you decide further, hear me. It is right that if there be danger in the Land, the first to meet it is the Prince whom the people trust. If there is pain to be felt, who should feel it before him? If death is to come to any, surely it should first strike over his corpse. King, Father, pause but one day. Let me go to-morrow against the Giant. This widow hath told you that now he sleeps after his combat. Tomorrow I shall meet him in fight. If I fall, then will be time to risk the lives of your people; and if it should be that he falls, then all is well."

King Mago knew that the Prince had spoken well; and although it grieved him to see his beloved son running into such danger, he did not try to stop him, but said:

"Oh, son, worthy to be a king, thou hast well spoken! Be it even as thou wilt."

Then the people left the Hall, and King Mago and Bluebell kissed Zaphir. Bluebell said to him:

"Zaphir, you have done right," and she looked at him proudly.

Presently the prince went to bed, that he might sleep, and so be strong for the morrow.

All that night the smiths and armourers and the craftsmen of jewels worked hard and fast. Till daylight the furnaces glowed and the anvils rang; and all hands cunning at artifice plied hard.

In the morning they brought into the Hall, and laid before the throne as a present for Prince Zaphir, a suit of armour such as never before had been seen.

It was wrought of steel and gold, and was all in scales. Each scale was like a different leaf; and it was all burnished and bright as the sun. Between the leaves were jewels, and many more jewels were fastened on them like drops of dew. Thus the armour shone in the light till it dazzled the eyes of whosoever saw it - for the cunning armourers meant that when the Prince fought, his enemy might be half blinded with the glare and so miss his blows.

The helmet was like to a flower, and the Prince's crest was wrought upon it, and the feather and the big diamond in his cap were fastened in front.

When the Prince was equipped, he looked so noble and brave that the people cried out with shouts that he must conquer; and they had new and great hopes.

Then his father, the King, blessed him, and Princess Bluebell kissed him and cried a few tears and gave him a lovely rose, which he fastened on his helmet.

Amid shouting of the people, Prince Zaphir went out to fight the Giant.

His dog, Gomus, wanted to go, but he could not be taken. So Gomus was shut up and howled, for he knew that his dear master was in danger and wanted to be with him.

When Prince Zaphir was gone, Princess Bluebell went to the top of the tower and looked after him till he got so far away that she could no longer see the flashing of his beautiful armour in the sunlight. At first, when she was saying good bye to Zaphir - and she knew that it might be good bye for ever - she did not shed a tear, lest she should pain her beloved Prince, for she knew that he was going into battle, and would need all his bravery and all his firmness. So the last look Zaphir saw on his Bluebell's face was a loving, hopeful, trustful smile. Thus he went into the battle strengthened by the thought that her heart went with him, and that, although her body was far away, her spirit was close to him.

When he was gone, really gone, far away out of sight, and she stood on the top of the tower alone, Bluebell shed many tears; and the great fear of her heart that Zaphir might be killed made her sad unto death. She thought that it might be that he would be killed by the wicked Giant who had already slain two armies, and that then she would never see him again - never see the love in his dear, true eyes - never hear the tones of his tender, sweet voice - never feel the beating of his great, generous heart again.

And so she wept, oh! so bitterly. But as she wept the thought came to her that life does not lie in the power of men, or even of giants; and so she dried her tears, and knelt down and prayed with an humble heart, and rose up comforted, as people always do when they pray earnestly.

Then she went down to the great hall; but King Mago was not there. She looked for him to comfort her, for she knew that his heart must be bleeding for his son in danger.

She found him in his chamber, and he, too, was praying. She knelt beside him, and they put their arms round each other - the old King and the orphan child - and they prayed together; and so they both got comfort.

Together they waited, and waited patiently, for the return of their beloved one. All the city waited too; and neither by day nor night was there sleep in the Country Under the Sunset, for all were waiting for the return of the Prince.

When Zaphir left the city, he went on and on in the direction of the Giant, till the sun grew bright in the heavens, so bright that his golden armour glowed like fire; and then he

walked under the shelter of the trees, and he did not pause even in the rest-time, but went ever onward.

Towards evening he heard and saw strange things.

Far off the ground seemed to shake, and a dull rumbling arose of rocks being levelled, and forests being broken down. These were the sounds of the Giant's footsteps, as he came onwards to the city. But Prince Zaphir, although the sounds were very terrible, had no fear, and went bravely onward. Then he began to meet many living things, which swept by him at full speed - for they were the swiftest of their kind, and so had run from the Giant faster than the rest.

On they came, in hundreds and thousands, their numbers getting more and more as the time wore on, and as the Prince and the Giant drew nearer.

There were all the beasts of the field, and all the fowls of the air, and all the insects that fly and crawl. Lions and tigers, and horses and sheep, and mice and cats and rats, and cocks and hens, and foxes and geese and turkeys, all were mixed together, big and little, and all were so frightened at the Giant that they forgot to be afraid of one another. Thus there ran together, cats and mice, wolves and lambs, foxes and geese; and the weak ones did not fear, nor did the strong ones wish to harm.

As they came on, however, all the living things seemed to know that Prince Zaphir was braver than they were, and made room for him to pass. The weakest things, and those most afraid, did not go further in their flight, but tried to get as near the Prince as possible; and many followed him back towards the Giant rather than not be near him.

Further on, in a little while, he met all the old animals that could not come so fast as the rest, and all the poor wounded living things, and all those that were slow of pace. These, too, did not try to go further, for they knew that they were safer near a brave man than in helpless flight.

Then Prince Zaphir saw something, still far off, that looked like a mighty mountain.

It was moving towards him, and his heart beat high, partly with the thought of his coming battle, and partly with hope.

The Giant came closer and closer. His footsteps crushed the rocks, and with his mighty club he swept the forests from his path.

The living things behind Prince Zaphir quailed with fear, and hid their faces in the dust. Some animals, like some foolish people, think that if they do not see anything that they do not want to see, that therefore it ceases to exist.

It is very silly of them.

Then, as the Giant drew near, Prince Zaphir felt that the hour of battle had come.

When he was face to face with a foe more mighty than aught he had ever seen, Zaphir felt as he never felt before. It was not that he was afraid of the Giant, for he felt so brave that, for the good of his people, he could gladly have died then the most painful death. It was that he realized how small a thing he was in the great world.

He saw more clearly than he had ever seen that he was only a speck - a mere atom - in the great living world; and in one moment he knew that if the victory came to him it was not because his arm was strong or his heart brave, but that because it was willed by the One that rules the universe.

Then, in his humility, Prince Zaphir prayed for strength. He doffed his splendid armour, which shone like a sun on earth, he took off the splendid helmet, and he laid by the flashing sword; and they lay in a lifeless heap beside him.

It was a fair sight, that young boy kneeling by the discarded armour. The glittering heap lay all beautiful, glowing in the bright sunset with millions of coloured flashes, till it looked like even unto a living thing. Yet it was sad, and poor, and pitiful beside the boy. There he knelt paying humbly, with his deep earnest eyes lit by the truth and trust that lay in his clean heart and pure soul.

The glittering armour looked like the work of man's hands - as it was, and the work of the hands of good true men; but the beautiful boy kneeling in trust and faith was the work of the hands of God.

As he prayed, Prince Zaphir saw all his life in the past, from the day he could first remember till even then as he was, face to face with the Giant. There was not an unworthy thought that he had ever had, not a cross word he had ever spoken, not an angry look that had ever given another pain, that did not come back to his mind. It grieved him much that there were so many; for they crowded on so thick and fast that he was amazed at their very number.

It is ever thus that the things which we do wrong - although they may seem little at the time, and though from the hardness of our hearts we pass them lightly by - come back to us with bitterness, when danger makes us think how little we have done to deserve help, and how much to deserve punishment.

Prince Zaphir's heart was purified by repentance for all wrongs done in the past, and by high resolves to be good in the future; and when his humble prayer was finished, he rose up, and he felt in his arms a strength that he wot not of. He knew that it was not his own strength, but that he was the humble instrument of saving his beloved people; and in his heart he was very thankful.

The Giant saw presently the glitter of the golden armour, and knew that another enemy had come anigh him.

He gave a great roar of rage and anger, that sounded like the echo of a thunder-clap. On the distant hills it echoed, and it rolled through the far-off valleys, and sunk into mutterings and low growlings, as of wild beasts, in the caves and the mountain fastnesses.

With such sound the Giant ever began his fighting, that so he might terrify his enemies; but the brave heart of the Prince shook not with fear. He became braver than ever as he heard the sound; for he knew that there was the more need for courage, lest his people, and even the King his father, and Bluebell, should fall into the power of the Giant.

Whilst amongst the rocks and forests the footsteps of the Giant crashed, and whilst there uprose around his feet the dust of the desolation which he made, Prince Zaphir gathered from the brook some round pebbles.

He fitted one in the sling which he carried.

As he lifted his arm to whirl the sling round his head, the Giant saw him, and laughed, and pointed in scorn at him with his great hands, which were more savage than tiger's claws. The laugh which the Giant thundered forth was so terrible - so harsh and grim and dreadful, that the living things that had raised their timid eyes to watch the fray buried their heads in the dust again, and quaked with fear.

But even as he laughed his enemy to scorn, the Giant's doom was spoken.

Round Prince Zaphir's head swung the sling, and the whistling pebble flew. It struck the Giant fair in the temple; and even with the scornful laughter on his lips, and with his outstretched hand pointing in derision, he fell prone.

As he fell he gave a single cry, but a cry so loud that it rolled away over the hills and valleys like a peal of thunder. At the sound the living things cowered again, and sagged with fear.

Afar off the people in the City heard the mighty sound; but they knew not what it meant.

As the Giant's great body fell prone, the earth trembled with the shock for many a mile around; and as his great club dropped from his hand, it laid many tall trees of the forest low.

Then Prince Zaphir fell on his knees and prayed with fervent thankfulness for his victory.

Quickly he arose, and, as he knew of the bitter anxiety of the King and people, he never stopped to gather up his armour, but fled fast to the City to bring the joyful tidings.

The night had now fallen and the way was dark; but Prince Zaphir had trust, and he went onward into the darkness with a brave and hopeful heart.

Soon the living things that were noble came around him in their gratitude; and all they that could followed him closely. Many noble animals there were, - lions and tigers and bears, as well as tamer beasts; and their great fiery eyes seemed like lamps, and helped him on his way.

However, as they drew near to the City the wild animals began to stop, for though they trusted Zaphir they feared other men. They growled a low growl of regret and stopped; and Prince Zaphir went on alone.

All night long the city had been awake. In the court King Mago and Princess Bluebell waited and watched together hand in hand. The people in the streets sat around their watch-fires, and they only dared to talk in whispers.

So the long night wore away.

At last the eastern sky began to pale; and then a streak of red fire shot up over the horizon; and the sun rose in his glory; and it was day. The people, when they saw the light and heard the fresh singing of the birds, had hope; and they looked anxiously for the coming of the Prince.

Neither King Mago nor Princess Bluebell dared to go aloft to the tower, but waited patiently in the hall; and their faces were pale as death.

The watchmen of the city and those who joined them looked down the long roadway, expecting ever and anon to see Prince Zaphir's golden armour shining in the bright morning light, and his great white plume, that they knew so well, nodding in the breeze. They knew that they could see it afar off, and so they only glanced now and again into the distance.

Suddenly there was a shout from all the people - and then a sudden stillness.

They rose to their feet, and with one accord waited for the news.

For oh, joy! there among them - shorn of his bright armour and his nodding plume, but hale - stood their beloved Prince.

VICTORY was in his look.

He smiled on them, raising his hands as if blessing; and pointed to the King's palace, as though to say:

"Our king! his is the right to hear the earliest tidings."

He passed into the hall, all the people following him.

When King Mago and Princess Bluebell heard the shout and felt the stillness that followed, their hearts began to beat, and they waited in great dread.

Princess Bluebell shuddered and cried a little, and drew closer to the King, and leaned her face on his breast.

As she leaned with her face hidden, she felt the King start. She looked up quickly, and there - oh, joy of joys! - was her own beloved Zaphir entering the hall, with all the people following him.

The King stepped down from his throne and took him in his arms, and kissed him; and Bluebell, too, put her arms round him, and kissed him on the mouth.

Prince Zaphir spoke and said:

"Oh King my Father, and oh People! - God has been good to us, and His arm has given us the victory. Lo, the Giant has fallen in the pride of his strength!"

Then such a shout went up from the people that the roof rang again; and the noise went out over the City on the wings of the wind. The glad multitude shouted again and again, till the sound rolled in waves over the whole Dominion, and Under the Sunset that hour there was naught but joy. The King called Zaphir his Brave Son; and Princess Bluebell kissed him again, and called him her Hero.

At that very time, far away in the forest, the Giant lay fallen in the pride of his strength - the foulest thing in all the land - and over his dead body ran the foxes and the stoats. The snakes crawled around his body; and thither, too, crept all the meaner living things that had fled from him when he lived.

From afar off gathered the vultures for their prey.

Close to the slain Giant, shining in the light, lay the golden armour. The great white plume rose from the helmet and even now nodded in the breeze.

When the people came out to see the dead Giant, they found that rank weeds had grown up already where his blood had fallen, but that round the armour that the Prince had doffed had grown a ring of lovely flowers. Fairest of all was a rose tree in bloom, for the rose that Princess Bluebell had given him had taken root, and had blossomed afresh and made a crown of living roses round the helmet and lay against the stem of the plume.

Then the people took reverently home the golden armour; but Prince Zaphir said that not such armour, but a true heart was the best protection, and that he would not dare to put it on again.

So they hung it up in the Cathedral amongst the grand old flags and the helmets of the old knights, as a memorial of the victory over the Giant.

Prince Zaphir took from the helmet the feather that the King his father had given him of old and he wore it again in his cap. The rose that had blossomed was planted in the centre of the palace garden; and it grew so great that many people could sit under it, and be sheltered from the sun by its wealth of flowers.

When Prince Zaphir's birthday came, the people had made in secret a great preparation.

When he rose in the morning to go to the Cathedral, the whole people had assembled and lined the way on every side. Each person, old and young, held one rose. Those who had many roses brought them for those who had none; and each person had only one that all might be equal in the sight of the Prince whom they loved. They had taken off all the thorns from the stems that the Prince's feet might not be hurt. As he passed they threw their roses in the way, till all the long street was a mass of flowers.

As the Prince went by, they stooped and gathered up the roses that his feet had touched; and they treasured them very dearly.

At each birthday of the Prince they did the same for all their lives long. When Zaphir and Bluebell were married, they strewed their path with roses in the same way, for the people loved them much.

Long and happily lived THE ROSE PRINCE - for so they called him - and his beautiful wife Princess Bluebell.

When in the fulness of time King Mago died - as all men must - they ruled as King and Queen. They ruled well and unselfishly, ever denying themselves and striving to make others good and happy.

They were blessed with peace.