

Ferenand the Faithful and Ferenand the Unfaithful

Once upon a time there lived a husband and wife; while they were rich, they had no children, but when they became poor, a little son was born to them. Yet they could find no godfather for him, so the husband resolved to go to the nearest town and seek one there.

On his way thither he met a poor man who asked him where he was going. The husband told him that he was seeking a godfather, saying that he was poor and therefore nobody wished to become his comrade. "Oh!" said the poor man. "You are poor, and I am poor; let me be your child's godfather! I am so poor that I can give the child nothing; but you go home and tell the mother to bring the child to church."

When the husband and wife came to the church, the poor man was already waiting for them there and named the child Faithful Ferdinand. As they left the church, the poor man said: "Let us now part and go each to his own home; I can give you nothing, and you owe me nothing."

But he gave the mother a key, telling her that upon returning home she should entrust it to the father for safekeeping until the child reached the full age of fourteen years; then the boy should go forth, find the lock to which that key belonged, and whatever was found within that lock would remain his forever.

When the boy was only seven years old—though he was already tall—he once went out to play with other children, and they began boasting how much each had received from his godfather, while he had nothing to boast of.

He returned home in vexation and said to his father: "Did I receive nothing at all from my godfather?" "Oh yes!" replied the father. "You received a key to a lock; when you grow up and search for it, you shall open it with that key."

So the boy went forth to look and search, yet there was neither news nor trace of any such lock.

Seven years later, when he had turned fourteen, he set out once more to search for the lock, and behold, there stood a castle. When he opened it with the key, he found nothing inside except a dapple-gray horse. The youth rejoiced greatly at this discovery; immediately he sprang onto the horse and galloped to his father. "See," said he, "now I have a horse; now I too shall travel abroad."

And indeed, he departed from home, and as he rode along the road, he saw a writing pen lying there; he intended to pick it up, but then thought to himself: "Let it lie! Wherever I go, I shall find a writing pen if I need one."

After he had ridden away from the pen, he heard someone calling him: "Faithful Ferdinand, take me with you!" He looked around, saw nobody, returned to the pen, and picked it up.

Some time afterward, he happened to pass by some water and saw a fish lying on the shore, gaping widely and gasping for air.

Then he said: "Well, little fish, I will help you get back into the water," took it by the tail, and threw it into the water.

Thereupon the fish thrust its head above the water and said: "You helped me move from mud into water, so I will give you a flute. Whenever you are in trouble, play upon it—I will come to your aid, and if you drop anything into the water, I will immediately retrieve it for you."

He rode further, and met a man who asked him whither he was traveling. "To the nearest town." "And what is your name?" "Faithful Ferdinand." "Well, then, our names are almost alike: mine is Unfaithful Ferdinand."

So they traveled together to the nearest town and entered an inn. The only trouble was that Unfaithful Ferdinand, through various sorceries, always knew what the other was thinking and intending to do.

In the inn where both Ferdinands lodged, there was a maid-servant, very pretty and behaving very graciously; she fell in love with Faithful Ferdinand because he was a handsome youth, and asked him how far he intended to travel. "Just wandering about," he replied.

Then she advised him to stay, saying that in their city there was a king who would gladly take him into service either as a servant or as a postilion. Faithful Ferdinand answered that he did not wish to go and offer his services himself. But the girl replied: "Oh, if that is so, I myself will arrange everything for you."

So she went to the king and asked whether he wished to hire a handsome servant.

The king was very pleased with this proposal and ordered Ferdinand to come to him, intending to take him as a servant. But Ferdinand preferred to be a postilion, since he did not wish to be separated from his horse; thus the king took him as a postilion.

When Unfaithful Ferdinand saw this, he said to the maid: "Will you not also help me obtain a position?" "Why not? I will help you too," replied the girl, though she thought to herself: "One must not quarrel with him, for he cannot be trusted."

So she went to the king and secured a place as servant for him. One morning, while dressing his king, the latter began sighing and speaking mournfully: "Oh, if only my beloved could be with me!"

Unfaithful Ferdinand, hearing this, said to the king: "Indeed, you have a postilion; send him thither for your beloved, that he may bring her to you; and if he fails to bring her, then cut off his head."

The king ordered Faithful Ferdinand to be summoned and told him that he had a beloved in such-and-such a place whom he must fetch; and if he failed to bring her, his head should be taken.

Faithful Ferdinand went to the stable to his horse and began lamenting his fate: "Alas, what an unfortunate wretch I am!"

Then someone behind him said: "Faithful Ferdinand, why do you weep?" He looked around, saw nobody, and continued complaining: "Oh, my dear Dapple-Gray, it seems I must part from you, I must die!" Again someone called to him: "Faithful Ferdinand, why do you weep?"

Only then did he notice that it was his Dapple-Gray speaking, and he asked him: "Is it you, Dapple-Gray? Can you really speak?" Then he added: "I must travel to such-and-such a place and bring the king a bride; do you know how I might accomplish this?"

Dapple-Gray answered him: "Go to the king and say that if he gives you what you request, you will bring him the bride: if he provides a ship laden fully with meat and another ship laden fully with bread, then the matter may succeed. Beyond the sea dwell enormous giants, and if you do not bring them meat, they will tear you apart; moreover, there are great birds there which will peck out your eyes if you do not provide them with bread."

So the king commanded all the butchers to slaughter cattle and all the bakers to bake bread, until the ships were filled.

When they were loaded, Dapple-Gray said to Faithful Ferdinand: "Now mount me and take me aboard the ship with you; and when the giants come, say:

'Hush, hush, you little giants,
I have cared for you,
And brought provisions dear.'

And when the birds arrive, say to them likewise:

'Hush, hush, you little birds,
I have cared for you,
And brought provisions dear.'

Then they will do you no harm, but will even assist you when you reach the castle wherein lies that princess in deep sleep; only beware not to awaken her, but take two giants with you and command them to carry her, bed and all, onto the ship."

And everything happened exactly as Dapple-Gray had said.

To both the giants and the birds, Faithful Ferdinand gave what he had brought for them; the giants were well pleased and carried the princess, bed and all, onto the ship.

When she arrived before the king, she declared that she could not remain unless her writings, which she had forgotten in the castle, were fetched for her.

Then, at the instigation of Unfaithful Ferdinand, Faithful Ferdinand was summoned again, and the king commanded him to fetch those writings from the castle; and if he failed to bring them, he should be executed.

So he went once more to the stable and began lamenting, saying: "Oh, my dear Dapple-Gray, again they send me; what shall I do?" Then Dapple-Gray said that, as before, the ship must be loaded with a full cargo. So he sailed again, just as previously, satisfying the giants and the birds with meat and bread, thereby appeasing them.

When they approached the castle, Dapple-Gray told him that he must enter and proceed straight to the princess's bedchamber, where her writings lay upon the table.

Faithful Ferdinand went and retrieved those writings. As they sailed back upon the ship, Ferdinand dropped his pen into the water, and Dapple-Gray said to him: "Well, in this I cannot help you." Then Ferdinand remembered his flute, began playing upon it, and behold, the fish rose holding the pen in its mouth and handed it to Ferdinand. Afterward he conveyed the papers to the castle, where the wedding was celebrated.

Nevertheless, the queen could not love the king, because he displeased her,

And Ferdinand the Faithful liked her and fell in love with her.

Once, when all his courtiers had gathered before the king, the queen told them that she knew how to perform tricks. "Look," she said, "I can cut off a person's head and set it back in place again; does anyone wish to try?" However, no one dared to undergo this trick upon themselves, and once again Ferdinand the Faithful had to volunteer, urged on by Ferdinand the Unfaithful.

And indeed, the queen cut off his head, set it back in place, healed it, and only a mark remained on his neck, like a red thread.

Then the king said to her: "Tell me, my dear, where did you learn this art?"—"Yes," she said, "I am skilled in this art; do you not wish to try my art upon yourself?"—"Why should I not try?" he said.

And she cut off his head, but did not set it back in place, pretending either that she did not know how to set it back or that the head itself would not stay upon his shoulders. Thus they buried the king; and the queen married Ferdinand the Faithful.

And Ferdinand continued riding his Dapple-Grey, and once, while he was riding him, the horse told him to ride to another field and circle around it three times.

When he had done this, Dapple-Grey rose on his hind legs and turned into a prince.