

SIR BAYARD AND THE PRINCESS WITH THE GOLDEN HAIR

Once upon a time there lived a King in France who had one son, called Sir Bayard. The young man longed to see the world, and one day he mounted his horse and set out, accompanied by his servant, Izanik.

He also took a purse filled with money, but that was soon spent, for as soon as he met anyone in need, he gave them everything they required. At last they reached an abandoned castle. It was surrounded by a forest filled with birds and animals, and they decided to stay there for some time.

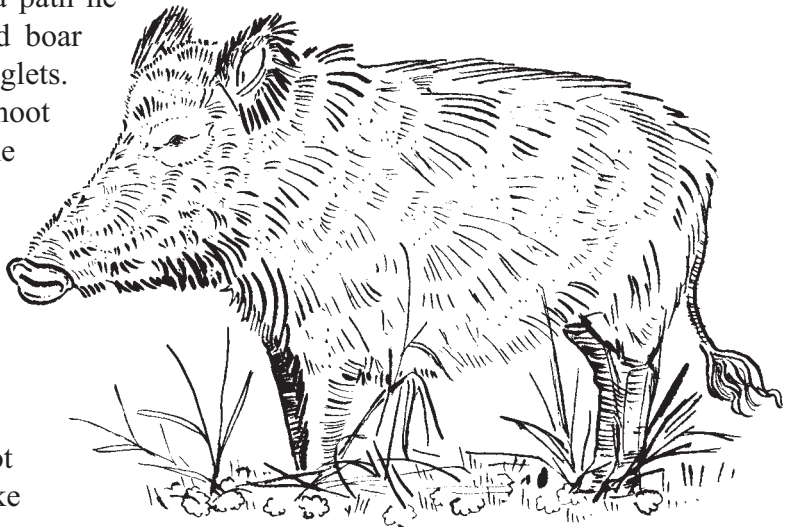
“Very good,” said Sir Bayard. “We will not die of hunger here, for I can go out hunting, and you can take care of the castle, and prepare the midday meal.”

That day he brought home more than they could eat, and Izanik sold the remainder in the nearby village. He earned seven écus and was very pleased, for he saw that in this way they could earn enough money to continue their travels.

The next day Sir Bayard brought home even more animals, and Izanik sold them and earned 14 écus. The following day he earned 28 écus, and on the fourth day Sir Bayard set out into the forest with a glad heart. As he was riding along a path he

saw a female wild boar and her nine piglets. He was about to shoot them, when the animal started to speak.

“Young man,” she said in a sweet voice, very like that of a young girl. “Do not kill me. I am not the animal you take



me for. In fact, I wish to become your wife.”

“Oh no, no,” exclaimed Sir Bayard, in dismay. He scrambled quickly up a tree to escape from them, but in a moment the nine piglets felled it to the ground.

“It is up to you,” said the sow. “If you refuse, then I will end your life. You have a night to make up your mind.”

Sir Bayard rode home to the castle, with the wild boar and her piglets following behind. When Izanik heard what had happened he was filled with horror, but neither he, nor the prince, could think of anything they could do.

On the evening before the betrothal feast the poor prince was in a sorry state. He sent Izanik again and again to the stable, in which they had shut up the sow and her piglets, but all Izanik could tell him when he came back was that he had heard a terrible noise. Nevertheless, Sir Bayard sent him once again to the stable, and this time when Izanik peeped through the keyhole he saw a magnificent room, blazing with light and filled with precious things. In the middle was a maiden of great beauty, seated upon a throne, and round about her stood nine other maidens, who were brushing her hair. With each stroke of the comb gold coins fell to the ground, and soon they quite covered the floor.

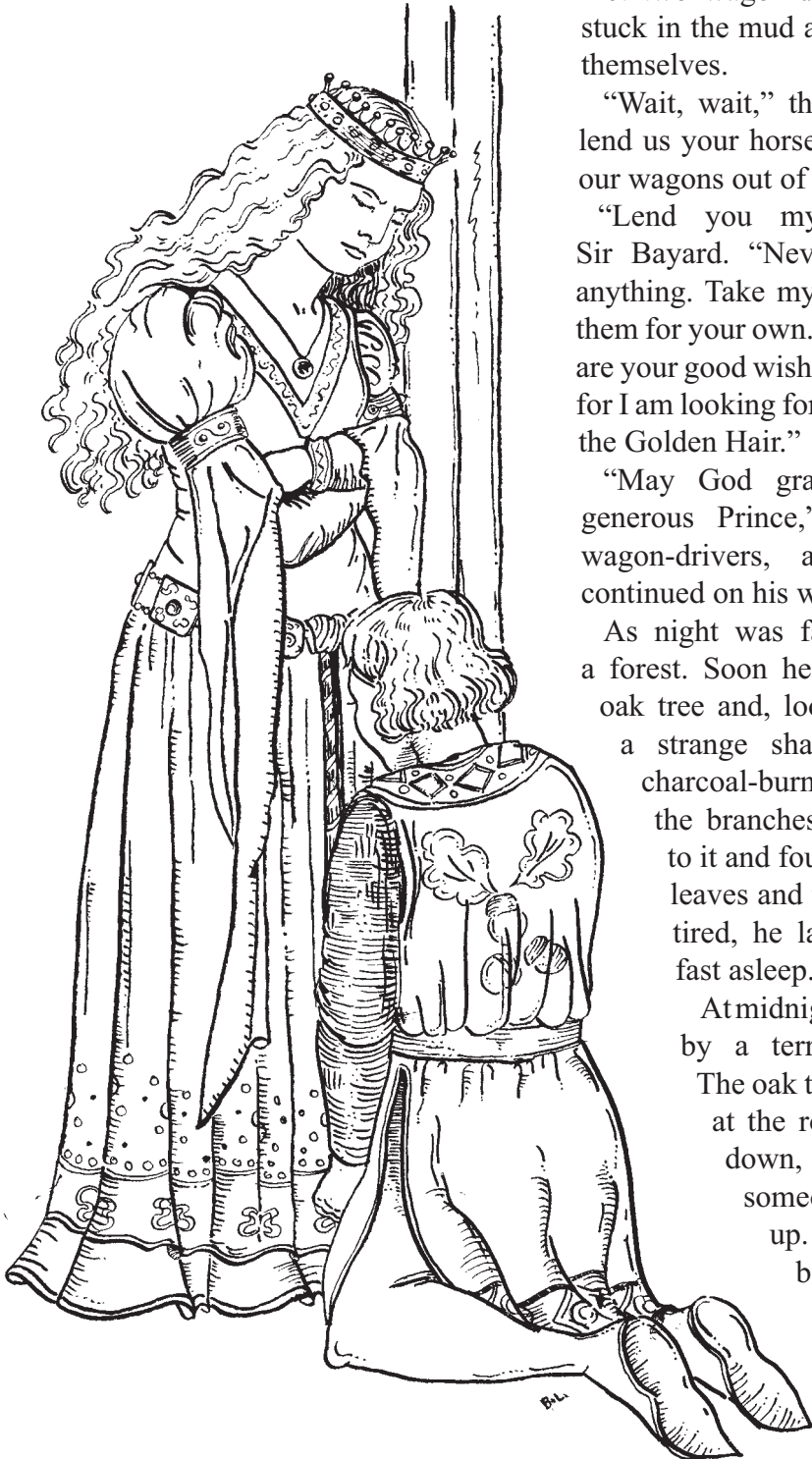
Izanik told his master what he had seen, and all Sir Bayard’s fears were put to rest. He accepted the sow as his betrothed, and began to make preparations for the wedding. It was to take place in eight days, and during that time they were not to see each other. However, on the seventh day Sir Bayard could not restrain his curiosity any longer, and when night fell, he went to the stable, and looked through the keyhole.

He saw a beautiful princess, combing her golden hair, but she knew immediately that he was behind the door, and became very angry. She arose and came out to meet him, with all her ornaments shining and sparkling.

“Prince,” she cried, “you have broken your word. I can no longer be your wife. I must leave at once. If you wish to find me, my home is between the Black Sea and the Blue Sea, and it is joined to them by three chains of silver and three chains of gold. Farewell.”

So saying she disappeared. Sir Bayard was greatly distressed, but he decided to go after her without delay. He set out with two horses, leaving Izanik behind at the castle, and taking with him a purse full of money.

After a few days the purse was empty, for Sir Bayard had once again given all his gold away to the beggars he met along the road; now he had nothing left but his two horses. One day, when he was riding up a hill, he



met two wagon-drivers, who were stuck in the mud and could not free themselves.

“Wait, wait,” they cried. “Please lend us your horses, so we can pull our wagons out of the mud.”

“Lend you my horses?” said Sir Bayard. “Never. I never lend anything. Take my horses and keep them for your own. All I ask in return are your good wishes for my success; for I am looking for the Princess with the Golden Hair.”

“May God grant you success, generous Prince,” cried the two wagon-drivers, and Sir Bayard continued on his way.

As night was falling he entered a forest. Soon he came to a great oak tree and, looking up, he saw a strange shape, very like a charcoal-burner’s hut, amongst the branches. He climbed up to it and found a bed made of leaves and twigs. Being very tired, he lay down and fell fast asleep.

At midnight he was awoken by a terrible commotion.

The oak tree was trembling at the roots and, looking down, he saw that someone was climbing up. Quickly, he hid beneath the bed and the next moment a giant over twenty feet high, entered

the hut. He seemed very pleased, and rubbed his hands, and chuckled to himself.

“I have never had such a good day’s work,” he said. “Just fancy, a pair of boots that travel a hundred leagues at a stride.”

The giant lay down on the bed of dry leaves, but before he had been asleep an hour, a second giant arrived, even larger than the first.

“It smells of a mortal man in here,” he said.

“Be quiet, and let me sleep,” mumbled the first giant. The second giant lay down on the bed, and Sir Bayard heard him mutter:

“I have not wasted my day; I have found a cloak that makes the wearer invisible, and allows him to see everything.”

The young man wisely remained beneath the bed, for soon a third giant, even larger than the others, came bursting into the hut.

“What luck! What luck!” he cried, “I have taken a sword that can slay five hundred men at a stroke.”

“Tell us about it tomorrow,” said the other giants. “Right now we want to sleep.”

All three giants fell asleep, and Sir Bayard crept out, picked up the boots, the cloak, and the sword, and slipped quietly down the tree. He put on the wonderful boots, and by daybreak he was far away, for with each stride he travelled a hundred leagues.

He found himself upon the vast heath of Menéieu Gad, which stretched on for a thousand leagues, and was free from all inhabitants. However, at last he caught sight of a little cottage, whose roof was so low that it seemed on a level with the ground. He was very hungry, so he went in.

He was met by an old woman. She was bent with age, her face was covered with wrinkles, and she had a beard that reached to her waist. She was stirring a steaming cauldron of Ioud silet (oat gruel).

“Good morning Mam goh (grandmother),” he said. “I have not eaten for eight days. May I have some of that delicious gruel?”

“Eat, my son,” said the old woman. “I always pity those in need. But tell me what you are doing in this lonely place.”

“I am looking for the home of the Princess with the Golden Hair,” said Sir Bayard. “It lies between the Black Sea and the Blue Sea. Do you know where it is, Grandmother?”

“No,” replied the old woman. “I am two hundred years old, and I have never heard of such a place. However, I have a sister who is three hundred years older than I am. She lives a thousand leagues from here, on the heath of Millebroches. Tell her that you are my son, for then you will receive a

good welcome. Perhaps she will be able to help you. And remember – be careful of her sons, for they have bad tempers.”

The next day the Prince travelled to the home of the second old lady, and found her preparing a meal for her sons.

“Good day, Aunt,” he cried. “I bring you news of your sister.”

“My sister?” said the old woman. “It is a hundred years since I heard any news of her. As you are her child, you are welcome here.”

Sir Bayard ate and drank, and then lay down to sleep at the bottom of a large wardrobe. Before long he was awoken by the arrival of January, the old woman’s eldest son. He was a giant, over fifteen feet tall.

“I can smell a mortal man,” he grumbled.

“Yes, indeed,” said his mother. “It is your cousin, come to visit you. You will not eat him now, I hope.”

“My cousin? I am glad to hear it. Let him sleep on.”

An hour later the second son, February, arrived, and was given the same explanation. At midnight, the third son, whose name was March, entered the house. He was the strongest and fiercest of them all, and he rushed at the wardrobe crying:

“A man – I must taste the flesh of a mortal man!”

He broke down the door, and had taken hold of the poor prince, when the old woman called to him.

“For shame – would you eat your own flesh and blood? That young man is your cousin.”

“Why didn’t you tell me so before?” said the giant. “I could have done a great wrong to the family.”

Henceforward the giants and the young man were the best of friends. They talked of their plans and travels, and one day January asked Sir Bayard what he intended to do when he left that place.

“I am looking for the home of the Princess with the Golden Hair,” said Sir Bayard. “But I do not know where it is.”

“That is easy,” said March, in his rough voice. “I am King of the birds, and one of them is bound to know the way.”

With that he blew upon a whistle, and birds came flying from every direction.

“Do you know the way to the castle of the Princess with the Golden Hair?” asked March.

“No, Sire, we do not,” they all replied.

Just then an old jay came flying up, and began to apologise for his lateness.

“Please forgive me,” he panted, “but I was at the marriage of the Princess with the Golden Hair, between the Black Sea and the Blue Sea.”

“Take us there at once,” commanded March. “And you, cousin, climb onto my back.”

Sir Bayard obeyed, and in a moment they passed over land and sea and came to the island of the Princess.

“I will leave you here, cousin,” said March. “Good luck, and farewell.”

Sir Bayard put on the invisible cloak and entered the palace. He soon found the Princess preparing for the wedding, with her nine ladies-in-waiting standing round her.

“Ah, Sir Bayard, dear Sir Bayard,” she murmured sadly. “Why do you not come to rescue me?”

“I am here, my love,” said Sir Bayard, removing the cloak. “And so long as we live, we need never part again.”

“Alas,” said the Princess. “But what of my husband to be, the King of Turkey? He will slay you when he finds you, for he is very cruel.”

“I do not fear him,” said the young man. “Let him come.”

As he said these words, the King of Turkey entered the room. He flew into a rage, at the sight of a young man in the presence of his bride, but in the twinkling of an eye Sir Bayard slew him, and all who tried to fight him, with his wonderful sword.

The Prince then married the Princess with the Golden Hair, and gave one of her ladies-in-waiting to his servant, Izanik. He ruled over his subjects wisely and well, and the people continued to remember him for many years.

Told by Joseph Jégouzo, from Melrand