

GRIM FAIRY TALES

E. V. STONE

With Illustrations by David Marais



ONCE UPON A TIME, long, long ago, there lived in Egypt a Pharaoh who had a Bright Idea. He would sit looking out of his palace of a morning and see the long lines of toiling slaves, all busy making bricks without straw, and it distressed him greatly to see how they were discomforted by the flies. Accordingly, being a very benevolent despot and having the welfare of his slaves at heart, he gave orders that henceforward all taskmasters were to carry whips.

The slaves seemed a trifle anxious about this and sent a deputation to Pharaoh to point out that it would be cruel to whip them to work. Pharaoh was very indignant and very upset that the slaves should ever have thought that such was his intention. "Why," he said, "you poor ungrateful wretches, the whips won't be used to whip you. They are for swatting t'ie flies as they land on your backs."



LONG, long ago, before democratic government rendered oppression and injustice out of date, and monarchs could be as lazy and as cruel and as greedy as they liked, there lived in the State of Anaesthesia a King Who Wished Nobody Any Ill. His only weakness (and surely we are all allowed to have just one vice) was an incurable reluctance to undertake any disagreeable tasks or hard work of any nature.

Now because he suffered from incurable laziness and because he was a King Who Wished Nobody Any Ill, he appointed a Grand Vizier to look after his kingdom for him and bade him be sure to provide a way for people to make petitions if they thought they were unfairly treated.

The Grand Vizier was a very wise man, and realizing he was only human and that he might just possibly not be completely impartial in cases where people disagreed with him, he decided to appoint a Lord High Commissioner of Complaints, who was to be quite independent of the Government. His next task was to find a very wise man in the kingdom to whom he could entrust this very responsible task, and this he found to be extremely difficult. At last he realized that there was really only one man in the land who could be relied upon to make the right decisions, and that was himself. Accordingly, he offered himself the post, which he thereupon reluctantly accepted.

The wisdom of his choice was apparent to all, for during the term of his office, only one complaint was ever lodged, until the next Government took over after the Revolution.



IN THE bad old days, when dragons roamed the countryside terrorizing the inhabitants, there lived a brave knight called Sir Quester de Politico, and upon him did the people rely to deliver them from this terrible scourge.

Now Sir Quester was a very brave knight, but he had one serious drawback—his sword was very, very blunt and stubbornly refused to be sharpened. For this reason he had to rely upon

his brains more than his sword, and he determined to outwit the dragon.

Making his plans with great cunning, he requested that the inhabitants of the country supply him with five very pretty damsels and at least one princess. These being willingly supplied by the grateful fellow-countrymen, he set about to win the dragon's confidence by chaining each of the damsels in turn to a rock, just outside the dragon's cave. On the sixth and fateful occasion, he tied the Princess to a rock a little further away, and then, greatly daring, went to call the dragon from his lair. Sir Quester's wonderful strategy was absolutely successful—the dragon followed very closely behind him, saliva splashing from time to time on the rocky path that led them to their goal. Now came the fateful moment. The gallant knight intended to swing suddenly round and jab his sword in the eye of the dragon before the monster could breathe out one death-dealing flame. But, alas, to his dismay, he discovered that his sword had melted in the heat of the dragon's breath, on the way up.

But the story ended very happily, because the dragon was really rather a jolly old sport and was grateful to the knight for all the free feeds. So when he had eaten the Princess, he let the knight climb on his back and gave him a free lift to the frontier.



The custom which distinguished the inhabitants of Schizophrenia from all neighbouring countries, was that of boiling all mothers-in-law on the first anniversary of their daughters' wedding. Such had been their tradition from time immemorial, and although there had been an odd occasional suggestion by a few radically-minded people (mainly mothers-in-law) that the law be changed, no-one had ever taken the matter up seriously, until one day the Government of Schizophrenia introduced a Bill to have mothers-in-law boiled on the wedding-day itself.

The Parliamentary Opposition suddenly made a most unreasonable outcry, and various people (notably mothers whose daughters were engaged) organized protest marches and held mass meetings. Neighbouring states also disapproved, and there was talk of economic sanctions.

At the crucial debate in the House, tempers ran high, and there were even rash accusations of cruelty. Towards the end of the debate, it even seemed as if the Opposition might win the day. However, in his winding-up speech for the Government, the Prime Minister reminded the House of two things that everyone had forgotten, that the Government was only extending the accepted principle of former Governments and that the boiling of mothers-in-law was part of the Schizophrenian way of life. Of course, the Opposition realized that there was no answer to that, and perceiving how unpatriotic they had been to oppose the measure at all, allowed the Bill to become law without the formality of a division.

