

The Husband of Aglaes

Table of Contents

The Husband of Aglaes.....1

The Husband of Aglaes

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

IN Rome some time dwelt a mighty emperor named Philominus, who had one only daughter, who was fair and gracious in the sight of every man, who had to name Aglaes. There was also in the emperor's palace a gentle knight that loved dearly this lady. It befell after on a day that this knight talked with this lady, and secretly uttered his desire to her. Then she said courteously, "Seeing you have uttered to me the secrets of your heart, I will likewise for your love utter to you the secrets of my heart: and truly I say, that above all other I love you best." Then said the knight, "I purpose to visit the Holy Land, and therefore give me your troth, that this seven years you shall take no other man, but only for my love to tarry for me so long, and if I come not again by this day seven years, then take what man you like best. And likewise I promise you that within this seven years I will take no wife." Then said she, "This covenant pleaseth me well." When this was said, each of them was betrothed to other, and then this knight took his leave of the lady, and went to the Holy Land.

Shortly after, the emperor treated with the king of Hungary for the marriage of his daughter. Then came the king of Hungary to the emperor's palace, and when he had seen his daughter, he liked marvelous well her beauty and her behavior, so that the emperor and the king were accorded in all things as touching the marriage, upon the condition that the damsel would consent. Then called the emperor the young lady to him, and said, "O, my fair daughter, I have provided for thee, that a king shall be thy husband, if thou list consent; therefore tell me what answer thou wilt give to this." Then said she to her father, "It pleaseth me well; but one thing, dear father, I entreat of you, if it might please you to grant me: I have vowed to keep my virginity, and not to marry these seven years; therefore, dear father, I beseech you for all the love that is between your gracious fatherhood and me, that you name no man to be my husband till these seven years be ended, and then I shall be ready in all things to fulfill your will." Then said the emperor, "Sith it is so that thou hast thus vowed, I will not break thy vow; but when these seven years be expired, thou shalt have the king of Hungary to thy husband."

Then the emperor sent forth his letters to the king of Hungary, praying him if it might please him to stay seven years for the love of his daughter, and then he should speed without fail. Herewith the king was pleased and content to stay the prefixed day.

And when the seven years were ended, save a day, the young lady stood in her chamber window, and wept sore, saying, "Woe and alas, as to-morrow my love promised to be with me again from the Holy Land; and also the king of Hungary to-morrow will be here to marry me, according to my father's promise; and if my love comes not at a certain hour, then am I utterly deceived of the inward love I bear to him."

When the day came, the king hasted toward the emperor, to marry his daughter, and was royally arrayed in purple. And while the king was riding on his way, there came a knight riding on his way, who said, "I am of the empire of Rome, and now am lately come from the Holy Land, and am ready to do you the best service I can." And as they rode talking by the way, it began to rain so fast that all the king's apparel was sore wet. Then said the knight, "My lord, ye have done foolishly, for as much as ye brought not with you your house." Then said the king: "Why speakest thou so? My house is large and broad, and made of stones and mortar; how should I bring then with me my house? Thou speakest like a fool." When this was said, they rode on till they came to a great deep water, and the king smote his horse with his spurs, and leapt into the water, so that he was almost drowned. When the knight saw this, and was over on the other side of the water without peril, he said to the king, "Ye were in peril, and therefore ye did foolishly, because ye brought not with you your bridge." Then said the king, "Thou speakest

The Husband of Aglaes

strangely: my bridge is made of lime and stone, and containeth in quality more than half a mile; how should I then bear with me my bridge? therefore thou speakest foolishly." "Well," said the knight, "my foolishness may turn you to wisdom." When the king had ridden a little farther, he asked the knight what time of day it was. Then said the knight, "If any man hath list to eat, it is time of the day to eat. Wherefore, my lord, pray take a modicum with me, for that is no dishonor to you, but great honor to me before the states of this empire." Then said the king, "I will gladly eat with thee." They sat both down in a fair vine garden, and there dined together, both the king and the knight. And when dinner was done, and that the king had washed, the knight said unto the king, "My lord, ye have done foolishly, for that ye brought not with you your father and mother." Then said the king: "What sayest thou? My father is dead, and my mother is old, and may not travel; how should I then bring them with me? Therefore, to say the truth, a foolisher man than thou art did I never hear." Then said the knight, "Every work is praised at the end."

When the knight had ridden a little further, and nigh to the emperor's palace, he asked leave to go from him; for he knew a nearer way to the palace, to the young lady, that he might come first, and carry her away with him. Then said the king, "I pray thee tell me by what place thou purposest to ride?" Then said the knight: "I shall tell you the truth. This day seven years I left a net in a place, and now I purpose to visit it, and draw it to me, and if it be whole, then will I take it to me, and keep it as a precious jewel; if it be broken, then will I leave it." And when he had thus said, he took his leave of the king, and rode forth; but the king kept the broad highway.

When the emperor heard of the king's coming, he went toward him with a great company, and royally received him, causing him to shift his wet clothes, and to put on fresh apparel. And when the emperor and the king were set at meat, the emperor welcomed him with all the cheer and solace that he could. And when he had eaten, the emperor asked tidings of the king. "My lord," said he, "I shall tell you what I have heard this day by the way: there came a knight to me, and reverently saluted me; and anon after there fell a great rain, and greatly spoiled my apparel. And anon the knight said, 'Sir, ye have done foolishly, for that ye brought not with you your house.'" Then said the emperor, "What clothing had the knight on?" "A cloak," quoth the king. Then said the emperor, "Sure that was a wise man, for the house whereof he spake was a cloak, and therefore he said to you that you did foolishly, because had you come with your cloak, then your clothes had not been spoiled with rain." Then said the king: "When he had ridden a little farther, we came to a deep water, and I smote my horse with my spurs, and I was almost drowned, but he rid through the water without any peril. Then said he to me, 'You did foolishly, for that you brought not with you your bridge.'" "Verily," said the emperor, "he said truth, for he called the squire the bridge, that should have ridden before you, and assayed the deepness of the water." Then said the king: "We rode further, and at the last he prayed me to dine with him. And when he had dined, he said, I did unwisely, because I brought not with me my father and mother." "Truly," said the emperor, "he was a wise man, and saith wisely: for he called your father and mother, bread and wine, and other victual." Then said the king: "We rode farther, and anon after he asked me leave to go from me, and I asked earnestly whither he went; and he answered again, and said, 'This day seven years I left a net in a private place, and now I will ride to see it; and if it be broken and torn, then I leave it, but if it be as I left it, then shall it be unto me right precious.'"

When the emperor heard this, he cried with a loud voice, and said, "O ye my knights and servants, come ye with me speedily unto my daughter's chamber, for surely that is the net of which he spake." And forthwith his knights and servants went unto his daughter's chamber, and found her not, for the aforesaid knight had taken her with him. And thus the king was deceived of the damsel, and he went home again to his own country ashamed.