

*CZECHOSLOVAK  
FAIRY TALES*

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# ***CZECHOSLOVAK FAIRY TALES***

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***Zloboha in Dobrunka's Clothes***

**PARKER FILLMORE**

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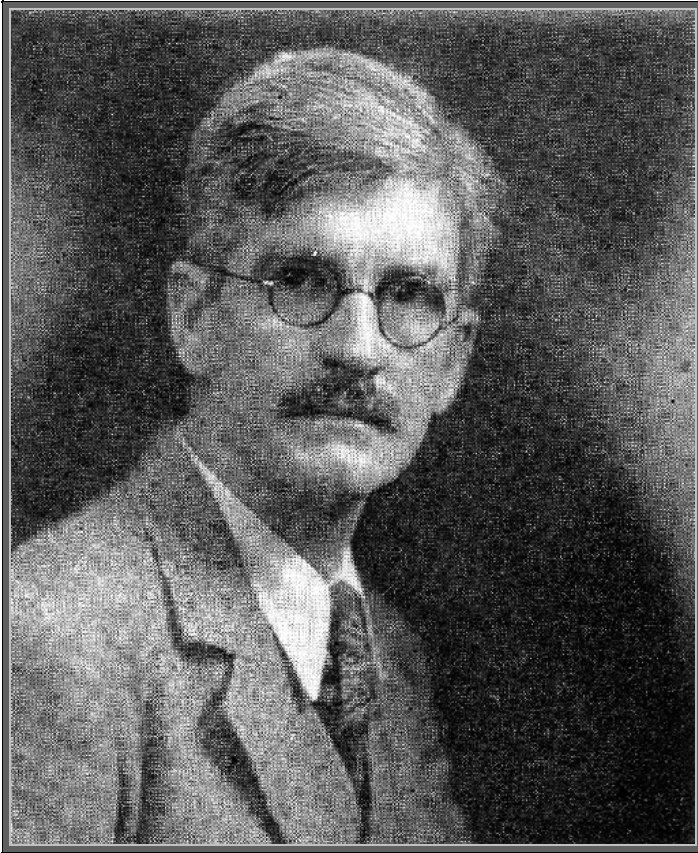
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## ABOUT THE BOOK & AUTHOR:

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***P***arker Fillmore, author of “*The Laughing Prince*”,

was a collector and editor of fairy tales from Czechoslovak tales and Slavic folklore. The *Laughing Prince* is classified as Slavic fairy tales, but the collection is also comprised of fairy tales and folklore for Bosnia, Bulgaria,

Croatia, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Russia, the Ukraine, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Poland and others.

This Book, His other work, “**Czechoslovak Fairy Tales**”, is another collection of fairy tales. Fillmore enjoyed the fairy tales he heard, and received a scholarship from patrons to spend time collecting these iconic tales that were part of the heritage of many he encountered in Czechoslovak and elsewhere. He referred to the tales as “charming little tales of sentiment” and called a few “full of stark simplicity and grim humor.” He also calls the tales his “own renderings” and not exactly translations, an important distinction to make. He does say, however, that he didn't invent new details, but instead made the stories his own.

### **Fairy tales by Parker Fillmore:**

#### **B**

- Beauty and the Horns - The Story of an Enchanted Maiden
- The Best Wish - The Story of Three Brothers and an Angel
- The Betrothal Gifts: The Story of Kubik and the Frog
- The Bird with the Golden Gizzard: The Story of Two Brothers

#### **D**

- The Dragon's Strength - The Story of the Youngest Prince Who Killed the Sparrow
- The Devil's Hide: The Story of the Boy Who Wouldn't Lose His Temper

**E**

- The Enchanted Peafowl - The Story of the Golden Apples, the Wicked Dragon, and the Magic Horse
- The Enchanted Grouse: The Story of Helli and the Little Locked Box

**F**

- The Forest Bride: The Story of a Little Mouse Who Was a Princess
- Familiar Faces I: Mary, Mary, So Contrary!
- Familiar Faces II: Jane, Jane Don't Complain!
- Familiar Faces III: Susan Walker, What a Talker!
- The Flaming Horse: The Story of a Country Where the Sun Never Shines

**G**

- The Girl in the Chest - The Story of the Third Sister Who was Brave and Good
- Grandfather's Eyes: The Story of Three Wicked Ye-zinkas
- The Golden Spinning-Wheel: The Story of King Dobromil and the Good Dobrunka
- The Golden Godmother: The Story of Poor Lucas
- The Golden Duck: The Story of Prince Raduz and the Faithful Ludmila

**K**

- Katcha and the Devil: The Story of a Clinging Vine

**L**

- The Laughing Prince: The Boy Who Could Talk Nonsense
- The Little Lame Fox - The Story of the Youngest Brother Who Found the Magic Grape-Vine and Married the Golden Maiden



- The Little Lame Fox - The Story of the Youngest Brother Who Found the Magic Grape-Vine and Married the Golden Maiden
- The Little Singing Frog - The Story of a Girl Whose Parents were Ashamed of Her
- Lord and Master - The Story of the Man Who Understood the Language of the Animals
- Log: The Story of the Hero Who Released the Sun
- Little Sister: The Story of Suyettar and the Nine Brothers
- Longshanks, Girth, and Keen: The Story of Three Wonderful Serving Men

**M**

- Mighty Mikko: The Story of a Poor Woodsman and a Grateful Fox
- Mikko the Fox - Adventure I: The Animals Take a Bite
- Mikko, the Fox - Adventure II: The Partners

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To

MISS MARJORIE RAHLSON

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# Preface

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### NOTE

This rendering of some of the old Czechoslovak tales

is not offered as a literal translation or a scholarly translation. I have retold the stories in a way that I hope will please American children. I have tried hard to keep the flavor of the originals but have taken the liberty of a short cut here and an elaboration there wherever these have seemed to me to make the English version clearer and more interesting.

I have gone to Czech, Slovakian, and Moravian sources. All these stories appear in many versions in the different folklore collections made by such native writers as Erben, Nemcova, Dobsinsky, Rimavsky, Benes-Trebizsky, Kulda. They represent the folk-tale in all stages of its development from the bald narrative of *The Bird with the Golden Gizzard* which Kulda reports with phonographic exactness, to Nemcova's more elaborate tale, *Prince Bayaya*, which is really a mosaic of two or three simpler stories. I have included *Katcha and the Devil* for the sake of its keen

humor, which is particularly Czech in character; *The Betrothal Gifts* to show how a story common to other countries is made most charmingly local by giving it a local background; *The Three Golden Hairs* to contrast it with a famous German variant which it seems to me is much inferior to the Slavic version; and several fine stories of the prince gone off on adventures which in common with the folk-tales of all Europe show a strong Oriental influence.

In the transliteration of proper names I have not followed consistently any one method, but for each individual name have made what seemed to be the best selection from the various possible spellings. Until transliteration from the Slavic languages has become standardized this, I am sure, is permissible and even advisable.

In the preparation of this volume I have made heavy draughts upon the scholarship and patience of my Czech friends, Mrs. Jan Matulka and Mr. Vladimir Jelinek. I beg them to accept my thanks. I am also deeply grateful to Mr. A. B. Koukol, who did me the favor of reading the final sheets. Lastly I wish to express my appreciation of the Webster Branch of the New York Public Library, which has gathered together what is probably the most complete collection of Czechoslovak literature in America, and one particularly rich in folklore and children's books.

**P. F.**

**August, 1919**

# LONGSHANKS, GIRTH, AND KEEN

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## THE STORY OF THREE WONDER- FUL SERVING MEN

### LONGSHANKS, GIRTH, AND KEEN

**T**HERE was once an aged king who had an only son.

One day he called the prince to him and said: “My dear son, you know that ripe fruit falls in order to make room for other fruit. This my old head is like ripe fruit and soon the sun will no longer shine upon it. Now before I die I should like to see you happily married. Get you a wife, my son.”

“I would, my father, that I could please you in this,” the prince answered, “but I know of no one who would make you a worthy daughter-in-law.”

The old king reached into his pocket, drew out a golden key, and handed it to the prince. He said:

“Go up into the tower to the very top. There look about you and when you have decided what you like best of all you see, come back and tell me.”

The prince took the key and at once mounted the tower. He had never before gone to the very top and he had never heard what was there. He went up and up until at last he saw a small iron door in the ceiling. He opened this with the golden key, pushed it back, and entered a large circular hall. The ceiling was blue and silver like the heavens on a bright night when the stars shine, and the floor was covered with a green silken carpet. There were twelve tall windows set in gold frames, and on the crystal glass of each window a beautiful young girl was pictured in glowing colors. Every one of them was a princess with a royal crown upon her head. As the prince looked at them it seemed to him that each was more lovely than the last, and for the life of him he knew not which was the loveliest. Then they began to move as if alive, and they smiled at the prince and nodded, and looked as if they were about to speak.

Suddenly the prince noticed that one of the twelve windows was covered with a white curtain. He pulled the curtain aside and there without any question was the most beautiful princess of them all, clothed in pure white, with a silver girdle and a crown of pearls. Her face was deathly pale and sad as the grave.

For a long time the prince stood before this picture in utter amazement and as he looked at it a pain seemed to enter his heart.

“This one I want for my bride,” he said aloud, “this one and no other.”

At these words the maiden bowed, flushed like a rose, and then instantly all the pictures disappeared.

When the prince told his father what he had seen and which maiden he had chosen, the old king was greatly troubled.

“My son,” he said, “you did ill to uncover what was covered and in declaring this, your choice, you have exposed yourself to a great danger. This maiden is in the power of a black magician who holds her captive in an iron castle. Of all who have gone to rescue her not one has ever returned. However, what’s done is done and you have given your word. Go, then, try what fortune has in store for you, and may Heaven bring you back safe and sound.”

So the prince bade his father farewell, mounted his horse, and rode forth to find his bride. His first adventure was to lose his way in a deep forest. He wandered about some time not knowing where to turn when suddenly he was hailed from behind with these words:

“Hey, there, master, wait a minute!”

He looked around and saw a tall man running toward him.

“Take me into your service, master,” the tall man said. “If you do you won’t regret it.”

“What is your name,” the prince asked, “and what can you do?”

“People call me Longshanks because I can stretch myself out. I’ll show you. Do you see a bird’s nest in the top of that tall fir? I’ll get it down for you and not by climbing the tree either.”

So saying he began to stretch out and his body shot up and up until he was as tall as the fir tree. He reached over and got the nest and then, in a shorter time than it had taken him to stretch out, he reduced himself to his natural size.

“You do your trick very well,” the prince said, “but just now a bird’s nest isn’t of much use to me. What I need is some one to show me the way out of this forest.”

“H’m,” Longshanks said, “that’s an easy enough matter.”

Again he began to stretch himself up and up and up until he was three times as tall as the highest pine in the forest. He looked around and said: “Over there, in that direction, is the nearest way out.”

Then he made himself small again, took the horse by the bridle, walked ahead, and in a short time they emerged from the forest.

A broad plain stretched out before them and beyond it they could see tall gray rocks that looked like the walls of a great city and mountains overgrown with forests.

Longshanks pointed off across the plain and said: "There, master, goes a comrade of mine who would be very useful to you. You ought to take him into your service too."

"Very well," said the prince, "call him here that I may find out what sort of a fellow he is."

"He is too far away to call," Longshanks said. "He wouldn't hear my voice and if he did he would be a long time in reaching us, for he has much to carry. I had better step over and get him myself."

As he said this, Longshanks stretched out and out until his head was lost in the clouds. He took two or three strides, reached his comrade, set him on his shoulder, and brought him to the prince.

The new man was heavily built and round as a barrel.

"Who are you?" the prince asked. "And what can you do?"

"I am called Girth," the man said. "I can widen myself."

"Let me see you do it," the prince said.

"Very well, master," said Girth, beginning to puff out, "I will. But take care! Ride off into the forest as fast as you can!"



The prince did not understand the warning, but he saw that Longshanks was in full flight, so he spurred his horse and galloped after him.

It was just as well he did, for in another moment Girth would have crushed both him and his horse, so fast did he spread out, so huge did he become. In a short time he filled the whole plain until it looked as though a mountain had fallen upon it.

When the plain was entirely covered, he stopped expanding, heaved a deep breath that shook the forest trees, and returned to his natural size.

“You made me run for my life!” the prince said. “I tell you I don’t meet a fellow like you every day! By all means join me.”

They went across the plain and as they neared the rocks they met a man whose eyes were bandaged with a handkerchief.

“Master,” said Longshanks, “there is my other comrade. Take him into your service, too, and I can tell you you won’t regret the bread he eats.”

“Who are you?” the prince asked. “And why do you keep your eyes bandaged? You can’t see where you’re going.”

“On the contrary, master, it is just because I see too well that I have to bandage my eyes. With bandaged eyes I

see as well as other people whose eyes are uncovered. When I take the handkerchief off, my sight is so keen it goes straight through everything. When I look at anything intently it catches fire, and if it can't burn, it crumbles to pieces. On account of my sight I'm called Keen."

He untied the handkerchief, turned to one of the rocks opposite, and gazed at it with glowing eyes. Soon the rock began to crumble and fall to pieces. In a few moments it was reduced to a heap of sand. In the sand something gleamed like fire. Keen picked it up and handed it to the prince. It was a lump of pure gold.

"Ha, ha!" said the prince. "You are a fine fellow and worth more than wages! I should be a fool not to take you into my service. Since you have such keen eyes, look and tell me how much farther it is to the Iron Castle and what is happening there now."

"If you rode there alone," Keen answered, "you might get there within a year, but with us to help you, you will arrive this very day. Our coming is not unexpected, either, for at this very moment they are preparing supper for us."

"What is the captive princess doing?"

"She is sitting in a high tower behind an iron grating. The magician stands on guard."

“If you are real men,” the prince cried, “you will all help me to free her.”

The three comrades promised they would.

They led the prince straight through the gray rocks by a defile which Keen made with his eyes, and on and on through high mountains and deep forests. Whatever obstacle was in the way one or another of the three comrades was able to remove it.

By late afternoon they had crossed the last mountain, had left behind them the last stretch of dark forest, and they saw looming up ahead of them the Iron Castle.

Just as the sun sank the prince and his followers crossed the drawbridge and entered the courtyard gate. Instantly the drawbridge lifted and the gate clanged shut.

They went through the courtyard and the prince put his horse in the stable, where he found a place all in readiness. Then the four of them marched boldly into the castle.

Everywhere—in the courtyard, in the stables, and now in the various rooms of the castle—they saw great numbers of richly clad men all of whom, masters and servants alike, had been turned to stone.

They went on from one room to another until they reached the banquet hall. This was brilliantly lighted and the table, with food and drink in abundance, was set for

four persons. They waited, expecting some one to appear, but no one came. At last, overpowered by hunger, they sat down and ate and drank most heartily.

After supper they began to look about for a place to sleep. It was then without warning that the doors burst open and the magician appeared. He was a bent old man with a bald head and a gray beard that reached to his knees. He was dressed in a long black robe and he had, instead of a belt, three iron bands about his waist.

He led in a beautiful lady dressed in white with a silver girdle and a crown of pearls. Her face was deathly pale and as sad as the grave. The prince recognized her instantly and sprang forward to meet her. Before he could speak, the magician raised his hand and said:

“I know why you have come. It is to carry off this princess. Very well, take her. If you can guard her for three nights so that she won't escape you, she is yours. But if she escapes you, then you and your men will suffer the fate of all those who have come before you and be turned into stone.”

Then when he had motioned the princess to a seat, he turned and left the hall.

The prince could not take his eyes from the princess, she was so beautiful. He tried to talk to her, asking her many questions, but she made him no answer. She might

have been marble the way she never smiled and never looked at any of them.

He seated himself beside her, determined to stay all night on guard in order to prevent her escape. For greater security Longshanks stretched himself out on the floor like a strap and wound himself around the room the whole length of the wall. Girth sat in the doorway and puffed himself out until he filled that space so completely that not even a mouse could slip through. Keen took his place by a pillar in the middle of the hall.

But, alas, in a few moments they all grew heavy with drowsiness and in the end slept soundly all night long.

In the morning in the early dawn the prince awoke and with a pain in his heart that was like a blow from a dagger, he saw that the princess was gone. Instantly he aroused his men and asked them what was to be done.

“It’s all right, master, don’t worry,” said Keen as he took a long look through the window. “I see her now. A hundred miles from here is a forest, in the midst of the forest an ancient oak, on the top of the oak an acorn. The princess is that acorn. Let Longshanks take me on his shoulders and we’ll go get her.”

Longshanks picked Keen up, stretched himself out, and set forth. He took ten miles at a stride and in the time it would take you or me to run around a cottage, here he

was back again with the acorn in his hand. He gave it to the prince.

“Drop it, master, on the floor.”

The prince dropped the acorn and instantly the princess appeared.

As the sun came over the mountain tops the doors slammed open and the magician entered. A crafty smile was on his face. But when he saw the princess the smile changed to a scowl, he growled in rage, and bang! one of the iron bands about his waist burst asunder. Then he took the princess by the hand and dragged her off.

That whole day the prince had nothing to do but wander about the castle and look at all the strange and curious things it contained. It seemed as if at some one instant all life had been arrested. In one hall he saw a prince who had been turned into stone while he was brandishing his sword. The sword was still uplifted. In another room there was a stone knight who was taken in the act of flight. He had stumbled on the threshold but he had not yet fallen. A serving man sat under the chimney eating his supper. With one hand he was reaching a piece of roast meat to his mouth. Days, months, perhaps years had gone by, but the meat had not yet touched his lips. There were many others, all of them still in whatever position they happened to be when the magician had cried: “Be ye turned into stone!”