

THE FAIR ONE WITH THE GOLDEN LOCKS

BY COMTESSE D'AULNOY

There was once a most beautiful and amiable princess who was called "The Fair One with Locks of Gold," for her hair shone brighter than gold, and flowed in curls down to her feet, her head was always encircled by a wreath of beautiful flowers, and pearls and diamonds.

A handsome, rich, young prince, whose territories joined to hers, was deeply in love with the reports he heard of her, and sent to demand her in marriage. The ambassador sent with proposals was most sumptuously attired, and surrounded by lackeys on beautiful horses, as well as charged with every kind of compliment, from the anxious prince, who hoped he would bring the princess back with him; but whether it was that she was not that day in a good humour, or that she did not like the speeches made by the ambassador, I don't know, but she returned thanks to his master for the honour he intended her, and said she had no inclination to marry. When the ambassador arrived at the king's chief city, where he was expected with great impatience, the people were extremely afflicted to see him return without the Fair One with the Locks of Gold; and the king wept like a child. There was a youth at



court whose beauty outshone the sun, the gracefulness of whose person was not to be equalled, and for his gracefulness and wit, he was called Avenant: the king loved him, and indeed every body except the envious. Avenant being one day in company with some persons, inconsiderately said, "If the king had sent me to the Fair One with Locks of Gold, I dare say I could have prevailed on her to return with me." These enviers of Avenant's prosperity immediately ran open mouthed to the king, saying, "Sir sir, what does your majesty think Avenant says? He boasts that if you had sent him to the Fair One with the Golden Hair, he could have brought her with him; which shows he is so vain as to think himself handsomer than your majesty and that her love for him would have made her follow him wherever he went." This put the king into a violent rage. "What!" said he, "does this youngster make a jest at my misfortune, and pretend to set himself above me? Go and put him immediately in my great tower, and there let him starve to death." The king's guards went and seized Avenant who thought no more of what he had said, dragged him to prison, and used him in the most cruel manner.

One day when he was almost quite spent, he said to himself, fetching a deep sigh, "Wherein can I have offended the king? He has not a more faithful subject than myself; nor have I ever done any thing to displease him." The king happened at that time to pass by the tower; and stopped to hear him, notwithstanding the persuasions of those that were with him; "Hold your peace," replied the king, "and let me hear him out." Which having done, and being greatly moved by his sufferings, he opened the door of the tower, and called him by his name. Upon which Avenant came forth in a sad condition, and, throwing himself at the king's feet, "What have I done, sir," said he, "that your majesty should use me thus severely?" "Thou hast ridiculed me and my ambassador," replied the king; "and hast said, that if I had sent thee to the Fair One with Locks of Gold, thou couldst have brought her with thee." "It is true, sir," replied Avenant, "for I would have so thoroughly convinced her of your transcending qualities, that it should not have been in her power to have denied me; and this, surely, I said in the name of your majesty." The king found in reality he had done no injury; so, he took him away with him, repenting heartily of the wrong he had done him. After having given him an excellent supper, the king sent for him into his cabinet. "Avenant," said he, "I still love the Fair One with Locks of Gold; I have a mind to send thee to her, to try whether thou canst succeed," Avenant replied, he was ready to obey his majesty in all things, and would depart the very next morning. "Hold," said the king, "I will

provide thee first with a most sumptuous equipage." "There is no necessity for that," answered Avenant; "I need only a good horse and your letters of credence." Upon this the king embraced him; being overjoyed to see him so soon ready.

It was upon a Monday morning that he took leave of the king and his friends. Being on his journey by break of day, and entering into a spacious meadow, a fine thought came into his head; he alighted immediately, and seated himself by the bank of a little stream that watered one side of the meadow, and wrote the sentiment down in his pocket book. After he had done writing, he looked about him every way, being charmed with the beauties of the place, and suddenly perceived a large gilded carp, which stirred a little, and that was all it could do, for having attempted to catch some little flies, it had leaped so far out of the water, as to throw itself upon the grass, where it was almost dead, not being able to recover its natural element. Avenant took pity on the poor creature, and though it was a fish-day, and he might have carried it away for his dinner, he took it up, and gently put it again into the river, where the carp, feeling the refreshing coolness of the water, began to rejoice, and sunk to the bottom; but soon rising up again, brisk and gay, to the side of the river; "Avenant," said the carp, "I thank you for the kindness you have done me; had it not been for you, I had died; but you have saved my life, and I will reward you." After this short compliment, the carp darted itself to the bottom of the water, leaving Avenant not a little surprised at its wit and great civility.

Another day, as he was pursuing his journey, he saw a crow in great distress: being pursued by a huge eagle, he took his bow, which he always carried abroad with him, and aiming at the eagle, let fly an arrow, which pierced him through the body, so that he fell down dead; which the crow seeing, came in an ecstasy of joy, and perched upon a tree. "Avenant," said the crow, "you have been extremely generous to succour me, who am but a poor wretched crow; but I am not ungrateful and will do you as good a turn." Avenant admired the wit of the crow, and continuing his journey, he entered into a wood so early one morning, that he could scarcely see his way, where he heard an owl crying out like an owl in despair. So looking about every where, he at length came to a place where certain fowlers had spread their nets in the night-time to catch little birds. "What pity 'tis," said he, "men are only made to torment one another, or else to persecute poor animals who never do them any harm!" So saying, he drew his knife, cut the cords, and set the owl at liberty; who, before he took wing, said, "Avenant, the fowlers are coming, I should have been taken, and must have died, without your assistance: I have a grateful heart, and will remember it."

These were the three most remarkable adventures that befell Avenant in his journey; and when he arrived at the end of it, he washed himself, combed and powdered his hair, and put on a suit of cloth of gold: which having done, he put a rich embroidered scarf about his

neck, with a small basket, wherein was a little dog which he was very fond of. And Avenant was so amiable, and did every thing with so good a grace, that when he presented himself at the gate of the palace, all the guards paid him great respect, and every one strove who should first give notice to the Fair One with Locks of Gold, that Avenant, the neighbouring king's ambassador, demanded audience. The princess on hearing the name of Avenant, said, "It has a pleasing sound, and I dare say he is agreeable and pleases every body; and she said to her maids of honour, go fetch me my rich embroidered gown of blue satin, dress my hair, and bring my wreaths of fresh flowers: let me have my high shoes, and my fan, and let my audience chamber and throne be clean, and richly adorned; for I would have him every where with truth say, that I am really the Fair One with Locks of Gold." Thus all her women were employed to dress her as a queen should be. At length, she went to her great gallery of looking-glasses, to see if any thing was wanting; after which she ascended her throne of gold, ivory, and ebony, the fragrant smell of which was superior to the choicest balm. She also commanded her maids of honour to take their instruments, and play to their own singing so sweetly that none should be disgusted.

Avenant was conducted into the chamber of audience, where he stood so transported with admiration, that, as he afterwards said, he had scarcely power to open his lips. At length, however, he took courage, and made his speech wonderfully well;

wherein he prayed the princess not to let him be so unfortunate as to return without her. "Gentle Avenant," said she, "all the reasons you have laid before me, are very good, and I assure you, I would rather favour you than any other; but you must know, about a month since, I went to take the air by the side of a river, with my maids of honour; as I was pulling off my glove, I pulled a ring from my finger, which by accident fell into the river. This ring I valued more than my whole kingdom; whence you may judge how much I am afflicted by the loss of it. And I have made a vow never to hearken to any proposals of marriage, unless the ambassador who makes them shall also bring my ring. This is the present which you have to make me; otherwise you may talk your heart out, for months and even years shall never change my resolution." When he returned to his lodgings, he went to bed supperless; and his little dog, who was called Cabriole, made a fasting night of it too, and went and lay down by his master; who did nothing all night but sigh and lament, saying, "How can I find a ring that fell into a great river a month ago? It would be folly to attempt it. The princess enjoined me this task, merely because she knew it was impossible," he continued, greatly afflicted; which Cabriole observing, said, "My dear master, pray do not despair of your good fortune; for you are too good to be unhappy. Therefore, when it is day, let us go to the river side." Avenant made no answer, but gave his dog two little cuffs with his hand, and being overwhelmed with grief, fell asleep.

But when Cabriole perceived it was broad day, he fell a barking so loud that he waked

his master. "Rise, sir," said he, "put on your clothes, and let us go and try our fortune." Avenant took his little dog's advice; got up, and dressed himself, went down into the garden, and out of the garden he walked insensibly to the river side, with his hat over his eyes, and his arms across, thinking of nothing but taking his leave; when all on a sudden he heard a voice call, "Avenant, Avenant!" upon which he looked around him, but seeing nothing, he concluded it was an illusion, and was proceeding in his walk; but he presently heard himself called again. "Who calls me?" said he; Cabriole, who was very little and looked closely into the water, cried out, "Never believe me, if it is not a gilded carp." Immediately the carp appeared, and with an audible voice said, "Avenant, you saved my life in the poplar meadow, where I must have died without your assistance; and now I am come to requite your kindness. Here, my dear Avenant, here is the ring which the Fair One with Locks of Gold dropped into the river." Upon which he stooped and took it out of the carp's mouth; to whom he returned a thousand thanks. And now, instead of returning home, he went directly to the palace with little Cabriole, who skipped about, and wagged his tail for joy, that he had persuaded his master to walk by the side of the river. The princess being told that Avenant desired an audience: "Alas," said she, "the poor youth has come to take his leave of me! He has considered what I enjoined him as impossible, and is returning to his master." But Avenant being admitted, presented her the

ring, saying, "Madam, behold I have executed your command; and now, I hope, you will receive my master for your royal consort." When she saw her ring, and that it was noways injured, she was so amazed that she could hardly believe her eyes. "Surely, courteous Avenant," said she, "you must be favoured by some fairy; for naturally this is impossible." "Madam," said he, "I am acquainted with no fairy; but I was willing to obey your command." "Well, then, seeing you have so good a will," continued she, "you must do me another piece of service, without which I will never marry. There is a certain prince who lives not far from hence, whose name is Galifron, and whom nothing would serve but that he must needs marry me. He declared his mind to me, with most terrible menaces, that if I denied him, he would enter my kingdom with fire and sword; but you shall judge whether I would accept his proposal: he is a giant, as high as a steeple; he devours men as an ape eats chestnuts; when he goes into the country, he carries cannons in his pocket, to use instead of pistols; and when he speaks aloud he deafens the ears of those that stand near him. I answered him, that I did not choose to marry, and desired him to excuse me. Nevertheless, he has not ceased to persecute me, and has put an infinite number of my subjects to the sword: therefore, before all other things you must fight him, and bring me his head."

Avenant was somewhat startled by this proposal; but, having considered it awhile, "Well, madam," said he, "I will fight this Gali-

fron; I believe I shall be vanquished; but I will die like a man of courage." The princess was astonished at his intrepidity, and said a thousand things to dissuade him from it, but all in vain. At length he arrived at Galifron's castle, the roads all the way being strewed with the bones and carcasses of men which the giant had devoured, or cut in pieces. It was not long before Avenant saw the monster approach, and he immediately challenged him; but there was no occasion for this, for he lifted his iron mace, and had certainly beat out the gentle Avenant's brains at the first blow, had not a crow at that instant perched upon the giant's head, and with his bill pecked out both his eyes. The blood trickled down his face, whereat he grew desperate, and laid about him on every side; but Avenant took care to avoid his blows, and gave him many great wounds with his sword, which he pushed up to the very hilt; so that the giant fainted, and fell down with loss of blood. Avenant immediately cut off his head; and while he was in an ecstasy of joy, for his good success, the crow perched upon a tree, and said, "Avenant, I did not forget the kindnesses I received at your hands, when you killed the eagle that pursued me; I promised to make you amends, and now I have been as good as my word." "I acknowledge your kindness, Mr. Crow," replied Avenant; "I am still your debtor, and your servant." So saying, he mounted his courser, and rode away with the giant's horrid head. When he arrived at the city, every body crowded after him, cry-

ing out, "Long live the valiant Avenant, who has slain the cruel monster!" so that the princess, who heard the noise, and trembling for fear she should have heard of Avenant's death, durst not inquire what was the matter. But presently after, she saw Avenant enter with the giant's head; at the sight of which she trembled, though there was nothing to fear. "Madam," said he, "behold your enemy is dead; and now, I hope, you will no longer refuse the king my master." "Alas!" replied the Fair One with Locks of Gold, "I must still refuse him, unless you can find means to bring me some of the water of the gloomy cave. Not far from hence," continued she, "there is a very deep cave, about six leagues in compass; the entrance into which is guarded by two dragons. The dragons dart fire from their mouths and eyes; and when you have got into this cave, you will meet with a very deep hole, into which you must go down, and you will find it full of toads, adders and serpents. At the bottom of this hole there is a kind of cellar, through which runs the fountain of beauty and health. This is the water I must have; its virtues are wonderful; for the fair, by washing in it, preserve their beauty; and the deformed it renders beautiful; if they are young, it preserves them always youthful; and if old it makes them young again. Now judge you, Avenant, whether I will ever leave my kingdom without carrying some of this water along with me." "Madam," said he, "you are so beautiful, that this water will be of no use to you; but I am an unfortunate ambas-

sador, whose death you seek. However, I will go in search of what you desire, though I am certain never to return."

At length he arrived at the top of a mountain, where he sat down to rest himself; giving his horse liberty to feed, and Cabriole to run after the flies. He knew that the gloomy cave was not far off, and looked about to see whether he could discover it; and at length he perceived a horrid rock as black as ink, whence issued a thick smoke; and immediately after he spied one of the dragons casting forth fire from his jaws and eyes; his skin all over yellow and green, with prodigious claws and a long tail rolled up in an hundred folds. Avenant, with a resolution to die in the attempt, drew his sword, and with the phial which the Fair One with Locks of Gold had given him to fill with the water of beauty, went towards the cave, saying to his little dog, "Cabriole, here is an end of me; I never shall be able to get this water, it is so well guarded by the dragons; therefore when I am dead, fill this phial with my blood, and carry it to my princess, that she may see what her severity has cost me: then go to the king my master and give him an account of my misfortunes." While he was saying this, he heard a voice call "Avenant, Avenant!" "Who calls me?" said he; and presently he espied an owl in the hole of an old hollow tree, who, calling him again, said, "You rescued me from the fowler's net, where I had been assuredly taken, had you not delivered me. I promised to make you amends, and now the time

is come; give me your phial; I am acquainted with all the secret inlets into the gloomy cave, and will go and fetch you the water of beauty." Avenant most gladly gave the phial, and the owl, entering without any impediment into the cave, filled it, and in less than a quarter of an hour returned with it well stopped. Avenant was overjoyed at his good fortune, gave the owl a thousand thanks, and returned with a merry heart to the city. Being arrived at the palace, he presented the phial to the Fair One with Locks of Gold, who had then nothing further to say. She returned Avenant thanks, and gave orders for every thing that was requisite for her departure: after which she set forward with him. The Fair One with Locks of Gold thought Avenant very amiable, and said to him sometimes upon the road, "If you had been willing, I could have made you a king; and then we need not have left my kingdom." But Avenant replied, "I would not have been guilty of such a piece of treachery to my master for all the kingdoms of the earth; though I must acknowledge your beauties are more resplendent than the sun."

At length they arrived at the king's chief city, who understanding that the Fair One with Locks of Gold was arrived, he went forth to meet her, and made her the richest presents in the world. The nuptials were solemnized with such demonstrations of joy, that nothing else was discoursed of. But the Fair One with Locks of Gold, who loved Avenant in her heart, was never pleased but when she was in

his company, and would be always speaking in his praise: "I had never come hither," said she to the king, "had it not been for Avenant, who, to serve me, has conquered impossibilities; you are infinitely obliged to him; he procured me the water of beauty and health; by which I shall never grow old, and shall always preserve my health and beauty." The enviers of Avenant's happiness, who heard the queen's words, said to the king, "Were your majesty inclined to be jealous, you have reason enough to be so, for the queen is desperately in love with Avenant." "Indeed," said the king, "I am sensible of the truth of what you tell me; let him be put in the great tower, with fetters upon his feet and hands." Avenant was immediately seized. However, his little dog Cabriole never forsook him, but cheered him the best he could, and brought him all the news of the court. When the Fair One with Locks of Gold was informed of his misfortunes, she threw herself at the king's feet, and all in tears besought him to release Avenant out of prison. But the more she besought him the more he was incensed, believing it was her affection that made her so zealous a suppliant in his behalf. Finding she could not prevail, she said no more to him, but grew very pensive and melancholy.

The king took it into his head that she did not think him handsome enough; so he resolved to wash his face with the water of beauty, in hopes that the queen would then conceive a greater affection for him than she

had. This water stood in a phial upon a table in the queen's chamber, where she had put it, that it might not be out of her sight. But one of the chambermaids going to kill a spider with her besom, by accident threw down the phial, and broke it, so that the water was lost. She dried it up with all the speed she could, and not knowing what to do, she bethought herself that she had seen a phial of clear water in the king's cabinet very like that she had broken. Without any more ado, therefore, she went and fetched that phial, and set it upon the table in place of the other. This water which was in the king's cabinet, was a certain water which he made use of to poison the great lords and princes of his court when they were convicted of any great crime; to which purpose, instead of cutting off their heads, or hanging them, he caused their faces to be rubbed with this water, which cast them into so profound a sleep that they never waked again. Now the king one evening took this phial, and rubbed his face well with the water, after which he fell asleep and died. Cabriole was one of the first that came to a knowledge of this accident, and immediately ran to inform Avenant of it who bid him go to the Fair One with Locks of Gold, and remind her of the poor prisoner. Cabriole slipped unperceived through the crowd, for there was a great noise and hurry at court upon the king's death; and getting to the queen, "Madam," said he, "remember poor Avenant." She presently called to mind the afflictions he had suffered for her sake, and his

fidelity. Without speaking a word, she went directly to the great tower, and took off the fetters from Avenant's feet and hands herself; after which, putting the crown upon his head, and the royal mantle about his shoulders, "Amiable Avenant," said she, "I will make you a sovereign prince, and take you for my consort." Avenant threw himself at her feet, and in terms the most passionate and respectful returned her thanks. Every body was overjoyed to have him for their king: the nuptials were the most splendid in the world; and the Fair One with Locks of Gold lived a long time with her beloved Avenant, both happy and contented in the enjoyment of each other.