

Translating

The Happy Prince By Oscar Wilde

De Gelukkige Prins
Oscar Wilde



(By Walter Crane)

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Introduction

A correctly chosen word, sentence or paragraph can be what makes a story so fascinating and timeless that years later people still marvel at it. On the other hand, when wrongly used, they can make a story remain hidden on forgotten bookshelves. A translator is responsible for keeping the magic of these words, sentences and paragraphs alive. I shall have to be this translator, who can amaze people with words, sentences and paragraphs in the same way the author originally did and who searched a long time to find the right words.

I decided to do a translation for my bachelor thesis and therefore I had to look for a story to translate. *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde was the first story that I considered translating but I had doubts that the story would be too easy to translate because of the writing style, so I decided to look further. However, after several other options I decided to go back to my first choice of *The Happy Prince*. There was something about the story that kept me in its grip and I kept looking at it over and over again. Even now, whenever I read the story again, I am amazed by its ability to lift my spirits.

The story of *The Happy Prince* revolves around someone who is trying to help the poor. Although the statue of the happy prince teaches us about giving, those in the city with high positions sadly remind us again of the ignorance and of the selfish people in the world.

Oscar Wilde

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born on October sixteenth 1854 in Dublin as the second child of William Robert Wilde and Jane Elgee. Both Oscar and his older brother Willie were sent to Portora Royal School where Wilde stayed until he won a scholarship and started attending Trinity College, Dublin. After Wilde won a second scholarship he started studying at Magdalen College, Oxford. During his study at Trinity College Wilde won the

Berkeley Gold Medal and he won the Oxford Newdigate prize for his poem “Ravenna” while studying at Magdalen College.

In 1881 Wilde met Constance Lloyd. In a letter to her brother Constance wrote: “I can’t help liking him, because when he’s talking to me alone he’s never a bit affected, and speaks naturally, except that he uses better language than most people” (qtd. in Page 16). Constance is not the only one who has made remarks on Wilde’s way of speaking. William Butler Yeats said the following about Wilde: “I never heard a man talking with perfect sentences, as if he had written them all overnight with labour and yet spontaneous” (qtd. in Raby 50). André Gide mentioned that “Wilde did not converse: he narrated” (qtd. in Raby 50). It is said that Wilde’s stories even lost some of their magic whenever they were written on paper. According to Yeats, “the further Wilde goes from the method of speech, from improvisation, from sympathy with some especial audience, the less original he is, the less accomplished” (qtd. in Killeen 8).

Constance and Wilde married May 29th 1884. Their first son Cyril is born June fifth 1885 followed by their second son Vyvyan in 1886 whose day of birth is not precisely known. Vyvyan wrote the following in the *Son of Oscar Wilde*:

My birth was not registered for some weeks after I was born, as my father and my mother each thought that the other had seen to the matter. When the time came, no one could remember the exact date on which I had been born, though everyone was sure that it was during the first five days of November; so eventually the 3rd was selected as being the mean date. (36-37)

In 1886 Wilde had his first homosexual relation with Robert Ross but eventually Wilde’s relationship with Alfred Douglas would lead to Wilde’s imprisonment. Wilde had been continuously asked by the Marquess of Queensberry to leave Alfred Douglas, his son, alone. Wilde refused and decided to sue Queensberry with libel after he was left an insulting

message at the Albemarle club. During the trial, in which Queensberry was discharged, the relationship between Wilde and Douglas became known and after two trials Wilde was sentenced to two years in prison. While in prison Wilde wrote a long letter to Alfred Douglas. The letter was published by Robert Ross under the name *De Profundis* five years after Wilde's death.

When Wilde was released from prison he moved to France and took on the name Sebastian Melmoth. Wilde had to survive on the allowances that Constance sent to him. The last work he wrote was "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." Wilde's time in prison was the inspiration for the long poem. Wilde died of meningitis in November 1900.

Wilde's first publication simply called *Poems* was published in 1881. These poems were met with some hostility but a fifth edition was reached quite quickly (Holland, *His World* 31). In 1888 Wilde published his first volume of fairy tales called *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* followed by a second volume, *A House of Pomegranates* in 1891. In these stories "he adopted a style which was half way between romantic prose and blank verse; this is particularly apparent when the stories are read aloud, as it is impossible to read them intelligently without a certain lilt and cadence" (Holland, *His World* 63-64).

The Picture of Dorian Gray was also published in 1891. Wilde wrote many letters to the press to defend the many criticism the book received (Holland, *His World* 70). A review in the *Daily Chronicle* even called the book poisonous because the book made references to "disgusting sins and abominable crimes" (Murray, *The Picture* vii).

After 1891 Wilde had some successes with his plays, first of all *Lady Windermere's Fan*, followed by *A Woman of No Importance* after his play *Salomé* did not receive a license to be produced on stage under the rule that references to Biblical characters were forbidden (Holland, *His World* 84). In 1895 both *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* were produced in London. Both plays were a success with the critics and the public.

During and after his imprisonment Wilde wrote *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. These were the last major works that Wilde would still write.

Over a century after his death Wilde has become celebrated as a great playwright. Many of his stories have been adapted in different media and the story of his life has been told in many different ways. Many of Wilde's stories can be read today as if they were written merely yesterday instead of over a century ago as most themes in Wilde's stories are still relevant today. In both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and "The Nightingale and the Rose" Wilde wrote about beauty. In other pieces Wilde wrote about at homosexuality and individuality.

The Happy Prince and Other Tales

It is believed that Oscar Wilde was influenced by Hans Christian Andersen when he wrote his fairy stories (Raby 56-57). The themes used in the stories that are featured in *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* are very similar to the themes used in the stories of Hans Christian Anderson (Murray 10). Oscar Wilde originally told the story of *The Happy Prince* to a group of friends before writing it up and reading it to his two sons (Wilde 2). Vyvyan Holland remembers how his father "would keep [them] quiet by telling [them] fairy stories, or tales of adventure, of which he had a never-ending supply ... He told us all his own written fairy stories suitably adapted for our young minds, and a great many others as well" (Holland, *Son* 53). Wilde himself once wrote that "[i]t is the duty of every father... to write fairy tales for his children" (qtd. in Killeen 10).

The volume contains five fairy tales. The first story in the volume is "The Happy Prince". *The Happy Prince* is about a statue of a prince who, only now that he is a statue, is able to see the sorrow in the city. The Happy Prince lived his entire life in a castle and never saw the city until he died and they made a statue of him. Unable to help the people in the city

himself he enlists the help of a swallow who planned to use the statue as a sleeping spot before flying further to Egypt the next day where he planned on joining his family. The statue persuades the swallow to deliver the valuable gems and gold leaf that adorns him to the less fortunate people in the city. Night after night the swallow is persuaded to stay just a night longer until finally the winter sets in and the swallow dies. Saddened by the death of the swallow the heart of the statue breaks. The good deeds of the prince and the swallow go unnoticed by the people in the city who, when finding the statue devoid of its gems and gold leaf, decide to have the statue melted.

Clearly, the happy Prince gives up everything that he has to offer in order to bring happiness to the citizens in his city while the Swallow sacrifices his life in an effort to make the Prince happy again. Both sacrifices, however, are only recognised by God.

Fairy Tales

The term fairy tales is believed to come from the French “contes de fees” which was used to describe a group of adult stories in the seventeenth century (Windling par. 1). Most fairy tales have some origin in folk tales that used to be told orally to each other from generation to generation, therefore it is hard to find the original story of these tales as they may have and probably have been altered upon each telling. The modern day fairy tale may still contain some elements of the traditional folk tale although they cannot actually be called a folk tale (Windling par. 2).

Although the history of the fairy tale cannot be completely recalled it is known that women were mostly responsible for the tales when they were still told orally (Windling par. 2). The Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Andersen and Charles Perrault, however, are the best known writers and collectors of literary fairy tales and all happen to be male. These authors but mostly translators and many others are responsible for shaping the fairy tales in the style

that can be found in fairy tales today. One common factor is that most fairy tales are told in a third-person narrative.

Most common in fairy tales is the reoccurrence of certain key sentences. In *Snow White* the queen would consult a mirror and say “Mirror, mirror on the wall who is the fairest one of all?” (The Brothers Grimm 11). In *The Happy Prince* the following sentence is reoccurring: “‘Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,’ said the Prince” (Wilde 13).

Not all fairy tales were originally intended for children. The Grimm Brothers only adapted their stories when it became clear that many children read their stories. According to Wilhelm Schoof, Wilhelm Grimm “was guided by the desire to endow the tales with a tone and style primarily for children. Given his own ability to capture the appropriate childlike tone, he created a uniform fairy-tale style” (qtd. in Zipes 112). Hans Christian Andersen wrote fairy tales for both adults and children using the way that children speak in the tales meant for children (Øster 148). Among translators, rewrites and media adaptations many of the tales have been altered and made more suitable for children. The best known adaptations are probably those of Walt Disney, who altered many of these tales to make them acceptable for children animation films.

Not all tales are the same, as some contain a moralistic, some a superior tone, and some an ironic tone. Most fairy tales, however, share a general childlike tone with simple syntax and short sentences. Sentences that contain small expressive words also add to this tone. For example, the following sentence: “‘Ah! but we have, in our dreams,’ answered the children” contains the expressive word ah (Wilde 10). When reading this out loud, the reader will most likely pay extra attention to the feeling of the word instead of merely saying the word. Also short explanations of things that have happened in the story are frequent in fairy tales. From *The Happy Prince* comes the following example: “And the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy” (Wilde 15).

Wilde mentioned that his stories were “meant partly for children, and partly for those who have kept the childlike faculties of wonder and joy” (qtd. in Raby 50). Anderson called his fairy tales: *Fairy Tales Told for Children* which hints that the tales were meant to be told. In addition, as said earlier, the fairy tales by Oscar Wilde change when they are read out loud. Wilde also frequently uses the word “then” to describe a situation that happens after a previous one. He does this in the same way a child would tell a story to someone and like Andersen he uses the way children that speak in his writing. Riita Oittinen in her book *Translating for Children* also mentions that children’s book are mostly meant to be read out loud (*Translating for Children* 5). Consequently most fairy tales now are either told as bedtime stories or viewed by one of the many Disney adaptation’s that exist of them.

Translating for Children

Gillian Lathey mentions that there is a difference between translating a text for the higher educated and translating a text for children: “A translator for children has to have a clear sense and understanding of his or her audience, to enter into an imaginary dialogue with the child... for the translation to be successfully received and enjoyed by young readers” (Lathey 15). Many other translators, who have written texts about translating for children, warn that the translator should not only focus upon the children for whom he is translating but also keep in mind that parents, and other adults, will also be reading these texts alongside the children. Isabel Pascua-Febles specifies, however, that we must focus our attention on the reader and not necessarily on those who read alongside the children (Pascua-Febles 113-114).

When it comes to translating for children Oittinen mentions that the translator should try and find his or her own child image (“No Innocence Act” 41). As Oittinen explains: “Child image is a central factor in translating children’s books: according to their ideologies, translators direct their words at some kind of child, naïve or understanding, innocent or

experienced” (“No Innocence Act” 41-42). By the term child image Oittinen means that the translator should try and find his inner child or reflect on his or her own childhood. Oittinen, however, is aware that this child image is different for each person, “Anything we create for children reflects our views on being a child” (“No Innocence Act” 41). According to Oittinen the readability of a story is also important (*Translating for Children 5*). The translator needs to read the original and base his or her translation on the experience that came from reading the source text (Oittinen, *Translating for Children 5*). Oittinen mentions that “Translators are readers who are always translating for their readers, the future readers of the translation” (*Translating for Children 5*).

Jeffrey Green believes that a translation needs to reflect the voice, also called style or tone, of the author (Green 59). By this he means that the translator should read the text out loud and find a voice that matches the source text in the target text. When translating a story that will most likely be read out loud paying attention to the voice of the author might make the story more engaging in the target text than when a translator is not paying attention to the author’s voice. Green suggests that a translator should read the text out loud like an actor in a role to find the voice of the text (Green 64). However, he is aware that the translator will most likely leave some of his own voice behind in the translation (Green 65).

In children’s stories, which are mostly read out loud, the way a story is told is very important. A story that is told without an engaging tone and that is difficult to understand is not very appealing to children. A translator should therefore keep his “child image” in mind and also attempt to recreate a voice that is close to the source texts author’s voice.

Sentence Constructions

The English language uses the subject-verb-object sentence structure. This is in contrast with the Dutch language that uses the subject-object-verb sentence structure. This is evident in the

following reoccurring sentence in the story: "[W]ill you not stay with me one night longer?" that is translated as: "[Z]ou je niet nog één nachtje langer bij me willen blijven?" (Wilde 15). In the Dutch sentence the verb "blijven" is at the end of the sentence while in the English sentence the verb "stay" can be found in the middle of the sentence.

Wilde, however, did not always use the subject-verb-object sentence structure. For example: "One night there flew over the city a little Swallow" (Wilde 10). In this sentence the subject is at the end of the sentence. Changing the sentence to "A little Swallow flew over the city one night" would have followed the subject-verb-object structure. The sentence that is used in the story, however, adds to the experience of the story when read out loud and similar structures are used frequently in fairytales.

Wilde also used punctuation to make his sentence longer. In *The Happy Prince* he frequently used a semicolon which resulted in some translating problems as the semicolon is rarely used in the Dutch written language.

He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold-fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies. (Wilde 18-19)

This lengthy sentence has been translated as:

Hij vertelde hem over de rode ibissen die in lange rijen aan de oevers van de Nijl staan en goudvissen in hun snavels vangen. Hij vertelde over de sfinx die zo oud is als de wereld zelf en in de woestijn woont en alles weet. Hij vertelde over de handelaars die

langzaam naast hun kamelen lopen en gele kralen in hun handen dragen. Hij vertelde over de koning van de maanbergen die zo zwart als ebbenhout is en een groot kristal aanbidt. Hij vertelde over de grote groene slang die in een palmboom slaapt en twintig priesters heeft die hem honingkoekjes voeren en hij vertelde over de pygmeeën die over een groot meer op grote platte bladeren zeilen en altijd in oorlog zijn met de vlinders.

The semicolons have been changed into full stops. The repetitive start of “Hij vertelde over” needed adding to make the sentence grammatically correct and also helps the reader remember that the Swallow is telling of his adventures.

Culture-Specific Elements

Some translations of the culture-specific elements in the story cannot be explained in just one or two sentences. Many of these culture-specific elements are only used in reference with the court of a monarch. In the following sentence the word curtsy is used as a reference to the court of a monarch: “And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtsies” (Wilde 11). This word is linked to a particular bow used when meeting someone of royalty. The Dutch translation for this would be “reverence” or “knixje”. To make a curtsy you would have to bend your knees while standing with your right foot behind your left. A reed is unable to actually bend its knees so it would be unable to actually make a “curtsy”. Secondly, both words are not commonly used in the Dutch language so the final translation of the sentence became: “En inderdaad, steeds als de wind waaide maakte de rietstengel de meest gracieuze buigingen.” A “buiging” can also be used to show respect to a person that is of royal heritage and in this sentence it also gives the same mental image of a reed bending in the wind.

Another example of a term more commonly used in the court of a monarch is “courtiers” in the following sentence: “My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness” (Wilde 12). The direct translation of “courtiers” would be “hovelingen” but as this particular word would need more explanation for most readers, the decision was made to translate the word into “hofhouding” which does not necessary require additional information. Consequently a “hoveling” is part of the “hofhouding”. The translation has become: “Mijn hofhouding noemde me de Gelukkige Prins en ik was ook gelukkig, als plezier hebben hetzelfde is als gelukkig zijn.”

As a final example the term “gown” in the following sentence: “She is embroidering passion-flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball” (Wilde 13). The dictionaries consulted gave mostly unsatisfying translations for “gown.” Possible choices were “japon” “baljurk” or “avondjurk” The final choice is “baljurk” because the gown is being made for the “court-ball” which has been translated to “hofbal”. The entire sentence has been translated as: “Ze borduurt passiebloemen op een satijnen baljurk voor de schoonste hofdame van de koningin, om te dragen tijdens het volgende hofbal”

To Conclude

Fairy tales are not tales that are mostly read. From an early age children come into contact with these fairy tales when they hear them from their parents or when they see them on the screen from one of the many media adaptations. When translating a fairy tale it is wise to keep these factors in mind. Parents may read the actual words from the paper but they bring them to life when using different voices or when changing the pitch and rhythm when they read these stories to their children. Film or television adaptations give the children the opportunity to see the tales come alive. Oscar Wilde also mentioned that every father should write fairy tales for their own children and although not every father writes his own fairy tale

the way they will tell them is different for every person that in a way every telling of a fairy tale is unique.

De Gelukkige Prins

Hoog boven de stad op een hoge zuil stond het standbeeld van de Gelukkige Prins¹. Hij was geheel verguld met een fijne laag bladgoud. Zijn ogen waren twee schitterende saffieren en een grote rode robijn glansde op het heft van zijn zwaard.

Hij werd heel erg bewonderd. “Hij is zo mooi als een windhaan,” merkte een van de gemeenteraadsleden,² die graag om zijn kunstzinnigheid bekend wil staan, op. “Alleen niet zo nuttig” voegde hij daaraan toe omdat hij bang was dat mensen hem onpraktisch zouden vinden, wat hij in werkelijkheid niet was.

“Waarom kun jij niet zoals de Gelukkige Prins zijn?” vroeg een verstandige moeder aan haar zoontje, die naar het onmogelijke verlangde³. “De Gelukkige Prins zou er nooit over piekeren het onmogelijke te verlangen.”

“Ik ben blij dat er tenminste iemand in de wereld gelukkig is,” mompelde een teleurgestelde man, terwijl hij het prachtige standbeeld bekeek.

“Hij ziet er uit als een engel,” zeiden de weeskinderen, terwijl zij de kathedraal uitkwamen in hun vuurrode mantels en hun schone witte schortjes.

“Hoe weten jullie dat?” vroeg de wiskundeleraar, “Jullie hebben er nooit één gezien.”

“O! Maar dat hebben we wel, in onze dromen,” antwoordden de kinderen. De wiskundeleraar fronste en keek zeer streng omdat hij het namelijk niet goedkeurt dat kinderen dromen.

¹ Similar to the source text I decided to leave “Gelukkige Prins” written with a capital letter.

² This is one of the many cultural specific elements in this short story. “Gemeenteraadsleden” is the term that most closely resembles “town councillors”.

³ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the phrase “crying for the moon” stands for the wish to gain the unattainable. I was unable to find a phrase in Dutch that holds the same meaning as the English phrase therefore I decided to translate the meaning of the phrase instead.

Op een nacht vloog er een kleine Zwaluw⁴ over de stad. Zijn vrienden waren zes weken daarvoor al vertrokken naar Egypte, maar hij was achtergebleven omdat hij verliefd was op de prachtigste rietstengel. Vroeg in de lente had hij haar ontmoet toen hij boven de rivier⁵ achter een grote gele mot aanvloog. Hij was zo tot haar slanke taille aangetrokken dat hij gestopt was om met haar te praten.

“Zal ik van je houden?” vroeg de Zwaluw die graag meteen ter zake kwam, en de rietstengel maakte voor hem een diepe buiging. Dus vloog hij eindeloos rondjes om haar heen, raakte het water met zijn vleugels en creëerde zo⁶ zilveren rimpels. Zo maakte hij haar gedurende de gehele zomer het hof.

“Het is een belachelijke relatie,” tsjilpten de andere zwaluwen. “Ze heeft geen geld en veel te veel familie.” En, de rivier was inderdaad behoorlijk gevuld met rietstengels. Toen de herfst kwam vlogen de andere zwaluwen⁷ allemaal weg.

Toen ze weg waren voelde hij zich eenzaam en begon hij genoeg te krijgen van zijn liefje. “Ze is saai,” zei hij, “en ik ben bang dat ze een flirt is want ze speelt altijd met de wind.” En inderdaad, steeds als de wind waaide maakte de rietstengel de meest gracieuze buigingen. “Ik geef toe dat ze erg huiselijk is,” ging hij verder, “maar ik hou van reizen en mijn vrouw zal, zodoende, ook van reizen moeten houden.”

“Ga je met me mee?” vroeg hij haar tenslotte, maar de rietstengel schudde haar hoofd. Ze was te gehecht aan haar thuis.

⁴ The Swallow is another main character in the story and thus for the same reason as the Happy Prince I decided to use a capital letter.

⁵ The phrase down the river is usually associated with negative feelings. However, in this short story by Oscar Wilde I realized that the phrase was meant literally.

⁶ I added this pragmatic particle to make clear that the “zilveren rimpels” are made because of the wings touching the water. Without “zo” it would appear as if it was a separate action that has nothing to do with the touching of the water.

⁷ I decided to specify that the swallows are flying away to avoid confusion.

“Je hebt me voor de gek gehouden⁸,” riep hij uit. “Ik ga naar de piramiden. Vaarwel!” en hij vloog weg.

Hij vloog de hele dag en kwam 's nachts in de stad aan. “Waar zal ik overnachten⁹?” vroeg hij. “Ik hoop dat de stad voorbereidingen heeft getroffen.”

Toen zag hij het standbeeld op de hoge zuil.

“Daar zal ik overnachten,” riep hij. “Het is een geschikte locatie met genoeg frisse lucht.” Dus streek hij tussen de voeten van de Gelukkige Prins neer.

“Ik heb een gouden slaapkamer,” zei hij zachtjes tegen zichzelf terwijl hij om zich heen keek en hij zich voorbereidde om te gaan slapen, maar net toen hij zijn hoofd onder zijn vleugels wilde stoppen viel er een grote druppel water op hem. “Wat vreemd¹⁰!” riep hij, “er is geen wolk in de lucht te zien, de sterren stralen¹¹ en toch regent het. Het klimaat in Noord Europa is echt verschrikkelijk. De rietstengel hield wel van de regen, maar dat was haar egoïsme.”

Toen viel er nog een druppel.

“Wat voor nut heeft een standbeeld als het de regen niet kan tegenhouden?” zei hij. “Ik moet op zoek naar een goede schoorsteen,” en hij besloot om weg te vliegen.

Maar, nog voor hij zijn vleugels gespreid had viel er een derde druppel en keek hij omhoog en – ach, wat zag hij?

⁸ “You have been trifling with me” is an English expression to make clear that you feel used or made a fool off. The Dutch phrase “Je hebt me voor de gek gehouden” is able to convey almost the same feeling.

⁹ “To put up” refers to a place to stay so instead of translating it to “waar zal ik verblijven” I decided to go for “waar zal ik de nacht doorbrengen” because the sentence before mentions that the swallow arrived at night.

¹⁰ “What a curious thing” is an expression made when something unexpected might occur. In this case it is the drop of water that falls on the swallow even when the sky is clear. The phrase “wat vreemd” makes it clear in the Dutch language that something unexpected happened.

¹¹ In the source text the swallow states that the stars are “clear and bright”, however it is customary to say “de sterren stralen” in Dutch and added with the previous sentence “er is geen wolk in de lucht te zien” shows that there is nothing hindering the stars from shining upon the Earth.

De ogen van de Gelukkige Prins waren gevuld met tranen en er liepen tranen over zijn gouden wangen. Zijn gezicht was zo mooi in het maanlicht dat de kleine Zwaluw vervuld raakte van medelijden.

“Wie ben jij?” vroeg hij.

“Ik ben de Gelukkige Prins.”

“Waarom huil je dan?” vroeg de Zwaluw. “Je hebt me helemaal doorweekt.”

“Toen ik nog leefde en een menselijk hart had,” antwoordde het standbeeld, “wist ik niet wat tranen waren. Ik woonde in het paleis van Sanssouci waar verdriet niet is toegestaan. Overdag speelde ik met mijn kameraadjes in de tuin en ’s avonds leidde ik de dans in de grote balzaal. Rond de tuin stond een hele hoge muur, maar ik vroeg me nooit af wat erachter lag. Alles om me heen was zo prachtig. Mijn hofhouding noemde me de Gelukkige Prins en ik was ook gelukkig, als plezier hebben hetzelfde is als gelukkig zijn. Zo leefde ik en zo stierf ik. En nu ik dood ben hebben ze me hier zo hoog geplaatst dat ik alle lelijkheid en ellende van mijn stad kan zien. En hoewel mijn hart van lood is gemaakt, kan ik niets anders dan huilen.”

“Wat! Is hij niet helemaal van goud?” zei de Zwaluw zachtjes tegen zichzelf. Hij was te beleefd om hardop persoonlijke opmerkingen te maken.

“Ver weg,” ging het standbeeld verder met een lage muzikale stem, “ver weg in een kleine straat staat een armoedig huis. Eén van de ramen staat open en daar doorheen kan ik een vrouw aan een tafel zien zitten. Haar gezicht is mager en vermoeid en ze heeft ruwe rode handen vol met naaldenprikken, want ze is naaister. Ze borduurt passiebloemen op een satijnen baljurk voor de schoonste hofdame van de koningin, om te dragen tijdens het volgende hofbal¹². In een bed in de hoek van de kamer ligt een kleine zieke jongen. Hij heeft koorts en vraagt om sinaasappelen. Zijn moeder kan hem alleen maar rivierwater geven en

¹² A court-ball would generally be called a “hofbal” in Dutch.

daarom huilt hij. Zwaluw, Zwaluw, kleine Zwaluw, zou je haar de robijn uit het heft van mijn zwaard willen brengen? Mijn voeten zijn gebonden aan deze sokkel en ik kan me niet bewegen.”

“Ik word in Egypte verwacht,” zei de Zwaluw. “Mijn vrienden vliegen de Nijl op en neer en praten met de grote lotusbloemen. Binnenkort zullen ze gaan slapen in de tombe van de grote koning. De koning is er zelf ook in zijn beschilderde kist. Hij is in gele linnen gewikkeld en met kruiden gebalsemd. Rond zijn nek hangt een ketting van bleke groene jade en zijn handen zijn net als verwelkte bladeren.”

“Zwaluw, Zwaluw, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins, “zou je niet nog één nachtje bij me willen blijven en mijn boodschapper zijn? De jongen heeft zo’n dorst en de moeder is erg verdrietig.”

“Ik denk niet dat ik van jongetjes hou,” antwoordde de Zwaluw. “Afgelopen zomer,¹³ toen ik op de rivier verbleef, waren er twee gemene jongens, de zonen van de molenaar, die altijd stenen naar me aan het gooien waren. Ze raakten me natuurlijk nooit, wij zwaluwen kunnen daar veel te goed voor vliegen en bovendien kom ik van een familie die bekend staat om zijn behendigheid, maar toch, het was een teken van gebrek aan respect.”

Maar de Gelukkige Prins keek zo verdrietig dat de Zwaluw spijt kreeg. “Het is hier erg koud,” zei hij, “maar ik zal één nacht bij je blijven en je boodschapper zijn.”

“Dankje, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins.

Dus pikte de Zwaluw de grote robijn uit het zwaard van de prins en vloog met de robijn in zijn snavel over de daken van de stad.

Hij vloog langs de toren van de kathedraal, waarop engelen uit wit marmer waren gesculptuurd. Hij vloog langs het paleis en hoorde het geluid van dansen. Een mooi meisje

¹³ At first this was translated as “vorige zomer” but after consideration I changed it to “afgelopen zomer” because “vorige zomer” would most likely refer to the summer from a year before and not to the summer that had just past.

kwam het balkon op met haar geliefde. “Hoe wonderbaarlijk de sterren zijn,” zei hij tegen haar, “en hoe wonderbaarlijk is de kracht van de liefde!”

“Ik hoop dat mijn baljurk op tijd klaar is voor het hofbal,” antwoordde ze, “Ik heb borduursels van passiebloemen erop besteld, maar de naaisters zijn zo lui.”

Hij vloog over de rivier en zag de lantaarns aan de masten van de schepen hangen. Hij vloog over het getto en zag de oude Joden met elkaar handel drijven en geld wegen op koperen weegschalen. Tenslotte kwam hij bij het armoedige huis en keek naar binnen. De jongen draaide zich steeds koortsig om in zijn bed en de moeder was in slaap gevallen, ze was zo moe. Hij hopte naar binnen en legde de grote robijn naast de vingerhoed van de vrouw op de tafel. Toen vloog hij zachtjes rond het bed terwijl hij het voorhoofd van de jongen met zijn vleugels koelte toewuifde. “Wat voel ik me koel,” zei de jongen, “ik zal wel beter aan het worden zijn” en hij zakte weg in een heerlijke slaap.

Toen vloog de Zwaluw terug naar de Gelukkige Prins en vertelde hem wat hij had gedaan. “Het is vreemd,” merkte hij op, “hoe warm ik me nu voel terwijl het zo koud is.”

“Dat is omdat je een goede daad hebt verricht,” zei de Prins. En de kleine Zwaluw begon te denken en toen viel hij in slaap. Hij werd altijd slaperig van denken.

Toen de dag aanbrak vloog hij naar de rivier en nam een bad. “Wat een opmerkelijk fenomeen,” zei de Professor van Vogelkunde toen hij over de brug liep. “Een zwaluw in de winter!” en hij schreef er een lange brief over naar de lokale krant. Iedereen citeerde de brief, want er stonden zoveel woorden in die ze niet konden begrijpen.

“Vanavond ga ik naar Egypte,” zei de Zwaluw en hij was in een opperbeste stemming bij het vooruitzicht. “Hij bezocht alle openbare monumenten en zat een lange tijd bovenop de kerktoren. Waar hij ook heen ging tjlpten de mussen en ze zeiden tegen elkaar, “Wat een opmerkelijke vreemdeling!” daardoor had hij het erg naar zijn zin.

Toen de maan opkwam vloog hij terug naar de Gelukkige Prins. “Heb je nog een taak voor me, in Egypte?” riep hij; “Ik ga net op weg.”

“Zwaluw, Zwaluw, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins, “zou je niet nog één nachtje langer bij me willen blijven?”

“Ik word in Egypte verwacht,” antwoordde de Zwaluw. “Morgen vliegen mijn vrienden tot aan de tweede waterval¹⁴. Het rivier-paard¹⁵ ligt in hinderlaag tussen de lisdodde en op een grote granieten troon zit de God Memnon. De hele nacht lang kijkt hij naar de sterren en wanneer de Morgenster verschijnt uit hij een schreeuw van blijdschap, daarna is hij stil. ’s Middags komen gele leeuwen bij de rand van het water om te drinken. Ze hebben ogen zo groen als beril en hun gebrul is luider dan het gebrul van de waterval.”

“Zwaluw, Zwaluw, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins, “ver weg aan de andere kant van de stad zie ik een jonge man in een zolderkamer. Hij leunt over een bureau dat met papier is bedekt en in een vaasje naast hem staan een paar verwelkte viooltjes. Zijn haar is bruin en gekruld en zijn lippen zijn zo rood als een granaatappel en hij heeft grote dromerige ogen. Hij probeert een toneelstuk af te maken voor de directeur van het theater, maar hij heeft het te koud om nog te kunnen schrijven. Er is geen vuur in de haard en hij is flauw van de honger.”

“Ik zal nog één nacht langer bij je blijven,” zei de Zwaluw, die echt een goed hart had. “Zal ik hem een andere robijn brengen?”

“Helaas! Ik heb nu geen robijn meer,” zei de Prins, “mijn ogen zijn alles wat ik nog over heb. Ze zijn van zeldzame saffieren gemaakt die duizend jaar geleden uit India zijn meegebracht. Pik er eentje uit en breng die naar hem. Hij zal hem aan een juwelier verkopen en voedsel en brandhout kopen en zijn toneelstuk afmaken.”

¹⁴ Cataract is translated in the dictionary as “cataract” or “waterval” instead of keeping the uncommon word I decided to make it clear for everyone and use “waterval”.

¹⁵ The river-horse mentioned is actually the hippopotamus and I could have translated this to “nijlpaard” but I decided to keep closer to the source text and translate it as “rivier-paard”.

“Lieve Prins,” zei de Zwaluw, “dat kan ik niet doen” en hij begon te huilen

“Zwaluw, Zwaluw, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins, “doe wat ik je zeg.”

Dus pikte de Zwaluw een oog van de prins eruit en vloog ermee naar de zolderkamer van de student. Het was makkelijk om binnen te komen want er zat een gat in het dak. Daar vloog hij doorheen en kwam de kamer binnen. De jonge man zat met zijn hoofd in zijn handen en hoorde dus niet het gefladder van de vleugels. Toen hij opkeek zag¹⁶ hij de mooie saffier op de verwelkte viooltjes liggen.

“Ik begin gewaardeerd te worden,” riep hij, “dit is van een groot bewonderaar. Nu kan ik mijn toneelstuk afmaken” en hij zag er heel gelukkig uit.

De volgende dag vloog de Zwaluw naar de haven. Hij zat op de mast van een groot schip en keek toe hoe de zeelui, met touwen, grote kisten uit het ruim haalden. “En trekken!¹⁷” riepen ze bij iedere kist die naar boven kwam. “Ik ga naar Egypte!” riep de Zwaluw, maar niemand leek er iets om te geven en toen de maan opkwam vloog hij terug naar de Gelukkige Prins.

“Ik kom afscheid nemen” riep hij.

“Zwaluw, Zwaluw, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins, “zou je niet nog één nachtje langer bij me willen blijven?”

“Het is winter,” antwoordde de Zwaluw, “en binnenkort zal de kille sneeuw er zijn. In Egypte is de zon warm op de groene palmbomen en de krokodillen liggen in de modder en kijken lui om zich heen. Mijn vrienden bouwen een nest in de tempel van Baalbec terwijl de roze en witte duiven toekijken en naar elkaar aan het kirren zijn. Lieve Prins, ik moet je verlaten, maar ik zal je nooit vergeten en de komende lente zal ik je twee prachtige juwelen

¹⁶ The source text uses the word found but in the context of the sentence the Dutch verb “vinden” does not fit. I used the verb “zien” instead.

¹⁷ A-hoy is used as a greeting and in this instance it can be seen as a greeting to the chests they heaved up or it can be used as a way to get all sailors to heave at the same time. I decided to translate to “en trekken” to get the same effect of all heaving at the same time.

meenemen om de plaats in te nemen van de juwelen die je hebt weggegeven. De robijn zal roder zijn dan een rode roos en de saffier zal zo blauw zijn als de grote zee.”

“Op het plein beneden ons,” zei de Gelukkige Prins, “staat een klein meisje lucifers te verkopen. Ze heeft haar lucifers in de goot laten vallen en nu zijn ze allemaal onbruikbaar. Ze huilt en haar vader zal haar slaan als ze geen geld mee naar huis brengt. Ze heeft geen schoenen of kousen en niks dat haar kleine hoofd bedekt. Pik mijn andere oog eruit en geef het haar en haar vader zal haar niet slaan.”

“Ik zal nog één nacht langer bij je blijven,” zei de Zwaluw, “maar ik kan je oog er niet uitpikken. Je zou dan helemaal blind zijn.”

“Zwaluw, Zwaluw, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins, “doe wat ik je zeg.”

Dus pikte hij het andere oog van de prins eruit en stootte ermee naar beneden. Hij scheerde langs het meisje met de lucifers en liet ongemerkt het juweel in de palm van haar hand vallen. “Wat een prachtig stuk glas,” riep het kleine meisje en ze rende lachend naar huis.

Toen kwam de Zwaluw terug bij de Prins. “Je bent nu blind,” zei hij, “dus zal ik altijd bij je blijven.”

“Nee, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de arme Prins, “je moet naar Egypte gaan.”

“Ik zal altijd bij je blijven,” zei de Zwaluw en hij sloep aan de voeten van de Prins.

De volgende dag zat hij op de schouders van de Prins en vertelde hem verhalen over wat hij in verre landen had gezien. Hij vertelde hem over de rode ibissen die in lange rijen aan de oevers van de Nijl staan en goudvissen in hun snavels vangen. Hij vertelde over de sfinx die zo oud is als de wereld zelf en in de woestijn woont en alles weet. Hij vertelde over de handelaars die langzaam naast hun kamelen lopen en gele kralen in hun handen dragen. Hij vertelde over de koning van de maanbergen die zo zwart als ebbenhout is en een groot kristal aanbidt. Hij vertelde over de grote groene slang die in een palmboom slaapt en twintig

priesters heeft die hem honingkoekjes voeren en hij vertelde over de pygmeëen die over een groot meer op grote platte bladeren zeilen en altijd in oorlog zijn met de vlinders.

“Lieve kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins, “je vertelt me over wonderbaarlijke dingen maar het lijden van man en vrouw is wonderbaarlijker dan alles. Er is geen groter mysterie dan ellende. Vlieg over mijn stad, kleine Zwaluw, en vertel me wat je daar ziet.”

Dus vloog de Zwaluw over de grote stad en zag de rijken feest vieren¹⁸ in hun prachtige huizen, terwijl de bedelaars aan de poorten zaten. Hij vloog donkere steegjes in en zag de witte gezichten van hongerige kinderen lusteloos naar de zwarte straten kijken. Onder de boog van de brug lagen twee kleine jongetjes in elkaars armen. Zo probeerden ze elkaar warm te houden. “Wat hebben we toch een honger!” zeiden ze. “Jullie mogen hier niet liggen,” schreeuwde de nachtwaker en ze liepen de regen in.

Toen vloog hij terug naar de Prins en vertelde hem wat hij had gezien.

“Ik ben bedekt met fijn goud,” zei de Prins, “je moet het er af halen, blad na blad¹⁹ en aan de armen geven. De levenden denken altijd dat goud ze gelukkig kan maken.”

Blad na blad van het fijne goud pikte de Zwaluw eraf totdat de Gelukkige Prins er dof en grijs uit zag. Blad na blad van het fijne goud bracht hij naar de armen en de gezichten van de kinderen werden rooskleuriger en ze lachten en speelden spelletjes in de straat. “Nu hebben we brood!” riepen ze.

Toen kwam de sneeuw en na de sneeuw kwam de vorst. De straten zager eruit alsof ze van zilver gemaakt waren, ze waren zo helder en glinsterend. Lange ijspegels als kristallen dolken hingen aan de dakranden van de huizen, iedereen droeg bont en de kleine jongens droegen rode mutsen en schaatsten op het ijs.

¹⁸ The English verb merrymaking is here translated as “feest vieren” because I felt that using the word “pret” would not regularly be used by the richer society.

¹⁹ Another choice could have been “laag na laag” but there is a reference to goldleaf or “bladgoud” I decided to use the word blad.

De arme kleine Zwaluw kreeg het kouder en kouder, maar hij wilde de Prins niet verlaten, hij hield teveel van hem. Hij pikte broodkruimels op buiten de deur van de bakker, als die even niet keek en probeerde zichzelf warm te houden door met zijn vleugels te flapperen.

Maar tenslotte wist hij dat hij ging sterven. Hij had nog net genoeg kracht om nog één keer naar de schouders van de Prins te vliegen. “Vaarwel, lieve Prins!” mompelde hij, “mag ik je hand kussen?”

“Ik ben blij dat je eindelijk naar Egypte gaat, kleine Zwaluw,” zei de Prins, “je bent veel te lang hier gebleven, maar je moet me op de lippen kussen want ik hou van je.”

“Het is niet Egypte waar ik heen ga,” zei de Zwaluw. “Ik ga naar het huis van de Dood. Dood is immers de broer van slaap, nietwaar?”

En hij kustte de Gelukkige Prins op de lippen en viel toen dood neer aan zijn voeten.

Op dat moment klonk er een vreemd gekraak binnen in het standbeeld alsof er iets gebroken was. Het loden hart was precies in tweeën gebroken. Het was echt een vreselijke vorst.

Vroeg in de volgende morgen liep de burgemeester in het gezelschap van de gemeenteraadsleden onder op het plein. Terwijl ze de zuil passeerden keek hij omhoog naar het standbeeld: “Mijn hemel! Wat ziet de Gelukkige Prins er haveloos uit!” zei hij.

“Inderdaad, haveloos!” riepen de gemeenteraadsleden die het altijd met de burgemeester eens waren en ze gingen omhoog om er naar te kijken.

“De robijn is uit zijn zwaard gevallen, zijn ogen zijn weg en hij is niet langer van goud,” zei de burgemeester, “hij is niet veel beter dan een bedelaar!”

“Niet veel beter dan een bedelaar,” zeiden de gemeenteraadsleden.

“En er ligt zelfs een dode vogel aan zijn voeten!” ging de burgemeester verder. “We moeten een verbod opstellen waarin staat dat vogels hier niet mogen sterven.” De gemeentesecretaris maakte een notitie van de suggestie.

Dus werd het standbeeld van de Gelukkige Prins neergehaald. “Omdat hij niet langer meer mooi is, is hij niet langer meer nuttig,” zei de professor van de Kunst aan de universiteit.

Toen werd het standbeeld in de oven gesmolten en de burgemeester hield met het gemeentebestuur een vergadering om te besluiten wat er met het metaal moest gebeuren. “We moeten natuurlijk een ander beeld hebben,” zei hij, “en het zal een standbeeld van mijzelf zijn.”

“Van mijzelf,” zeiden de gemeenteraadsleden tegen elkaar en vervolgens hadden ze ruzie. Het laatste wat ik van ze gehoord heb, was dat ze nog steeds ruzie met elkaar hadden.

“Wat vreemd!” zei de opzichter van de arbeiders in de metaalgieterij, “Dit gebroken loden hart wil niet in de oven smelten. We moeten het weggooien.” Dus gooiden ze het op de vuilnishoop waar de dode Zwaluw ook lag.

“Breng me de twee kostbaarste dingen uit de stad,” zei God tegen een van Zijn Engelen en de Engel bracht Hem het loden hart en de dode vogel.

“Je hebt juist gekozen,” zei God, “want in mijn paradijs tuin zal deze kleine vogel voor eeuwig zingen en in mijn gouden stad zal de Gelukkige Prins me prijzen.”

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The Happy Prince

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt.

He was very much admired indeed. "He is as beautiful as a weathercock," remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic tastes; "only not quite so useful," he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

"Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?" asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon. "The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything."

"I am glad there is some one in the world who is quite happy," muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

"He looks just like an angel," said the Charity Children as they came out of the cathedral in their bright scarlet cloaks and their clean white pinafores.

"How do you know?" said the Mathematical Master, "you have never seen one."

"Ah! but we have, in our dreams," answered the children; and the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

"Shall I love you?" said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

"It is a ridiculous attachment," twittered the other Swallows; "she has no money, and far too many relations"; and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came they all flew away.

After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his lady-love. "She has no conversation," he said, "and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind." And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtseys. "I admit that she is domestic," he continued, "but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling also."

"Will you come away with me?" he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

"You have been trifling with me," he cried. "I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!" and he flew away.

All day long he flew, and at night-time he arrived at the city. "Where shall I put up?" he said; "I hope the town has made preparations."

Then he saw the statue on the tall column.

"I will put up there," he cried; "it is a fine position, with plenty of fresh air." So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

"I have a golden bedroom," he said softly to himself as he looked round, and he prepared to go to sleep; but just as he was putting his head under his wing a large drop of water fell on him. "What a curious thing!" he cried; "there is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. The Reed used to like the rain, but that was merely her selfishness."

Then another drop fell.

"What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?" he said; "I must look for a good chimney-pot," and he determined to fly away.

But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw - Ah! what did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity.

"Who are you?" he said.

"I am the Happy Prince."

"Why are you weeping then?" asked the Swallow; "you have quite drenched me."

"When I was alive and had a human heart," answered the statue, "I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans- Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot chose but weep."

"What! is he not solid gold?" said the Swallow to himself. He was too polite to make any personal remarks out loud.

"Far away," continued the statue in a low musical voice, "far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion- flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maids-of- honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will

you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move."

"I am waited for in Egypt," said the Swallow. "My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus- flowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen, and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me for one night, and be my messenger? The boy is so thirsty, and the mother so sad."

"I don't think I like boys," answered the Swallow. "Last summer, when I was staying on the river, there were two rude boys, the miller's sons, who were always throwing stones at me. They never hit me, of course; we swallows fly far too well for that, and besides, I come of a family famous for its agility; but still, it was a mark of disrespect."

But the Happy Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow was sorry. "It is very cold here," he said; "but I will stay with you for one night, and be your messenger."

"Thank you, little Swallow," said the Prince.

So the Swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince's sword, and flew away with it in his beak over the roofs of the town.

He passed by the cathedral tower, where the white marble angels were sculptured. He passed by the palace and heard the sound of dancing. A beautiful girl came out on the balcony with her lover. "How wonderful the stars are," he said to her, "and how wonderful is the power of love!"

"I hope my dress will be ready in time for the State-ball," she answered; "I have ordered passion-flowers to be embroidered on it; but the seamstresses are so lazy."

He passed over the river, and saw the lanterns hanging to the masts of the ships. He passed over the Ghetto, and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales. At last he came to the poor house and looked in. The boy was tossing feverishly on his bed, and the mother had fallen asleep, she was so tired. In he hopped, and laid the great ruby on the table beside the woman's thimble. Then he flew gently round the bed, fanning the boy's forehead with his wings. "How cool I feel," said the boy, "I must be getting better"; and he sank into a delicious slumber.

Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince, and told him what he had done. "It is curious," he remarked, "but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold."

"That is because you have done a good action," said the Prince. And the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy.

When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath. "What a remarkable phenomenon," said the Professor of Ornithology as he was passing over the bridge. "A swallow in winter!" And he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Every one quoted it, it was full of so many words that they could not understand.

"To-night I go to Egypt," said the Swallow, and he was in high spirits at the prospect. He visited all the public monuments, and sat a long time on top of the church steeple. Wherever he went the Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, "What a distinguished stranger!" so he enjoyed himself very much.

When the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince. "Have you any commissions for Egypt?" he cried; "I am just starting."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer?"

"I am waited for in Egypt," answered the Swallow. "To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great

granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water's edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "far away across the city I see a young man in a garret. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers, and in a tumbler by his side there is a bunch of withered violets. His hair is brown and crisp, and his lips are red as a pomegranate, and he has large and dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre, but he is too cold to write any more. There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint."

"I will wait with you one night longer," said the Swallow, who really had a good heart. "Shall I take him another ruby?"

"Alas! I have no ruby now," said the Prince; "my eyes are all that I have left. They are made of rare sapphires, which were brought out of India a thousand years ago. Pluck out one of them and take it to him. He will sell it to the jeweller, and buy food and firewood, and finish his play."

"Dear Prince," said the Swallow, "I cannot do that"; and he began to weep.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

So the Swallow plucked out the Prince's eye, and flew away to the student's garret. It was easy enough to get in, as there was a hole in the roof. Through this he darted, and came into the room. The young man had his head buried in his hands, so he did not hear the flutter of the bird's wings, and when he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the withered violets.

"I am beginning to be appreciated," he cried; "this is from some great admirer. Now I can finish my play," and he looked quite happy.

The next day the Swallow flew down to the harbour. He sat on the mast of a large vessel and watched the sailors hauling big chests out of the hold with ropes. "Heave a-hoy!" they shouted as each chest came up. "I am going to Egypt"! cried the Swallow, but nobody minded, and when the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince.

"I am come to bid you good-bye," he cried.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer?"

"It is winter," answered the Swallow, "and the chill snow will soon be here. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm-trees, and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them. My companions are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other. Dear Prince, I must leave you, but I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back two beautiful jewels in place of those you have given away. The ruby shall be redder than a red rose, and the sapphire shall be as blue as the great sea."

"In the square below," said the Happy Prince, "there stands a little match-girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her, and her father will not beat her."

"I will stay with you one night longer," said the Swallow, "but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

So he plucked out the Prince's other eye, and darted down with it. He swooped past the match-girl, and slipped the jewel into the palm of her hand. "What a lovely bit of glass," cried the little girl; and she ran home, laughing.

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. "You are blind now," he said, "so I will stay with you always."

"No, little Swallow," said the poor Prince, "you must go away to Egypt."

"I will stay with you always," said the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince's feet.

All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold-fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

"Dear little Swallow," said the Prince, "you tell me of marvellous things, but more marvellous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see there."

So the Swallow flew over the great city, and saw the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates. He flew into dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black streets. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another's arms to try and keep themselves warm. "How hungry we are!" they said. "You must not lie here," shouted the Watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.

Then he flew back and told the Prince what he had seen.

"I am covered with fine gold," said the Prince, "you must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor; the living always think that gold can make them happy."

Leaf after leaf of the fine gold the Swallow picked off, till the Happy Prince looked quite dull and grey. Leaf after leaf of the fine gold he brought to the poor, and the children's faces grew rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. "We have bread now!" they cried.

Then the snow came, and after the snow came the frost. The streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright and glistening; long icicles like crystal daggers hung down from the eaves of the houses, everybody went about in furs, and the little boys wore scarlet caps and skated on the ice.

The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs outside the baker's door when the baker was not looking and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings.

But at last he knew that he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up to the Prince's shoulder once more. "Good-bye, dear Prince!" he murmured, "will you let me kiss your hand?"

"I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow," said the Prince, "you have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you."

"It is not to Egypt that I am going," said the Swallow. "I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?"

And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down dead at his feet.

At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue, as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two. It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost.

Early the next morning the Mayor was walking in the square below in company with the Town Councillors. As they passed the column he looked up at the statue: "Dear me! how shabby the Happy Prince looks!" he said.

"How shabby indeed!" cried the Town Councillors, who always agreed with the Mayor; and they went up to look at it.

"The ruby has fallen out of his sword, his eyes are gone, and he is golden no longer," said the Mayor in fact, "he is little better than a beggar!"

"Little better than a beggar," said the Town Councillors.

"And here is actually a dead bird at his feet!" continued the Mayor. "We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not to be allowed to die here." And the Town Clerk made a note of the suggestion.

So they pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince. "As he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful," said the Art Professor at the University.

Then they melted the statue in a furnace, and the Mayor held a meeting of the Corporation to decide what was to be done with the metal. "We must have another statue, of course," he said, "and it shall be a statue of myself."

"Of myself," said each of the Town Councillors, and they quarrelled. When I last heard of them they were quarrelling still.

"What a strange thing!" said the overseer of the workmen at the foundry. "This broken lead heart will not melt in the furnace. We must throw it away." So they threw it on a dust-heap where the dead Swallow was also lying.

"Bring me the two most precious things in the city," said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird.

"You have rightly chosen," said God, "for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me."