

The Sweet and Pleasant
History of Patient Grissel

Ambose Merton

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GAMMER GURTON'S

Pleasant Stories

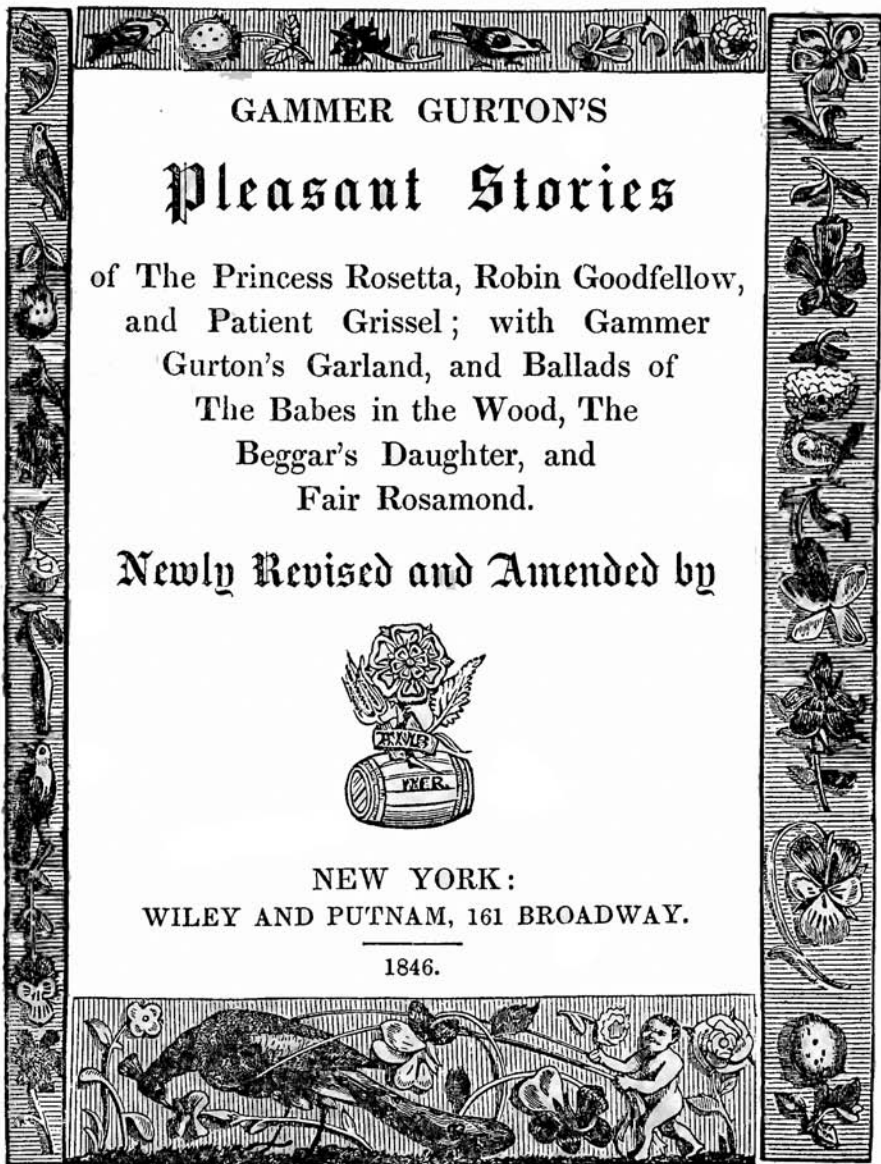
of The Princess Rosetta, Robin Goodfellow,
and Patient Grissel; with Gammer
Gurton's Garland, and Ballads of
The Babes in the Wood, The
Beggar's Daughter, and
Fair Rosamond.

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PARENTS AND CHILDREN.



WILEY AND PUTNAM.

THE SWEET AND PLEASANT HISTORY OF PATIENT GRISSEL.

CHAPTER I.

The Marquis of Salus is solicited by his Nobles to marry; he consents, and falls in love with a poor Countryman's Daughter.

BETWEEN the mountains of Italy and France, towards the south, lies the territory of Salus, a country flourishing with excellent towns, and some castles, and peopled with the best sort of gentry, and peasants. Among them lived, long since, a nobleman of great reputation and honour, who was lord of the country, and by name Gualter, Marquis of Salus. He was young in years, and never thought of marriage, until pressed to it, by the desires and petitions of his people, who often importuned him thereto.

At last he consented to it; and fame soon spread



the report abroad, and each princess was filled with hopes of being the Marquis's happy partner.

All this time, the Marquis continued his hunting; and usually resorted to a little village, not far from Salus, where lived a poor countryman, named Janicola, overworn in years, and overcome with distress; having nothing to make his life comfortable, but an only daughter, who was exceedingly beautiful, modest, and virtuous; but, as fire will not lie hid, where there is matter of combustibles, so virtue cannot be obscured, where there be tongues and ears; thus the report of her reached the Marquis. He, being satisfied of the truth, and finding her a fit woman to be his wife, resolved to forward the business. In the mean time, the court was furnished, and a crown and rich apparel prepared for the Queen; but who she was, the nobles all wondered, and the damsels marvelled, while the people in general flocked to see, who was to be the happy woman. At last, the nuptial day arrived: but who the Bride was, the next chapter must discover.

CHAPTER II.

The Marquis demands and marries the old Man's Daughter.

WHEN all things were prepared, the noble Marquis took with him a great company of earls, lords, knights, squires, gentlemen, ladies, and attendants, and went from the palace into the country, towards Janicola's house ; where Grissel, the fair maid, ignorant of what had happened, or of what was to come, had made herself and house clean, determining, with the rest of the neighbouring maidens, to see the solemnity. At this instant the Marquis arrived with his company ; and meeting Grissel, with two pitchers of water, which she was carrying home, asked her, where her father was. She answered, "In the house." "Go then," replied he, "and tell him I would speak with him." The poor man came forth to him, somewhat abashed, until the Marquis, taking him by the hand, said that he had a secret to impart to him ; and taking him from the rest of the company, spoke to him in the following manner :

"Janicola, I know thou always lovedst me ; and am satisfied thou dost not hate me now. You have been pleased, when I have been pleased ; and



you will not now be sorrowful, if I am satisfied. Nay, I am sure, if it lies in your power, you will further my delight ; I come with the intention of begging your daughter to be my wife ; will you take me for your son-in-law, as I have chosen you for my father."

The poor old man was so astonished, that he could not speak for joy ; but, when the ecstasy was over, he thus faintly replied :—"Most gracious sovereign, you are my lord, and therefore I must agree to your will ; but you are generous, and therefore take her, and make me a glad father." "Why, then," quoth the Marquis, "let us enter your house, for I must ask her a question before you." So he went in ; the company tarrying without, in vast astonishment.

The fair maid was busied, in making it as handsome as she could ; so, the Marquis took hold of her hand, and used these speeches, "To tell you this blush becomes you, were but a folly ; or, that your modesty has graced your comeliness, is unbecoming my greatness ; but, in one word, your father and I have agreed to make you my wife, therefore delays shall not entangle you with suspicion, nor, two days longer protract our happiness. Only, I must be satisfied in this, if your heart affords willing entertainment to the motion ; and your virtue and constancy to the following resolution : that is,



not to repine at my pleasure, in any thing, nor presume on contradiction when I command ; for as good soldiers must obey without disputing the business, so must virtuous wives dutifully consent without reproof. Therefore be advised how you answer ; and I charge thee take heed, that thy tongue utters no more than thy heart conceits."

All this time was Grissel wondering at these words ; but, thinking nothing impossible with God, made the Marquis the following answer :

"My gracious lord, I am not ignorant of your greatness ; and know my own weakness. There is nothing worthy in me to be your servant ; therefore I can have no desert to be your wife. Notwithstanding, because God is the author of miracles, I yield to your pleasure, and praise him for the fortune. Only this I will be bold to say, that your will shall be my delight, and death shall be more welcome to me, than a word of displeasure against you."

After this, the ladies adorned Grissel with robes befitting her state : the Marquis and all the company returned back to Salus ; where, in the cathedral, in the sight of the people, according to the fulness of religious ceremonies, they were by the priest joined together.



CHAPTER III.

Lady Grissel's Patience tried by the Marquis.

TO the other blessings, in process of time, there was added the birth of a daughter, which rejoiced the mother, and gladdened the father. The country triumphed ; and the people clapped their hands for joy. Notwithstanding this, fortune had a trick to check Grissel's pride ; and prosperity must be seasoned with crosses, for else it would corrupt us too much. It fell out, that the Marquis determined to prove his wife, and to make a trial of her virtues : and so, taking a convenient season, after the child was weaned, he one day repaired secretly to her chamber, and, seeming angry, imparted to her some of his mind ; telling her, that to preserve amity between him and his people, who were determined that none of her posterity should rule over them, he must needs take away her daughter. The lady sorrowfully apprehended the Marquis's resolution, to her grief, (though every word was like an arrow in her side,) yet admitted the temptation, disputing with herself to what end the virtues of patience, modesty, forbearance, fortitude, and mag-



nanimity were ordained, if they had not proper subjects to work upon.

When the Marquis saw her constancy, he was pleased with her modest behaviour, and said but little at that time, but between joy and fear departed, resolving to make a farther trial of her love.

CHAPTER IV.

The Marquis's Daughter is taken from her Mother, and sent to Bologna, to be there brought up.

NOT long after this conference between the Marquis and his lady, he called a faithful servant, to whom he imparted what he meant to do with his child, and then sent him to his wife, with an angry message. When Grissel had heard him out, remembering the conference the Marquis had with her, and apprehending there was no room for dispute, but that the child was ordained to die, she took it up in her arms, and, with a mother's blessing, kissed it; being not once amazed or troubled, since her lord would have it so; only she said, "I must, friend, entreat one thing at your hand, that, out of humanity and christian love, you leave not the body to be devoured by beasts and birds, for she





HISTORY OF PATIENT GRISEL.

is worthy of a grave." The man, having got the child durst not tarry, but return to his master, repeating every circumstance of her answer.

The Marquis, considering the great virtue of his wife, and looking on the beauty of his daughter, began to entertain some compassion, and to retract his wilfulness; but having, as he thought, so well began, he would not so soon give over, so, with the same secrecy he had taken her from his wife, sent her away to his sister, the Duchess of Bologna, with presents of worth, and letters of recommendation, containing in them the nature of the business, and the manner in which he wished the child to be brought up; which, she accordingly put into practice.

CHAPTER V.

The Marquis makes a further trial of his Wife's Patience.

AS this patient and wonderful lady was, one day, sporting with her infant son, two years after it had passed the danger of a cradle, and the trouble of infancy, the Marquis, to put her to a further trial, sent again his former messenger to demand that child also. Yet he, (as if there were a con-

science in disquieting her greatness,) came forward with preambles, craving pardon of the lady, that his message might seem blameless. But he was not so sudden in his demand as she was in her dispatch; for she presently blessed, kissed, and gave him this child also; only she pleaded with the same enforcement, as she had spoken in behalf of her daughter, that he would not see it devoured, for lack of a grave. In like manner he returned to the Marquis, who had still more cause for astonishment, and less reason to abuse so obedient a wife. Nevertheless, for a time he sent this child also to his sister; who, understanding her brother's mind, brought up the children in such a manner, that though no man ever knew whose children they were, yet they supposed them to belong to some great potentate.

By this time the Marquis' unkindness to his wife got spread among the people; who all admired, and wondered at her, for her constancy, patience, and love, for although he had more than once tried her patience, yet she never complained, but seemed to love him the more.



CHAPTER VI.

Grissel disrobed and sent home to her Father by her Husband; her Son and Daughter brought home under pretence of the Marquis marrying the latter: Grissel is sent for to make preparations, and her condescension thereon.

AFTER this, the Marquis was resolved to put her to another trial; so sent for her clothes, and commanded her to go home again to her father's, disrobed of every thing. Accordingly, in the midst of the nobility, she disrobed herself, and returned back to her father's cottage, deploring, indeed, the alteration of her fortune, but smiling that her virtue was predominant over her passion. The nobles all exclaimed against the cruelty of her lord; but she used no invective. They wondered at her so great patience and virtue; she answered, they were befitting a modest woman.

By this time they approached the house; and old Janicola, seeing his daughter so pitifully arrayed, amidst such honourable company, ran into the house, and brought her the robes she formerly wore; and putting them on her, said, "Now thou art in thy element;" and kissing her, bade her welcome.



The company were in amaze at his moderation, and wondered how nature could be so restrained from passion, and that any woman could have so much grace and virtue. In which amazement, not without some reprehension of fortune and their lord's cruelty, they left her, and returned to the palace, where they recounted to the Marquis, how she continued in her moderation and patience.

Not long after came the Duchess of Bologna, with her glorious company, she sending word beforehand she should be at Salus, on such a day. Whereupon, the Marquis sent a troop to welcome her, and prepared a court for her entertainment. While some of his courtiers condemned the Marquis, whilst others deplored his wife's misfortunes, all were transported with the gallant youth, and comely virgin, that came along with the Duchess; the latter of whom it was reported, the Marquis was going to marry. And neither the Duke, nor the Princess, knew themselves to be the children of the Marquis.

The next morning, after their arrival, the Marquis sent a messenger for Grissel, bidding her come and speak with him, just in the dress she then was; upon which, she immediately waited on her Lord. At her approach, he was somewhat abashed; but recovering his spirits, he thus addressed her.

"Grissel, the lady with whom I must marry, will



be here to-morrow by this time; and the feast is prepared accordingly. Now, because there is none so well acquainted with the secrets of my palace, and disposition of myself, as you are, I would have you, for all this base attire, address your wisdom to the ordering of the business, appointing such officers as are befitting, and disposing of the rooms, according to the degrees, and estates, of the persons. In a word, let nothing be wanting, which may set forth my honour, and delight the people."

"My Lord," said she, "I ever told you, that I took pleasure in nothing, but your contentment, and in whatsoever might conform to your delight. Herein consisted happiness; therefore make no question of my diligence and duty in this, or any thing, you shall please to impose upon me." And so, like a poor servant, she presently addressed herself to the business of the house, performing all things with such dispatch and quickness, that each one wondered at her goodness, and fair demeanour: and many murmured, to see her put to such a trial.

The day of the entertainment being come, when the fair lady approached, she looked so exceedingly beautiful, that some began not to blame the Marquis, for the change; while, Grissel, taking her by the hand, thus addressed her.

"Lady, if it were not his pleasure that may command to bid you welcome, yet, methinks, there is a

kind of overruling grace from nature in you, which must extort a respect unto you. And, as to you, young Lord, I can say no more ; but, if I might have my desires, they should be employed to secure your happiness. To the rest, I offer all that is fit for entertainment ; hoping they will excuse whatever they see amiss." So saying, she conducted them to their several apartments, where they agreeably reposed themselves, till it was dinner time.

When all things were prepared, the Marquis sent for his Grissel, and standing up, took her by the hand, and thus addressed himself to her.

"You see the lady is here I mean to marry ; and the company assembled to witness it. Are you, therefore, contented I should thus dispose of myself ? and do you, most quietly, submit to the alteration ?"

"My Lord," replied she, "before you all, in what as a woman, I might be found faulty, I will not now dispute ; but, because I am your wife, and have devoted myself to obedience, I am resolved to delight myself in your pleasure ; so, if this match be designed for your good, I am satisfied, and more than much contented. Only, great Lord, take care of one thing, that you try not your new bride, as you did your old wife ; for she is young, and perhaps wants that patience, which poor I have possessed."



CHAPTER VIII.

The Marquis's Speech to his Wife ; and the discovery of the Children.

TILL this, the Marquis had held out bravely ; but now, he could not forbear bursting into tears. After he had recovered himself, he thus addressed his patient wife, Grissel. "Thou wonder of women ! the champion of true virtue ! I am ashamed of my imperfections, and tired with abusing thee ; I have tried thee beyond all modesty. Believe me, therefore, I will have no wife but thyself, and, therefore, seeing that I have used you so unkindly heretofore, I protest never to disquiet thee any more ; and wherein my cruelty extended against thee, in bereaving thee of thy children, my love shall now make amends, in restoring thee thy son and daughter ; for this, my new bride, is our daughter, and this young lord, her brother. Thank this good lady, my sister, for bringing them up ; and, this man, you know him well enough, for his secrecy. I have related the truth, and will confirm it with my honour, and this kiss ; only sit down till the dinner is come, and then bid the company welcome, even in this poor array." The Marquis,

thus tenderly treating her, and discovering who the young lord and lady were, gave the nobility a fresh opportunity to show their obedience ; the which they immediately did to all three, and the dinner being over, none was so ready to attire Grissel, as her daughter, who was more glad than disappointed, at this so sudden a change. Janicola was sent to court, and ever after he was the Marquis's counselor. The servant also was well rewarded for his fidelity ; and the Dutchess returned to her palace, leaving her brother and sister to live and reign in peace. In length of time, the Marquis died, and Grissel lived thirty-three years after him ; and then died in a good old age, being a pattern for all women.



