



THE TWELVE

LITTLE PRINCESSES

ONCE upon a time there lived a great King, whose name was Mesmerian, and who was also a powerful enchanter. He was most anxious to have a son to succeed him on his throne, and when the fairies sent him twelve lovely little daughters, he got in a great rage, and throwing them into a magic sleep he locked them all up in a big cupboard in an old palace. At least, all but the eldest Princess, Ida, who was so beautiful that even his hard heart relented, though he sent her to the same palace, with an old deaf and dumb woman to take charge of her. Then he enchanted the palace, so that though it stood in the midst of the city no one remembered it, and not a sound was heard in it, or its

gardens, but the songs of the birds, and the clear little voice of Princess Ida.

Now, of course, Princess Ida knew nothing about her little sisters. She had to play all alone in the garden, and to read the old books in the library, and to tend her flowers; and she often longed for a companion. But no one came, and only once a year her Father paid her a visit. She was always glad to see him, though he rather frightened her, and moreover he made her curious; because every time he always sent her away into the garden, while he went and peeped into a cupboard which was kept locked. She knew he went, because once she followed him, and saw him put a key in the lock, but when he turned and saw her he was so angry that it made

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her quite ill. Now, on the mōrning after one of these visits, Ida ran out into the garden as usual, and there she saw something, shining and bright, lying on the path. It was a key, — a golden key.

"Oh, how pretty!" she said, picking it up. "I wonder where it comes from?" Then she gave a start as a thought struck her. "It must be the key of the cupboard. Father has dropped it! O—oh! if I dared—!"

She looked at the key, and longed for just one peep. But she was a well-read little girl and knew her Bluebeard. Yet, of course, her Father wasn't wicked, like Bluebeard; besides, she would be careful not to *drop the key*. All the time she was walking slowly back into the palace, and then upstairs; and then she reached the cupboard, and then, somehow, the key got into the lock and she peeped in.

"Oh! oh!" she cried. "Oh, you darlings!"

For there, instead of anything dreadful, sat eleven lovely little girls, in eleven little armchairs, but they were all sound asleep.

"Oh, you dears!" cried Ida. "I am sure you are my sisters."

And in she ran and kissed them all round, and as soon as she kissed them they all woke up.

"Why, where are we?" they cried, "and who are you?"

"You are in the Old Palace, and I am your sister Ida. Come down and have some dinner. But, hark! what a noise there is outside! What can be the matter?"

For the profound quiet of the palace was broken by shouts and cries of excitement.

"Let us go and see," said the eleven. And down they ran. There stood the great door of the palace, open, and outside were crowds of people, and just opposite a man knelt with his head on a block, and another man was just going to cut it off; and beyond stood a group of grand gentlemen all in armor.

"It is Father!" shrieked Princess Ida. "Oh, it is Father!"

And so it was; for the Emperor Ragymuffin and his twelve sons had that day conquered the city, and they were just going to chop off King Mesmerian's head, as a bad king and wicked enchanter.

"Oh! stop—don't!" cried Princess Ida; and, followed by her sisters, she rushed across, and they all fell on their knees before the Emperor.

Name: _____

Date: _____

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The Emperor paused, and hesitated. Then one of his sons stepped up and whispered something to him, and then another, and then another.

"Hum!" said the Emperor, at last. "Hum, ha! Exactly; well, young ladies — if — hum — ha — if you will consent to marry my twelve sons, and your Father will divide his dominions among you — I — I will accede to your request."

"We will do anything," sobbed the Princesses, "to save our dear Papa."

And, of course, King Mesmerian agreed to the terms.

And the twelve Princesses and their bridegrooms lived happily all the days of their lives.

Directions: Put the words into alphabetical (ABC) order.

anxious

relented

hesitated

dominions

bridegrooms

princesses

emperor

shrieked

knelt

request

profound

struck

cupboard

agreed

happily

frightened

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read and write each word three times.

anxious

dominions

frightened

profound

shrieked

relented

request

Directions: Match each word to its synonym.

1. frightened:

- a. scared
- b. weak
- c. anxious
- d. happy

2. profound:

- a. deep
- b. shallow
- c. scary
- d. silly

3. shrieked:

- a. screamed
- b. whispered
- c. clapped
- d. said

4. relented:

- a. surrendered
- b. asked
- c. requested
- d. made

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Describe each character.

King Mesmerian

Princess Ida

Emperor Ragymuffin

Summarize the story.

Does this story have a happy ending? How might it end differently?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Find the following terms in the word search puzzle below.

agreed
anxious
bridegrooms
cupboard
dominions

emperor
frightened
happily
hesitated
knelt
princesses

profound
relented
request
shrieked
struck

