

# A BOOK OF THE LAWS OF FAERIE

FOR THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD

By Oliver Raymond



**I**N the great catechism of gramarye, which is a new method of teaching children to see, there occurs, after the invocations and the litanies, a first question as follows: What is the Land of Faerie? And the answer is thus: It is all of seven. At first sight this appears like a cap with seven bells, or something that is against sense; but the text explains it further: The Land of the Faerie is (1) That which goes before and comes after; (2) That which intervenes; (3) Beneath the surface; (4) Thither; (5) Now and then; (6) The world well lost; (7) The present time: I am, Thou art, He is, &c., and all this only needs to be interpreted, because books of gramarye, or enchantment, are written on both sides of the page and across it also. The meaning in all simplicity is that in respect of the situation of Fairyland, it envelopes and enswathes all that we see and feel and hear. One book which I have read in the course of my researches tells me that it is "nearer than hands or feet." In other words, the world of mystery is always about us, but here, for the most part, we are content to "sit and play with similes," and to wait till things see us and accost us before we take notice of them. Before we discern them, they have, in fact, to find us out, unlike that old-fashioned gentleman of La Mancha who, by turning knight-errant, purchased everlasting honour and renown.

What would be our sensations and experiences if in the present century, and amidst our ordinary daily life, Fairyland suddenly became true for us, with all its glamour, all its adventures, and all the suddenness of its transformations? I am well fitted to answer this question, because I have myself turned the corner of the street, by which expression I am seeking to show the exact length of the journey, and that when you have grown accustomed to the kind of change which it involves, it is at most like moving your lodgings from No. 1 in the High Street to the broad avenue beyond the Market Place. There are a thousand things which I could tell you concerning my inquiries and explorations, but this is only a preface, full of simplicity and plain speaking, concerning them, which I have set down roughly for the use of good dreamers and those who see. So far as it extends, it is a record of first-hand experiences which could at need be supported by the evidence of others drawn from many sources. However, the excursions of fantasy will not require an apology with any true fantasiasts.

How it was done is another question—one which certain children are continually asking me, just as others say, "What became of the wolf who ate up Little Red Riding-hood? And was it possible that the maiden escaped?" Great things are possible in Fairyland, and that is why, as regards the modes of entrance, their name is legion, for they are many. The meaning of this is a plea-

santry, but there are certainly more ways of getting a magic ring than by buying it. If the roads into Fairyland are many, then the entrance-gate is one, and if the gates are many, then it is certain that the way is one. Should this savour of paradox to the student, I will be more clear on another occasion.

Once in the hush of the midnight, I stood at an open casement, when the spell of the moonbeams had dissolved the whole sky and lay in a misty radiance over all the land. There was a nightingale singing in a thicket, and, as I listened, I found that casement, which stood under a simple thatch in an old-world farmery, situated in the deep heart of the country, was no longer a common window, but one which opened "on the foam of perilous seas in faerie lands forlorn." There—I have been utterly frank with you—that is one of my methods, and the others are equally simple. Yet, if you prefer a decorative and flamboyant way, it shall not prove a failure, and, if I meet with you, I will tell you in utter secret, under a rose of many petals, that there are consecrations which have from all time conferred the privileges of Fairyland with the freedom of all its cities in a golden casket, and many of its manorial easements, including the old customs of the country, and the privilege of the ancient lights. But, for myself, I love better the ecstasies at moonlight in long, embayed windows, with their prospects of faerie meadows, tideless lagoons, and toil-worn, tossing seas.

Take notice, however, that, in any case, there is a certain sense of a divorce from nature, for the man who has seen a ghost is never thenceforward quite like the man who does not believe in spirits; and if you eat the bread of the fairies, no baker's loaves are likely to satisfy you afterwards.

And this reminds me of one of my earlier adventures in the land beyond the turnstile, when I met with the miraculous plant which is not only sufficient to support life without any more material food, but produces a strange transfiguration of the five senses, seeming to possess them completely until those senses produce, as a kind of

spiritual blossom, another and higher faculty, which is that, in fine, that is necessary in order to obtain the true freedom of Fairyland. It is sight, speech, hearing, taste, sensation exalted in a kind of rapture, and it enables you, among other liberties, to understand and speak on occasion the common languages of the country, including the particular dialects or *patois* of its outlying parts. I have myself reduced into writing the elements of the grammar and accidence of this silvern and golden speech, these tongues of mellifluous melody which prevails in the three attainable spheres of Fairyland, for there are other domains beyond them which no man has entered, or at least returned to tell. It is in truth a very great world, wide and far, and it is easy to become lost therein.

The language of the first sphere is shadowed forth by the music of a sweet peal of bells, somewhat dimmed by distance; the second is like the voice of a spirit; the third is the voice of love. And beyond and above these languages there is said to be another and unknown tongue which comprehends them all and yet—such is the alchemy of elfin music—is something other than any of them. The melody of this language is one of the higher ministries of exalted Nature which we must all of us learn one day. It is possible, as I have heard, to learn it easily by a short road, but I do not know where to look for it, and it is possible to go far to acquire it, as to which I can say only that I have been further than most men, but I have not even met with its alphabet. I spoke once on this subject to a holy hermit after plainsong at compline-time in Fairyland, in a chapel of ease attached to the metropolitan church or minster of the first sphere, and he said that, albeit he had never been fully informed, this language, in his opinion, had been acquired very easily by St. John, who had heard it in this life and that it was a hard lesson for Judas, but that both must learn it ultimately, the one not less than the other. He said also that it was more important in one sense for a bad man to learn it than that a good man should already know it. When it has

been learned by Antichrist, he affirmed that there would be no evil left in the world. Having asked him whether he could himself speak it, the hermit replied that he had once seen the letters, but that he did not know their attribution. When I paid a visit to Dreamland, which is on the outskirts of the elfin hemisphere, even the emperor of dreams had only heard of it in snatches—faint voices far over purple hills, beyond the fields of poppy, the groves of hemlock and all the beds of moly and nepenthe. He said that such voices were not known in sleep or in dreams of the night; he thought that they were among the mysteries of the awakening.

These things remind me how I once found mystic characters written around the chalices of all cup-shaped flowers in Fairyland. I thought at the time that they contained only the natural secrets of the virtues peculiar to such flowers, more especially as many ordinary herbs have, to my own knowledge, certain sigils or sentences inscribed on their leaves, setting forth quite intelligibly the great uses which they have in strange arts. But I thought afterwards that I had passed by these characters too lightly, and the next day they had vanished, while in their place was a rich dew of honey-sweet, very pleasant to the taste, on which I lived without other food for days and nights in a wilderness carpeted with hyacinths and peopled with scarlet flamingoes. I have spoken of days and nights as we count them here, but it was always sunset in that wilderness, and the blue of the flowers, the scarlet plumes of the strange birds and the gold and orange of the cloudland, so troubled the eyes that I have seen visions ever since and walk about with a fixed gaze, like one who is in very deep contemplation.

This state is useful in many ways to those who can enter it. There was a youth—I knew him well in the old days, when the spirit of delight created pleasure-domes and bright gardens everywhere—there was, I say, a young man who by long contemplation and great love of the sea had penetrated into the sea's secret, so that he came to know of the sea-spirit—I mean that great being

which is veiled by the strength, beauty and vastness of the ocean. This is long ago and I know not what has become of him, except that he went away over the waters when the tide was high in the spring-time.

If you are a lover of fantasy you would rejoice to see the garden of miraculous flowers which I reached one summer evening in an hour of dews and fragrance. It is tended with loving care by the elfin powers, because on reaching the perfection of their fullest bloom the flowers change into elfin maidens who go away over the land westward in the moonlight, but rather sadly, as it has always seemed to me, in search of lovers.

I have said already that the roamer in these realms is conscious throughout of a certain separation from nature; though he has only turned the corner, he has gone down a strange street, which has taken him into wan meadows, full of wonder and weariness. I must add now that if there are no tears in Fairyland, there is often a deep sense of dreariness. There may be regions where Puck and the hierarchies of tricksiness abide and play pranks, but I have not met with them in my walks. The fantastic, the grotesque, and all that which corresponds to the arabesque and the dim regions of gothic grandeur and melancholy are encountered at every turn in the lanes and highways. I must not say that the sense of gladness is wanting, but there is nothing of the sense of comedy, and generally there is the kind of sentiment which follows a strain of music that is very beautiful but, withal, mournful.

And this is the tincture of its histories. I remember that of the Vanished Prince who disappeared mysteriously from throne and kingdom just as he was on the point of attaining the crown of love and of dominion. He simply rose up and went forth. His people mourned him through a whole century; the nation itself passed away; and at the time of the story, after the lapse of a whole age, as people reckon ages in Fairyland, there was one grey watcher left in the turret of a ruined castle, looking towards that quarter of the heavens in the direction of which he had dis-

appeared, and still awaiting his return. But from what I know of the legends of Fairyland, I doubt if he would come back to his own again.

This kind of vigil recurs continually in the great books of romances which fill the galleries of the faerie castles. I cannot tell you as I should like concerning the Circle of Seven Watchers whom seven followed day and night through the years, until something should come to pass which they call the New Life in the Morning. I cannot transfer the glamour of the fairy language on which this story depends. I am told they are still watching; in their part of the country people call it the Divine Vigil and there are many rites and invocations connected with it. But the morning never comes, for it is the place of the Evening Star.

Another melancholy fable tells you of the princess who is entombed in an inaccessible grotto of a great gorge in the mountains, many thousands of feet down, and is there nourished on the tasteless fruits of a forest of mournful trees, which, however, have the gift of preserving the life of the partaker, their unchangeable insipidity imparting a species of sad invariability to the frame. The trees weep in that land.

The Land of Færie is not usually a place of portents, because all that lives therein is a sign or an omen. Hence it is seldom only that things appear suddenly and with violence. There is, however, the Phantom Arm which is seen at unequal intervals, moving with a kind of sweep. Its owner is never seen, be he ghost or demon. Some say that it is really the arm of a great spirit, but it is generally a destroying arm and very few can avert it. It has at times been averted by a great heroism, and then the Phantom Arm is not seen for a long period. Does this remind you of anything?

In spite of sadness, and the sense of disproportion, I prefer to commune with Fairyland than with the ordinary ways of life, for it is always unexpected if it is not always more wonderful; and occasionally it is full of consolations. Nothing appeals to one more powerfully than that custom in a certain part

of the country where a true and extinguishable love kindles an undying soul in the hearts of the soulless. This has been heard of from time to time in our own world, and has been explained by the philosophers. For the beginner, also, there are certain pleasantries which have at first sight the aspect of comedy. He may go in search of the treasures which were accumulated by the princess in the story called "Diamonds and Pearls," because they are stored somewhere in secret to this day; or he may travel to the mansion of Blue Beard, which still stands in Fairyland, and is part of its antiquities. But all such adventures are designed to lead him further, and the more trivial is your quest at the beginning, the less likely are you to get home at the end, because of the endless adventures which pursue you.

The first time that I climbed the wall at the end of the *cul de sac* I took with me a high speculation, which was nothing less than the attainment of faerie omnipotence, royalty and splendour, and the passage through these to even greater powers. I became page to the King of Faerie and was afterwards made keeper of the Rolls of Elfin Emperors. New names were given to me at each elevation, but I never attained my real purpose, for this must not be so much as expected in Fairyland, though at one time I might, as it seemed, have accomplished a revolution: that was when I had learned wisdom and had undertaken to codify the archives, which I am still doing.

And this reminds me that I have said enough at this time of these matters by the way of introduction and preface until the day comes when I can tell you at full length of the whole elfin archæology; of the Laws of succession in Fairyland; of the Elfin hierachy; of the Buried Cities of Fairyland: of all the goblin world and ghost mythology. And then as to the place itself—of glades and glens in Fairyland; of forests and seas; of pageants and moving manors; of the fauna and flora of Fairyland; of the evening and the morning; of the mystery of sleep. And in like manner of the people in that country; of its kings and

their chivalries: of the commerce of men and fairies; of witch ladies. And, in fine, to make an end of this dreaming, of great quests in Fairyland, with the journeys, pilgrimages and explorations which can be made therein, as, for example; of the search for the Ring of Invisibility; of the quest after the Purse of Fortunatus; of the inquisition for the

Wishing-Cap; and the pursuit of the Seven-League Boots. Of these things in their due order and methodised you shall hear surely, under favourable stars. And so farewell, but you shall yet pledge me, my children, in the violet wine of Færie and the Book of the Laws of Faerie we shall read together thereafter with happy and shining eyes.

