

THE WEDDING GARMENT

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ONCE upon a time, way out at the edge of all creation, away past all the twinkling stars, in the little kingdom of Mundi there lived an old woman and her two lovely daughters, Celeste and Terra.

Although these girls were beautiful, they were very different in character. Celeste was good, kind, and thoughtful, Terra was rude and selfish.

Nevertheless, the mother loved Terra better, because she was like her; so she lavished all her love upon Terra and gave her all the beautiful things she possessed and let her grow up vain and careless.

Celeste never had the beautiful things her sister had, and on her frail shoulders seemed to fall the burdens of the others; but she was always bright and cheerful and helpful, never complaining because her tasks were hard.

Now the king of this country was going on a long journey, and when he returned he was to bring his bride with him. But as there were many difficulties in the way and many obstacles to hinder his progress, he could not tell just when his return would be. So he asked his people to be ready always, so that the moment they heard the herald announce his appearance they could come to the feast prepared for his return.

As soon as he was gone the people began doing various things; some thought it would be a very long

time before he came back and they would wait a while before getting ready; some thought he might be killed and never come home; some got their clothes ready and put them away to be used when he came; and a very few did what he had asked them and expected him any day.

Terra and her mother planned a gorgeous robe; it was spun cloth of gold and embroidered with rubies and precious stones, and when it was finished they laid it away in a beautiful carved chest.



But for Celeste nothing was planned, and she had only her every-day clothes which she wore to her every-day task of going out to the hilltop to tend and feed the sheep and little lambs; and no one knew while she was on the hilltop of the dress she planned to wear when the king came. Every night, no matter how tired her hands, she would weave a little on her robe, working in little strands of wool left on the briars by the sheep in passing, and the petals of the bright flowers she loved so well; sometimes tears

would fall, but she brushed them away and laughed for joy for she knew the king would be pleased with her work.

After a long time, when the wind that blows around the stars had many times circled this little kingdom, the herald proclaimed that the king was coming; every one began hurrying to get ready and some of them didn't have time so they were left out; but Terra and Celeste put on the dresses that they had prepared and went to the banquet hall. Terra made Celeste stay by the door, while she went up to the front near the royal throne.

After a while the master of ceremonies came through the hall to see if everything was in order; but when he came to the people who had hurried so fast that they were not properly dressed, he made them go out, for no one could appear before the king who was not carefully clothed.

As he passed Terra, he stopped and asked her why she did not have a suitable dress on; in amazement she looked down at her gorgeous apparel and was horrified to see that it was all tarnished from disuse, the rubies looked like drops of blood and the embroideries were all black. As she was going out she tried to take Celeste with her, but the master stopped her, saying, "Look! she has on the Wedding Garment." Terra looked, and behold! every thread had turned to gold, the tears were pearls and the bright flowers and leaves were glowing gems. The master led her to the seat which Terra had occupied, for Celeste was fit to sit with those who had watched and were ready for the coming of the King.