

THE THREE WISHES

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As everyone knows, young folks that never do what they should not do, and never leave undone what they ought to do, run a great risk of meeting some day a good fairy who will tell them in a musical voice that the king has decided to reward them.

Now, there was once a lad named Albert Crane. He was related to the King of the fairies by the marriage of a great uncle, who had once saved the life of a fairy who was caught in a rainstorm about midnight and could not fly home. This young man picked her gently up and hid her under a candle-snuffer till the next night, thus saving her from the fatal glance of the sun. And this is a thing you must all do when you find a fairy in distress; for fairies fade into nothing under the glare of the sun.

Well, then, since this young man had befriended the fairy, the fairy King was eager to show his gratitude in any way and every way possible, even to relatives far removed. He was very anxious, for this reason, to grant the three wishes to Albert Crane. But Albert was such a mischievous little fellow that it seemed he would never be able to express his gratitude in that direction. The lowest average of good behavior on which the diploma of the three wishes will be granted is three weeks. (No wonder so few young people ever get the wishes!) Albert Crane seemed the most hopeless of all. There is no need of telling you all the mischievous things he did, because, if you have not already done them all yourself before, you might learn something new.

But just as the fairy King was giving up in despair, Albert fell sick, and was kept in bed for a whole month. He was too weak for mischief; and the fairy King jumped at the chance to relieve himself of the debt he thought he owed.

So, the first day Albert was strong enough to go into the woods, he was surprised to see standing before him a beautiful girl with long brown hair and bright blue eyes, and a wand with a star on it. Albert recognized her at once from her resemblance to the fairies in the picture books.

The fairy spoke to him, and in a musical voice said: "Albert, since you have been a good boy, the gracious King of the fairies has decided to reward you bountifully. Any three wishes you may make will be granted, whatever they are. But be very careful what you choose."

When Albert heard the fairy's little speech, he was too amazed to say a word. He wanted so many things at once that his brain went into a whirl. Then a happy thought struck him. Instead of choosing any three wishes out of the thousand things a boy of his age could wish, he suddenly said, with a bluntness that took the fairy's breath away:

"If I choose one wish only, will you make me three times as sure of getting it?"

The fairy was too startled to understand what this strange request might mean, and before she thought, she accepted.

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