

The Mermaid and the Simpleton

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は し が き

近年児童文学の翻訳や研究がさかんで、外国の児童文学の主要な作品が、古典から現代のものまで、いい翻訳で読める機会が多いのはうれしいことです。しかし読みたいと思うすべての作品が翻訳されているわけではありませんし、原書で読むにこしたことはありません。本書のおとぎ話 *The Mermaid and the Simpleton* を書いた Barbara Leonie Picard (1917～) ももっと皆さんに愛読されていていい作家の一人だと思います。しかし残念なことに、*The Eagle of the Ninth*, *The Lantern Bearers*, *Knight's Fee* などで知られる Rosemary Sutcliff (1920～) ほどにわが国に紹介されていません。

Picard は Sutcliff と同じように現代のイギリスの秀れた歴史小説家の一人で、多数の著作があります。彼女はイングランドのサリー州のリッチモンドの生まれで、バークシャー州の聖キャサリン校で教育をうけました。現在サセックス州に住んでいます。そして短篇集 *The Mermaid and the Simpleton* は1949年に出版された彼女の最初の本と思われます。この短篇集には15の短篇がのっていますが、本書ではそのうちの5つを選びました。いずれも愛をテーマとしていて、人生における愛のきびしさ、美しさ、とろとろさが簡潔な文体で、さらっと描かれています。ここでは筋書きはのべないで、ただとても心にのこる物語で、ハッピーエンドのものも、そうでないものもあるとだけいっておきます。きっと皆さんは読むにつれ、想像力の翼がはえ、このおとぎ話の世界を心ゆくまで楽しむようになると思います。

参考までに Picard の主な他の本をあげておきます。

The Faun and the Woodcutter's Daughter (1951)

* *The Odyssey of Homer* (1952)

French Legends, Tales and Fairy Stories (1955)

Ransom for a Knight (1956)

* *The Iliad of Homer* (1960)

The Goldfinch Garden (1963)

Twice Seven Tales (1968)

The Story of the Pandavas (1968)

* この二冊は岩波書店より高杉一郎氏の訳でホメーロスの『オデュッセイア物語』『イーリアス物語』として出ています。

編 者

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The Mermaid and the Simpleton



ONE DAY, while he was fishing in the sea, a fisherman caught a mermaid in his net. He had thought that she was some kind of large fish, and had had a great struggle to drag her into his boat, urged on by the thought of the price at which so large a fish might sell. But at last, when he could look at his prize properly, he saw the mermaid lying at the bottom of his boat, entangled in the net, and still making vain attempts to free herself from its meshes.

"Well," said the fisherman, "seventeen years have I worked at my trade, and never have I caught anything so strange."

She raised tear-filled eyes to him. "I am a mermaid, please let me go. I am young and very frightened, please throw me back into the sea."

"By all means," said the fisherman, "but first I must take you home with me to show my wife. She always complains

that I never catch anything wonderful; a fish with a golden ring inside it, like the one in the story; or a sea-serpent; or even an octopus. But now that I have caught you I can silence her complaining for ever, if I but show you to her
5 to-night. To-morrow I will bring you back with me and return you to the sea."

So the fisherman carried the mermaid, wrapped up in his net, home to his little cottage near the sea and showed her to his wife. The woman was delighted; she praised her
10 husband for his cleverness in catching such a creature and could not leave off staring at the little mermaid and touching her to make sure that she was quite real. She stroked her scaly tail and pulled her blue hair, and eyed enviously the red coral necklace around her white throat.

15 "This is horrible," thought the mermaid, "but it will not last for ever. To-morrow morning I shall be back in the sea, and this will all have been an ugly dream."

But later that evening, as the fisherman and his wife were sitting at supper, still talking of the mermaid, a
20 rogue passed the cottage on his way to make a fortune, and knocking at the door he asked shelter for the night. He was made very welcome, and naturally he was told about the fisherman's adventure and shown the mermaid. As soon as he saw her his eyes glittered greedily and he



thought, "I must have her. To a clever fellow like myself, she would be worth her weight in gold." So when he had duly admired the fisherman's skill in catching strange creatures, he asked, "What will you do with her?"

5 "Why," said the fisherman, "put her back in the sea to-morrow. It is to the sea that she belongs."

"Then you are not thinking of keeping her?" asked the rogue.

"Indeed no," laughed the fisherman; "what should we
10 do with a mermaid in the cottage?"

"In that case," said the rogue, "since I have a fancy to own so strange a creature, I will buy her from you."

"No," replied the fisherman, "she is not for sale. I
15 promised to return her to the sea to-morrow and I must keep my word."

"I will give you five golden crowns for her."

The fisherman hesitated. Then he said, "A promise is a
promise, I will not sell her."

"You fool," whispered his wife, "sell her to him, but
20 ask more than five crowns."

But the fisherman shook his head. "No," he said.

"I will give you ten golden crowns," said the rogue,
"and that is a lot of money."

"It is indeed," said the fisherman, and he thought, "it is

more than I could earn in six months by fishing."

"We are poor and it is a fair price," whispered his wife, "accept it, man." But the fisherman said nothing. "Come," said the woman, "you cannot refuse ten golden crowns," and when he still did not answer she turned to the rogue. 5 "We accept your price," she said. "Ten golden crowns for her, but without the coral necklace; that would be a crown the more."

The rogue laughed. "You may keep your necklace," he said, and with eager fingers she dragged it from the mer- 10 maid's neck and set it around her own and ran to admire her reflection in a polished copper pan that hung upon the wall. And the rogue smiled to himself as he counted ten golden crowns out on to the table. But the fisherman spoke to neither of them. He went out of the cottage 15 and walked up and down in the darkness outside, his hands clasped behind his back.

"What have I done?" he said to himself, "what have I done?"

The next morning the mermaid was put into a sack which 20 the rogue slung over his shoulder, and, well-pleased with himself, he went on his way. At the nearest town he sought out a carpenter, who made at his request a wooden cage large enough to hold the mermaid. Then the rogue

bought a donkey and a little cart and a dark cloth to cover the cage, and set off to make some money. He would stop at every town and village on his way and charge one silver penny for a sight of the mermaid, and on fair days and
5 market days he made a great deal of money.

* * * *

In a cottage, just outside a small town, lived a poor widow and her only son. The widow was always cleaning and cooking and polishing and mending, but her son was a simple, idle youth, who liked nothing better than to lie
10 in the fields and gaze up at the clouds, or to sit on a gate and swing his legs and whistle, or stroll along the roads singing to himself, and indeed he whistled and sang as merrily and prettily as any bird.

“You are a lazy good-for-nothing fellow,” said his
15 mother; “you are a disgrace to the family. I am glad that your poor father never lived to see what his only child grew up to be. Here I am working my fingers to the bone all day, and you idle the time away.”

“Nobody asks you to work so hard, Mother,” said the
20 simpleton, “what is the good of work, anyway? You sweep the floor and the dust comes down in the night and tomorrow you have to sweep it up again.”

“You might not mind living in a pig-sty,” said his

mother, "but what would the neighbours think?"

"You spend an hour preparing a meal which is eaten in ten minutes," said the simpleton; "would it not be better to eat nuts like the squirrels and fruit like the blackbirds and have more time to spare for singing and laughing and 5 being happy?"

"I am ashamed of you," said his mother, "wanting to live like an animal! The sooner you make up your mind to find a useful trade the better."

"But what is the use of work, Mother? Tell me that." 10

"Why, to earn money of course."

"Ah, for money. Now I understand," said the simpleton, for he had often heard his mother talk of money. "But all the same, I do very well without money."

"You are impossible," snapped his mother. "But mark my 15 words, such a lazy fellow can only come to a bad end."

Everyone blamed the simpleton for his laziness.

"I am deeply grieved," said the parish priest, "to see that you do not mend your ways. Idleness is a great sin, and industry is a great virtue. I warn you, young man, 20 idleness will bring you to disaster."

"Will it indeed, sir?" asked the simpleton, but still he did no work.

One fine morning in late summer, as the simpleton was

walking along, he found a silver penny lying in the road.

"Ah," he said, "here is a find. I shall go to town and spend it."

As he strolled round the streets wondering what to buy,
5 he saw a crowd collected round a donkey cart. On the cart was something covered by a cloth, and beside it stood a man.

"Come up, come up, good people," he shouted. "Only a silver penny to see the mermaid. A real live mermaid from the sea. No other wonder like it in the land. Only a silver
10 penny."

"Now," said the simpleton to himself, "that would be a thing to see. I have heard of mermaids, but I never thought to see one," and he joined the crowd and paid his silver penny to the rogue.

15 Then the rogue whipped the cloth off the cage and there inside it was the little mermaid. The crowd pressed round laughing and jeering, and those who were nearest the cart poked her through the bars with their fingers to see if she were real, and she shrank away from them and hid her
20 face in her hands. But the simpleton stared at her and did not laugh. "Poor little mermaid," he thought, "how horrible it must be for her in that cage, and how she must miss the sea."

The parish priest was passing by, and when he saw the

simpleton he stopped.

"It is indeed a distressing thing to see you wasting your time gaping at worthless marvels," he said. But after reflection he added, "Though perhaps for once you are not spending your time entirely unprofitably, for the mermaids 5 are an idle pagan race, who pass their days in sitting upon rocks and combing their hair, and now you see before you to what idleness and singing bring you."

"To what do they bring you, sir?" asked the simpleton. "Why, indeed," replied the parish priest, "just to this. To 10 being set up here before a foolish crowd for the people to laugh and jeer at. Take heed of the warning," and he walked on.

But the simpleton watched the mermaid and he pitied her, and when the crowd had seen enough and the people 15 had drifted away, chattering and laughing, he went up to the rogue and said, "Do you think that it is quite kind to keep a mermaid on the dry land and in a cage?"

The rogue stared at him in astonishment. "Probably not," he said. 20

"Then why do you do it?" asked the youth. "Would it not be better to let her go back to the sea where she belongs?"

The rogue burst out laughing. "Why, what a simple

fellow you must be, to be sure. That mermaid is worth her weight in gold to me, and I am not losing the chance of making good money with her help. Though to be truthful, I find travelling around the country all the time can become a little tiring.”

“Oh money!” said the simpleton, remembering all that his mother always said on the subject. “Now I understand why you must keep her in a cage on dry land.”

The rogue laughed again. “I am glad you understand, my friend,” he said; “and now, if you would earn some money for yourself, stay by the cart and keep an eye upon the cage for me while I go to the inn, for I am hungry, and I will give you two silver pence when I return.”

So the simpleton waited with the cart while the rogue went to the inn, and as soon as he was alone, the simpleton lifted a corner of the black cloth over the cage and whispered into the darkness, “Are you very unhappy, little mermaid?”

“I am very unhappy,” said the mermaid, and she began to weep.

“Do not cry, little mermaid, tell me what I can do to help you.”

“Carry me back to the sea,” pleaded the mermaid.

“But I have never seen the sea,” replied the simpleton,

"and I do not know where it is, save that it is many, many miles from here."

The mermaid sobbed in her cage and the simpleton thought hard. At last he exclaimed, "Near here is a river. I have heard tell that sometime every river reaches the sea. 5 If I put you into the river could you find your way to the sea?"

"I am sure that I could," said the mermaid.

"Now we must make our plans," said the simpleton, and it was arranged that he should go after dark to the inn 10 stables where the mermaid was kept in her cage at night, and while the guests at the inn, with the rogue among them, were making merry over supper, he should unfasten the cage, carry off the mermaid and take her to the river.

But that evening, when he reached the stables, he could 15 find neither the mermaid nor the cage, but only the donkey eating its hay, and the empty cart with the black cloth folded neatly upon it, and he had to go away alone.

The next morning he learnt that while the rogue had been showing the mermaid to the crowd on the previous 20 afternoon, the rich count who lived in the large house on the hill beside the town had driven through the street in his carriage, and having seen the mermaid he had a fancy to buy her for his new fish pool. He had offered the

rogue five hundred golden crowns for her, and being tired of travelling around the country, the rogue had accepted the high price, and now the mermaid was in the fish pool in the count's garden.

5 "Well," thought the simpleton, "a fish pool is better than a cage, but all the same I must go up there and see if she is happy."

So the next moonlit night he climbed up the hill to the count's house, and since the big gates were locked he had
10 to find a way over the wall. He walked almost all around the grounds before he found a place where the ivy grew over the wall and he could climb up it into the garden. After a search he saw the pool gleaming cold and silver in the moonlight, and standing by it he called softly, "Little
15 mermaid, are you there?" and she came swimming towards him.

"Are you happy here?" asked the simpleton.

"No," said the mermaid, "I want to return to the sea."

"Then I will take you down to the river," said the
20 simpleton, and he picked her up out of the pool.

He had great difficulty in climbing back over the wall with the mermaid in his arms, but at last it was done and he stood in the grass at the foot of the high wall. Then carrying the mermaid carefully he made his way down the

NOTES

The Mermaid and the Simpleton

- P. L.
 5 2 mermaid「人魚」中世英語では mermaide: mere (sea) + maid.
 伝説上の架空動物で; 上半身が人間の女性, 下半身が魚の形
 をしており, 半人半鳥の海の精の Siren [sáirín] サイレン
 としばしば混同される. 人魚は海牛またはその一種のジュ
 ゴンを見た舟乗りの想像から生まれたらしいといわれている.
 cf. merman (男の人魚)
- 4 had a great struggle to...=made a great effort to...
 6 prize 「捕獲物」
- 10 seventeen years have I worked at my trade, and...
 「17年間もおれはこの商売をやってきたんだが...」
- 10 work at=be engaged in.
 12 tear-filled eyes 「いっぱい涙をたたえた目」
 15 By all means=without fail; certainly.
- 6 1 a fish with a golden ring inside it, like the one in
 the story ここでいう話にある魚というのは, ヘロドトスの
 「歴史」の巻3, 41~42節に出てくるサモスの僭主ポリュク
 ラテスがはめていた印章つきの指輪がおなかにあった見事な
 大魚などがこれにあてはまる. このヘロドトスの魚の話はこ
 うである. ポリュクラテスと友好関係を結んでいたエジプト
 王アマシスはあまり幸運に恵まれるポリュクラテスに, すべ
 てに幸運な者は悲惨な最後をとげることになるから, 何か一
 番大切にしているものを捨てるように忠告する. その忠告に
 従ってポリュクラテスが黄金の台をつけたエメラルド製の指
 輪を捨てるが, それから5日後に漁師が献上した大魚の腹か
 らその指輪が見つかるという話である. この指輪は Ring
 of Amasis として知られている.

78 NOTES

- P. L.
- 6 2 sea-serpent 「(伝説上の) 大うみへび」
 7 carried the mermaid, wrapped up in his net, home to his little cottage... 「人魚を網にくるんで、自分の小さな家へともち帰り…」
 12 to make sure 「…を確かめるために」
 13 scaly [skéili] 「うろこのある」
 20 make a fortune=earn great wealth
 21 asked shelter for the night 「一夜の宿をたのんだ」
- 8 2 she would be worth her weight in gold 「この人魚は同量の黄金とおなじ価値があるだろう」
 4 do with 「…を処置する」
 11 have a fancy to... 「…が好きである」
 16 crown=any of various coins whose name means *crown*, as the *krona*, *krone*, etc. 「クラウン貨幣」
- 9 12 her reflection in a polished copper pan 「みがき上げた銅製の平なべにうつった自分の姿」
 20 a sack which the rogue slung over his shoulder 「悪党が肩にかけた袋」
 21 well-pleased with himself... 「大いに満足して」
- 10 2 set off=started.
 2 would 過去の習慣をあらわす。cf. He would sit for hours doing nothing.
 3 charge=ask as a price
 4 on fair days and market days 「お祭りや市の開かれる日には」
 9 liked nothing better than to... 「…しているのが一番好きだった」
 14 good-for-nothing=worthless
 15 a disgrace=a person or thing that brings shame, dishonor, or reproach (to one, etc.)
 16 never lived to see what his only child grew up to be. 「自分の一人息子が成長してどんな人間になったかを見るまで生きなかった」cf. He did not live to finish the work.
 17 work one's fingers to the bone 「骨を惜しまず働く」

- P. L.
- 10 23 pig-sty=a shelter where pigs are kept
- 11 8 The sooner you make up your mind to find a useful trade the better. 「おまえが役に立つ仕事を見つける決心をするのが早ければ早いほど、いいんだよ」 the better のつぎに it would be をおぎなって考える.
- 15 mark my words 「わたしの言うことをよく注意して聞くんだ」
- 19 mend your ways 「おまえの行状をあらためる」
- 12 15 whipped the cloth off the cage 「おりにかぶせてあった布をぱっとはぎとった」
- 13 4 for once=for this once「今度だけは」
7 now you see before you to what idleness and singing bring you 「こうして現におまえは何もしないで歌などうたっているとはどんなことになるか見ているのだ」
- 12 take heed of=pay close attention to
- 24 burst out laughing=began laughing suddenly
- 14 3 Though to be truthful... 「だが実をいうとな…」 to be truthful は to tell the truth と同じで独立不定詞句.
- 11 keep an eye upon=watch carefully
- 14 waited with... 「…の番をした」
- 15 1 save that... 「…ということのほか」
5 I have heard tell that... 「…ということを話に聞いたことがある」 hear tell は hear の次に people, someone などが省略された形で方言 (dialect) または俗語 (colloquialism) に用いられるが、時には文語的 (literary) 用法としても用いられる.
- 13 make merry over supper 「夕食をしながら陽気にうかれ騒ぐ」
- 21 count 「(英国以外の国の) 伯爵」 cf. 英国の伯爵は earl, しかし夫人は countess
- 16 6 all the same=nevertheless
- 11 the grounds 「庭園」
- 13 he saw the pool gleaming cold and silver in the moonlight 「かれは池が月の光りをあびて冷たく銀色に光

80 NOTES

P. L.

- っているのを見た」
- 17 1 it was daylight by the time that... 「…するまでには夜が明けていた」
5 good luck be with you 「あなたの幸運を祈りますわ」祈願文. cf. May you be happy!
- 19 constable=policeman
- 18 17 sentenced the simpleton to be hanged for... 「…の罪で“物くさ太郎”に絞首刑の宣告をした」
24 This is what comes of associating with legendary creatures. 「これも伝説の生きものなんかにつきあったりする結果なんじゃ」 cf. Your illness comes of drinking too much.
- 19 4 commotion=agitated stir, violent disturbance
6 tiptoe=on tiptoe 「つま先で」
- 20 3 Greetings to you, swallows. 「ツバメさんたち、ようこそ」 cf. Welcome to you all.
- 13 a shell which will contain just so much of the sea and the wind as I wish... 「ちょうど私ののぞむだけの量の海の水と風がはいっているような貝がら」
- 15 periwinkle shell 「たまきびがい」
- 21 2 set up=assemble and erect
11 screeched=cried out in high tones
18 trifle [tráifl]=thing of little value
- 22 5 a little puff of wind 「小さな一陣の風」
5 In the twinkling of an eye=in an instant
8 awash 「水をかぶって」
- 14 ran dry-footed 「足をぬらさないで走った」 dry-footed は形容詞もあるが、ここでは副詞的。
cf. bare-footed, four-footed
- 17 Who would have thought so much water could be in so small a shell. 「こんなに小さな貝がらの中にこんなに沢山の水がはいっているなんてだれが考えたろう」
- 24 venture out of doors 「あえて戸外に出る」
- 23 2 mess=a disorderly, untidy, or dirty state of things

The Thousandth Gift

- P. L.
- 24 2 it was proclaimed throughout the land that... 「…が
国中に布告された」
- 3 suitor [sú:tər] 「(男性の)求婚者」
- 7 make her choice of a husband 「夫をえらぶ」
- 9 eligible [élidzəbl] 「選ぶに足る」
- 13 far and wide=abroad; everywhere
- 15 cowherd 「牛飼い」 cf. shepherd [jépərd] 羊飼い
- 25 1 with her ladies-in-waiting in attendance 「侍女たちを
供に従えて」
- 8 try his luck at 「いちかばちかやってみる」
- 14 disconsolate [diskənsəlit]=hopelessly sad
- 21 looking as if the world were coming to an end 「ま
るでこの世の終わりでもやってくるような顔をして」
- 26 4 Up, and away to the palace with your gift, 「さあ、
立ち上がって、おまえさんの贈り物をもって宮殿におゆき」
up=rise
- 13 be quick about it=hurry up
- 22 I have it, lad, 「おまえさん、わかったよ」
- 27 10 bride=a woman who has recently been married or is
about to be married cf. bridegroom
- 18 the presentations 「王女に贈り物を披露する式」
- 20 the Lord Chamberlain 「式部長官」
- 28 1 fashioned of gold 「金で作られた」
- 6 kill=put an end to; extinguish
- 9 when blown 「吹かれれば」
- 24 a swan which sang, …sing again. ギリシアの昔からヨー
ロッパには、白鳥は死に臨んで美しい声で歌うという伝説が
あり、この伝説に基づいている。
- 29 14 If it will please your highness 「恐れながら申し上げますが」
- 19 discomfiture=embarrassment
- 23 dismiss=direct or allow to leave
- 23 with a wave of her hand 「手をふって」

- P. L.
 30 20 I will waste no more time on you 「わたしはおまえなどにこれ以上かかっているひまはない」
- 31 1 coax [kóuks]=persuade or try to persuade by pleading or flattery
 8 by force 「力づくで」
 14 not having her own way 「自分の思いどおりにならないこと」
 18 wavered in his determination 「決断にまよった」
- 32 2 racked their brains 「悩みそをしぼった」
 5 tossed and turned 「輾転反側した」
 9 although not a wink of sleep did she get...=although she did not sleep a wink...
 24 went down on one knee 「(片ひざをついて)ひざまずいた」

King Florimonde and the Winged Horse

- 35 1 in the olden times=in the old times
 2 over=in a position to rule or control
 7 rare and costly treasures the like of which the world had never seen before 「世間の人々が以前一度として見たことのない比類なく珍しい、高価な財宝」 the like of = a thing like; anything to equal. この which の先行詞は treasures
- 36 1 had made a covenant with 「...と契約を結んでいた」
 13 the court 「君主の一族重臣たち」
 15 surpassed=exceeded, was (or were) better than
 16 there was no strange thing that...which... この文は関係代名詞 that と which が同一の先行詞 thing にかかる二重限定の構文。
 23 a range of mountains=a mountain range 「山脈、連山」
- 37 2 steed=horse
 3 the cheering crowds 「歓呼してむかえる群衆たち」
 13 in no way 「決して...しない」