THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

Once upon a time there was a king and queen who for a very long time had no children, and when at length a little daughter was born to them they were so pleased that they gave a christening feast to which they invited a number of fairies. But, unfortunately, they left out one rather cross old fairy, and she was so angry that she said the princess should die when she reached the age of sixteen, by pricking her hand with a spindle. All the other fairies present, except one, had already given the princess their beautiful gifts, and this last one said she could not prevent part of the wicked wish coming true; but her gift should be that the princess should not really die, but only fall into a deep sleep, which should last for a hundred years, and at the end of that time she should be awakened by a king's son.
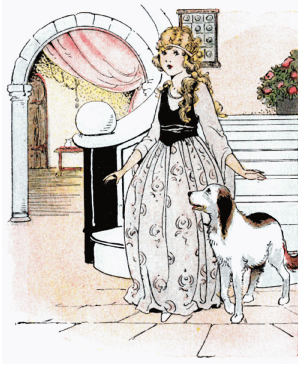
It all happened as the fairies had predicted. When the princess was sixteen years old she saw an old woman spinning and took the spindle from her to try this strange new work. Instantly she pricked her hand and fell into a deep sleep, as did everyone else in the palace. There she lay in a bower of roses, year after year, and the hedge around the palace garden grew so tall and thick that at last you could not have told that there was a castle at all.

At the end of the hundred years a king's son heard of the castle and the enchanted princess who lay asleep there and determined to rescue her. So he cut his way through the thick prickly hedge and at length he came to the princess. When he saw how lovely and how sweet she looked he fell in love with her and, stooping, kissed her lips.

At once she awoke and with her the king and queen and all the courtiers, who had fallen asleep at the same time.

As the princess was as much taken with the prince's appearance as he was with hers, they decided to be married. And so the wedding was celebrated the same day with great pomp and ceremony.