

THE WONDERFUL CLOAK

ONCE upon a time there lived a King, who had an only son. When the King grew old, he decided that his son must marry.

"I shall travel the country," the young Prince replied, "pass through every town and village and marry only the girl whom my heart fancies".

He travelled the wide world but nowhere did he find the girl he was seeking.

He went from town to town, from village to village until at last he came to a poor peasant's cottage on the outskirts of a small village.

A girl was sitting at the door of the cottage, spinning. The Prince looked at her and could not take his eyes away; she was so beautiful.

The Prince asked the girl to marry him, but the girl replied:

"Neither my father nor my mother are at home now. They will return from the fields in the evening, and then they will decide what I should do."

So the Prince went away empty-handed. But the next day he sent his envoys to see the girl's father.

The envoys rode up to the poor peasant's home and asked him to give his daughter in marriage to the Prince. But he didn't believe them.

Who had ever heard of a Prince asking for the hand of a simple peasant girl?

"We are not equals of the Prince. Let him seek a bride of richer and nobler birth..."

But the girl heard the envoy's message calmly. She merely asked them: "And does your Prince know a trade?"

The envoys burst out laughing: "Know a trade? Why should the King's son need a trade, when the whole kingdom is his?"

"That's true my daughter," said her father sadly. "It is we poor people who need a trade to earn our bread.

"But the Prince has no need to work; we work for him..."

The girl listened to her father respectfully, then turned to the envoys and proudly replied:

"Tell the Prince I will only marry a man with a trade!"

"Today he is a Prince, but tomorrow he may not be. Then how shall we live? How will he keep a family?"

WHEN the Prince received her message he became sad and thoughtful. He had never had to do any work in his life, and it wasn't easy to learn a trade just like that!

All the same, he loved the girl very much indeed, and couldn't lightly give her up. So he went to his father and told him what she had said.

The King summoned all his craftsmen. He asked a carpenter: "How long will it take you to teach my son your trade?"

"Five years."

"Five years! She will have found another husband before then and what'll I do then?" the Prince exclaimed.

But all the other craftsmen named long periods. Some said three years, others four, others even longer.

Finally an old cloakmaker came forward.

"I too have a craft of sorts," he said. "Give the Prince to me and I will teach him my craft in a day and a night."

The Prince went with him and in exactly a day and a night had learnt to smooth felt and to make cloaks.

So he married the peasant girl and they both lived happily and peacefully. Soon the old King died and the Prince ruled in his place.

ONE day the new King said to his wife: "I'll travel through the kingdom to see how my people live, and to hear what they say about me."

He dressed in simple clothes and set off.

When night fell, he put up at a tiny inn. He didn't know that the wine and food at the inn was drugged, so that the unsuspecting travellers could be kidnapped and sold into slavery.

When he woke up, the King found himself in a deep dungeon, with two other unfortunates.

The heavy iron doors grated open and the fat, bearded innkeeper entered with three armed servants.

"What can you do?" he asked hoarsely, prodding one of his captives with a thick finger.

"Oh master, I can write, and sing gay songs..."

"That's no good to me! You'll die at dawn tomorrow. And how about you?" he turned to the second man.

"My lord, I can count the stars in the heavens and tell you how many grains of sand are on the seashore..."

"You'll die at dawn the day after tomorrow..." said the innkeeper, and then he turned to the King.

"In a day and a night I can make a cloak so precious that only the Queen will be able to buy it."

"Very well," said the innkeeper. "You shall live until you have done what you say."

They locked the Prince in a cold tower, and brought him the very best wool and he set to work.

He made a cloak that fitted the Queen exactly, not a hair too wide, not a hair too long.

And he coloured the white felt so marvellously that one could not take one's eye from it.

The innkeeper himself took the cloak to the palace. The King's wife liked the cloak, tried it on and was amazed that it fitted her like a glove as if the tailor had made it from her own measurements. She looked at the flower patterns along the edge of the cloak and in one corner found written in tiny lettering:

"My darling, I am a prisoner in a cold tower in the house of the man who brought this cloak."

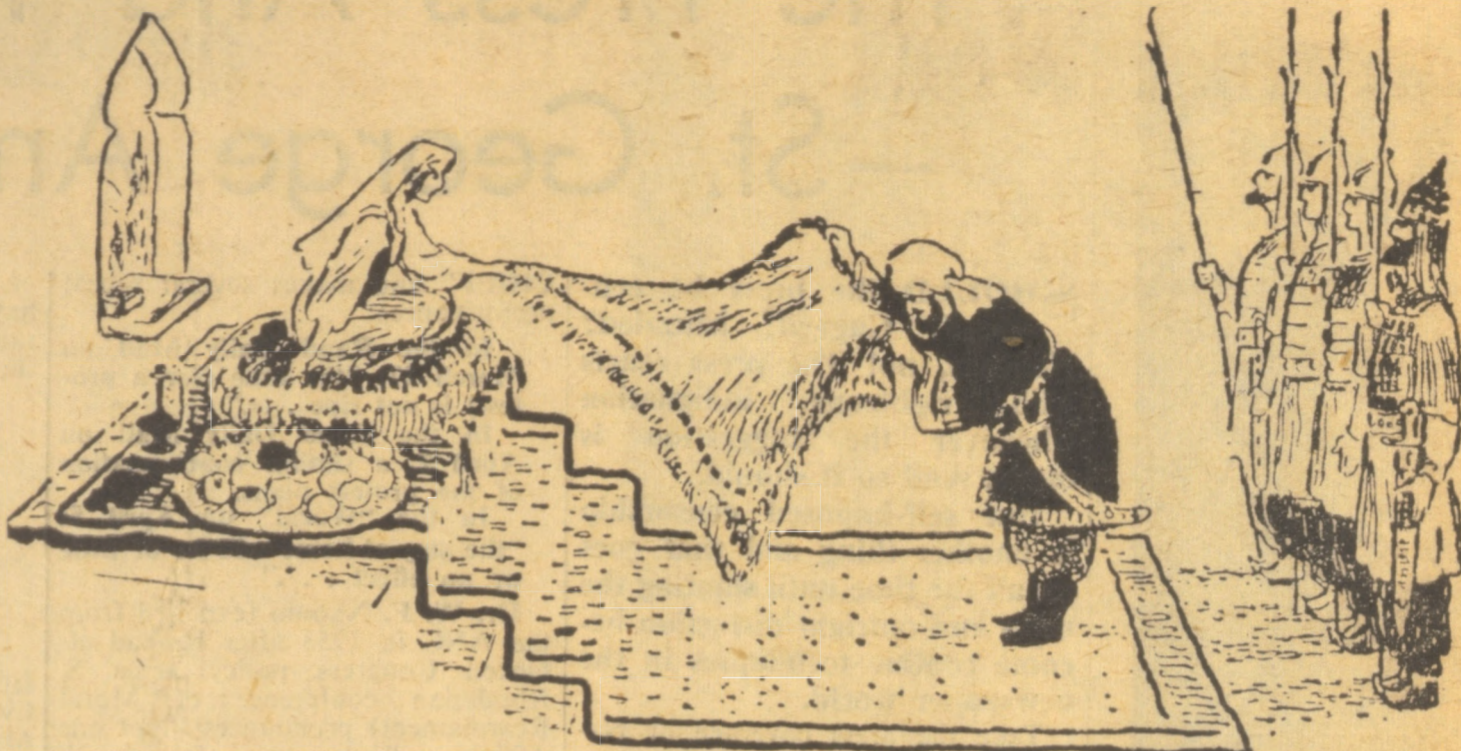
The King's wife generously rewarded the innkeeper so as not to arouse his suspicions, but when he had gone she gathered an army and followed him.

The soldiers broke into his cellar, smashed the locks of the iron doors and released the prisoners.

The King ran and embraced his wife.

"It was a good thing," he said. "that you refused to marry a man without a trade!"

"My rank did not save me from captivity and humiliation, but a trade gave me freedom and life."



ROBESON BREAKS THROUGH

NEW YORK.

A SIGN of the sharpness of the swing in United States public opinion away from the red-baiting hysteria of the MacCarthy era has been Paul Robeson's return to commercial entertainment.

Long barred from the large theatres because of his courageous stand for socialism and freedom, Robeson's name has not been mentioned by the music critics of the big newspapers for over nine years. But now, after a huge San Francisco audience turned out to hear and applaud him—in spite of the threats of fascist hooligans—the critics are once more giving him rave notices. This is what the big papers

said of his performance:

San Francisco Chronicle: "He floated the pianissimo melody with such feeling that a person next to me sat quietly crying while the crowd applauded."

The Tribune: "As of old, the sincere conviction, the dramatic vitality which he infused into his songs created the same strong impact."

The Call-Bulletin: "The capacity audience loved every minute of it and the 59-year-old basso knew it."

THEY STAYED AWAY

Anti-communist groups which had announced that they would picket the performance did not show their faces in the vicinity of the hall.

A record company has announced that it will shortly produce a long-playing album of Robeson songs.

A remarkable feature of all the press notices was that they wrote as if Robeson had been dead for the past nine years and had returned from the grave. They calmly ignored the fact that progressive groups throughout the country had been making great sacrifices and fighting great odds to enable people to attend the hundreds of concerts at which Robeson sang, while the music-loving newspaper critics had blanketed the great entertainer in silence.

[In South Africa a long-playing record of songs by Paul Robeson is now available for the first time in many years.]

UP MY ALLEY

UNITY Movement types outside the Athlone Town Hall on election day were all insisting that I mention the "boycott" this week. Sorry I can't give you a boost, boys, because I didn't see you turning any voters away from the polls. And don't tell me the low poll is due to your "silent protest" (something you learned from the much-sneered-at Black Sash?) What I can say about the attempts at working an impossible miracle is that they were an awful waste of time, money and effort on the part of the Anti-CAD boys.

What the boycotters didn't take into account is that the powers that be are not concerned with how many people voted, but WITH WHO GETS IN.

● And now I'm looking forward to the next "black list" in the Torch, listing the thousands of voters who took part in the elections.

THEN there was the "boycott" supporter at the Drill Hall who gave his placard to somebody else to hold, while he got his voting number at a table and then went into the booth to cast his vote.

● Quisling!

THE cops are prepared to spoil anybody's fun, it seems. From Port Elizabeth comes the story of a raid for permits right in the middle of a major golf tournament, resulting in the arrest of a number of caddies, so that many of the entrants had to abandon the game.

● I suppose if the golfers had to raise a protest Senator De Klerk's answer would be to reserve caddy jobs for Europeans only.

★ WHILE clearing out my desk I came across a back copy

★ By ALEX LA GUMA



★ of "Bantu," described as "an informal publication of the Native

Affairs Department." Included among the many words of praise for "our government," I found a letter by a certain Mr. J. R. Mlate, of Pretoria.

Said Mr. Mlate: "Let us thank this Government, more especially the Honourable Minister and the Secretary for Native Affairs, and try to mould the Bantu by the following acts which we thank the Government for introducing: Bantu Education Act, Bantu Authorities Act, Urban Areas Act. We also thank the Government for: Labour Bureaux, Employment offices to send us where there is work to be done and thus to end Tsotsism... We wish this Government to carry this torch to the future."

It is perhaps significant that this letter came from Pretoria. I wonder in which Department Mlate works.

★ THE ideal (of total apartheid) was there for future generations and the apartheid legislation of the present government would make it easier for them, said Minister Erasmus at a meeting.

● That's what I call being a super-optimist.

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