J & J Colman's Xmas Greetings to their young friends all over the world
CHAPTER I.

LONG, long ago, in a land far distant from our country, there lived a merchant who after many years of patient work had waxed rich. At length his fortune grew so great that his ships sailed many seas, and his captains traded honourably with strange people, who lived on spice islands and where the cocoa nut palms, and the date trees, and the almonds still grow, and where grapes are dried to luscious raisins. These strange people came with all sorts of queer articles to trade. They brought the ivory tusks of elephants down to the beach, and gold that had been washed by rivers that white men had as yet never seen, ostrich feathers from inland plains, and diamonds from the blue ground, and pearls for which they dived deep into the green sea. So that his ships came home fraught with curious carvings, rich silks, jewels and spices, and the merchant was happy and prosperous. But one day fierce winds blew from the skies and great waves leaped upon the ships, and after the storm had passed the news came to the merchant that all his vessels had sunk to the bottom of the ocean with their precious cargoes. So the good merchant found himself suddenly poor. He took the remnant of his former fortune and, buying a small cottage, began to live frugally, for in the evening of his life his means were scant. Now this merchant had three daughters. They were all beautiful, but one of them, the youngest, was by far the most beautiful. Indeed her looks were so comely that all called her “Beauty.” To be sure, the change from a mansion to a cottage was a harsh change to the daughters, for young folk are apt to think comfort depends upon riches and fine clothes, whereas folk who have gone through the better part of life know that firm friends, health and a happy heart are greater far than finery and gold.
THE two elder sisters, who were not so beautiful either in face or spirit as Beauty, could not bring themselves to look the change in their position fairly in the face, and to make the best of their altered lot. They spent long hours in crying and complaining, although if they had given the matter a thought they must have known that sunken ships cannot be raised by moans. Their grief, too, made their father's sorrow the greater. He grieved because of their grief. But Beauty did not cry. She set to work to make the best of things; she scrubbed and swept and dusted, she kept a cheerful heart and cooked—for they could not afford to keep a cook or housemaid—she flitted here and flitted there like a good fairy, and every spot she visited she left clean and sweet and in order. From her elder sisters she got neither help nor kind words. They, as I have told you, spent their days in fretting and dressing themselves in tawdry finery which they had carried with them from their former house. And so the days went by, Beauty all the time doing what lay in her power to brighten her father's life and to keep him of good cheer, for he was now old and frail. Well, one day, after a year and more had passed, what should come to the cottage but the good news that one of the ships supposed to have long lain at the bottom of the sea had in fact weathered the wild storm and come safely into port. The merchant, at these good tidings, set out for the city. Before he parted with his daughters he asked each what present she would like from the great town he was about to visit. To be sure the elder sisters, their heads quite turned at the prospect of much riches once more, bade their father not to fail to bring to them all sorts of finery, silks and satin dresses, jewels set in gold, ivory ornaments and all that, so that once again they might bedeck themselves as in the days long past. It made these two laugh and scoff when they heard Beauty, fond of flowers, ask her father to return quickly and to bring her—a rose.

CHAPTER III.

OFF set the father, glad of heart, but as it turned out good fortune had for the time quite passed him by. When he reached the port he found that although one of
his ships had indeed fetched the harbour his partners, without waiting his arrival, had made great haste to sell the cargo and to divide all the money among themselves, so that there was nothing for the poor old merchant. He spent long days in trying to get his share of the riches by bringing the dishonest partners before the judges, but, although in the end he did obtain a portion of his dues, the portion was only sufficient to meet the expenses of his journey, and he turned his face homeward as poor a man as when he so gaily set out. It proved a trying journey for such an aged man, from the city to the cottage, and one dark night he lost his way. After wandering hither and thither for hours morning dawned, and lo! he found before him a grand palace, standing in charming grounds. He knocked at the door, but getting no answer walked in, and on the table he found a pleasant breakfast, and by the bright fire dry clothes, all as though prepared for him. The place was quite deserted. When he was on the point of leaving he saw lovely roses growing in the garden, and in a flash Beauty's wish came to his mind. Believing there could be no harm in taking from such a store of roses he plucked a few. The instant the roses were in his hands he heard a roar, and there before him stood a frightful beast. "After all my goodness to you, you tear my rose bushes and steal my roses," roared the monster. The poor man was in terror of the Beast. "I but took a rose to give to my good daughter Beauty!" he explained. "She asked me to bring her a rose." "Beautiful daughter? Then I will spare your life if you send her to me to live in this palace, but bear this in mind, she must come willingly to me, and remember if you and she do not return at the time I appoint, I will come for you." So carrying the roses in his hand, the old merchant plodded on his way to his cottage, more sad of heart than he had ever been in all his life.

CHAPTER IV.

Now, you must know that the father had no thought of sending Beauty to the castle of the Beast. His intention was to bid good-bye to his children, and then himself return and give himself up to suffer what might befall for having taken the rose. He made all speed to
reach his home, although his heart was sore and heavy. To be sure, the elder sisters were very angry when their father reached the cottage without any fine dresses or jewels for them, and they railed at him for coming home empty-handed. Nothing would satisfy them but riches, and they cried in their rage and disappointment. But the father was silent, and his heart lamented. Beauty met him with kind greetings and no harsh words on her tongue. So it was doubly hard for him to tell them all what had happened. At length he handed the lovely roses to Beauty, saying as the old rhyme has it:

"Accept these roses, ill-starred maid!
     For thee thy father's life is paid."

Then he told the tale of the palace and the garden, and among the roses the awful Beast. Poor Beauty! It was now her time to be full of sorrow. She loved her father better than anyone in the world, and when he said that he must set off to give himself up to the Beast, Beauty's cheerfulness was gone, and she sat with weeping eyes. Her sisters, cruel in all things, now railed at her, saying that her pride had brought death to their father, whom they now pretended to love sincerely. But when they had done Beauty sprang to her feet, and told them that as she was the cause of all the sorrow she herself would go to the palace. Her good father tried to turn her from her purpose, but when he saw that she meant to go, he set off with her to the home of the Beast. It was a long walk from the cottage to the palace, and the old father and beautiful daughter, holding each other's hand, plodded on in silence.

CHAPTER V.

The sun had set before the father and Beauty reached the strange palace, and when the merchant entered followed by his daughter he once more found the rooms empty. In the great dining hall was a table laid with all things good to eat and drink; a bright fire blazed on the hearth, and on every hand very rich ornaments and pictures and hangings such as Beauty had never, even in the days of her father's wealth, seen. The two, still sore, afraid and in anxiety, sat down to the meal prepared for them, but both were too full of fear and of sorrow to eat or to drink. All on a sudden, as they sat
in silence, they heard a terrible roar. Beauty flew to her father's arms, and father and daughter gazed at the door. In a little while the horrible head of the Beast appeared. Poor Beauty had never seen anything quite so hideous, and she was all a-tremble with fright. The Beast came shuffling forward and, without looking at the father, demanded of Beauty: "Did you come here of your own free will?" "Yes, sir," answered Beauty. "That's kind of you," said the Beast in kindlier tones, for he seemed much pleased with the good girl's pretty face and quiet ways. Then, turning to the father, he said: "Begone at sunrise to-morrow, and never again set foot within the palace grounds." Father and daughter could not sleep all that night. Although the table was spread with many good things to eat, fruits and cakes, and with fresh flowers everywhere, the kind father and obedient daughter could not bring themselves to taste anything, for their hearts were so sad at the bitter thought of parting with each other. They could not be sure of ever seeing one another again, for of course they did not know what the Beast had in his mind to do with Beauty. You may know that they passed a sleepless and sorrowful night of it. In the grey dawn the poor merchant, with prayers and tears, bade Beauty good-bye. Beauty, more cheerful than her father, still could only say: "Heaven guards the good," and so they parted, for the old man was compelled by the Beast to go home.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR some hours after her father had gone Beauty, all alone in the great palace, and knowing that somewhere near by was the great Beast, could do nothing but cry. Her heart was sad at losing home and father. But presently she picked up spirits and became vastly interested in the palace, for on every hand were grand things, beautiful gardens, ancient tapestry, fine pictures, and everything was fresh and sweet of breath. When wandering round she all on a sudden came upon an archway with, written in gold, these lines:—

"Beauty's apartment! Enter blest!
This but an earnest of the rest!"

Of course she went in, and found it full of good books
and music and pretty things for her mind. When she read:

“Welcome Beauty, banish fear,
   You are queen and mistress here;
   Speak your wishes, speak your will,
   Swift obedience meets them still,”

she began to think the Beast could not be quite so bad as his loud voice and ugly face had led her to believe. This thought made her pick up her good spirits again. That evening when Beauty sat down to dine the Beast again entered, but this time Beauty was not nearly so frightened as she had been in the first appearance of the Beast, and was much less so after he had spoken to her. “Do you think me hideous,” he asked, “and am I not very ugly?” But Beauty answered, “You have been so good in providing everything for which I could wish since I came to your palace, that I think not of your shape, but of your kindness.” The Beast was greatly touched by the gentleness and grace of Beauty, and after spending some little time in the room, bade her good-night, and without molesting her, left her in peace. But before he went out of the room he asked Beauty if she had any request to make, and she answered that she would much like to know how her father and sisters were. At once a mirror was placed before her, and looking into it she beheld the cottage. There she saw her father, and she knew that he still grieved her absence. On the other hand, her sisters were in high spirits, for they were glad that she had been taken from their sight.

CHAPTER VII.

In the fair palace Beauty was in all things happy and well cared for, except that, to be sure, she thought every hour of the day of her old father, and she dreamt of him at night, for she well knew what anguish her absence must cause the heart of the kind old man. In the palace she found lovely dresses for her to wear, rich ornaments, diamonds, pearls, rubies, opals, sweet perfumes, flowers newly cut or growing in pots, every-thing in fact that would help to make her life a delight, but her kind heart could not forget her father. All the while she kept a cheerful face, and made the best of her
new condition, just as she had made the best of it when misfortune overtook her father and they were compelled to move from their mansion in the city to the tiny cottage. So after three months had passed she made up her mind to ask the Beast to allow her to return to see her father and sisters. The Beast, every evening as dinner time came round, used to enter the hall and speak with her, always gently, mannerly, and modestly, so that now Beauty no longer feared him nor shuddered at his awful shape. One evening when the Beast had called, she asked to be allowed to return to her father's cot, there to stay for one week. The Beast was sorry to hear that she wished to leave him, for he had grown very fond of Beauty, but when she promised faithfully to return when the week was ended, the Beast at length gave consent. "Lay your ring on your dressing table when you go to bed," he told her, "and in the morning you will find yourself in your own bed at home. But be sure to bear in mind that if you do not return at the time you have said, grief will kill me." Now Beauty had not the slightest intention of breaking her promise. She thanked the kind Beast again and again for his permission, and lay down to sleep, happy in the thought that at the morrow's break, she would see her dear father once more. And when she opened her eyes with the sun, sure enough there she found herself in her own tiny bed at home. You may be sure her father was delighted to kiss his fair daughter again and stroke her hair, and gaze into her eyes, for three months is a long time to be separated from those you love.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEAUTY soon had all the news. She found no great change had taken place. It turned out that while she was away both her sisters had married, and neither of them being of sweet temper nor smiling to her in contentment, they were both very miserable indeed. When they learned that, instead of being eaten up by the Beast, Beauty lived a joyous life in a splendid palace, round which were ample grounds and many flowers and ferns and trees, that she had all she could possibly want to make her happy, the two went out of the cottage and cried for vexation. But at length their crying ceased, they
set their wicked brains to devise a plan to spoil their sister's happiness, for you will know the two were more envious and spiteful. After a long time spent in arguing they made up their minds to prevent, by some means or other, Beauty from going back to the palace at the time she had told the Beast she would return. But when the week was ended and Beauty prepared to leave the cottage, the two wicked sisters came to her with tears in their eyes and begged of her not to leave their poor old father in grief. "Just a few days longer," they implored her to stay, and soon Beauty's heart melted at their tears and, thinking that no great harm could come of it, she told them all she would wait a few days more. On hearing this the sisters were greatly pleased, and said to one another: "Now that she has broken her promise the Beast will eat her up when she does go back." But one night, some time after the day on which Beauty should have returned to the palace, she dreamt that she saw the Beast lying by the water side in the palace grounds, dying. She awoke with a start, and leaping from her bed placed the ring on the table and again fell asleep, and awoke in the palace. Hastily dressing, she ran without a moment's loss of time to the water side, and there sure enough lay the Beast in great pain. Beauty flew to his side and gathered his large ugly head in her fair arms. He opened his eyes and the good girl saw that he was very near unto death. "Alas," he said, "you forgot your promise to me, and now for your neglect I must die." But Beauty cried: "You must not die; you have been kind to me, so kind, and I love you, I love you!" Now the moment these words were said, by a change so swift that no eye could follow, would you believe it, the ugly Beast turned like winking into the most beautiful Prince the world had ever seen. To be sure Beauty was surprised, and the Prince taking her by the hand asked her to become his wife. Not long after there was a grand wedding between the two, and on the same day the two sisters turned suddenly into stone statues, because they had been so wicked and spiteful. So you see, love and kindness turned an ugly Beast into a happy and beautiful Prince.
Colman's Starch
IT'S COLMAN'S MUSTARD I WANT