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Memorial Edition De Luxe

FORTY-SIX VOLUMES

VOL. XXII.

NEW YORK
J. A. HILL & COMPANY

ÉDOUARD RENÉ LEFEBVRE LABOULAYE

(1811-1883)

IF THE literary pilgrim of two or three decades ago had desired to pay his respects to the most delightful French teller of fairy tales, he might have had to interrupt a session of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, to disturb the wise men of the Académie des Sciences Morales, to sit out a debate in the Assemblée Nationale, or to attend the leisure of the distinguished Professeur de Législation Comparée in the Collège de France; for all these institutions laid claim to the assistance of the profound scholar and philosophic statesman, Édouard Laboulaye.

As, however, that eminent original mathematician and writer of many solid treatises on numbers, Charles Dodgson, is to be remembered as the happy author of 'Alice in Wonderland,' so the juriconsult and political economist Laboulaye will live in grateful remembrance for his 'Contes Bleus' and 'Nouveaux Contes Bleus,'—stories of witch and elf, of fairy and enchanter,—rather than for his great services to learning.



ÉDOUARD LABOULAYE

He was born in Paris in 1811, under the First Empire, at the height of its deceptive splendor. His family was undistinguished, but intelligent and progressive. Educated in the usual French way, at school and college, he turned his mature thoughts first to business, setting up a type foundry with his brother Charles, who presently became an eminent inventor. The scientific bent which characterized the family inclined Édouard, however, to legal, historical, and philosophic investigations.

In his twenty-eighth year he made himself a distinguished name among scholars by the publication of his 'Histoire du Droit de Propriété Foncière en Occident' (History of Landed Property in Europe), a work crowned by the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres. The next year he brought out a remarkable book, 'Essai sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de Savigny' (The Life and Doctrines of Savigny); a memoir which not only introduced to French readers the great

German jurist and politician, but familiarized them with the new comparative method in historical investigation.

Three years later appeared a still more famous volume, 'Recherches sur la Condition Civile et Politique des Femmes depuis les Romains jusqu'à nos Jours (The Civil and Political Condition of Women from the time of the Romans). This was the first scientific inquiry into the causes and sources of the heavy legal disabilities of women, affording a basis for the first ameliorative legislation. A remarkable historical study, showing nice literary workmanship, it was crowned by the Academy of Moral Sciences for its ethical value.

Meantime the enthusiastic student had been admitted to the bar and begun to practice. He found time, however, to write various books on jurisprudence—'Roman Criminal Law,' 'Literary Property in France and England,' 'The State and its Limits,' with many minor treatises and studies. A Liberal by conviction, he set himself to propagate Liberal opinions under the repressive conditions of the Second Empire. Finding his ideal in the republican institutions of America, he wrote as a tract for the times 'A Political History of the United States.' During the Civil War his ardent friendship for this country prompted him to produce 'The United States and France,' an eloquent plea for the Union; and 'Paris in America,' a brilliant allegorical satire which passed through numberless editions. Indefatigable, he translated into French the works of William Ellery Channing, edited the biography and correspondence of Benjamin Franklin, wrote treatises on Germany and the Slavonic countries and on the political philosophy of Alexis de Tocqueville, poured forth reminiscences of travel, essays on slavery, religious liberty, constitutional republicanism, or political economy, and published anonymous satires on the government.

This then was the public-spirited citizen, the learned jurist and accomplished scholar, who yet found time to write three volumes of delightful fairy stories for the pleasure of his grandchildren. Of the first of these, 'Abdallah,' he once said, "This little volume cost me more than a year's study. There is not a detail in it that is not borrowed from some volume of Eastern travel; and I read the Koran twice through (a wearisome task) in order to extract therefrom a morality that might put Christians to the blush, though it is practiced by Arabs." In the same way he has filled his national fairy stories—Russian, Hungarian, Bohemian, Spanish—with local color and race characteristics. In many of them the brilliant censor who wrote 'Paris in America' and 'Prince Caniche' uses the grotesque and whimsical to veil a searching satire. But so delicate is his art that while the offenders may see themselves in the mirror he holds up to nature, the innocent read for the story alone. Full of wit, humor, and

invention, finely imaginative, and written in a graceful and charming style, these fairy tales would alone have given their author a place among distinguished French writers. Unfortunately it is only the less important which are short enough to be cited in this volume.

When Laboulaye died, in 1883, the Republic for which he had labored lavished on him the tributes of her foremost scholars and statesmen. But the memorial he himself desired was the affectionate remembrance of the children to whom he had revealed an ideal world. "Experience will teach you only too quickly," he said, addressing them, "that the truest and sweetest things in life are not those which we see, but those of which we dream. Then, in repeating my tales to the young folks whom I shall never see, perhaps you will find pleasure in talking to them of the old man who delighted in trying to amuse children. I desire no other fame. This immortality suffices me."

THE TWELVE MONTHS

A BOHEMIAN TALE

From the 'Fairy Book.' Translated by Mary L. Booth, and published by Harper & Brothers

THERE was once a woman who was left a widow with two children. The elder, who was only her stepdaughter, was named Dobrunka; the younger, who was as wicked as her mother, was called Katinka. The mother worshiped her daughter, but she hated Dobrunka simply because she was as beautiful as her sister was ugly. Dobrunka did not even know that she was pretty, and she could not understand why her stepmother flew into a rage at the mere sight of her. The poor child was obliged to do all the work of the house; she had to sweep, cook, wash, sew, spin, weave, cut the grass, and take care of the cow, while Katinka lived like a princess,—that is to say, did nothing.

Dobrunka worked with a good will, and took reproaches and blows with the gentleness of a lamb; but nothing soothed her stepmother, for every day added to the beauty of the elder sister and the ugliness of the younger. "They are growing up," thought the mother, "and suitors will soon appear, who will refuse my daughter when they see this hateful Dobrunka, who grows beautiful on purpose to spite me. I must get rid of her, cost what it may."