



Emarie

Overview



written after the first Crusade.

The story of Emarie is another of the tales brought to England by the French minstrels. The adventures of the gentle princess were enjoyed by many generations of English and Norman people. As this story also contains references to Saracens, it must have been

The Tale of Emarie

Here was once a little princess named Emarie. She was the daughter of a great emperor. As Emarie's mother was dead, Emarie was sent to a good woman named Albro to be taught all the things a little princess should know. From Albro she learned to sew a fine seam and to be courteous to all, old and young and rich and poor. Thus she grew up to be one of the fairest and best maidens in all the world. Then her father, the Emperor, wished to have his daughter with him again, and sent for her to come to his palace. Emarie was very glad to go home, and thought that she could live happily forever with her father in the beautiful palace.

But the Emperor was a wicked man. He was self-willed and ill-tempered and thought only of his own pleasure all day long. One day in a fit of rage, he ordered Emarie to be put to sea in a little boat, with no food or water. Emarie was very much frightened, as well she might be. The waves tossed the boat night and day. Every hour she became hungrier and thirstier. She was on

the sea for seven days. At last, when she was nearly dead from want of food and drink, the boat drifted into a little bay in the land of Galys.

Sir Kadore, the high steward of the kingdom, happened to be walking along the shore with two of his friends, as he often did in the evening. He saw the little boat floating out in the bay and rowed out to tow it to land. He found in the strange boat a fair maiden lying faint with hunger and thirst. He brought her ashore and carried her to his palace. There he gave her all she wanted to eat and drink until the color came back to her pale cheeks and she felt well once more. After that she lived on and on at the palace of good Sir Kadore and taught the ladies of the land to sew fine seams and to be courteous to old and young and rich and poor.

One day Sir Kadore gave a great feast for all the lords in the land. Even the King himself was there. Emarie served among the other ladies-in-waiting and seemed the fairest maiden alive. The King noticed her at once and thought her the loveliest maiden he had ever seen. After the feast he asked Sir Kadore about her.

"Her name is Emarie," answered Sir Kadore, "and I understand that she is the daughter of an earl of a foreign land. Certainly she is the fairest and wisest woman in the world."

"I am going to marry this fair maid and make her my queen, said the King at once.

Then the King brought his mother to see the beautiful maiden whom he loved. Emarie came forth lily-fair, clothed in rich robes of gold and blue.

The old Queen looked at her and said, "My son, if you wish my blessing, never marry this maid.

She is too beautiful to be a human being. She must be a fairy.”

“I love the maiden and am going to marry her no matter what you say,” answered the King firmly, and the old Queen went off in rage.

So the King and Emarie were married, and for a time lived in great happiness. Then the King of France was attacked by the Saracens and called the King of Galys and many other great lords to his aid. The King of Galys gathered together all the brave men of his kingdom and went to France. He left Emarie in the care of the faithful Sir Kadore.

While the King was gone, a son was born, the fairest child the world had ever seen. Emarie called him Segramour. At once Sir Kadore wrote a letter to the King telling him of the new baby. This letter he gave to the fastest messenger in the kingdom. On the way the messenger stopped at the palace of the King’s mother to tell her the news. Now the wicked old Queen had never liked Emarie and had always been jealous of her beauty.

So she gave the messenger much wine and rich food to make him sleep soundly. Then in the night she crept into his chamber, stole the letter, and burned it up. She wrote another letter to put in its place. In this letter she said that the new baby was not human, but a goblin-child, black as pitch and shaped like a dragon.

The messenger went on his way next morning and delivered the false letter to the King. When the King read the horrible news in the false letter, he was sorrow-stricken and wept. He wrote Emarie a kind note to comfort her as best he could and ordered Sir Kadore to care for her well until he should return from France.

On the way home the messenger again passed the night at the wicked old Queen’s palace and again she stole the true letter and wrote a false one. She signed this note with the King’s name and addressed it to Sir Kadore. It ordered him to put Emarie and her baby to sea in a little boat with no food or water. The messenger did not suspect any treachery and took the false note to Sir Kadore. When Sir Kadore read the command, he wept bitterly, for he was very fond of the lovely Emarie. Soon Emarie heard him weeping in the hall and called him to her.

“Friend, what is the matter?” said she. “Keep nothing from me. If anything is amiss, tell me and I may be able to help you.”

“Here is a letter my lord has sent,” replied Sir Kadore, “and this is what makes me sad.” Emarie took the letter and read the command that she and her baby go upon the sea.

“Weep no more,” she said to Sir Kadore, “and waste no time in pity for me, but hasten to do my lord’s bidding. He must be ashamed of having wed me, and I wish to shame him no longer.” There was much weeping and sorrow throughout the land when the time came for Emarie to go to sea, for everyone loved her. She walked down to the shore, carrying the baby in her arms.

She climbed into the little skiff and men pushed it off into the ocean. All day the boat was tossed about by the waves and wind. At night the baby cried with fear, but Emarie sang him to sleep just as calmly as if they had been on dry land. For a full week they were on the water. Then the wind drove them to Rome.

There was a merchant in that city, a man rich in gold. His name was Jurdan. Each day he liked to walk along the seashore. One day he found a boat on the beach and in it was a fair lady with a little baby.

“Fair lady, what is your name?” he asked. “Sir,” she said, “my name is Emarie.”

Then the good merchant took up Emarie and her baby and brought them to his home. His wife welcomed Emarie and brought her meat and drink and all that she needed to make her comfortable. Emarie stayed on at the house of Jurdan. She was so sweet and courteous and helpful that everyone in the house loved her and wished her to live there always. As little Segramour grew older, she taught him all the things that a prince should know. When he was seven years old, he was a big boy, both brave and clever. He rode well in the field and served well in the hall, and was always courteous to old and young and rich and poor. All men loved him dearly.

Meanwhile, the Saracens had been driven from France, and the King of Galys turned homeward. Knights and barons of high degree rode by his side and many merry men came riding behind. As soon as Sir Kadore heard of the approach of

this procession, he hastened to meet his King. He told the King of many happenings in his castles, towers, and broad lands, but he said no word of Emarie.

At last the King said, "Why haven't you told me first of all of my lady, Emarie, whom I love most of all things?"

Then Sir Kadore was sick at heart and said angrily, "Why do you speak so? Have you gone mad? See, here is the letter which you yourself sent me, and I have done your bidding."

When the King saw the false letter he grew pale, and cried, "Sir Kadore, I tell you this letter never came from me. Oh, alas, that I was ever born!"

And he wept and wept until he fell from his horse in a faint. As soon as he recovered, he sent for the messenger who had brought the note and asked him which way he had come.

"Sir, I came by your mother's palace," replied the messenger, "and on each journey I passed the night there."

Then the King knew that the wicked old Queen was guilty. At once he wished to have her burned at the stake, but his lords begged him to have mercy on her because she was his mother and was very, very old. They asked him to send her into exile instead of burning her. So he took her palace and lands away from her and sent her into a far, far country.

After that the King lived on alone for seven years. His heart was ever heavy with sorrow. Whenever he saw a fair lady pass, he thought of his lost Queen, and whenever he heard the cries of children playing in the street, he thought of his own little son whom he had never seen. At last, when he was almost mad with grief, he decided to take a trip to Rome, because he thought that travelling might take his mind from his sorrows. He fitted up a ship and set sail, taking Sir Kadore and many knights with him. The wind took them quickly over the salt foam. When they reached Rome, they took shelter at the house of Jurdan.

When Emarie heard that the King was there, she called her little boy to her room and said to him, "My dear son, do me a little favor and you will always have my blessing. Tomorrow you will serve in the hall before this noble King. Be so courteous that no man can find fault with you in

anything. When the King has been served with food, kneel down and take his hand in yours. Then serve him with his wine, and whatever he says to you, come and tell me quickly."

The next day the boy went forth into the hall among the great lords. He served them so well, and with such grace and courtesy, that they all praised him and spoke to him gently.

At last the King said to him, "Little boy, what is your name?"

"Sir, my name is Segramour," he answered. Then the King was sad, for his own lost son had been named Segramour. He looked long at little Segramour, and the longer he looked the more he loved him.

After the meal, when the boy knelt down and served the King his wine, the King said to Jurdan, "Sir, please give me this little boy, and I will make him lord of town and tower, hall and bower, for I love him dearly."

Then Segramour ran to his mother and told her what the King had said.

"Soon, when he is about to go to his room," she said, "take his hand and bid him come to speak with Emarie, for I am his wife and you are his son."

The boy went again to the hall. The lords were rising from the table and making ready to go to their rooms. Segramour took the King by the hand and said, "Sir, please come with me, for I am your son, and my mother, Emarie, wishes to speak with you.

The King could scarcely believe his ears. Dumb with astonishment, he followed the boy along a winding passage. Suddenly he saw Emarie standing in the doorway of a room. With a cry of joy, he rushed forward. Then Sir Kadore and the other lords of Galys sent up a shout that shook the walls, for their Queen who had been lost was found again.