

THE  
PRINCESS  
AND  
CURDIE



T H E  
PRINCESS  
A N D  
CURDIE

GEORGE MACDONALD

*With an Introduction by Timothy Larsen*

MOSCOW, IDAHO

Published by Canonball Books, an imprint of Canon Press  
P.O. Box 8729, Moscow, Idaho 83843  
800.488.2034 | [www.canonballbooks.com](http://www.canonballbooks.com)

George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin*  
This Canonball Books edition copyright ©2020. First published in 1883.  
Introduction, copyright ©2020 by Timothy Larsen.

Cover design by James Engerbretson  
Cover illustration by Forrest Dickison  
Interior design by Valerie Anne Bost

Printed in the United States of America.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the author, except as provided by USA copyright law.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data forthcoming*

20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## CONTENTS

	<i>Introduction: The Plot Against the King</i> . . . . .	1
<b>1</b>	The Mountain. . . . .	9
<b>2</b>	The White Pigeon . . . . .	13
<b>3</b>	The Mistress of the Silver Moon . . . . .	17
<b>4</b>	Curdie's Father and Mother . . . . .	25
<b>5</b>	The Miners . . . . .	31
<b>6</b>	The Emerald . . . . .	35
<b>7</b>	What Is in a Name? . . . . .	51
<b>8</b>	Curdie's Mission . . . . .	57
<b>9</b>	Hands . . . . .	67
<b>10</b>	The Health. . . . .	77
<b>11</b>	Lina . . . . .	83

<b>12</b>	More Creatures . . . . .	93
<b>13</b>	The Baker's Wife . . . . .	97
<b>14</b>	The Dogs of Gwyntystorm . . . . .	103
<b>15</b>	Debra and Barbara . . . . .	109
<b>16</b>	The Mattock . . . . .	121
<b>17</b>	The Wine Cellar . . . . .	125
<b>18</b>	The King's Kitchen . . . . .	129
<b>19</b>	The King's Chamber . . . . .	141
<b>20</b>	Counterplotting . . . . .	149
<b>21</b>	The Loaf . . . . .	155
<b>22</b>	The Lord Chamberlain . . . . .	169
<b>23</b>	Dr. Kelman . . . . .	177
<b>24</b>	The Prophecy . . . . .	189
<b>25</b>	The Avengers . . . . .	193
<b>26</b>	The Vengeance . . . . .	199
<b>27</b>	More Vengeance . . . . .	203
<b>28</b>	The Preacher . . . . .	213
<b>29</b>	Barbara . . . . .	219
<b>30</b>	Peter . . . . .	223
<b>31</b>	The Sacrifice . . . . .	227
<b>32</b>	The King's Army . . . . .	235
<b>33</b>	The Battle . . . . .	235
<b>34</b>	Judgement . . . . .	235
<b>35</b>	The End. . . . .	235

# 1

## THE MOUNTAIN

CURDIE WAS THE SON OF PETER THE MINER. HE LIVED with his father and mother in a cottage built on a mountain, and he worked with his father inside the mountain.

A mountain is a strange and awful thing. In old times, without knowing so much of their strangeness and awfulness as we do, people were yet more afraid of mountains. But then somehow they had not come to see how beautiful they are as well as awful, and they hated them—and what people hate they must fear. Now that we have learned to look at them with admiration,

perhaps we do not feel quite awe enough of them. To me they are beautiful terrors.

I will try to tell you what they are. They are portions of the heart of the earth that have escaped from the dungeon down below, and rushed up and out. For the heart of the earth is a great wallowing mass, not of blood, as in the hearts of men and animals, but of glowing hot, melted metals and stones. And as our hearts keep us alive, so that great lump of heat keeps the earth alive: it is a huge power of buried sunlight—that is what it is.

Now think: out of that cauldron, where all the bubbles would be as big as the Alps if it could get room for its boiling, certain bubbles have bubbled out and escaped—up and away, and there they stand in the cool, cold sky—mountains. Think of the change, and you will no more wonder that there should be something awful about the very look of a mountain: from the darkness—for where the light has nothing to shine upon, much the same as darkness—from the heat, from the endless tumult of boiling unrest—up, with a sudden heavenward shoot, into the wind, and the cold, and the starshine, and a cloak of snow that lies like ermine above the blue-green mail of the glaciers; and the great sun, their grandfather, up there in the sky; and their little old cold aunt, the moon, that comes wandering about the house at night; and everlasting stillness, except for the wind that turns the rocks and caverns into a roaring organ for the young archangels that are studying how to let out the pent-up praises of their hearts, and the molten music of the streams, rushing ever from the bosoms of the glaciers fresh born.



Think, too, of the change in their own substance—no longer molten and soft, heaving and glowing, but hard and shining and cold. Think of the creatures scampering over and burrowing in it, and the birds building their nests upon it, and the trees growing out of its sides, like hair to clothe it, and the lovely grass in the valleys, and the gracious flowers even at the very edge of its armour of ice, like the rich embroidery of the garment below, and the rivers galloping down the valleys in a tumult of white and green! And along with all these, think of the terrible precipices down which the traveller may fall and be lost, and the frightful gulfs of blue air cracked in the glaciers, and the dark profound lakes, covered like little arctic oceans with floating lumps of ice.

All this outside the mountain! But the inside, who shall tell what lies there? Caverns of awfulest solitude, their walls miles thick, sparkling with ores of gold or silver, copper or iron, tin or mercury, studded perhaps with precious stones—perhaps a brook, with eyeless fish in it, running, running ceaselessly, cold and babbling, through banks crusted with carbuncles and golden topazes, or over a gravel of which some of the stones are rubies and emeralds, perhaps diamonds and sapphires—who can tell?—and whoever can't tell is free to think—all waiting to flash, waiting for millions of ages—ever since the earth flew off from the sun, a great blot of fire, and began to cool.

Then there are caverns full of water, numbingly cold, fiercely hot—hotter than any boiling water. From some of these the water cannot get out, and from others it runs in channels as the

blood in the body: little veins bring it down from the ice above into the great caverns of the mountain's heart, whence the arteries let it out again, gushing in pipes and clefts and ducts of all shapes and kinds, through and through its bulk, until it springs newborn to the light, and rushes down the Mountainside in torrents, and down the valleys in rivers—down, down, rejoicing, to the mighty lungs of the world, that is the sea, where it is tossed in storms and cyclones, heaved up in billows, twisted in waterspouts, dashed to mist upon rocks, beaten by millions of tails, and breathed by millions of gills, whence at last, melted into vapour by the sun, it is lifted up pure into the air, and borne by the servant winds back to the mountaintops and the snow, the solid ice, and the molten stream.

Well, when the heart of the earth has thus come rushing up among her children, bringing with it gifts of all that she possesses, then straightway into it rush her children to see what they can find there. With pickaxe and spade and crowbar, with boring chisel and blasting powder, they force their way back: is it to search for what toys they may have left in their long-forgotten nurseries? Hence the mountains that lift their heads into the clear air, and are dotted over with the dwellings of men, are tunnelled and bored in the darkness of their bosoms by the dwellers in the houses which they hold up to the sun and air.

Curdie and his father were of these: their business was to bring to light hidden things; they sought silver in the rock and found it, and carried it out. Of the many other precious things in their mountain they knew little or nothing. Silver ore was

what they were sent to find, and in darkness and danger they found it. But oh, how sweet was the air on the mountain face when they came out at sunset to go home to wife and mother! They did breathe deep then!

The mines belonged to the king of the country, and the miners were his servants, working under his overseers and officers. He was a real king—that is, one who ruled for the good of his people and not to please himself, and he wanted the silver not to buy rich things for himself, but to help him to govern the country, and pay the ones that defended it from certain troublesome neighbours, and the judges whom he set to portion out righteousness among the people, that so they might learn it themselves, and come to do without judges at all. Nothing that could be got from the heart of the earth could have been put to better purposes than the silver the king's miners got for him. There were people in the country who, when it came into their hands, degraded it by locking it up in a chest, and then it grew diseased and was called mammon, and bred all sorts of quarrels; but when first it left the king's hands it never made any but friends, and the air of the world kept it clean.

About a year before this story began, a series of very remarkable events had just ended. I will narrate as much of them as will serve to show the tops of the roots of my tree.

Upon the mountain, on one of its many claws, stood a grand old house, half farmhouse, half castle, belonging to the king; and there his only child, the Princess Irene, had been brought up till she was nearly nine years old, and would doubtless have

continued much longer, but for the strange events to which I have referred.

At that time the hollow places of the mountain were inhabited by creatures called goblins, who for various reasons and in various ways made themselves troublesome to all, but to the little princess dangerous. Mainly by the watchful devotion and energy of Curdie, however, their designs had been utterly defeated, and made to recoil upon themselves to their own destruction, so that now there were very few of them left alive, and the miners did not believe there was a single goblin remaining in the whole inside of the mountain.

The king had been so pleased with the boy—then approaching thirteen years of age—that when he carried away his daughter he asked him to accompany them; but he was still better pleased with him when he found that he preferred staying with his father and mother. He was a right good king and knew that the love of a boy who would not leave his father and mother to be made a great man was worth ten thousand offers to die for his sake, and would prove so when the right time came. As for his father and mother, they would have given him up without a grumble, for they were just as good as the king, and he and they understood each other perfectly; but in this matter, not seeing that he could do anything for the king which one of his numerous attendants could not do as well, Curdie felt that it was for him to decide. So the king took a kind farewell of them all and rode away, with his daughter on his horse before him.

A gloom fell upon the mountain and the miners when she was gone, and Curdie did not whistle for a whole week. As for his verses, there was no occasion to make any now. He had made them only to drive away the goblins, and they were all gone—a good riddance—only the princess was gone too! He would rather have had things as they were, except for the princess's sake. But whoever is diligent will soon be cheerful, and though the miners missed the household of the castle, they yet managed to get on without them. Peter and his wife, however, were troubled with the fancy that they had stood in the way of their boy's good fortune. It would have been such a fine thing for him and them, too, they thought, if he had ridden with the good king's train. How beautiful he looked, they said, when he rode the king's own horse through the river that the goblins had sent out of the hill! He might soon have been a captain, they did believe! The good, kind people did not reflect that the road to the next duty is the only straight one, or that, for their fancied good, we should never wish our children or friends to do what we would not do ourselves if we were in their position. We must accept righteous sacrifices as well as make them.