

To live in the Golden Castle was my dream! I wanted it all my life, but actually getting there seemed to be much more difficult than one might imagine. I had followed the advice of wise men and women; I had read the guidebooks; but it seemed that each path I took ended without my reaching the Golden Castle.

Then one day in my wanderings I came upon a man sitting at a desk in front of a huge warehouse. He was checking off items on an endless list when I approached him, and I waited until he saw me and paused in his task.

"May I help you?" he said in a business-like tone.

"Well," said I, hesitantly, "I've been trying to find the Golden Castle. I don't suppose you know where it is."

"Oh, my dear young man," he said, as though speaking tolerantly to an unusually ignorant child, "you have been going about it all wrong! You can't just *walk* to the Golden Castle. It is far too arduous a journey for that! No, no, you must have a Golden Castle Machine — and it just so happens that I have a warehouse full of Golden Castle Machines, and I'd be delighted for you to have one."

"Well," I said, dubiously, "if it will get me to the Golden Castle. . ."

"Indeed, it will; indeed, it will," he assured me, "That's what these Machines are *for*. In fact, this is the *only* way to get to the Golden Castle."

With that he opened the huge warehouse door and disappeared inside for a few moments. Then I heard a great chugging and huffing, and soon this incredible contraption emerged from the warehouse door. It was a massive wagon, with a seat at the front, and completely filled with tank and flywheels and levers and pulleys and smokestacks and gauges and piping and valves and chains and all sorts of things.

"Now come here!" he said, springing from the seat. "Sit down right here, and I will show you how to operate this Machine." I hesitatingly took my place on the seat, and he began a long litany of instructions: "Exactly at dawn, you must take this cup and put exactly one-half cup of water into that yellow funnel there. Then, at 8 in the morning, you must get down and push this blue button. At 9:30 you must come over here and turn this green valve three turns to the right. At exactly 11 a.m., you must pull the

chain on this red pulley, while pushing down on the orange pedal with your right foot. At high noon, you must stop the machine, back it up exactly four feet, and check this gauge to make sure it reads precisely 478°. And at one in the afternoon, you must adjust this lever. . . ." His instructions went on and on. I had to ask him to repeat directions many times before I was able to memorize them. Eventually, when I had recited the entire litany two times without flaw, the man pronounced me ready to begin my journey.

"Now," he said, "take the first left turn about a half mile down this road, and you will go through a narrow pass in the mountains, and from there on, simply count on the Machine to take you on your way to the Golden Castle — as long as you remember the proper procedures to run the Machine."

I thanked the man, and, releasing the brake, I went off down the road in my Machine, chugging and huffing and occasionally tooting. I took the left turn he had indicated, and went through the narrow pass between the mountain peaks, and found myself in a broad and beautiful plain. I took my hands from the steering wheel, and the Machine began to move on its own. It turned a little to the right and began to make its way across the plain.

To make a long story short, I traveled on in my Machine for many days. I kept rehearsing the instructions to myself, and I fulfilled each of them to the letter. Soon, however, I found I was getting more and more tired. The Machine required so much care that I scarcely had time to sleep at night for fear that I would forget one of the instructions. But I had faith in the Machine, and so we went on and on. I had little time to pay much attention to the surroundings, because I was so concerned that I not make a mistake with the Machine, so it was some time before I realized that the Machine was apparently carrying me in a wide circle. I had just made this discovery when I was interrupted by a shining young man standing beside the Machine and smiling.

"What in the world are you doing here with this contraption?" he asked, good-naturedly.

"Oh, this is a Golden Castle Machine," I replied, "and if I care for it properly, it will take me to the Golden Castle."

The young man's smile broadened until it turned into a laugh, and soon he was doubled up with laughter there in the field beside my Machine. I smiled, too, since his laughter carried nothing of ridicule in it and delicate showers of bright mirth seemed to drop, glittering, from his body as he spoke.

When he had recovered himself, he extended his hand. "Here," he said, "step down beside me." And, when I had alighted, he said, "Now, first of all, you have no more need of that Machine here." and with a wave of his hand, the Machine was engulfed in a golden cloud and disappeared.

"But that was my only way to get to the Golden Castle," I protested forlornly.

"No need to worry," he said reassuringly, "just look there;" and his hand indicated the horizon. "what do you see out at the edge of this field?" he asked.

"Why — a row of mountains." I said.

"No," he insisted, "Look harder and more carefully."

And suddenly I realized that what I had taken for a ring of mountain was actually a high stonewall, and as I looked about, I realized that it completely encircled the plain where we were standing.

My companion laughed again: "My dear friend," he said, smiling, "this *is* the Golden Castle. You are standing in its wide courtyard right now, and those are its great golden walls surrounding us."

I was astounded and awe-struck. "But, then, the man was right," stammered, "The Machine *did* get me to the Golden Castle."

"Yes," smiled my companion, "but you were so intent on your tinkering and the care of your Machine that you didn't even know you had arrived!"

I shook my head in wonder.

"Don't worry, you're here now," he said, placing a golden hand on my shoulder, "so let's go now and join the others."

And together we set out across the grass of the field.