

The Happy Prince and Other Tales

O.Wilde

January 17, 2013

It is very hard not to discern a definite influence of H.C.Andersen in those stories. This holds in particular for the titular story, 'the Nightingale and the Rose' and most of all the concluding 'The Remarkable Rocket' in which inanimate objects are endowed with souls, in the manner of 'Den Standhaftige Tinsoldat'. They are sentimental as well as being mockingly so. They are elaborations on the themes of Andersens stories, meaning that they have been painted with a golden brush to make them glitter even more. It is hard to take them seriously, and I guess they were never meant to. In a way it is easy to dismiss them as mere 'finger exercises' but I guess their author was more ambitious in his quest. They would do well, lavishly illustrated in a coffee-table sized book. One would naturally cast the artist out of the pre-Raphaelists. This has probably been done.

Two of the stories are a bit original, although that does not usually imply that they need to be very good. In fact innovations more often than not fail, and are usually inferior to traditional efforts. 'The friendly Giant' seems to me to be half-baked, while a 'Devoted Friend' I hold to be the most memorable of the collection. It manages to be both funny and touching at the same time, and even has a moral that the reader is expected to be quick to spot and hoped to be slow to surrender.

January 28, 2013 **Ulf Persson:** *Prof.em, Chalmers U.of Tech., Göteborg Sweden* ulfp@chalmers.se