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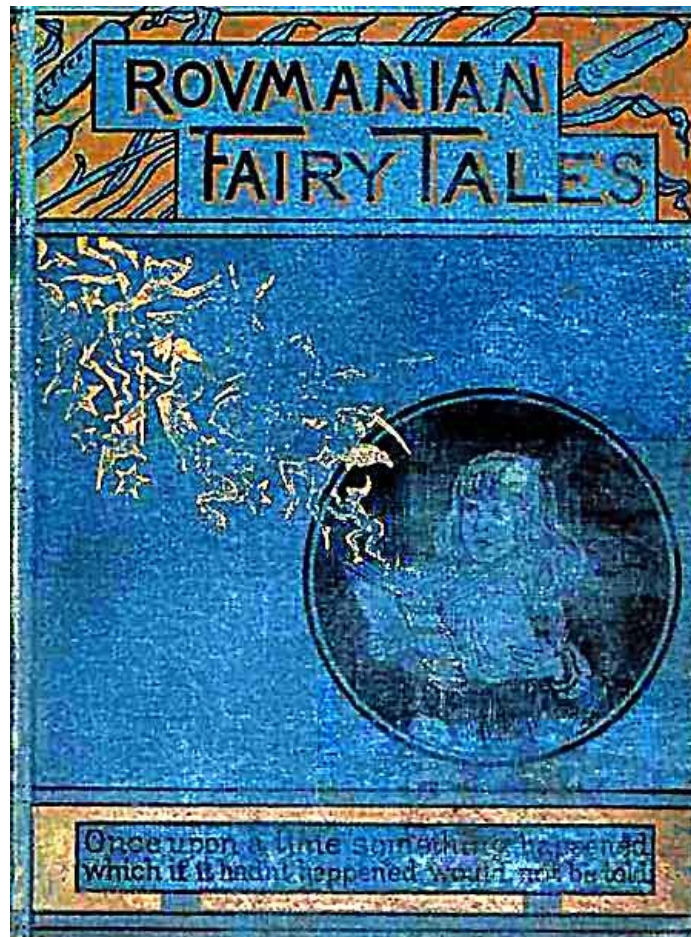
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## ROUMANIAN FAIRY TALES

*COLLECTED*

BY

# MITE KREMnitz.

*ADAPTED AND ARRANGED*

BY

**J. M. PERCIVAL**



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## **PREFACE.**

This collection contains translations of Roumanian tales which, however, comprise but a small portion of the inexhaustible treasure that exists in the nation. The originals are scattered throughout Roumanian literature. The finest collection is Herr P. Ispirescu's, from which the stories numbered in the contents 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, and 17 in the present volume have been selected. No. 11 is taken from Herr T. M. Arsenie's small collection; the others have been drawn from the columns of the periodical *Convorbiri Literare*. Of these Nos. 5 and 14 are by the pen of Herr J. Creanga, No. 9 is the work of Herr Miron Pompilin, while Nos. 1, 3, 7, 16 and 18 are by Herr Slavice, who wrote No. 15 specially for this volume, in the Roumanian language, just as it was related to him by the peasants.



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[1]

## Stan Bolovan.



nce upon a time, something happened. If it hadn't happened, it wouldn't be told.

At the edge of the village, where the peasants' oxen break through the hedges and the neighbors' hogs wallow in the ground under the fences, there once stood a house. In this house lived a man, and the man had a wife; but the wife grieved all day long.

"What troubles you, dear wife, that you sit there drooping like a frost-bitten bud in the sunlight?" her husband asked one day. "You have all you need. So be cheerful, like other folks."

"Let me alone, and ask no more questions!" replied the wife, and became still more melancholy than before.

Her husband questioned her the second time, and received the same reply. But, when he asked again, she answered more fully.

"Dear me," she said, "why do you trouble your head about it? If you know, you'll be just sorrowful as I am. It's better for me not to tell you."

But, to this, people will never agree. If you tell a person he must sit still, he is more anxious to move than ever. Stan was now determined to know what was in his wife's mind. [2]

"If you are determined to hear, I'll tell you," said the wife. "There's no luck in the house, husband,—there's no luck in the house!"

"Isn't the cow a good one? Are not the fruit-trees and bee-hives full? Are not the fields fertile?" asked Stan. "You talk nonsense, if you complain of any thing."

"But, husband, we have no children."

Stan understood; and, when a man realizes such a thing, it isn't well. From this time, a sorrowful man and a sorrowful woman lived in the house on the edge of the village. And they were sorrowful because the Lord had given them no children. When the wife saw her husband sad, she grew still more melancholy; and the more melancholy she was, the greater his grief became.

This continued for a long time.

They had masses repeated and prayers read in all the churches. They questioned all the witches, but God's gift did not come.

One day, two travelers arrived at Stan's house, and were joyfully received and entertained with the best food he had. They were angels in disguise; and, perceiving that Stan and his wife were good people, one of them, while throwing his knapsack over his shoulder to continue his journey, asked his host what he most desired, and said that any three of his wishes should be fulfilled. [3]

"Give me children," replied Stan.

"What else shall I give you?"

"Children, sir, give me children!"

"Take care," said the angel, "or there will be too many of them. Have you enough to support them?"

"Never mind that, sir,—only give them to me!"

The travelers departed; but Stan accompanied them as far as the high-road, that they might not lose their way among the fields and woods.

When Stan reached home again, he found the house, yard, and garden filled with children, in all not less than a hundred. Not one was larger than the other; but each was more quarrelsome, bolder, more mischievous and noisier than the rest. And, in some way, God made Stan feel and know that they all belonged to him and were his.

"Good gracious! What a lot of them!" he cried, standing in the midst of the throng.

"But not too many, husband," replied his wife, bringing a little flock with her.

Then followed days which can only be experienced by a man who has a hundred children. The house and village echoed with shouts of "father" and "mother," and the world was full of happiness.

But taking care of children isn't so simple a matter. Many pleasures come with many troubles, and many troubles with many joys. When, after a few days, the children began to shout, "Father, I'm hungry!" Stan began to scratch his head. There did not seem to him to be too many children, for God's gift is good, however large it may be; but his barns were too small, the cow was growing thin, and the fields did not produce enough. [4]

"I'll tell you what, wife," said Stan one day, "it seems to me that there isn't much harmony in our affairs. As God was good enough to give us so many children, He ought to have filled the measure of His goodness, and sent us food for them, too."

"Search for it, husband," the wife answered. "Who knows where it may be concealed? The Lord never does a thing by halves."

Stan went out into the wide world to find God's gift. He was firmly resolved to return home laden with food.

Aha! The road of the hungry is always a long one. A man doesn't earn food for a hundred greedy children in a trice. Stan wandered on, on, on, till he had fairly run himself off his feet. When he had thus arrived nearly at the end of the world, where what is mixed with what is not, he saw in the distance, in the middle of a field which lay spread out as flat as a cake, a sheep-fold. By it stood seven shepherds, and in the shadow within lay a flock of sheep.

"Lord, help me," said Stan, and went up to the fold to see whether, by patience and discretion, he might not find some employment there. But he soon discovered that there was not much more hope here than in the other places whither he had journeyed. This was the state of affairs: every night, at precisely twelve o'clock, a furious dragon came and took from the herd a ram, a sheep, and a lamb, three animals in all. He also carried milk enough for seventy-seven lambkins to the old she-dragon, that she might bathe in it and grow young. The shepherds were very angry about it, and complained bitterly. So Stan saw that he was not likely to return home from here richly laden with food for his children. [5]

But there is no spur more powerful than for a man to see his children starving. An idea entered Stan's head, and he said boldly, "What would you give me, if I released you from the greedy dragon?"

"One of each three rams shall be yours, one-third of the sheep, and one-third of the lambs," replied the shepherds.

"Agreed," said Stan; yet he felt rather anxious, lest he might find it too hard to drive the flock home alone.

But there was no hurry about that. It was some time before midnight. And besides, to tell the truth, Stan did not exactly know how he was to get rid of the dragon. "The Lord will send me some clever plan," he said to himself, and then counted the flock again to see how many animals he would have.

Just at midnight, when day and night, weary of strife, for a moment stood still, Stan felt that he was about to see something he had never beheld before. It was something that can not be described. It is a horrible thing to have a dragon come. It seemed as if the monster was hurling huge rocks at the trees, and thus forcing a way through primeval forests. Even Stan felt that he

should be wise to take the quickest way off, and enter into no quarrel with a dragon. Ah! but his children at home were starving.

[6]

"I'll kill you or you shall kill me!" Stan said to himself, and remained where he was, close by the sheep-fold.

"Stop!" he cried, when he saw the dragon near the fold; and he shouted as though he was a person of importance.

"H'm," said the dragon: "where did you come from, that you screech at me so?"

"I am Stan Bolovan, who at night devours rocks and by day grazes on the trees of the primeval forests; and if you touch the flock, I'll cut a cross on your back, and bathe you in holy water."

When the dragon heard these words, he stopped in the midst of his career; for he saw that he had found his match.

"But you must first fight with me," replied the dragon, hesitatingly.

"I fight with you?" cried Stan. "Beware of the words that have escaped your lips. My breath is stronger than your whole body." Then, taking from his knapsack a piece of white cheese, he showed it to the dragon. "Do you see this stone?" he said. "Pick one up from the bank of yonder stream, and we'll try our strength."

The dragon took a stone from the shore of the brook.

"Can you squeeze buttermilk out of the stone?" asked Stan.

The dragon crushed the stone in his hand, so that he crumbled it into powder. But he squeezed no buttermilk from it.

"It can't be done," he said rather angrily.

[7]

"I'll show you whether it can be done," replied Stan, and then squeezed the soft cheese in his hand, till the buttermilk trickled down between his fingers.

When the dragon saw this, he began to look about him to find the shortest road to run away; but Stan placed himself before the forest. "Let us have a little reckoning about what you have taken from the fold," he said. "Nothing is given away here."

The poor dragon would have taken flight, if he hadn't been afraid that Stan might blow behind him, and bury him under the trees in the forest. So he stood still, like a person who doesn't know what else to do.

"Listen!" he said, after a while. "I see that you are a useful man. My mother has long been looking for a servant like you, but has not been able to find one. Enter our service. The year has three days, and each day's wages is seven sacks of ducats!"

Three times seven sacks of ducats! A fine business! That was just what Stan needed. "And," he thought, "if I've outwitted the dragon, I can probably get the better of his mother!" So he didn't waste many words about the matter, but set off with the monster. A long, rough road; but still it was too short, since it led to a bad end. It seemed to Stan as if he had arrived almost before he started.

The old she-dragon, old as Time itself, was waiting for them. She had made a fire under the huge caldron, in which she meant to boil the milk and mix it with the blood of a lamb and the marrow from its bones, that the liquid might have healing power. Stan saw her eyes glistening in the darkness when they were still three gun-shots off. But, when they reached the spot and the she-dragon perceived that her son had brought her nothing, she was very angry. This she-dragon was by no means lovable. She had a wrinkled face, open jaws, tangled hair, sunken eyes, parched lips, and a breath reeking with the smell of onions.

[8]

"Stay here," said the dragon. "I'll go and make arrangements with my mother."

Stan would willingly have stood still further off, but he had no choice now that he had once entered upon this evil business. So he let the dragon go on.

"Listen, mother!" said the dragon, when he had entered the house. "I've brought you a man to get rid of. He's a terrible fellow, who eats pieces of rock and squeezes buttermilk out of stones." Then he told her what had happened.

"Just leave him to me," she said, after hearing the whole story. "No man ever slipped through *my* fingers."

So the matter remained as it had first been settled. Stan Bolovan became the servant of this monster and his mother. A terrible fix! I really don't know what will come of it.

The next day, the she-dragon gave him his task. They were to give a signal to the dragon world with a club sheathed in seven thicknesses of iron. The dragon raised the club and hurled it three miles, then he set off with Stan, that he might also throw it three miles, or, if possible, further still. When Stan reached the club, he began to look at it rather anxiously. He saw that he and all his children together could not even lift it from the ground.

[9]

"Why are you standing there?" asked the dragon.

"Why, you see, it's such a handsome club. I'm sorry," replied Stan.

"Sorry? Why?" inquired the dragon.

"Because," answered Stan, "I'm afraid you'll never see it again in your whole life, if I throw it; for I know my own strength."

"Don't fear. Just throw it," replied the dragon.

"If you really mean it, we'll first go and get provisions enough to last three days; for we shall have to travel at least three days, if not longer, to get it."

These words frightened the dragon, but he did not yet believe that it would be so bad as Stan said. So they went home for the provisions, though he wasn't at all pleased with the idea of having Stan serve his year in merely going after the club. When they got back again to it, Stan sat down on the bag of provisions and became absorbed in staring at the moon.

"What are you doing?" asked the dragon.

"Only waiting for the moon to sail by."

"Why?"

"Don't you see that the moon is directly in my way?" said Stan. "Or do you want me to fling the club into the moon?"

The dragon now began to be seriously anxious. It was a club that had descended to him from his ancestors, and he wouldn't have liked to lose it in the moon. [10]

"I'll tell you what," he said. "Don't throw the club. I'll do it myself."

"Certainly not. Heaven forbid!" replied Stan. "Only wait till the moon passes by."

Then a long conversation followed; for Stan would not consent to have the dragon throw the club again, except on the promise of seven sacks of ducats.

"Oh, dear! mother, he's a tremendously strong man," said the dragon. "I could scarcely prevent him from throwing the club into the moon."

The she-dragon began to be anxious, too. Just think of it! Would it be a joke to have a person able to throw any thing into the moon? She was a she-dragon of true dragon blood, however, and the next day had thought of a still harder task.

"Bring some water," she said early in the morning, and gave each twelve buffalo skins, ordering them to fill them by evening, and fetch them all home at once.

They went to the well; and, before one could wink, the dragon had filled the twelve skins, and was in the act of carrying them back. Stan was tired, he had scarcely been able to drag the empty skins along. A chill ran through his veins, when he thought of the full ones. What do you suppose he did? He pulled a worn-out knife blade from his belt, and began to scratch the earth around the well with it.

"What are you doing?" asked the dragon.

"I'm not a blockhead, that I should go to the labor of filling the skins with water," replied Stan. [11]

"But how will you carry the water to the house, then?"

"How? Just as you see," said Stan. "I'm going to take the well, you goose!"

The dragon stood with his mouth wide-open in amazement. He wouldn't have had this done on any account, for the well was one that had belonged to his ancestors.

"I'll tell you," he said anxiously, "let me carry your skins home, too."

"Certainly not. Heaven forbid!" replied Stan, digging on around the well.

Now, another long discussion followed; and this time, too, the dragon could only persuade Stan by promising him seven sacks of ducats.

On the third day, that is the last one, the she-dragon sent them into the forest for wood.

Before one could count three, the dragon tore up more trees than Stan had ever seen before in his whole life, and piled them up together. But Stan began to examine the trees, chose the very finest, climbed up into one and tied its top with a wild grape-vine to the next. So, without saying a word, he continued to fasten one splendid tree to another.

"What are you doing there?" asked the dragon.

"You see what I am doing," replied Stan, working quietly on.

"Why are you tying the trees together?"

"Why, to save myself unnecessary work in pulling them up one by one," said Stan.

"But how are you going to carry them home?"

[12]

"I shall take the whole forest, you goose! Can't you understand that?" said Stan, continuing to fasten them together.

The dragon now felt as if he wanted to take to his heels, and never stop until he reached home.

But he was afraid that he should suddenly find Stan pulling the whole forest down on his head.

This time, as it was the end of the year's service, it seemed as if the discussion would never cease. Stan did not want to listen at all, but had set his mind upon flinging the forest on his back at any rate.

"I'll tell you what," said the dragon, trembling with fear, "your wages shall be seven times seven sacks of ducats. Content yourself with that."

"Well, be it so, as I see you are a good fellow," replied Stan, and agreed that the dragon should carry the wood for him.

The year was now over. Stan was anxious only about one thing—how he was to drag so many ducats home.

In the evening, the dragon and his mother sat talking together in their room; but Stan listened in the entry.

"Woe betide us!" said the dragon: "this fellow upsets us terribly. Give him money, even more than he has, only let us get rid of him."

Ah, yes! but the she-dragon cared for money.

"Let me tell you one thing," she said: "you must kill this man to-night."

"I am afraid of him, mother," he answered in terror.

[13]

"Have no fear," replied his mother. "When you see that he is asleep, take your club and strike him in the middle of the forehead."

So it was agreed. Ah, yes! but Stan always had a bright idea at the right time. When he saw that the dragon and his mother had put out the light, he took the pig's trough, and laid it bottom upward in his place, covered it carefully with a shaggy coat, and lay down himself under the bed, where he began to snore like a person who is sound asleep.

The dragon went out softly, approached the bed, raised his club, and struck one blow on the spot where Stan's head ought to have been. The trough sounded hollow, Stan groaned, and the dragon tiptoed back again.

Stan then crept out from under the bed, cleaned it, and lay down, but was wise enough not to close an eye all night long.

The dragon and his mother were rigid with amazement when they saw Stan come in the next morning as sound as an egg.

"Good morning!"

"Good morning; but how did you sleep last night?"

"Very well," replied Stan. "Only I dreamed that a flea bit me just here on the forehead, and it seems as if it still pained me."

"Just listen to that, mother!" cried the dragon. "Did you hear? He talks about a flea, and I hit him with my club!"

This was too much for the she-dragon. She perceived that it isn't worth while to argue with such people. So they hastened to fill his sacks, in order to get rid of him as quickly as possible. But poor Stan now began to perspire. When he stood beside the bags, he trembled like an aspen leaf, because he was unable to lift even one of them from the ground. So he stood staring at them.

[14]

"Why are you standing there?" asked the dragon.

"H'm! I'm waiting," replied Stan, "because I would rather stay with you another year. I'm ashamed to have any body see me carry away so little at one time. I'm afraid people will say, 'Look at Stan Bolovan, who in one year has grown as weak as a dragon.'"

Now, it was the two dragons' turn to be frightened.

They vainly told him that they would give him seven—nay, three times seven or even seven times seven—sacks of ducats, if he would only go away.

"I'll tell you what," said Stan, at last. "As I see you don't want to keep me, I won't force you to do so. Have it your own way. I'll go. But, that I need not be ashamed before the people, you must carry this treasure home for me."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when the dragon picked up the sacks and set off with Stan.

Short and smooth, yet always too long, is the road that leads home. But, when Stan found himself close to his house, and heard his children's shouts, he began to walk slower. It seemed too near; for he was afraid that, if the dragon knew where he lived, he might come to take away the treasure. Only he was puzzled to find any way of carrying his money home alone.

[15]

"I really don't know what to do," he said, turning to the dragon. "I have a hundred hungry children, and fear you may fare badly among them, because they are very fond of fighting. But just behave sensibly, and I'll protect you as well as I can."

A hundred children! That's no joke! The dragon—though a dragon of dragon race—let the bags fall in his fright. But, from sheer terror, he picked them up again. Yet his fear did not gain the mastery till they entered the court-yard. When the hungry children saw their father coming with the loaded dragon, they rushed toward him, each one with a knife in the right hand and a fork in the left. Then they all began to whet the knives on the forks, shrieking at the top of their lungs, "We want dragon meat!"

This was enough to scare Satan himself. The dragon threw down the sacks, and then took to flight, so frightened that since that time he has never dared to come back to the world.



[16]

## The Wonderful Bird.



nce upon a time, something happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was a good, pious emperor, who had three sons. Among many other benefits bestowed upon the inhabitants of his empire he built a church, about which marvelous stories were told, for he adorned it with gold, precious stones and every thing the workmen of that country regarded as beautiful and valuable. Within and in front of this church were numbers of marble columns, and it was supplied with the finest paintings, silver chandeliers, huge silver lamps, and the rarest books. The more the emperor rejoiced in its beauty, the more sorrowful he felt that he could not finish it, for the steeple continually fell down.

"How is it that this sacred church can not be completed?" he asked. "I have spent all my property and it is not yet done." So he ordered a proclamation to be sent throughout the empire, stating that any architect who could finish the church steeple would receive great gifts and honors. Besides this, a second proclamation was issued, commanding prayers to be read and services held in all the churches, that God might take pity on him and send him a good architect. The third night the monarch dreamed that if any one would fetch the wonderful bird from the other shore and put its nest in the steeple, the church could be finished. He told this dream to his sons, and they vied with each other in offering to set out and devote themselves to their imperial father's service.

[17]

The emperor replied: "I see, my sons, that you all desire to fulfill your duty to God, but you can't all three go at once. My oldest son shall set out first, if he does not succeed, the second one, and so on until the Lord takes pity upon us."

The younger sons silently submitted; the oldest one made his preparations for the journey. He traveled as best he could, and when he had passed the frontiers of his father's empire, found himself in a beautiful grove. After lighting a fire he stood waiting until his food was cooked. Suddenly he saw a fox, which begged him to tie up his hound, give it a bit of bread and a glass of wine, and let it rest by his fire. Instead of granting the request the prince released the hound, which instantly pursued the animal, whereupon the fox, by a magic spell, transformed the emperor's son into a block of stone.

When the sovereign saw that his oldest son did not return, he listened to the entreaties of his second son, and gave him permission to set forth to find the wonderful bird. After making his preparations and taking some provisions with him, this prince also departed. On the spot where his brother had been turned to stone, the same thing happened to him, because he also refused the fox's entreaties, and tried to catch it, to get its skin.

[18]

The emperor grew very thoughtful, when after a long time his sons failed to return, either with or without the wonderful bird.

At last the youngest said: "You see, father, it is now a long time since my brothers set out to find the wonderful bird, and they haven't come home yet; give me some money and clothes for the journey that I may try my luck also. If I succeed, you will rejoice, because your dream will be fulfilled, and if I do not, you will suffer no mortification from it."

"Your older brothers have apparently been unable to get this wonderful bird," replied the



emperor; "nay, perhaps they have even lost their lives, they have been absent so long. I am old; if you go too, who will help me in the cares of government; if I die, who is there to ascend the throne except you, my son? Stay here, my dear child, do not leave me."

"You know, my royal father, that I have never swerved a hair's breadth from your commands, and if I now venture to urge my petition it is only because, if possible, I would fain fulfill a wish that gives you no rest, which you have cherished so many years and striven to realize at so great a cost."

After many entreaties, the emperor yielded. The prince chose from the imperial stables a horse that pleased him, took a dog for a companion, supplied himself with sufficient food and departed. [19]

After some time had passed, the emperor's two older sons suddenly arrived with the magic bird and a young girl, who was placed in charge of the poultry-yard. Every body wondered at the beauty of the bird, whose plumage glittered with a thousand hues, each feather shining like the sun, and the church-steeple did not fall after the bird and its nest were placed within. One thing, however, was noticed; the bird seemed dumb, it never uttered a note, and all who saw it grieved that so beautiful a creature should have no song; even the emperor, spite of all the pleasure he took in the church and steeple, was sorrowful because the bird did not sing.

People began to forget the youngest son, so great was the rejoicing over the bird that seemed to keep the steeple from falling, and thus enabled the workmen to finish the church; but the emperor grieved because the prince was not there to share his subjects' pleasure.

One day the poultry-keeper came to him and said: "May thy face shine, mighty emperor, the whole city is marveling at the singing of the magic bird—a shepherd entered the church early this morning, and the bird instantly began to sing as if it would burst its throat, and is so happy that it can hardly keep in its nest. This has happened to-day for the second time. While the shepherd is in the church the bird never stops singing, but as soon as he goes away, it is silent." [20]

"Let the shepherd be brought before me at once."

"Your majesty, the shepherd seems to be a stranger; no one here knows him. Your majesty's sons, I hear, have set guards to arrest him."

"Silence," said the emperor; "do not mention my sons; it is not seemly for you to speak against them."

The sovereign sent some of his most trusty servants to keep watch, seize the shepherd as soon as he entered the church and the bird began to sing, and bring him before him. But, not content with this, he went himself the next holiday to hear the bird's wonderful singing with his own ears, and see the shepherd. If he had not been present, a violent conflict would have arisen between his own people and the spies sent by his sons, who evidently wished to lay hands on the shepherd. The emperor ordered that he should be brought to the palace, for a strange feeling stirred in his heart when he saw the timid youth with the figure of a hero.

When he came out of church, the monarch went directly home to his palace, for his heart told him that there must be something unusual about this shepherd. On seeing him, he said:—

"Tell me, my son, from what part of the country do you come? Have you any parents, and how did you get here?"

"My story is a long one, most noble emperor. I have parents and brothers. I shall need more time to tell you how I came hither, but if it is your majesty's will, I am ready. I will come to your majesty early to-morrow morning, it is too late to-day." [21]

"Very well, my brave fellow, I will expect you at dawn to-morrow."

Early the next morning the shepherd came to await the emperor's commands; but as soon as the emperor heard that he had arrived, he summoned him.

"Tell me, my son, what is the reason the magic bird sings as soon as you enter the church, and stops when you go out."

"To understand that and other things, your majesty, let me tell you my whole story."

"I will listen; tell me anything you please."

The shepherd then began:—

"I have a father, and brothers. I left my home to do something to please my father, who was sad because he had a wish that could not be fulfilled. After a journey of several days I reached a beautiful meadow, from which branched several roads. Intending to spend the night there, I lighted a fire, took out some of the provisions I had brought with me, and was just sitting down to eat them, when I suddenly saw a fox beside me. Whence it came I did not know; it seemed as if it had sprung up out of the earth.

"Please let me warm myself by your fire," it said. "See, I am so cold that my teeth chatter. Give me a bit of bread and a glass of wine, that I may satisfy my hunger and thirst, and tie your dog, so I can eat in peace and rest without fear."

"Very well," I replied, "come and warm yourself. Here are my provisions and my flask, eat and

drink as much as you choose.'

[22]

"I tied my dog, and we sat down by the fire and talked together. Among other things, I told the fox where I was going, and even asked if it could tell me what I should do to accomplish the task I had voluntarily undertaken.

"'Have no anxiety about that,' replied the fox. 'We'll set out together early to-morrow morning, and if I don't help you to the goal, never trust me again.'

"We sat by the fire, feasting like two friends, then the fox bade me good-night, and vanished like a shadow. I wondered how it had been possible that I did not see what direction the animal took, and while racking my brains to find out how it had managed to go and come unperceived, I fell asleep. When the fox came at dawn next morning, it found me gazing in astonishment at several blocks of stone, which resembled two men, two dogs, and two horses. As soon as I saw the animal, we prepared to set out.

"The fox turned three somersaults and suddenly changed into a handsome hero. On the way he told me that the place where I had spent the night was part of his property, that he was married and had several children, but had been condemned to wear the form of a fox until some human being would take pity on him and receive him, let him warm himself by the same fire, give him a bit of bread and glass of wine. As I was this man, he was now released from the spell, and would go with me and never leave me until I had accomplished my object. This event pleased me, and we journeyed on and on all through the long summer day until late at night when we reached a mountain meadow, where we encamped. My traveling companion told me that the next day we should be obliged to pass through the lands of several dragons, and he thought we should there find what we sought.

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"The following morning we entered the dragons' country, though somewhat timidly, and about noon reached the dragon-palace. It is impossible to describe the magnificent things we saw there. Gardens with all sorts of flowers and fruits, rooms that seemed lined with silver, so that they shone in the sun like mirrors, walls covered with paintings and carved flowers. Every corner of the palace was gilded, and fountains cast jets of water into the air. Luckily for us, the dragons were not at home when we arrived. On the threshold we met a beautiful girl, a girl who looked as sweet as if she were made of sugar, and who advised us not to enter the court-yard in the dragons' absence, or we should meet with some misfortune. Then she wept for joy at seeing people from the place from whence the dragons had stolen her. When we asked her about the wonderful bird, she said it was in the possession of some other dragons, relatives of those on whose lands we were.

"'Go there,' she added, 'for with God's help, I hope you will succeed, and when you return, take me with you.'

"After she had told us how we could enter the dragons' court-yard and what we must do, I swore by what was dearest to me in the world, my father, that I would not leave her in the dragons' power, but take her away. Then we continued the journey. To tell the truth, I loved her as soon as I saw her.

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"When we reached the borders of the next dragon-kingdom, we stopped to rest, but at dawn the following day we crossed the frontier and by noon reached their palace, which was even more beautiful than the first one. As soon as I had dismounted from my horse, I went to the stable, but my companion turned back, for this was what the girl had advised. The horses were at their cribs. One turned its head and looked at me. I patted its eyes, pulled its ears, threw a bridle over its neck, mounted it, and in riding by, took the cage with the magic bird that hung in the entry."

"You brought the wonderful bird?" cried the emperor. "Then you are my son, whom all believe dead."

"Even so, father." And after kissing the emperor's hand, he begged him to send for the poultry-keeper. When she came, the shepherd said, "This is the girl of whom I told you."

"How is that possible!" replied the emperor. "How did she become a poultry maid?"

"She'll tell you that herself. I don't know. So, as I was saying," he continued, "after I had snatched the cage I fled as fast as I could on the horse I had taken from the dragons, but the other horses began to neigh and make such a noise that my hair fairly bristled, yet I held firm. The dragons chased me until I reached my comrade, who was waiting for me on the frontier. If it had not been for him, they would have seized me, and who knows what would have become of me then. But my companion stretched out his hand, shouting, 'Stop!' The dragons seemed to be suddenly turned to stone; not another step forward did they take. After embracing and kissing me he admired the bird's beauty. The dragons did every thing in their power to get it from me, and made all sorts of promises, but when they saw they could not persuade me, begged me at least to give them the horse. I perceived it would not be right to leave them in such a sad state, so I returned the horse and went on with my companion and the bird, but the dragons almost stared their eyes out after it.

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"When we reached the other dragon palace, the girl was waiting for us at the gate. Cracking her whip three times the whole building changed into an apple, which she put in her pocket. I passed my arm around her, and we set out. But oh! dear, when the dragons discovered it! How they chased us, roaring so that our blood curdled in our veins. I summoned all my courage, spurred

my horse, and fled like the wind with my companion. But the dragons came as fast as thought. When my comrade saw this, and perceived that there was no possibility of escape, he stopped, made a sign and turned them into blocks of stone. Then we continued our journey till we reached the field from which we had started and which was part of the fox's property. After we had rested and I had thanked God that we had accomplished our task, I asked my comrade what those stone pillars meant.

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"He answered: 'If you know you will regret it, and if you don't know, you will also regret it.'

"Pray tell me.'

"These are your brothers,' he answered. 'Instead of kindly granting my request, as you did, they set their hounds on me, which condemned me to wear the loathsome fox-skin still longer, so I turned them to stone.'

"For my sake,' I entreated, 'for the sake of our friendship, make them men again as they were before.'

"I prize your friendship greatly,' he replied, 'so let it be as you wish—but you'll repent it.'

"In an instant he made a sign with his hand, the stones suddenly shook, and my brothers remained motionless with amazement, when they saw us before them. We took leave of my comrade and set out on our way home. But see what a fine trick my brothers played me.

"Brother,' they said, after we had ridden about a mile, 'we are tired by the long distance, and it is very warm. Let us go to a pond we know here and each drink a little to cool ourselves.' I agreed, and we went there. The oldest drank, so did the second one, but when I was going to drink too, lying face downward at the edge of the pond, so that I could reach the water with my lips, as they had done, I suddenly felt a terrible burning sensation in both feet, and when I turned to see the cause, could not get up; my brothers had cut off both my feet, and then hurried off, without listening to my complaints and entreaties.

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"I spent three days and nights beside the pond. When my good horse saw a dragon coming, it lifted me by my clothes with its teeth, ran as far as it could and kicked so violently that no wild beast could approach us.

"At last, on the fourth day, I met a blind man groping his way along. 'Who are you?' I asked.

"A poor, maimed fellow,' said he. Then, after he had told me that his brothers, out of envy, had put out his eyes, I told him that my brothers had cut off my feet.

"I'll tell you what!' he exclaimed. 'We'll take an oath of brotherhood. I have feet, you have eyes, so I'll carry you on my back. I'll walk for you, and you shall see for me. A huge scorpion lives close by, whose blood cures all kinds of diseases.'

"I accepted his offer, and we went to the scorpion's house. He was not at home, so the blind man put me behind the door, telling me to kill him with my sword as soon as he came in; then he hid himself behind the stove. We did not wait long before the scorpion entered in a great rage, for he had noticed that somebody had broken into his house. When I saw him my heart shrunk till it was no bigger than a flea, but as he came in I waited till he was close by me, then struck one blow that chopped all three of his heads off at once.

"I instantly smeared myself with the hot blood and as soon as it touched my feet they stuck as fast as if they had never been cut off. I also smeared the blind man's eyes, and his sight returned. After thanking God, each set out on his own way.

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"I did not want to go home at once, but thought it best to hire out as a shepherd and leave God to arrange things so that the criminals' guilt should appear. I was not disappointed in my confidence, for you see His power is great and His judgment just."

"Now tell me how you became a servant and poultry-maid," said the emperor to the maiden.

"After your imperial majesty's oldest sons had cut off their youngest brother's feet, one of them took me, the other the wonderful bird. I thought my heart would dissolve with grief because I was obliged to part from your majesty's youngest son, whom I loved because he was such a noble man. They proposed that I should love one of them, and promised that he would marry me as soon as we reached the emperor's court. After refusing all their offers, I preferred to take service as your majesty's poultry maid, rather than go any where else, for I knew God would not let a man who did right perish, and now I thank Him for having shown me that a good deed is never lost."

"Can you prove," asked the emperor, "that you are the girl and no one else?"

"This apple will show every one that I am she," replied the girl, drawing it from her bosom. "Your older sons knew nothing about it, or they would have taken it from me."

With these words she went out of doors, cracked a little whip three times over the apple and a magnificent palace, more splendid than any in the kingdom, instantly arose.

The emperor himself was astonished. He wished to celebrate his youngest son's return, but the latter said, "Father, before we thank God that I have come home alive, let us three brothers submit to His judgment."

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The emperor could make no objection. The brothers were led before him and he ordered the older ones to kneel and ask the youngest son's forgiveness. But he replied: "If God forgives you, I will also."

As they could not avoid it, they went in front of the church, and set out three bee-hives at equal distances apart. Each brother stood with his feet in one, and hurled a stone into the air from a sling. The elder brothers' stones in falling back struck them so hard on the head that they were killed, but the youngest brother's fell in front of him.

Many had assembled to witness this trial. After the wedding was over and the emperor had married his son to the poultry-maid, he came down from the throne and gave it to the prince, who, if alive, reigns there still.

I was present at these events, and now tell them to those who listen.



[30]

## The Twins With the Golden Star.



nce upon a time something happened. If it hadn't happened, it wouldn't be told.

There was an emperor, who ruled over a whole world, and in this world lived an old shepherd and shepherdess, who had three daughters, Anna, Stana, and Laptitza.<sup>[1]</sup>

[1] Little Milk-white, from "Lapte"—milk.

Anna, the oldest sister, was so beautiful that the sheep stopped feeding when she went among them; Stana, the second, was so lovely that the wolves watched the herd when she was the shepherdess, but Laptitza, the youngest, who had a skin as white as the foam of milk, and hair as soft as the wool of the lambkins, was as beautiful as both of her sisters put together, beautiful as only she herself could be.

One summer day, when the sunbeams were growing less scorching, the three sisters went to the edge of the forest to pick strawberries. While searching for them, they heard the tramp of horses' hoofs, as if a whole troop of cavalry were dashing up. It was the emperor's son, hunting with his friends and courtiers, all handsome, stately youths, sitting their horses as if they were a part of their steeds, but the handsomest and proudest of all rode the most fiery charger, and was the emperor's son himself.

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When they saw the sisters, they curbed their horses and rode more slowly.

"Listen to me, sisters," said Anna; "if one of those youths should choose me for his wife, I'd knead a loaf of bread which, when he had eaten it, would make him always feel young and brave."

"And I," said Stana, "would weave my husband a shirt, in which he could fight against dragons, go through water without being wet, or fire without being burned."

"But I," said Laptitza, the youngest sister, "would give my husband two beautiful sons, twin boys with golden hair, and on their foreheads a golden star, a star as bright as Lucifer."

The youths heard these words, and turning their horses dashed toward the maidens.

"Sacred be thy promise, thou shalt be mine, fairest empress," cried the emperor's son, lifting Laptitza with her berries upon his horse.

"And thou shalt be mine!" "And thou shalt be mine!" said a second and third youth; so bearing their lovely burdens on their steeds, all dashed back to the imperial court.

The three weddings were celebrated the very next day, and for three days and nights the festival was held throughout the empire with great pomp and splendor. After three days and nights the news went through the whole country that Anna had gathered grain, ground, boiled, and kneaded it, and made a loaf of bread, as she had promised while picking strawberries. Then, after three more days and nights, tidings went through the land that Stana had collected flax, dried, and hackled it, spun it into linen, wove the cloth, and made her husband a shirt as she had promised while seeking for her strawberries. Laptitza alone had not yet kept her word, but great things require time.

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When seven weeks had passed, counting from the wedding day, the emperor's son, now emperor, appeared before his brave companions and the other courtiers with a very joyous face, and in a much softer voice than ever before informed them that henceforth he should not leave the court for a long time, his heart moved him to stay with his wife night and day.

So the world, the country, and the whole empire rejoiced in the expectation of seeing something never beheld before.

But many things happen in this world, among them much that is good and much that is evil.

The emperor had a step-mother, who had brought with her to the palace a daughter of her first husband, a girl with beautiful hair. But woe betide those who have such relationships.

The step-mother had intended that her daughter should become the emperor's wife and empress of the whole country, instead of little Milk-white, the shepherd's daughter. Therefore she determined that if things fell out as Laptitza had promised, the emperor and the world should believe they did not happen according to the prediction. [33]

But the step-mother could not carry out her plan, because the emperor remained with his wife day and night. Yet she thought that gradually, by coaxing and cunning, she might get rid of him, and then Laptitza would be left in her care and she would provide for every thing.

But she could not get rid of the emperor by means of a few coaxing words. The wind blew them away, and all her craft was useless. Time passed, the day for the fulfillment of Laptitza's promise was drawing near, and still the emperor never left his wife.

When the step-mother saw that no plot succeeded, she felt as if a stone were lying heavy on her heart, and sent a message to her brother, whose kingdom was very near, to ask him to come with his soldiers and summon the emperor to a war.

This was a clever plan and, as will be seen, not an unsuccessful one. The emperor fairly leaped into the air in his rage, when he heard that hostile soldiers were on the march to attack his country, and that something would occur which had not happened for a long time—a battle, a terrible battle, a battle between two emperors. The young husband saw that there was no help for it, he must do what needed to be done.

That is the way with emperors. No matter how much they wish to guard their wives—if they hear of war, their hearts fairly leap in their bodies, their brains swell almost to bursting, their eyes grow dim, and leaving wife and children in God's care, they dash like the wind to battle. [34]

The emperor departed at the first sign of peril, moved as swiftly as one of God's judgments, fought as only he could fight, and at dawn on the morning of the third day was back again at the imperial court, his heart soothed by the battle, but full of unsatisfied longing to know what had happened during his absence.

And—this had happened. Just at dawn on the morning of the third day, when the stars were paling in the sky, and the emperor was only three steps from the palace-gate, the Lord's gift came down to the earth, and Laptitza's promise was fulfilled—two beautiful twin princes, exactly alike, each with golden hair and a golden star on his forehead.

But the world was not to see them!

The step-mother, as wicked as her thoughts, hastily put two puppies in the place of the beautiful twins, and buried the golden-haired children at the corner of the palace, just under the emperor's windows.

When the monarch entered the palace he saw and heard nothing except the two puppies the step-mother had put in the twins' place. No words were wasted. The emperor saw with his own eyes, and that was enough. Laptitza had not kept her promise, and there was nothing to be done except mete out her punishment.

He could not help it, and though his own heart was torn, commanded that the empress should be buried to her breast in the earth and so remain before the eyes of the world, in token of what befell those who tried to deceive an emperor. [35]

The next day the step-mother's wish was fulfilled. The emperor married a second time, and again the wedding festivities lasted three days and three nights.

But God's blessing does not rest upon unjust deeds.

The two princes found no rest in the earth. Two beautiful aspens sprang up where they were buried, but when the step-mother saw them she ordered them to be pulled up by the roots. The emperor, however, said: "Let them grow, I like to see them before the window. I never beheld such aspens before."

So the trees grew, grew as no other aspens ever had grown, every day a year's growth, every night another year's growth, but in the dawn of morning, when the stars were paling in the sky, three years' growth in a single moment. When three days and three nights had passed, the two aspens were lofty trees, lifting their boughs to the emperor's window, and when the wind stirred the branches, he listened to their rustling all day long.

The step-mother suspected what they were, and pondered all day trying to find some way to get rid of the trees at any cost. It was a difficult task, but a woman's will can squeeze milk from a stone, a woman's cunning conquers heroes—what force can not accomplish, fair words win, and when these fail, hypocritical tears succeed.

One morning the empress sat down on the side of her husband's bed and began to overwhelm

him with loving words and tender caresses. It was a long time before the thread broke, but at last —even emperors are mortal! [36]

"Very well," he said, reluctantly, "have your own way; order the aspens to be cut down, but one must be made into a bedstead for me, the other for you."

This satisfied the empress. The aspens were cut down, and before night the beds were standing in the emperor's room.

When he lay down, he felt as if he had become a hundred times heavier, yet he had never rested so well; but it seemed to the empress as if she were lying on thorns and nettles, so that she could not sleep all night long.

When the emperor had fallen asleep, the beds began to creak, and amid this creaking the empress fancied she heard words that no one else understood.

"Is it hard for you, brother?" asked one of the beds.

"No, it isn't hard for me," replied the bed in which the emperor was sleeping, "I am happy, for my beloved father rests upon me."

"It's hard for me," replied the other, "for on me lies a wicked soul."

So the beds talked on in the empress's ears until the dawn of morning.

When daylight came, the empress planned how she could destroy the beds. At last she ordered two bedsteads exactly like them, and when the emperor went hunting, placed them in his room without his knowledge; but the aspen beds, down to the very smallest splinter, she threw into the fire. [37]

When they were burned so entirely that not even a bit of charcoal remained, the empress collected the ashes and scattered them to the winds, that they might be strewn over nine countries and seas, and not an atom find another atom through all eternity.

But she had not noticed that just when the fire was burning brightest two sparks rose, and soaring upward, fell again into the midst of the deep river that flowed through the empire, where they were changed into two little fishes with golden scales, so exactly alike that nobody could help knowing they were twin brothers.

One day the imperial fishermen went out early in the morning, and threw their nets into the water. Just at the moment the last stars were fading, one of the men drew up his net and beheld what he had never seen before: two tiny fishes with golden scales.

The other fishermen assembled to see the miracle, but when they had beheld and admired it, determined to carry the fish alive to the emperor for a gift.

"Don't take us there, we've just come from there, and it will be our destruction," said one of the fishes.

"But what shall I do with you?" asked the fisherman.

"Go and gather the dew from the leaves, let us swim in it, put us in the sun, and don't come back again till the sunbeams have dried the dew," said the second little fish.

The fisherman did as he was told, gathered the dew from the leaves, put the little fish into it, placed them in the sun, and did not come back till the dew was all dried up. [38]

But what had happened! What did he see?

Two boys, handsome princes with golden hair and a golden star on their foreheads, so exactly alike that no one who saw them could help knowing that they were twin brothers.

The children grew very rapidly. Every day enough for a year, and every night enough for another year, but in the dawn of morning when the stars paled in the sky, enough for three years in a single moment. Besides, they grew as no other children ever had grown, three times as fast in age, strength, and wisdom. When three days and nights had passed, they were twelve years in age, twenty-four in strength, and thirty-six in wisdom.

"Now let us go to our father," said one of the princes to the fisherman.

The fisherman dressed the lads in beautiful clothing, and made each a lambskin cap, which the boys drew low over their faces, that no one might see their golden hair and the golden star on their foreheads, and then took the princes to the imperial palace.

It was broad daylight when they arrived.

"We want to speak to the emperor," said one of the princes to the guard, who stood armed at the door of the palace.

"That can't be done, he's at table," replied the soldier.

"Just because he *is* at table," said the second prince, passing through the door. [39]

The guards ran up and tried to drive the boys out of the court-yard, but the boys slipped through their fingers like quicksilver. Three paces forward, three up, and they were standing before the

great hall, where the emperor was dining with all his court.

"We want to come in," said one of the princes sharply, to the servants who stood at the door.

"That can't be done," one of the lackeys answered.

"Indeed! We'll see whether it can be done or not," cried the other prince, pushing the men aside right and left.

But there were a great many lackeys, and only two princes. A tumult and uproar arose outside, that resounded through the palace.

"What is going on out there?" asked the emperor angrily.

The princes stopped when they heard their father's voice.

"Two boys are trying to enter by force," said an attendant, approaching the emperor.

"By force? Who seeks to enter my palace by force? Who are these boys?" cried the emperor in the same breath.

"We know not, your majesty," replied the lackey, "but there must be something uncommon about them, for the lads are as strong as young lions, they overpowered the guard at the gate, and have given us plenty to do. Besides, they are proud, they don't lift their caps from their heads."

The emperor flushed scarlet with rage.

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"Throw them out!" he cried. "Set the dogs on them."

"Never mind, we will go," said the princes, weeping at the harsh words, as they went down the steps again.

As they reached the gate, they were stopped by a servant, who was out of breath from running to overtake them.

"The emperor has commanded you to come back, the empress wants to see you."

The princes hesitated, then turned, climbed the stairs, and still with their caps on their heads appeared before the emperor.

There stood a long, wide table, at which sat all the imperial guests; at the head was the emperor, and beside him the empress, reclining on twelve silk cushions.

As the princes entered, one of these twelve cushions fell to the floor, only eleven remaining under the royal lady.

"Take off your caps!" cried a courtier.

"To wear the head covered is a token of rank among men. We wish to be what we are."

"Why, yes!" exclaimed the emperor, softened by the musical words that fell from the boys' lips. "Remain what you are, but who are you? Whence do you come, and what do you want?"

"We are twin brothers, members of a family that is broken in twain, half in the earth, half at the head of the table; we come from whence we went, and have reached the place whence we came; we have had a long journey, have spoken in the sighing of the wind, given a voice to wood, sang in the ripples of the water, but now we wish to chant in human language a song you know without knowing it."

[41]

A second cushion fell from under the empress.

"Let them go home with their nonsense!" she said to her husband.

"Oh! no, let them sing," replied the emperor. "You only wanted to see them, but I wish to hear them. Sing, boys!"

The empress was silent, and the princes began to sing the story of their lives.

"There was once an emperor," they began, and a third cushion fell from under the empress.

When they described the emperor's departure to the war, three cushions fell at once, and when the princes had finished their song not a single one remained. But when they took off their caps and showed their golden hair and the golden star on their foreheads, guests, courtiers and emperor closed their eyes, that they might not be dazzled by so much radiance.

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Afterward, what ought to have been from the beginning, happened.

Laptitza sat at the head of the table beside her husband, but the step-mother's daughter served as the humblest maid in the palace, and the wicked step-mother was fastened to the tail of a wild mare and dragged around the earth seven times, that the whole world might know and never forget, that whoever plans evil comes to a bad end.

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## Youth Without Age and Life Without Death.



nce upon a time something happened whose like never occurred before—if it had not happened it would not be told—since the flea had one foot shod with ninety-nine pounds of iron and jumped into the skies to get us fairy tales.

There was once a mighty emperor and empress. Both were young and handsome, and as they desired the blessing of children they did every thing that was necessary to secure it, that is they went to the witches and philosophers and asked them to read the stars to find out whether they would have children or not. But it was all in vain. Finally the emperor heard that a very wise old man lived in a neighboring village, and sent for him. The messengers returned with the answer: "Let him who needs me come to me." So the emperor and empress set out for the wise man's house, taking with them several of their courtiers, attendants, and soldiers. When the old man saw them in the distance, he rose, went to meet them, and said at once:

[43]

"Welcome! But what do you want to know, oh, emperor! your wish will bring you sorrow."

"I am not here to question you about that," replied the emperor, "but to learn whether you have any plants you can give us that will bestow the blessing of children."

"I have," the old man answered, "but you will possess only *one* child. He will be a handsome, lovable boy, yet you will not be able to keep him long."

After the emperor and empress had obtained the herbs they joyfully returned to the palace. The whole empire, the courtiers, and all the attendants rejoiced too. But when the hour of its birth came, the child began to scream in a way no magic arts could silence. The emperor commenced to promise it all the good things the world contained, but it was impossible to quiet it.

"Hush, father's pet," said the emperor, "I will give you this or that kingdom; hush, my son, I will give you this or that princess for your wife." At last, when he saw the child would not stop, he added: "Hush, my boy, I will give you youth without age and life without death."

Then the prince stopped crying; the courtiers beat drums and blew trumpets, and there were great rejoicings throughout the empire for a whole week.

The older the boy grew, the more thoughtful and reflective he became. He went to the schools and the philosophers and gained every kind of learning, so that the emperor died of joy and came to life again. The whole realm was proud of having a prince so wise and learned, a second King Solomon. But one day, when the lad had just reached his fifteenth year and the emperor sat at a banquet with the nobles and grandees of the country, the handsome prince rose, saying: "Father, the time has come, you must now give me what you promised at my birth!"

[44]

When the emperor heard this he grew very sorrowful and answered: "Why, my son, how can I give you an impossible thing? If I promised it to you then, it was only to hush you."

"If you can't give it to me, father, I shall be obliged to wander through the whole world till I find what was promised to me, and for which I was born."

Then all the nobles and the emperor fell at his feet and besought him not to quit the country, because, as the courtiers said, his father was growing old, and they would place him on the throne and give him the most beautiful princess under the sun for his wife. But it was impossible to shake his resolution, he remained as firm as a rock. After his father had seen and duly considered all these things, he gave his consent and prepared to supply the prince with provisions and whatever else he might need for his journey.

The young hero went to the imperial stables, where the finest steeds in the whole realm were standing, to choose one of them; but when he laid his hand on the horse's tail he knocked it down, and so they all fell, one after another. At last, just as he was going out, he let his eyes wander around the building once more and saw in one corner a sick, weak horse, covered with sores. He went up to it, and when he grasped it by the tail, the animal turned its head, saying:

[45]

"What do you command, my master? I thank God that He has permitted a hero's hand to touch me once more."

And, planting its feet firmly, it remained standing. The young prince told it what he intended to do, and the horse replied:

"To obtain your wish, you must ask your father for the sword, lance, bow, quiver of arrows, and garments he wore when a youth; but you must take care of me with your own hands for six weeks and give me oats boiled in milk."

When the prince begged the emperor for the articles the horse had advised, the monarch called



the major-domo of the palace and ordered him to open all the chests of clothing, that his son might choose what he pleased. The young hero, after rummaging them three whole days, at last found in the very bottom of an old trunk the weapons and garments his father had worn in his youth, but the arms were covered with rust. He set to work to clean them with his own hands and in six weeks, during the time he was taking care of the horse, he succeeded in making the weapons as bright and shining as a mirror. When the horse heard from the handsome prince that the clothes and arms were cleaned and ready, it shook itself once. All the sores instantly fell off and there it stood, a strong, well-formed animal, with four wings. When the hero saw this, he said:

"We'll go in three days!"

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"May you have a long life, master. From to-day I shall be at your service," the horse answered.

On the morning of the third day there was great mourning throughout the whole court and empire. The handsome prince, clad like a hero, holding his sword in his hand and riding the horse he had chosen, took leave of the emperor, the empress, the great nobles and lesser grandees, the army, and all the attendants, who, with tears in their eyes, implored him to give up the journey and not risk his life; but setting spurs to his steed, he dashed through the gate like the wind, followed by the carts loaded with provisions and money, and the two hundred horsemen the emperor had commanded to accompany him.

After reaching the boundaries of his father's country and arriving at the wilderness, the prince distributed all his property among the escort, bade them farewell, and sent them back, keeping for himself only as much food as the horse could carry. Then he turned toward the east and rode for three days and three nights, till he came to a wide plain where lay a great many human bones.

When he stopped here to rest, the horse said: "You must know, master, that we are on the land of a Woodpecker Fairy who is so wicked that nobody can enter her domain without being murdered. She was once a woman, but the curse of her parents, whom she angered by her disobedience, turned her into a woodpecker. She is with her children now, but you will meet her to-morrow in yonder forest; she will come to kill you. She is terribly big, but don't be frightened; hold the bow ready to pierce her with an arrow, and keep your sword and lance in hand, so that you can use them in case of need."

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Then they went to rest, taking turns in watching.

At dawn the next morning they prepared to pass through the forest; the prince saddled and bridled the horse, drew the girths tighter than usual, and mounted. Suddenly he heard a tremendous crashing. "Make ready, master," said the horse, "the Woodpecker Fairy is coming." As she approached, she moved so fast that she tore the trees down; but the horse leaped upward like the wind, so that it was almost over her, and the prince shot off one of her feet with an arrow. Just as he was about to discharge the second arrow, she cried:

"Stop, my young hero, I'll do you no harm." And seeing that he did not believe her, she gave him the promise written with her own blood.

"Your horse can not be killed, my young hero," she added, "it is enchanted; if it hadn't been for that, I would have roasted and eaten you. Know that until to-day no mortal man has ventured to cross my boundaries as far as this; a few bold wights who dared to make the trial, reached the plain where you saw so many bones."

They now went to the fairy's house, where she entertained them as guests. But while sitting at the table enjoying the banquet, the Woodpecker Fairy moaned with pain, so the prince pulled the foot he had shot off out of the traveling bag where he had put it, fastened it on, and it instantly healed. The hostess, in her joy, kept open house for three days, and begged the emperor's son to choose one of her daughters, all three of whom were beautiful as fairies, for his wife. He would not do that, but told her what he was seeking, and she replied:

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"With your horse and your heroic courage, I believe you will succeed."

After three days had passed, the prince prepared to continue his journey and departed. He rode on, and on, and on; the road seemed to grow longer and longer, but when he had finally crossed the frontiers of the Woodpecker Fairy's kingdom, he entered a beautiful meadow, one side of which was covered with blooming plants, but the other was scorched.

The prince asked why the grass was singed, and the horse answered:

"We are now in the domain of the Scorpion Witch; she is the Woodpecker Fairy's sister, but they are both so wicked that they can't live together. Their parents' curse has fallen upon them, and so, as you see, they have become monsters; their enmity goes beyond all bounds; they are always trying to get possession of each other's lands. When this one is very angry she spits fire and pitch; she must have had some quarrel with her sister, and, to drive her out of her kingdom, has burned the grass on which she was standing. She is even worse than her sister, and has three heads. We will rest awhile now, and be ready at the first peep of dawn to-morrow."

The next day they prepared themselves just as they did when they expected to meet the Woodpecker fairy, and set out. Soon they heard a howling and rustling unlike any thing ever known before.

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"Make ready, master, the Scorpion Witch is coming."

The Scorpion Witch, with one jaw in the sky and the other on the earth, approached like the wind, spitting fire as she came, but the horse darted upward as swiftly as an arrow, and then rushed over her a little on one side. The hero shot an arrow and one of her heads fell, but when he was going to strike off another, the Scorpion Witch entreated him to forgive her, she would do him no harm, and to convince him of this she gave him her promise, written in her own blood.

Like the Woodpecker Fairy, she entertained the prince, who returned her head, which grew on again, and at the end of three days he resumed his travels.

When the hero and his horse had reached the boundaries of the Scorpion Witch's kingdom they hurried on without resting till they came to a field covered with flowers, where reigned perpetual spring. Every blossom was remarkably beautiful and filled with a sweet, intoxicating fragrance; a gentle breeze fanned them all. They remained here to rest, but the horse said:

"We have arrived so far successfully, master, but we still have one great peril to undergo and, if the Lord helps us to conquer it, we shall really be valiant heroes. A short distance further on is the palace where dwell Youth without Age and Life without Death. It is surrounded by a high, dense forest, where roam all the wild animals in the world, watching it day and night. They are very numerous, and it is almost beyond the bounds of possibility to get through the wood by fighting them; we must try, if we can, to jump over them."

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After resting about two days they prepared to continue their journey, and the horse, holding its breath, said:

"Buckle my girth as tight as you can, and when you have mounted hold fast to my mane and press your feet close to my neck, that you may not hinder me." The prince mounted, and in a moment they were close to the forest.

"Master," said the horse, "this is the time that the wild beasts are fed; they are all collected together, now we'll jump over."

"Forward," replied the handsome prince, "and may the Lord have mercy on us."

They flew upward and saw the palace, which glittered so that it would have been easier to look at the sun. They passed over the forest, and, just as they were descending at the palace steps, one of the horse's hoofs lightly touched the top of a tree, which put the whole woods in motion. The wild animals began to howl till it was enough to make one's hair bristle. They hastily alighted, and if the mistress of the palace had not been outside feeding her chickens (for that is what she called the wild beasts), they would certainly have been killed. She spared their lives out of pure pleasure, for she had never before seen a human being. Restraining the savage beasts, she soothed them, and sent them back to their haunts. She was a tall, slender, lovely fairy, quite too beautiful. When the young hero saw her, he stood still as though turned to stone. But as she gazed at him she pitied him and said:

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"Welcome, my handsome prince. What do you seek here?"

"We seek Youth without Age and Life without Death."

Then he dismounted from his horse and entered the palace, where he found two other ladies, both of the same age, the elder sisters of the first one. He began to thank the fairy for having delivered him from danger, but she and her sisters, to show their joy, had a handsome banquet served in golden dishes. They gave the horse liberty to graze wherever it chose, and afterward made it acquainted with all the wild beasts, so that it might rove about the forest in peace. The ladies entreated the prince to stay with them, saying that it was so tiresome to be alone. He did not wait to be asked a second time, but accepted the offer with the satisfaction of a man who has found precisely what he sought.

By degrees they became accustomed to live together; the prince told them his story and related what he had suffered before meeting them, and after some time he married the youngest sister. At their wedding permission was granted to him to go wherever he liked in the neighborhood; they only begged him not to enter one valley, which they pointed out, otherwise some misfortune would befall him; it was called, they said, the Valley of Lamentation.

The prince spent a very long time at the palace without being aware of it, for he always remained just as young as he was when he arrived. He wandered about the woods without ever having a headache. He amused himself in the golden palace, lived in peace and quiet with his wife and her sisters, enjoyed the beauty of the flowers, and the sweet, pure air. He often went hunting; but one day, while pursuing a hare, he shot two arrows at it without hitting the animal. Angrily chasing it he discharged a third arrow, which struck it, but in his haste the luckless man had not noticed that he had passed through the Valley of Lamentation while following the game.

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He picked it up and turned toward home, but was suddenly seized with a longing for his father and mother. He did not venture to speak of this wish to his wife, yet by his grief and restlessness both she and her sisters instantly perceived his condition.

"Oh! luckless prince, you have passed through the Valley of Lamentation," they said in terror.

"I did so, my dear ones, without meaning to be so imprudent, but now the longing to see my parents is killing me! Yet I can not forsake you. I have already spent several days with you and

have no cause to complain. So I'll go and see my parents once more, and then come back to you, never to leave you again."

"Do not quit us, beloved prince! Your parents died two or three hundred years ago, and if you go, we fear you yourself will never return; stay with us, for a presentiment of evil tells us that you will perish!"

All the entreaties of the three ladies, as well as those of the horse, were unable to quiet the young hero's longing for his parents, which was fairly consuming him alive. [53]

At last the horse said: "If you don't listen to me, master, whatever happens to you will be your own fault. I'll tell you something, and if you accept my condition, I'll take you back."

"I'll accept it with many thanks," replied the prince; "let me hear it."

"As soon as you reach your father's palace you will dismount, but I am to return alone in case you stay even an hour."

"Be it so," the prince agreed.

They made their preparations for the journey, the prince embraced the ladies and after having bade them farewell he rode away, but they sobbed and wept bitterly when he left them.

They reached the country which had once been the kingdom of the Scorpion Witch, but found cities there; the woods had become fields; the prince questioned one person and another about the Scorpion Witch and her house, but they answered that their grandfathers had heard from their great, great grandfathers that such silly tales had once been told.

"How is that possible!" replied the prince, "I came through this region myself only a short time ago," and he told them all he knew.

The people laughed at him as if he were a lunatic or a person talking in his sleep, and the prince angrily rode on without noticing that his hair and beard were growing white.

When he reached the realm of the Woodpecker Fairy, the same questions and answers were exchanged. The prince could not understand how these places had altered so much in a few days, and again rode angrily on. He now had a white beard that reached to his waist, and he felt as if his feet were beginning to tremble. [54]

Quitting this country he arrived in his father's empire. Here he found new people, new towns, and every thing so much changed that he could not recognize it. At last he came to the palace where he was born. When he dismounted, the horse kissed his hand, and said:

"I wish you good health, master, I'm going back to the place from which I came. If you want to go too, mount quickly, and we'll be off."

"Farewell, I too hope to return soon."

The horse darted away with the speed of an arrow.

When the prince saw the ruined palace and the weeds growing around it, he sighed deeply and with tears in his eyes tried to remember how magnificent these places had once been. He walked around the building two or three times, tried to recollect how every room, every corner had looked, found the stable where he had discovered the horse, and then went down into the cellar, whose entrance was choked up with fallen rubbish.

He groped hither and thither, holding up his eyelids with his hands, and scarcely able to totter along, while his snowy beard now fell to his knees, but found nothing except a dilapidated old chest, which he opened. It seemed empty, but as he raised the lid a voice from the bottom said: [55]  
"Welcome, if you had kept me waiting much longer, I too should have gone to decay."

Then his death, which had become completely shriveled in the chest, seized him; but the prince fell lifeless on the ground and instantly crumbled into dust.

Into the saddle then I sprung,  
The tale to tell to old and young.



## The Little Purse with two Half-pennies.

here was once an old man and an old woman. The old woman had a hen and the old man had a rooster; the old woman's hen laid two eggs a day and she ate a great many, but she [56]



would not give the old man a single one. One day the old man lost patience and said: "Listen, old crony, you live as if you were in clover, give me a couple of eggs so that I can at least have a taste of them."

"No indeed!" replied the old woman, who was very avaricious. "If you want eggs, beat your rooster that he may lay eggs for you, and then eat them; I flogged my hen, and just see how she lays now."

The old man, being stingy and greedy, listened to the old woman's talk, angrily seized his rooster, gave him a sound thrashing and said:

"There, now, lay some eggs for me or else go out of the house, I won't feed you for nothing any longer."

As soon as the rooster escaped from the old man's hands it ran off down the high-road. While thus pursuing its way, lo and behold! it found a little purse with two half-pennies. Taking it in its beak, the bird turned and went back toward the old man's house. On the road it met a carriage containing a gentleman and several ladies. The gentleman looked at the rooster, saw a purse in its bill, and said to the driver:

[57]

"Get down and see what this rooster has in its beak."

The driver hastily jumped from his box, took the little purse from the rooster's bill, and gave it to his master. The gentleman put it in his pocket and drove on. The rooster was very angry and ran after the carriage, repeating continually:

"Kikeriki, sir, Kikerikak,  
To me the little purse give back."

The enraged gentleman said to the coachman as they passed a well:

"Take that impudent rooster and throw it into the well."

The driver got down from his box again, seized the rooster, and flung it down the well. When the rooster saw that its life was in such great danger, what was it to do?

It began to swallow the water, and drank and drank till it had swallowed all the water in the well. Then it flew out and again ran after the carriage, calling:

"Kikeriki, sir, Kikerikak,  
To me the little purse give back."

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When the gentleman saw this, he was perfectly amazed and said:

"Hoho! This rooster is a perfect imp of Satan! Never mind! I'll wring your neck, you saucy cockere!" When he reached home he told the cook to take the rooster, throw it on the coals burning upon the hearth, and push a big stone in front of the opening in the chimney. The old woman did what her master bade her.

When the rooster saw this new injustice, it began to spit out the water it had swallowed till it had poured all the water from the well upon the burning coals. This put out the fire, cooled the hearth, and made such a flood on the kitchen floor that the cook fainted away from pure rage. Then the rooster gave the stone a push, came out safe and sound, ran to the gentleman's window, and began to knock on the panes with its bill, screaming:

"Kikeriki, sir, Kikerikak,  
To me the little purse give back."

"Heaven knows that I've got a torment in this monster of a rooster," said the gentleman. "Driver, rid me of it, toss it into the middle of the herds of cows and oxen; perhaps some bull will stick its horns through it and relieve us." The coachman seized the rooster and flung it among the herds. You ought to have seen the rooster's delight. It swallowed bulls, oxen, cows, and calves, till it had devoured the whole herd and its stomach had grown as big as a mountain. Then it went to the window again, spread out its wings before the sun so that it darkened the gentleman's room, and once more began:

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"Kikeriki, sir, Kikerikak,  
To me the little purse give back."

When the gentleman saw this he was ready to burst with rage and did not know what to do to get rid of the rooster. He stood thinking till at last an idea entered his head:

"I'll lock it up in the treasure-chamber. Perhaps if it tries to swallow the ducats one will stick in its throat, and I shall get rid of the bird." No sooner said than done. He grasped the rooster and flung it into the treasure-chamber. The rooster swallowed all the money and left the chests empty. Then it escaped from the room, went to the gentleman's window, and again began:

"Kikeriki, sir, Kikerikak,  
To me the little purse give back."

As the gentleman saw that there was nothing else to be done he tossed the purse out. The rooster

picked it up, went about its own business, and left the gentleman in peace. All the poultry ran after the rooster so that it really looked like a wedding; but the gentleman turned green with rage as he watched, and said sighing:

"Let them all run off to the last chick, I'm glad to be rid of the torment; there was witchcraft in that rooster!"

But the puffed-up rooster stalked proudly along, followed by all the fowls, and went merrily on and on till he reached the old man's house and began to crow: "Kikeriki!"

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When the old man heard the rooster's voice he ran out joyfully to meet the bird, but looking through the door what did he see? His rooster had become a terrible object. An elephant beside it would have seemed like a flea; and following behind came countless flocks of birds, each one more beautiful and brilliant than the other. When the old man saw the rooster so huge and fat, he opened the gate for it. "Master," said the bird, "spread a sheet here in the middle of the yard."

The old man, as nimble as a top, laid down the sheet. The rooster took its stand upon it, spread its wings, and instantly the whole yard was filled with birds and herds of cattle, but it shook out on the sheet a pile of ducats that flashed in the sun till they dazzled the eyes. When the old man beheld this vast treasure he did not know what to do in his delight, and hugged and kissed the rooster.

But all at once the old woman appeared from somewhere, and when she saw this marvelous spectacle her eyes glittered in her head, and she was ready to burst with wrath.

"Dear old friend," she said, "give me a few ducats."

"Pine away with longing for them, old woman; when I begged you for some eggs, you know what you answered. Now flog your hen, that it may bring you ducats. I beat my rooster, and you see what it has fetched me."

The old woman went to the hen-coop, shook the hen, took it by the tail, and gave it such a drubbing that it was enough to make one weep for pity. When the poor hen escaped from the old woman's hands it fled to the highway. While walking along it found a bead, swallowed it, hurried back home as fast as possible, and began to cackle at the gate. The old woman welcomed it joyfully. The hen ran quickly in at the gate, passed its mistress, and went to its nest—at the end of an hour it jumped off, cackling loudly. The old woman hastened to see what the hen had laid. But when she glanced into the nest what did she perceive? A little glass bead. The hen had laid a glass bead! When the old woman saw that the hen had fooled her, she began to beat it, and beat till she flogged it to death. So the stupid old soul remained as poor as a church-mouse. From that time she might live on roast nothing and golden wait a while, instead of eggs, for she had abused and killed the poor hen, though it was not at all to blame.

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But the old man was very rich; he built great houses, laid out beautiful gardens, and lived luxuriously. He made the old woman his poultry-maid, the rooster he took about with him everywhere, dressed in a gold collar, yellow boots, and spurs on its heels, so that one might have thought it was one of the Three Kings from the Christmas play instead of a mere ordinary rooster.



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## Mogarzea and His Son.



There was once a young lad who had neither father nor mother. Every thing his parents had left him was in the care of guardians, and at last he could bear their unjust reproaches no longer, but went out into the wide world, entered a path leading to a glade in the forest, and followed it a long way.

When, in the evening, he grew tired and found no place to rest, he climbed a hill and gazed around him in every direction to try to discover a light; after a long search he saw the flicker of a tiny spark and went toward it. He walked and walked half the night, then he came to a huge fire, by which a man as big as a giant was sleeping. What was the youth to do? After thinking a while, he crept into one leg of the man's trowsers and spent the rest of the night there.

When the man rose the next morning, to his great astonishment, he saw the youngster drop out of his breeches.

"Where did you come from?" he asked.

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"I was sent to you for a son last night," replied the lad.

"If that is true," said the big man, "you may tend my sheep, and I'll give you something to eat, but

beware that you don't cross the boundaries, or woe betide you!"

He pointed out to the boy the end of his land, and then added:

"God be with you!"

The lad tended the flock all day, and when he returned in the evening found the fire lighted, and helped the giant milk the sheep.

After their work was done, they sat down to supper, and while they were eating the boy asked:

"What is your name, father?"

"Mogarzea," replied the big fellow.

"I wonder you don't get tired of staying here alone in this wilderness."

"Then you wonder without cause. Don't you know that the bear never dances willingly?"

"Yes, you're right there," replied the boy. "But I see that you are always dull and sad. Tell me your story, father."

"What can be the use of telling you things that would make you sorrowful too?"

"Never mind, I should like to know them. Are you not my father? Do you suppose you have me as a son for nothing?"

"Well then, if that's true and you wish it, listen to my story.

"My name, as I have already told you, is Mogarzea; I am a prince, and set out to go to the Sweet-milk Lake, which is not far from here, to marry a fairy. I had heard that three fairies lived there. But Fortune did not smile upon me; wicked elves attacked me and took away my soul. Since that time I have settled here to dwell with my sheep on this little patch of land, without being able to take pleasure in any thing, without having a moment's happiness, or even once enjoying a laugh.

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"The abominable elves are so quarrelsome that they let no one who crosses their frontiers go unpunished. That's why I advise you to be on your guard, lest something should happen to you also."

"All right, all right, just let me alone, father," replied the youth, and they went to rest.

When day dawned, the lad rose and set off with the flock. I don't know how or why, but he could not feel content to gaze at the elves' beautiful meadows, while the sheep were grazing on Mogarzea's barren ground.

On the third day, when he was standing in the shade of a tree playing on the flute, for he was, as it were, a master of the art of flute playing, one of the sheep strayed away into the flowery meadows, others followed, then others, till, when the youth noticed them, a number of the animals had crossed the boundaries.

Still playing on his flute, he went to drive back the sheep which had left the flock, but he suddenly saw before him three merry maidens, who stopped him and began to dance around him. When the lad discovered the state of affairs, he summoned up his courage and blew with all his might. They danced until the evening.

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"Let me go now," he said, "poor Mogarzea will be hungry; to-morrow, if you wish, I'll play still better."

"We will let you go," they replied, "but you know that if you don't come you will not escape our punishment."

So they agreed that he was to come directly to them the next morning, sheep and all, then each went home. Mogarzea wondered why the milk had increased so much, and was not satisfied until the lad assured him that he had not crossed the boundaries. They ate their supper and went to rest.

The youth did not wait till it had become perfectly light, but at the first streak of dawn set off with the sheep straight to the elves' meadows. When he began to play on his flute, the elves instantly appeared and danced and danced till evening. Then the youth pretended to drop the flute and, as if by accident, stepped upon it and broke it.

If you could have seen how he bewailed it, how he wrung his hands and wept over the loss of his companion, you would surely have pitied him. Even the elves were touched with compassion and tried to comfort him.

"I wouldn't care so much," he said, "only I shall never find another flute that will sound as merry as this one, for it was made out of the heart of a seven-year-old cherry tree."

[66]

"We have, in the court-yard, a cherry tree that is just seven years old; if you want it, come, we'll cut it down and you can make yourself another flute."

They all went there, felled the cherry tree, and for fear of touching the pith while stripping off the bark, the youth requested all the elves to help.

After having made a cleft in the trunk with his ax, large enough for them to get their fingers in,

he told them to take hold of it in order to break it apart solely by the strength of their arms, that the blade of the ax might not touch the pith of the wood. They were actually stupid enough to do so as they stood around the trunk, and, while saying "pull," he drew out the ax and caught their fingers in the crack.

In vain the elves begged him to release them, in vain they said that they were almost faint with pain; the lad would not even listen to the fine promises they made, but remained as cold as a stone.

Finally he asked them for Mogarzea's soul.

"It is in a bottle on the window-sill," they said.

After he had fetched it, he inquired how he could restore it to its place, and the elves explained, hoping he would then release them from their torture.

"You have tormented many people so that they suffered terrible agony all their lives; now you too can suffer for one night, it won't make the sky fall."

With these words he took the sheep and Mogarzea's soul and departed; but the elves wailed so that any one's heart might have been torn with pity. When he reached home, Mogarzea scolded him for being late. The boy's only reply was to ask him to lie down on his back, then climbing upon his breast he jumped up and down several times, until the lazy soul the elves had conjured into him darted out and the youngster gave him his own to swallow; holding his mouth and nose with his hands he made him drink the water that had been in the bottle, and then put on a plaster he had brought from the elves.

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He had scarcely got it on, when Mogarzea sprang up like a deer and said:

"Whether you are my son or not, what do you want as a reward for what you have done?"

"Tell me where the Milk Lake is, and what I am to do to obtain one of the three fairies who are there for my wife, and let me be your son forever."

Mogarzea granted the lad's wishes and they sat down to supper without his wondering how the sheep gave so much milk; all night long they amused themselves by shouting, singing and dancing.

Noticing that dawn was approaching before they had gone to rest, they resolved to set out together to pay a visit to the cheated elves,—and did so. When Mogarzea saw them, he took them, log and all, on his back and went to his father's kingdom, where every body rejoiced when he came home as brave and cheery as ever. But he pointed out his deliverer, who was following behind with the sheep.

Then they all thanked the lad for his cleverness in rescuing Mogarzea from misfortune, and the festivities at the palace lasted three whole days.

After these three days had passed, the boy took Mogarzea aside and said:

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"I want to go now; please tell me where the Sweet-milk Lake is, and, God willing, I'll come back again with my wife."

At first Mogarzea tried to detain him, but finding it no use to talk till he was tired, he told him what he had heard—he had seen nothing, on account of the elves.

The boy took his flute and some food for the journey, and then, departing, walked three long summer days until the evening, before he reached the Milk Lake, which was in a fairy's kingdom. Early the next morning he began to play on his flute at the edge of the lake,—and what did he see? A beautiful fairy, whose hair was exactly like gold, and whose clothes were more costly than any he had ever seen; she was more dazzling than the sun as she began to dance. The boy stood motionless with his eyes fixed upon her, but when the fairy noticed that he was no longer playing she vanished. The next day she did the same thing. On the third, still playing, he approached, and as in the pleasure of dancing she did not notice it, he suddenly rushed upon her, clasped her in his arms, kissed her, and snatched the rose from her head.

She screamed and then begged him to give her back the flower, but he refused. Even wood and stone might have wept over her grief, as she lamented and entreated. But when he fastened the rose in his hat, she followed him.

Finding that he could not be persuaded to restore the rose, they agreed to be married. So they went to Mogarzea, to be wedded by the emperor, and remained there, but every year in the month of May they returned to the Milk Lake to bathe their children in its waves.

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After the emperor's death Mogarzea divided the kingdom with his preserver.

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[70]



## Cunning Ileana.



nce upon a time something happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was once an emperor who had three daughters; the oldest was beautiful, the middle one more beautiful, but the youngest, Ileana, was so fair that even the sun stopped to gaze at her and admire her charms.

One day the emperor received the news that his neighbor, a mighty monarch, was no longer friendly, but wanted to fight with him on account of a great imperial feud. The emperor consulted the old men of the country, and, seeing there was nothing else to be done, he commanded his valiant soldiers to mount their horses, take their weapons, and prepare for the terrible battle which was to be fought.

Before mounting himself, the emperor called his daughters, addressed a few fatherly, touching words to them, and gave each one a beautiful flower, a merry little bird, and a rosy-cheeked apple.

"Whoever has her flower wither, her bird mope or her apple rot, I shall know has not kept her faith," said the wise emperor; then mounting his steed he wished them "Good-health" and set off with his brave soldiers on their toilsome way. [71]

When the neighboring emperor's three sons heard the news that the emperor had quitted his home and gone to the war, they made an agreement among themselves and sprang on their horses to ride to the palace and vex the monarch by making his three daughters faithless to his trust. The oldest prince, a brave, spirited, handsome fellow, went first to see how matters stood and bring tidings afterward to the others.

Three days and three nights the champion stood under the wall, but not one of the girls had appeared at the windows. In the gray dawn of the fourth day he lost patience, plucked up his courage, and tapped on the oldest princess's window.

"What is it—what is it? What is wanted?" asked the royal maiden, roused from her sleep.

"It is I, little sister," said the prince, "I, an emperor's son, who have stood under your window three days for love of you."

The princess did not even approach the window, but replied in a prudent tone:

"Go back home by the way you came; may flowers spring up before you and thorns remain behind."

After three more days and nights the prince again knocked on the girl's window. This time the princess approached it, and said in a more gentle voice:

"I told you to go back home by the way you came; may thorns spring up before you and flowers remain behind." [72]

Once more the prince waited three days and three nights under the maiden's window. In the gray dawn of the tenth day, that is after thrice three days and thrice three nights had passed, he smoothed his hair and for the third time tapped on the window.

"What is it? Who is it? What is wanted?" asked the princess, this time somewhat more sternly than before.

"It is I, little sister," said the prince. "For thrice three days I have stood longingly under your window. I would like to see your face, gaze into your eyes, and watch the words flow from your lips!"

The princess opened the window, glanced angrily at the handsome youth, and said in a scarcely audible voice:

"I would willingly look into your face and say a word or two to you, but first go to my younger sister—then come to me."

"I'll send my younger brother," replied the prince. "But give me one kiss to make my way home pleasanter."

And almost before he had spoken, he snatched a kiss from the beautiful girl.

"May no second one fall to your lot," said the princess, wiping her mouth with her embroidered sleeve. "Go back home by the way you came; may flowers spring up before you and flowers remain behind."



The prince went back to his brothers and told them all that had happened, and the second took his departure.

After this prince had stood under the second princess's window nine times nine days and nine times nine nights and tapped for the ninth time at her window, she opened it and said to him kindly: [73]

"I would like to look at you and say a word or two to you, but first go to my youngest sister, then come to me."

"I'll send my youngest brother," said the prince. "But give me one kiss, that I may hurry the faster."

He had scarcely said it, when he stole a kiss.

"May no second one fall to your lot," said this royal maiden too. "Go back home by the way you came, may flowers spring up before you and flowers remain behind!"

The prince returned to his brothers, told them all that had happened, and—for the third time—a hero departed, the youngest son. When he reached the palace where the three sisters lived Ileana was standing at the window, and when she saw him, said merrily:

"You handsome champion with the royal face, where are you hurrying, that you urge on your steed so hotly?"

When the prince saw Ileana's face and heard Ileana's words, he stopped, gazed at her, and answered boldly:

"I'm hurrying to the sun to steal one of its rays, to give to its sister and take her home, where she shall become my bride. Now, little sister, I will stop on my way to look at you, gaze at the radiance of your face, say a word to you and steal a word in reply."

Ileana cleverly answered: "If your nature is like your words, if your soul is like your face, proud and beautiful, and mild and gentle, I will gladly call you into the house, seat you at a banquet, give you food and drink and kisses." [74]

The prince sprang from his horse as he heard these words, and answered boldly:

"My nature will be like my speech, my heart like my face; let me in, seat me at the banquet, you shall never repent it from dawn till nightfall."

He had scarcely uttered the words when he leaped upon the window-sill, jumped through the window into the room, went through the room to the table, and took his place at the very top, where the emperor had sat when he was a bridegroom.

"Stop, stop!" said Ileana. "First let me see whether you are what you ought to be, and then we'll talk and begin our love-making. Can you make roses grow on burdocks?"

"No!" said the prince.

"Then the thistle is your flower," said clever Ileana. "Can you make the bat sing in a sweet voice?"

"No!" said the prince.

"Then night is your day," said clever Ileana. "Can you make apples grow on wolf's-bane?"

"That I can!" said the prince.

"Then that shall be your fruit!" replied the beautiful and cunning Ileana. "Sit down at the table."

The prince took his place. Ah! but Ileana was indeed cunning Ileana. Ere he had fairly seated himself, he dropped, chair and all, into the deep cellar where the emperor's treasures were kept.

Ileana now began to scream: "Help!" and when all the servants came rushing in to see what had happened, she told them she had heard a noise and was afraid that some one had got into the cellar to rob the emperor of his treasures. The servants did not waste many words, but instantly opened the iron door and went into the cellar, where they found the prince and brought him in disgrace to be sentenced. [75]

Ileana pronounced judgment.

Twelve girls under punishment for some offense were to carry him out of the country, and when they had reached the frontier with him, each one was to give him a kiss.

The order was obeyed. When the prince reached home and joined his brothers, he told them the whole story, and after every thing had been related their hearts were filled with rage. So they sent word to the two older princesses that they must arrange to have Ileana go to the three princes' court, so that they might revenge themselves upon her for the insult she had offered them. When the oldest daughter received this message from the prince she pretended to be sick, called Ileana to her bedside, and told her that she could not get well unless Ileana brought her something to eat from the princes' kitchen.

Ileana would have done any thing for her sister's sake, so she took a little jug and set off for the court of the three princes, to beg or steal. When she reached the palace, she rushed breathlessly

into the kitchen and said to the head-cook:

"For heaven's sake, don't you hear the emperor calling you? Make haste, and see what is the matter."

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The cook took to his heels and ran as fast as he could, as though he had received an imperial command. Ileana, left alone in the kitchen, filled her jug with food, emptied all the dainty dishes that were on the fire upon the floor, and went away.

When the princes heard of this insult they were still more enraged than before, sent another message to the two sisters and again prepared a revenge. As soon as the second sister received the news, she, too, pretended to be ill, called Ileana to her bed, and told her that she could not get well unless she tasted the wine in the princes' cellar. Ileana would have done any thing for her sister, so she took the little jug and prepared to go again.

When she reached the court she rushed into the cellar, and, panting for breath, said to the head-butler:

"For heaven's sake, don't you hear the emperor calling you? Make haste and see what is the matter." The butler took to his heels and ran as if he had received an imperial command. Ileana filled her jug with wine, poured out the rest on the cellar floor, and then hurried home.

The princes sent a third message to the two princesses and told them they must send Ileana in a different way from what they had done before. This time both the princesses feigned illness, called their sister to them, and told her that they could not get well unless Ileana brought them two of the princes' apples.

"My dear sisters," replied Ileana, "I would go through fire and water for you, how much more willingly to the princes." Taking the little jug she set off to find, seize, and bring back the fruit and save her dear sisters' lives.

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When the youngest prince learned that Ileana was coming to the garden to steal the golden apples, he gave orders that, if groans were heard there, nobody must dare go in, but let the person who was wailing, moan in peace. Then he hid huge knives, swords, spears, and many other things in the earth under the tree that bore the golden apples, concealing them so that only the sharp points rose out of the ground. After he had finished, he hid himself in a clump of bushes and waited for Ileana. She came to the gate, and seeing the two huge lions that kept guard there flung each of them a piece of meat; the lions began to tear it, and the princess went to the apple tree, stepped cautiously between the knives, swords, spears, and other things, and climbed into it.

"May this do you much good, little sister," said the prince. "I'm glad to see you in my garden."

"The pleasure is mine," replied Ileana, "since I have so brave and handsome a prince for my companion. Come, climb the tree and help me pick some apples for my dear sisters, who are dangerously ill and have asked for them."

The prince wanted nothing better—he meant to pull Ileana from the tree among the knives.

"You are very kind, Ileana," he replied, "be kinder still and give me your hand to help me up into the tree."

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"Your plan is wicked," thought Ileana, "but it shall work your own misfortune." She gave him her hand, pulled him up the trunk to the branches, and then let him drop among the knives, swords, spears and other such things, which had been put there for her own destruction.

"There you are," she said, "now you will know what you meant to do."

The hero with the black soul began to shriek and groan—but nobody came to help him; they left him, according to his own orders, to moan in peace, and he was obliged to bear his terrible sufferings patiently.

Ileana took her apples, carried them home, gave them to her sisters, and then went back to the imperial palace and told the servants to go and rescue their master from his great danger.

The prince, who had been so abominably treated, sent for the most skillful witch in the whole country to come and give him a cure for his wounds. But Ileana had gone to the witch first and offered her a great deal of money to let her, Ileana, go to the court in her place. So Ileana went to the palace disguised as the witch. She ordered a buffalo hide to be soaked in vinegar three days and three nights, then taken out and wrapped around the wounded youth. But the prince's cuts only burned the more, and his sufferings became still more unbearable. When he saw that he was in a bad way, he sent for a priest that he might relieve his heart before he died and give him the sacrament. But Ileana was not idle. She went to the priest, offered him a large sum of money, and induced him to let her go to the palace instead. So Ileana arrived at the court disguised as a priest.

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When she approached the prince's bed he was at the point of death, there were scarcely three breaths left in him.

"My son," said the false priest, Ileana, "you have summoned me to confess your sins to me. Think of the hour of death, and tell me all you have on your heart. Are you at variance with any one? Yes, or no?"

"With no one," replied the prince, "except Ileana, the youngest daughter of the emperor, our neighbor. And I hate her out of love and longing," he continued. "If I should not die, but recover, I will ask the emperor for her hand in marriage, and if I don't kill her the first night she shall be my faithful wife according to the law." Ileana heard these words, said a few in reply, and then went home. Here she soon understood why her sisters were wailing and lamenting, for they had heard that the emperor was returning home from the great war.

"You ought to rejoice," said Ileana, "when you hear that our kind father is coming home safe and well."

"We should rejoice," replied the sisters, "if our flowers had not withered, our apples had not rotted, and our birds had not stopped singing; but now we have reason to cry."

When Ileana heard these words she went to her room, saw the flower sprinkled with dew, the bird hungry, and the apple looking as if it wanted to say: "Eat me, little sister!"

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So, to help her dear sisters, she gave the flower to one and the bird to the other, keeping only the beautiful apple for herself. So they waited for the arrival of the emperor, who was very stern in his commands.

When the monarch reached home, he approached his oldest daughter and asked for the flower, the bird, and the apple. She showed him nothing but the flower, and even that was half withered. The emperor said nothing, but went to his second daughter. She showed him only the little bird, and that, too, looked drooping. Again the emperor did not speak, but silently went up to his youngest daughter, clever Ileana.

When the emperor saw the apple on Ileana's chest of drawers he could almost have devoured it with his eyes, it was so beautiful. "Where did you put the flower, and what have you done with the bird?" he asked Ileana.

Ileana did not answer, but hurried to her sisters and brought back a fresh flower and a merry little bird.

"May you prosper, my little daughter," said the emperor; "I see now that you have kept faith with me."

From Ileana the emperor went to his second daughter, and then to the eldest one.

When he questioned them about the three things he had trusted to their care, they hastily brought Ileana's flower, bird, and apple. But as God permits no falsehood to succeed, in their hands the flower withered, the bird moped, and only the apple remained fresh, rosy-cheeked, and eatable.

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When the emperor saw this he understood every thing, and ordered the two older princesses to be buried to their breasts in the earth, and left there that they might be an example of the severity of an imperial punishment. But Ileana he praised, kissed, spoke to her in kind, fatherly words, and said: "May you have much happiness, my child, for you have been faithful to your duty."

After the neighboring emperor's son had recovered, he mounted his horse and set off to ask Ileana to be his wife. The old emperor, Ileana's father, after hearing for what purpose the prince had come, said to him kindly:

"Go and ask Ileana, my son and hero; whatever she wishes shall, with God's help, be done."

Ileana said nothing, but permitted the prince to kiss her. The emperor instantly understood the whole matter and said: "My dear children, I see that you ought to be husband and wife; may it prove for your good."

It was not long before Ileana married the bold, handsome, heroic youth. Her wedding was so magnificent that tidings of it spread through seven countries. Yes indeed! But Ileana had not forgotten the evil the prince had in his mind; she knew that he would try some trick upon her the first night after their marriage. So she ordered a sugar doll to be made exactly the same size as she was herself, with face, eyes, lips, and figure precisely like Ileana's. When it was finished, she hid it in the bed where she was to sleep that night.

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In the evening, when the relatives and friends had gone to rest and Ileana, too, had been asleep, the prince said to his bride:

"Dear Ileana, wait a little while, I'll come back directly." Then he left the room.

Ileana did not hesitate long, but jumped out of bed, left the sugar doll in her place, and hid behind a curtain at the head of the bed.

She had scarcely concealed herself, when the prince returned to the chamber with a sharp sword in his hand.

"Tell me now, my dear Ileana," he said, "did you throw me into the cellar?"

"Yes," said Ileana, behind the curtain. The prince dealt one blow with the sword on the doll's breast.

"Did you drive me out of the country with scorn and mockery?" he asked again.

"Yes," said Ileana.

The prince cut the doll across her face.

"Did you empty my dishes of food?" asked the prince the third time.

"Yes," said Ileana.

The prince slashed the doll from head to foot.

"Did you pour out my wine?" was the prince's fourth question.

"Yes," said Ileana.

The prince cut the figure once across. Ileana began to breathe heavily as if in the agony of death.

"Did you throw me among the knives?" he asked for the fifth and last question. [83]

"Yes," said Ileana.

The prince now thrust his sword into the figure's heart, slashed, and hacked it in all directions, with all his strength, till the tears ran down in streams. As dawn approached he began to sob bitterly. Suddenly a bit of sugar popped into his mouth.

"Ah, Ileana! you were sweet in life, and remain sweet even in death," he said, weeping still more violently.

"Sweet indeed," said Ileana, coming out from behind the curtain, "but from this hour forth I will be a hundred thousand times sweeter."

The prince seemed fairly petrified with delight, when he saw Ileana safe and well. He clasped her in his arms, and for many years they lived joyously and ruled the land in peace and happiness.



[84]

## The Princess and the Fisherman.

Once upon a time something happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.



There was once a fisherman, neither very well off nor very poor, but he was young, with a mustache that curled fiercely at the ends, you know, and a fine-looking fellow. Whenever he passed the imperial palace, the emperor's daughter sent for him, bought his fish, and gave him ten times as much money as they were worth.

Our fisherman was spoiled by this wealth, and whenever he had nice fresh fish he took them to the palace; not a day passed that the princess did not buy fish if the fisherman went by.

One day, while paying for the fish, the princess pressed his hand, the fisherman blushed as red as a beet, and cast down his eyes, but first gave her one loving glance, for he had understood that she was willing he should do so.

Then he entered into conversation with her, and took good care not to say any thing stupid.

The next time the princess bought fish he began to talk about them at great length, and made her comprehend that he had understood her feelings, and that the fire of love which was consuming her burned no less hotly in his heart than in her own. [85]

Another time he spoke still more freely, and the princess learned that he was unmarried; she was, besides, much pleased with his clever answers, and as he was very attractive the royal maiden finally fell in love with him. She gave him a purse filled with money to purchase handsome clothes, and told him to come back afterward and show himself to her.

After he had bought garments like those worn by gentlemen, he put them on and returned to the princess. She would scarcely have recognized him, for even his gait and bearing had become as stiff as a noble's.

At last, unable to repress the love that glowed in her heart, the emperor's daughter told him that she would marry him.

The fisherman did not know much, but he was aware that such a dainty morsel wasn't meant for his bill, and he could hardly believe what he heard with his ears and saw with his eyes; but when the princess assured him that she wasn't joking, he accepted her hand, though to tell the truth with many doubts and blushes.

The marriage did not exactly suit the emperor, but as he loved his daughter and she was her parents' only child, he yielded to her wishes. The princess gave the fisherman another purse filled with money, and told him to buy himself still handsomer clothes. When he returned, in garments that fairly glittered with gold, the royal maiden presented him to the emperor, and the monarch betrothed them to each other.

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Ere long a magnificent imperial wedding was celebrated. When the company sat down to enjoy the banquet, a soft-boiled egg, which, according to ancient custom, only the bride and bridegroom were permitted to eat, was brought to the wedded pair. When the husband was about to dip a bit of bread into the egg, the princess stopped him, saying: "I must dip first, because I am the daughter of an emperor, and you are a fisherman." The bridegroom made no reply, but rose from the table and vanished. The guests, who did not know what had happened, looked at one another and asked in surprise what this meant, for they had not heard that the emperor's son-in-law had formerly been a fisherman.

The bride repented her imprudence, bit her lips, and wrung her hands. She ate what she was compelled to swallow, but she might just as well have thrown it behind her, for not a morsel did her any good.

After the feast she went to her room, but all night long she could not once close her eyes or fall asleep, she was so sorrowful. She thought of her bridegroom so constantly that she was afraid she would fall ill from longing. Her principal grief was that she did not know why he had gone away without saying even one word.

The next day she went to the emperor and told him she was seized with so great a longing for her husband that she was going to follow him till she found him. The emperor tried to detain her, but she would not listen and set out on her journey.

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She searched up and down the whole city, but did not find him anywhere. Then she wandered from place to place till she met him serving in a tavern.

As soon as she saw him she went up and spoke to him, but he pretended not to know her, turned his head away, made no answer, and went about his business.

The princess followed him everywhere, begging him to say just one word to her, but in vain. When the landlord saw that the stranger was to blame for the interruption in the work, he said: "Why don't you let my servant finish his work in peace? Don't you see he is dumb? Be kind enough to go away from here, if you are a respectable woman."

"He isn't dumb," she cried, "this is my husband, who deserted and fled from me on account of a fault of mine."

All the people in the tavern stood still in astonishment when they heard her words, for she was not joking; but the landlord could not believe it, he thought it would be impossible for a man who could speak to live a whole week without saying even one word, and every body really knew him as a dumb man, made him understand by signs, and liked him for his industry.

The princess then entered into an agreement with them all, that she would induce him to speak within three days if they would only allow her to stay with him, but if she did not succeed she would be hung. This agreement was put in writing and shown to the magistrates for their sanction. When the contract was concluded, the three days' trial was arranged to begin the next morning.

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The fisherman at first knew nothing about this agreement, though he heard of it afterward, but the emperor's daughter never left his side.

"My beloved husband," she said, "you know I am to blame. I chose you because I loved you; I swear that I will never commit such a blunder again; have pity on me, speak one word to me, save me from the disgrace that is killing me. I know you have a right to be angry, but for the sake of my love, forgive me."

The fisherman turned his head toward her, shrugged his shoulders, and pretended that he did not know her, and did not understand what she was talking about. One day, two days passed, and he did not even say boo. When the third came the princess was terribly frightened, and wherever the dumb man went she followed, beseeching him to say one word to her.

But the fisherman, feeling that she was softening him by her entreaties, fled like a savage that she might not assail him with tears, and pretended his heart was a lump of ice; but she did not cease imploring him a thousand times, so tenderly that it would have softened even a wild beast.

At last the third day also passed, and the fisherman had not even said baa.

Every body wondered over these things. Nothing was talked of in the whole city, except the mute servant at the tavern and the beautiful, charming girl, who, it was supposed, had mistaken the dumb man for some one else, and had now brought herself into trouble.

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The next day the gallows was ready, and the whole population gathered around it to witness the end of the affair.

The magistrates were summoned to the place, and, against their will, compelled to execute what was in the agreement.

The executioner came, and called upon the princess to submit to the penalty, since she had not succeeded in fulfilling the obligations she had imposed upon herself; the girl turned once more to the fisherman, and, sobbing bitterly, tried to soften his heart, but in vain. When she saw and understood that no escape was possible, she loosed her hair and let it fall over her shoulders, wailing so piteously that it was enough to make even wood and stone weep for her, and so walked toward the place of execution. All the people, old and young, were weeping around her, yet could not help her.

On reaching the gallows, she once more gazed hopefully at the dumb man, who had come with the crowd, but stood as if he were perfectly unmoved, and said to him:

"My dear husband, save me from death; you know my love for you, do not let me perish so ignominiously. Speak but one word and I shall be delivered." But the man only shrugged his shoulders and glanced backward across the fields.

The executioner stood with the noose in his hand; two assistants led her up the ladder, and the hangman slipped the rope around her neck. One moment more, and the princess would have been a corpse! But just at the instant the executioner was going to let her swing out into the empty air, the fisherman raised his hand, shouting: "Hi! hi! stop!" [90]

They all stood motionless, tears of joy streamed from every eye as the hangman took the noose from the prisoner's neck. Then the fisherman, looking at the royal maiden, said three times:

"Will you say fisherman to me again?"

"Forgive me, my dear husband," the princess hastened to reply, "I have only said it once, and that was by mistake. I promise you not to do so again."

"Let her come down, she is my wife."

He took her by the hand, and they went home together.

Afterward they lived in peace and happiness, and if they haven't died, they are living still.

Into the saddle then I sprung,  
This tale to tell to old and young.



[91]

## Little Wild-Rose.



Once upon a time something extraordinary happened. If it had not happened it would not be told. It was when the wolves lay down to rest with the sheep, and the shepherds feasted in the green fields with emperors and kings, when one sun rose and another set.

There was once a man, my dear good friends. This man would now—I am telling no lie—this man would now be a hundred years old, if not twenty more to boot; his wife, too, was older than any body I know; she was like the Friday-goddess (Venus), and from youth to age had never had a single child. Only those who know what children are in a house can understand the uncontrollable grief in the empty home of the old man and his wife. The poor old man had done every thing in his power to have his house brightened and filled with joy by what he himself so greatly desired. He had given alms to the convents and churches, he had had liturgies read in seven churches, had sent for priests with white beards, because they are the holiest men and have more earnestness in prayer, and had had masses read for all the saints and prayers for the last unction. But every thing was useless. The old wife had clung to the witches and magicians. There was not an enchanter to whom she had not gone for advice, even if he lived a week's journey off. As I said before, what wouldn't she have done! But it was vain, all was useless.

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One day the old man said sadly and thoughtfully:

"Old wife!"

"What do you want?"

"Give me some provisions to take with me on my journey, for I intend to travel through the wide world, looking wherever I go to try and find a child, for my heart aches and burns when I think that the end of my life is drawing near, and no heir will have my house after me, but all my property fall into the hands of strangers. I have tried all ways, now I will take this one. And I'll tell you one thing: If I find no child, I won't come home any more."

With these words the old man took his knapsack on his back, went out of the house, and began his journey. He walked on and on and on through the kingdom and the world, as God willed. Listen, good friends, I am telling the truth. He walked on till he came to a thick forest, so dense that it seemed like a wall. Tree was intertwined with tree, bush with bush, so that the sun could not even send so much as a ray of light through the foliage. When the old man saw these vast woods he thrice made the sign of the cross toward the east, prostrated himself three times, also toward the east, and then entered with great sorrow. How long a time he spent in groping about the forest I don't know, but I do know that one day he reached the entrance of a cave. This cave was hundreds and thousands of times darker than the deep forest, as dark as it is when we shut our eyes, as dark as it usually is in endless caverns. The old man crossed himself three times, fell on his knees several times, and then, with God's assistance, turned around a projection of a rock. He went about the distance of a gun-shot and saw a light in a cranny. Approaching nearer and nearer he could not believe his eyes when he saw what was standing beside it. An old hermit! He was very old, as ancient as the world. He had a white beard that reached to his knees, and when he raised his eyebrows and then lowered them again they shaded the whole cave.

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The hermit stood like a pillar of stone, his eyes fixed on a psalm-book on which his elbow rested, and which was sprinkled with big red characters; it was very, very old, so old that God alone knew to what period it belonged; and on a broad stone a yellow wax-candle blazed with a red flame and a blue smoke that was as dense as a cloud. The old man approached the praying saint and, again falling on his knees, said:

"Good-evening, holy father!"

The hermit was so absorbed in his litany that he heard nothing. So our old man spoke louder. The hermit did not stir, but made him a sign with his crutch to move aside. The old man stood aloof till the hermit had finished his prayer. When it was over, he raised his eyebrows and began:

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"My son, what do you seek from me in this dark, cheerless abode? For many centuries my eyes have seen no human face, and now I wonder what has led your footsteps hither."

The old man answered:

"I kiss your right hand. My unhappiness has brought me here. I have lived with my wife many years, but we have no children, and I should like to have an heir when I behold our Lord's glorious face."

The hermit took an apple, and, after having blessed it, cut it in two, and said:

"Take these two halves of the apple; give this one to your wife, eat the other yourself, and in God's name do not wander over the world so."

The old man took the gift, kissed the hermit's right hand and feet, and left the cave. Entering the dense forest, he walked a long time before he came to the meadows. There a terrible thirst and burning sensation in the throat seized upon him. What should he do, for he found no water? He did precisely what he was destined to do. He took the half apple and ate it. But instead of the half intended for him, he ate his wife's. He had scarcely swallowed it when he felt as if he could go no further. So he sank down on the grass where a quantity of yellow cheese-wort was growing, and fell sound asleep. And the angel of the Lord came down from Heaven, and watched beside him. When he awoke, what did his eyes behold? The wonder of wonders! The most marvelous of marvels! By his side, among the herbs, a little child was crying and moving its tiny hands. The angel brought some basil and some water that had been consecrated nine years, sprinkled the child, and christened it, giving it the name of "Little Wild-Rose." The old man, happier than he had ever been at the sight of the pretty little girl, took her in his arms, kissed her, and set off with her to his wife. When he reached the house he took a kneading-trough, put the little thing in it, set it on the roof, and then crawled into the cottage, saying:

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"Come quick, wife, come quick, and see what a treasure of a daughter, with golden hair and eyes like stars, our Lord has given me."

When they hurried out, to see the treasure of a girl and take the trough down from the roof, they saw nothing, no trace of the child anywhere. The old man crossed himself and sighed deeply. He searched hither and thither, right and left, but the little girl was nowhere to be found. He hunted through the straw in the hut and on the ground behind it to see if she had fallen down; but if she wasn't there she wasn't, and that ended the matter, for they couldn't stamp her out of the earth.

Oh, heavens, how the old man grieved and wrung his hands in despair. How could he help being startled by such a thing! He had put the child in the trough and seen her after he had laid her in it, and knew exactly where he had left her, and now to be unable to find her just a moment after was quite too bad.

"What could have happened to the little girl? Has the angel of the Lord taken her? Have the elves and wicked gnomes stolen her away? What in the world could have occurred!" said the man, sighing. Somebody had taken her, that was plain. But neither angels nor elves nor wicked gnomes frequented the neighborhood. Now, my good friends, just listen to the amazing event. A vulture or a griffin, whichever it was, but we'll say a griffin, was passing by, and, hearing the child's cries, swooped swiftly down, seized the little one, tucked her under its right wing, soared up into the sky with her, and took her to its eyry to feed its young. After putting her in its nest, the griffin flew off again. But the young birds, instead of eating the little girl, looked kindly at

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her, gave her some soft bread-crumbs, made a bed for her, and covered her with their wings to protect her from the chill of the morning air.

I must now tell you that in this terrible forest, at the bottom of a well of pure poison, lived a dragon with twelve heads, and this well was not far from the tree in whose top rested the griffin's nest. This horrible dragon never let the little griffins grow up, but as soon as they were ready to fly stretched out two of its fiery heads and put an end to their lives, so that the poor old griffin had never yet, in all its life, been able to see even one of its children fly off.

The present brood were now full-grown, and were waiting for daylight to fly through the woods and mountains, when lo, just at midnight the water of the well made a splashing noise, and what appeared in the moonlight that flickered through the trees? Two fiery heads, which approached the nest, setting up such a howling and wailing that the mountains shook to their foundations and the valleys rocked to and fro like cradles. Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, the joints of the earth and sky trembled and quaked, and the archangel, grasping a sword in his hand, appeared on a golden cloud, darting downward like a thunderbolt. Just as the dragon was going to seize the young griffins, the angel flashed his sword from east to west, and again from west to east, cutting off both heads as easily as one drinks a spoonful of water. Then two still more terrible ones came, but they were also hacked into pieces. Two others next appeared; they, too, were destroyed, and so fared all the twelve. Blood and poison flowed till the whole forest and valley were turned into a marsh, and the heads dashed against the tree which held the nest, so that the leaves fell from the boughs for ten miles around. The angel took some basil plant, and sprinkled the four quarters of the earth with water that had been consecrated in Paradise nine years before. The pools of blood all gathered into one spot, the heads lost their vitality, and the ground opened, swallowing them up with all the blood, so that the wood once more became pure and bright as God meant it to be.

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When the griffin came back at dawn, found its children safe in the nest, and saw that the accursed well had disappeared, it uttered such a cry of delight that the earth for nine miles round trembled and shook.

Then it waked the young birds and said:

"Tell me quickly, my darlings, who has done me this great favor?"

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The young birds shook their heads and replied: "We don't know any thing about it, we have been asleep all night."

As the griffin looked about, its glance fell upon the little girl, whose golden hair and starry eyes were glittering in the morning sunlight like the torches of Paradise, and the thought instantly darted through its mind that this beautiful light must have rendered the unspeakable benefit.

"Children," said the griffin, angrily, "you haven't eaten the little girl, what does this mean?" The young birds kept as still as mice, but the griffin straightway swallowed lovely little Wild-Rose, yet when she appeared again she was seven times as beautiful as before.

The griffin now set about a great task; all day long it brought flowers and soft green moss from the woodland meadows to make the little girl a room like a fairy's nest, and this tiny chamber, whenever the wind blew, rocked to and fro like a cradle. From this time little Wild-Rose was as dear to it as its own children, nay, she was the very apple of the griffin's eye, and it took care of her and fed her with the very best things a griffin could find.

So the little Wild-Rose with the golden hair began to grow and flourish like a stately lily. In the morning the merry dawn kissed and woke her, at noon the shadows of the leafy boughs fanned her, and in the evening she was lulled to rest by the gentle breezes and the tunes that echoed through the forest from the shepherds' pipes.

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So the little girl grew in beauty till she was able to stand alone, and one day, just as the evening-star was bathing in the rosy light left by the sun when it sank behind the mountains, the Lord permitted what had been predestined to happen, though it was something that had never occurred before, since this world was created and the sun began its course through the sky. So it happened that little Wild-Rose stood up, came out of her little room, and for the first time gazed into the world. But when she looked at the evening-sky the air quivered, the rising stars trembled, and on the eastern horizon a second sun, more beautiful and a hundred times brighter than the one which had set behind the mountains, rose upward in majesty and splendor as if mounting from a sea of fire. The forests, chasms and valleys quaked, the flowers whispered sweetly to each other and turned their little heads toward the vivifying waves of light. And now behold—the fairest flowers tried to drink in the little maid's glances, and the trees around bowed their tops to rejoice in little Wild-Rose's beauty. In short, the whole of God's creation, the birds in the sky as well as the beasts in the forest, exulted and jumped for joy over the divine miracle.

After that evening's festival, twice three days passed, then three times three, finally still more until little Wild-Rose was fourteen years old.

At fourteen little Wild-Rose was beautiful—so beautiful that I am afraid to praise her and describe her perfections, lest you should afterward say that you had seen some one equally handsome. But there was no one like her under the sun. Lovely as she was, no human being had seen her, and she had no idea of empires and cities; she lived on sisterly terms with the flowers, danced with the butterflies, was lulled by the murmur of the brook, vied with the birds in singing. Now, my dear readers, forgive me for first telling you I would say nothing, and afterward adding a few

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words in praise of little Wild-Rose. Who that has ever seen her can help talking about her?

So the days passed like hours and the hours like minutes, until one day a great hunt took place in the beautiful woods.

The emperor's son went to the chase too.

Well, evidently this ought to have been. The prince, in a good or evil hour—I don't know which I ought to say—saw a deer bound into the thicket, and hurried after the animal faster and faster and faster, till the young hero found himself where he had never been even in his dreams—in the very depths of the dense forest, which was still untrodden by any human foot.

When the prince discovered his situation, he stood still and listened, to try to hear some sound in this solitude; the barking of a dog, the blast of a horn, the report of a gun, any thing of the sort would have pleased the youth. But he listened in vain, utter silence and solitude surrounded him. After gazing around him for some time a dazzling light gleamed through the foliage. He glanced that way again, and felt that he must know what was there. One, two, three, and he reached the spot to see what it was. And he found—found the tree with the dainty little swinging chamber, and the young griffins staring at him. Whatever he may have thought, he drew his bow and would have instantly shot off the heads of the whole brood, when, like a thunderbolt, a blaze of light flashed into his face, dazzling him so that he dropped the bow and covered his eyes with his hands. When he looked that way again, he saw for half a minute the face and figure of little Wild-Rose, felt as if he were in the other world, and could not help falling on the grass in a fainting-fit. When he recovered his senses he called to the young girl to come down. But how was Wild-Rose to do such a thing? She did not go to a young man, but staid quietly at home with her mamma. [101]

When the prince saw this he went away as he had come. Yet no, not exactly as he had come, for when he arrived his heart had not been full of love and longing. Neither had he come through the bushes without any trace of path or opening. But now he tumbled about wherever he went, as though he had no eyes. Yet, however he returned, he *did* return, arriving just as the shepherds were driving their cattle from the pasture into the village, and there he luckily met two of his hunting companions.

Early the next morning heralds from the imperial court went through the whole country, proclaiming that whoever would promise to bring a wonder of a girl from the forest of the well with two trees, would be received by the emperor as his councilor so long as he lived and the whole court would do him honor. Lo, and behold! there came an old, lame woman, with a hump on her back and as much hair on her head as there is on the palm of the hand. "I am the person who can bring the girl from the forest of the well with the two trees," she said. The heralds looked at the old woman and burst out laughing. [102]

"Are you from Satan's kingdom, you scare-crow?" said a herald. "Who, in the Wood Witch's name, brought you in our way, for now we shall have no luck. Begone from our sight."

But the old woman insisted that she could bring the girl from the forest. And she stuck to the heralds like a bur to a sheep.

Then the oldest herald said: "Comrades, take her with us, for the emperor said plainly that we were to bring to the court any person, no matter who, that boasted of being able to execute his command; take the old woman and put her in the carriage."

So they took the old woman and carried her to court.

"You have boasted that you could bring the girl from the forest?" asked the emperor, seated on his throne.

"Long life to your majesty. Yes, I promised to do so."

"Then set to work."

"Let that be the old woman's care, but give me a kettle and a tripod." She quickly received them and set off behind the emperor's huntsmen, her mouth chattering and the kettle rattling, as the gipsies do when they bring a bride to her wedding. The prince had not remained at home either. How could he have staid behind and not known the why and wherefore! When the party reached the forest, the hunters and the prince halted and the old woman went on, like the Wood Witch, alone. [103]

The shrewd, cunning old woman lighted a fire under the tree where the girl was, placed the tripod over the flames, and hung the kettle on it. But the kettle stood awry and upset as fast as she put it on. Little Wild-Rose, who was looking down from her room and saw the old woman's stupidity, lost her patience and called:

"Not that way, old woman, set the tripod the other way."

"But suppose I don't know how, my darling?"

And she vainly set it up, turned it round, and straightened it, the kettle would not stand. Wild-Rose grew more and more impatient and angry.

"Haven't I already told you once that it won't stand so? Turn the handle of the kettle toward the trunk of the tree."

The old woman did exactly the opposite, and then said:

"Come down and show me, dear child."

And Wild-Rose, absorbed by that one idea, climbed quickly down the tree to teach the crone. But the old woman taught her so that she needed no second lesson. Seizing her by the arm, she lifted her on her shoulder and ran off with her to the enamored prince. When the prince saw Wild-Rose, he came to meet her, begged for her hand, and, trembling, kissed her. Then she was clothed in magnificent garments, which had been embroidered with gold and pearls by nine princesses. [104]

She was placed in the imperial carriage, and the horses stopped only once on the way home to take breath, for they had no equals except among the steeds of the sun. When they reached the palace, the prince lifted her out, led her in, and seated her at the table as if she were a real princess. The young hero's parents gazed at her with delight, and remembered their own youth. At the end of a week a magnificent wedding was celebrated, which lasted for three days and three nights, then, after twenty-four hours' intermission, three days and three nights more were spent in splendid festivities.

I was there, too, but as I am lame in one foot, I did not arrive until the wedding was over and had great trouble in finding some clear broth, which I searched in vain for a crumb of meat and then sipped from a sieve, so you can imagine how much I had and how I spent the time.



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## The Voice of Death.



nce upon a time something happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was once a man who prayed daily to God to grant him riches. One day his numerous and frequent prayers found our Lord in the mood to listen to them. When the man had grown rich he did not want to die, so he resolved to go from country to country and settle wherever he heard that the people lived forever. He prepared for his journey, told his wife his plan, and set off.

In every country he reached he asked whether people ever died there, and went on at once if he was told that they did. At last he arrived in a land where the inhabitants said they did not know what dying meant. The traveler, full of joy, asked:

"But are there not immense crowds of people here, if none of you die?"

"No, there are no immense crowds," was the reply, "for you see, every now and then somebody comes and calls one after another, and whoever follows him, never returns." [106]

"And do people see the person who calls them?" asked the traveler.

"Why shouldn't they see him?" he was answered.

The man could not wonder enough at the stupidity of those who followed the person that called them, though they knew that they would be obliged to stay where he took them. Returning home, he collected all his property, and with his wife and children, went to settle in the country where people did not die but were called by a certain person and never came back. He had therefore firmly resolved that neither he nor his family would ever follow any body who called them, no matter who it might be.

So, after he had established himself and arranged all his business affairs, he advised his wife and all his family on no account to follow any one who might call them, if, as he said, they did not want to die.

So they gave themselves up to pleasure, and in this way spent several years. One day, when they were all sitting comfortably in their house, his wife suddenly began to call:

"I'm coming, I'm coming!"

And she looked around the room for her fur jacket. Her husband instantly started up, seized her by the hand, and began to reproach her.

"So you don't heed my advice? Stay here, if you don't want to die."

"Don't you hear how he is calling me? I'll only see what he wants and come back at once."

And she struggled to escape from her husband's grasp and go.

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He held her fast and managed to bolt all the doors in the room. When she saw that, she said:

"Let me alone, husband, I don't care about going now."

The man thought she had come to her senses and given up her crazy idea, but before long the wife rushed to the nearest door, hurriedly opened it, and ran out. Her husband followed, holding her by her fur sack and entreating her not to go, for she would never return. She let her hands fall, bent backward, then leaned a little forward and suddenly threw herself back, slipping off her sack and leaving it in her husband's grasp, who stood stock still staring after her as she rushed on, screaming with all her might:

"I'm coming, I'm coming."

When he could see her no longer, the husband collected his senses, went back to the house, and said:

"If you are mad and want to die, go in God's name, I can't help you; I've told you often enough that you must follow no one, no matter who called you."

Days passed, many days; weeks, months, years followed, and the peace of the man's household was not disturbed again.

But at last one morning, when he went to his barber's as usual to be shaved, just as he had the soap on his chin, and the shop was full of people, he began to shout:

"I won't come, do you hear, I won't come!"

The barber and his customers all stared in amazement. The man, looking toward the door, said again: "Take notice, once for all, that I won't come, and go away from there." [108]

Afterward he cried:

"Go away, do you hear, if you want to get off with a whole skin, for I tell you a thousand times I won't come."

Then, as if some one was standing at the door constantly calling him, he grew angry and raved at the person for not leaving him in peace. At last he sprang up and snatched the razor from the barber's hand, crying:

"Give it to me, that I may show him what it is to continually annoy people."

And he ran at full speed after the person who, he said, was calling him, but whom nobody else could see. The poor barber, who did not want to lose his razor, followed. The man ran, the barber pursued, till they passed beyond the city limits, and, just outside of the town, the man fell into a chasm from which he did not come out again, so he also, like all the rest, followed the voice that called him.

The barber, who returned home panting for breath, told everybody he met what had happened and so the belief spread through the country that the people, who had gone away and not returned, had fallen into that gulf, for until then no one had known what became of those who followed the person that summoned them.

When a throng set out to visit the scene of misfortune, to see the insatiable gulf which swallowed up all the people and yet never had enough, nothing was found; it looked as if, since the beginning of the world, nothing had been there except a broad plain, and from that time the population of the neighborhood began to die like the human beings in the rest of the earth. [109]



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## The Old Woman and the Old Man.



nce upon a time there was an old man and an old woman, who had not a single child in their old age, and it was very hard for them, because they had no help, not even to light the fire; when they came home from working in the fields, they were obliged to begin with lighting the fire and then prepare their food.

One day, when they were fretting and consulting each other, they determined to look for children whatever might happen.

The old man went one way, the old woman another, to find a child somewhere.

The old man met a dog, the old woman a mouse. When they met again the old woman asked:

"Husband, what have you found?"

"A little dog. And you, wife?"

"A little mouse."

They now agreed to adopt the mouse for a child and drive the dog away, so the couple returned with the mouse, greatly delighted because they had found what they sought, that is, a child. [111]

On reaching home the old woman began to make a fire; then she set the pot of sour buttermilk on to boil, and left the mouse to watch that it did not fall over, while she went to work with the old man in the fields.

After she had gone, the porridge boiled and splashed over the top of the pot; the mouse, which was sitting on the hearth, said:

"Porridge, don't jump on me or I'll jump on you." But the buttermilk did not stop and still splashed over the brim. When the mouse saw this, it grew angry and leaped straight into the pot.

When the old people returned from hoeing and called their child, there was no child to be found. After searching for it a long time without success, they sat sadly down to eat their dinner. Yet they ate the porridge with great relish until, when the old woman emptied the dish she found at the bottom—what? The little mouse, their child, dead! She began:

"Husband, husband, here it is, our child is drowned in the buttermilk."

"How is that possible, wife!" replied the bearded old fellow.

When they saw this terrible accident, they began to weep and lament bitterly; the old man in his grief tore his beard, and the old woman pulled the hair out of her head.

The old man left the house with tearful eyes and touzled beard; on the bough of a tree, in front of the hut, perched a magpie, which seeing him asked:

"Why have you pulled out your beard, old man?" [112]

"Oh, my dear bird, how can I help tearing my beard, when my little child has drowned itself in the pot of porridge and is dead?"

When the magpie heard this, it tore out all its feathers, leaving nothing but the tail.

The old woman set off with her bald head to the well, to get a jug of water to wash the dead body of her child.

By the well stood a girl with a pitcher, who had come to draw water; when she saw the old woman she asked:

"My, old woman, why have you torn the hair out of your head till you are perfectly bald?"

"Alas, my darling, how can I help tearing my hair and making myself bald, when my little mouse is dead?"

The girl, in her grief, smashed her pitcher in two, then she hurried to the empress to tell her the story; the royal lady, as soon as she heard it, fell down from the balcony, broke her ankle, and died, while the emperor, out of love for his wife, went away and became a monk in the monastery of Lies, beyond the Country of Truth; while I

Acquaintance made with grandsires old,  
To whom this simple tale I told,  
It seemed to them such perfect chaff  
That its bare memory raised a laugh.



## The Pea Emperor.



nce upon a time something wonderful happened. If it hadn't happened, it wouldn't be told.

There was once a good for nothing fellow, who was so poor and needy that he had not even enough to eat to be able to drink water after it. When he had wandered through all the countries in the world, he returned home somewhat more sensible. He had passed through many perils abroad, knocked his head against the top of the door, been sifted through the coarse and the fine sieve. He would now gladly have pursued some trade, but he had no money. One day he found three peas. After picking them up from the ground he took them on the palm of his

hand, looked at them, pondered a long time, and then said laughing: "If I plant these seeds in the ground, I shall have a hundred in a year; if I afterward plant the hundred, I shall have thousands, and if I put these thousands in the earth I shall reap who knows how many! Then, if I go on in this way, I shall finally become a rich man. But if I could help wealth to come quicker—let me see!" [114]

He went to the emperor and begged him to order through the whole empire barrels in which to keep his peas.

When the emperor heard that he needed such a quantity of barrels, he thought he must be stifling in money, and was more and more convinced of it when he entered into conversation with him. What is true must remain true; he didn't keep his mouth shut, but opened it and bragged till it would have been supposed that real pearls fell from his lips.

He told the emperor what he had seen in foreign lands, related how things were here and there, spoke of this and that, till the emperor stood before him with his mouth wide open. When he saw that the emperor marveled at his statements, he bragged more and more, saying that he had palaces, herds, and other riches.

The sovereign believed the boaster's stories, and said to him:

"I see that you have traveled, know a great deal, and are cunning and experienced; if you wish, I will gladly give you my daughter in marriage."

The braggart now regretted having told so many lies, for he did not know how to escape the monarch's proposal. After reflecting a short time, he plucked up courage and said "I will gladly accept the position of son-in-law you offer, and will try to show you that I am worthy of it."

The necessary preparations were made, and after some time an imperial wedding was celebrated in the palace. Then the man remained there.

One, two, several weeks elapsed, and no trace of peas and wealth appeared. Finally the emperor began to repent what he had done, but there was no help for it and the emperor's son-in-law perceived, from the manner of the courtiers and nobles, that they had very little respect for him. [115]

His cheeks burned with shame. He made useless plans, tortured himself to find some means of getting out of the scrape, and could not even sleep at night. One morning without any one's knowledge he left the palace at dawn, walked on till he came to a meadow, and wandered along absorbed in thought, without knowing where he was going. Suddenly a rosy-cheeked man stood before him, and asked: "Where are you going, gossip, you look as sad and thoughtful as if all your ships had sunk in the sea."

The emperor's son-in-law related his dilemma and what he was seeking, and the man replied:

"If I deliver you from your difficulty, what will you give me?"

"Whatever you ask," he answered.

"There are nine of us brothers," said the man, "and each knows a riddle. If you guess them our whole property shall be yours, but if not, your first child must be ours."

The emperor's son-in-law, utterly crushed with shame, agreed, hard as it was for him, hoping that before the child was born he might find somebody who could tell him what to do.

So they set out together, that the stranger might show him the herds of cattle he owned and his palaces, which were not far off. They also instructed the herdsmen, swineherds, shepherds, and laborers what they were to say, if any body asked to whom the flocks and herds belonged. [116]

The emperor's son-in-law returned to the palace and said that he would take his wife home the next day. On his way back he met an old man in the fields, and, seeing how aged and feeble he was, he pitied him and offered him alms. The old man would accept nothing, but asked permission to enter his service, telling him that he would be none the worse for it, and the other received him. When the emperor heard that his son-in-law wanted to go to his own palace, he was so delighted that he commanded every thing to be arranged on a grand scale in order to accompany him with imperial honors.

Therefore, on the following day, the whole court was filled with nobles, soldiers, and attendants of all kinds. All the directions for the journey had been given by the old man who had taken service with the emperor's son-in-law; he said that he was the Pea Emperor's steward, and all praised his energy, dignity, and industry.

The emperor was in high spirits and set out with the empress, the Pea Emperor, and his bride, for his son-in-law's possessions. The old servant went before and had every thing in good order. But the poor Pea Emperor was as pale and dejected as if somebody had showered him with boiling water. He was thinking of the riddles and how he could guess them.

They drove and drove till they reached the fields. Here was a beautiful meadow, beyond it a grove like the Garden of Paradise. When the overseer of the fields saw them, he came up cap in hand. [117]

"To whom do these estates belong, my friend?" asked the emperor.

"To the Pea Emperor," replied the man.

The emperor grew fat with joy, for he now believed that his son-in-law really was no beggar. They drove on some distance further and met numerous flocks and herds of all sorts of animals; the emperor asked one keeper after another to whom they belonged, and all replied: "To the Pea Emperor."

But when they reached the palace of the nine dragons the emperor marveled at its magnificence. Every thing was in order. They were received at the gate by a band of musicians, who played the most beautiful tunes ever heard. The interior of the palace was adorned with real gems. A magnificent banquet was hastily prepared, and they drank the finest wine.

After the emperor had wished his son-in-law every happiness, he returned to his own home greatly delighted with the riches he had seen. But the Pea Emperor was almost dead with anxiety.

Evening came. The old servant said to his master:

"Master, what you have seen of me since I entered your service must have convinced you of my fidelity. Now I assure you that I can help you still more."

"Are you telling the truth?" asked the Pea Emperor.

"Do not doubt me for an instant, master! And I ask one thing besides: let me spend the night in some corner of the chamber where you are sleeping, even if it is behind the door. Moreover, I advise you not to answer a single word, no matter who calls you by name or how great a noise is made." [118]

"Be it so!" said the Pea Emperor. And so it was.

After they had lain down and put out the light, they heard a dull, rumbling noise like an approaching thunder storm. Then a hoarse, rough voice said:

"Pea Emperor, Pea Emperor!"

"What do you want?" replied the old man.

"I'm not calling you," it replied, "I'm calling the Pea Emperor."

"That's just the same thing," replied the old man, "my master is asleep, he's tired."

Then the noise of many voices was heard, as if people were quarreling! Again the first one repeated: "Pea Emperor, Pea Emperor!"

"What is it?" the old man answered.

"What is one?"

"The moon is one."

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

Then a terrible wailing arose, as if all the spirits of evil were abroad, and another voice said:

"What is two?"

"Two eyes in the head see well."

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

"What is three?"

"Where there are three grown daughters in a house, *beware* of putting your head in." [119]

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

"What is four?"

"The cart with four wheels runs well."

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

"What is five?"

"Five fingers on the hand hold well."

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

Again there was a noise like a thunder storm, and the palace shook as if the earth was quaking. And again there was a shout for the Pea Emperor. But the latter became more and more quiet,

and scarcely ventured to breathe, but remained perfectly still. This time, too, the old servant answered. Another voice asked:

"What is six?"

"The flute with six holes blows well."

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

"What is seven?"

"Where there are seven brothers, don't meddle with their affairs."

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

"What is eight?"

"The plow with eight oxen furrows the earth well."

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

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"What is nine?"

"Where there are nine grown daughters in a house, it is not swept."

"Is it you, master?"

"Burst, dragon!"

The Pea Emperor, who heard all this, could not sleep all night long, even when it grew so still that one might have heard a fly buzz; he waited for daylight with the utmost impatience.

When he rose the next morning the old servant had vanished. He went out of the palace, and what did he behold? The scattered corpses of nine dragons, which he gave to the ravens. While thanking God for having preserved his life and delivered him from disgrace, he heard a sweet voice say:

"Your compassion for the poor man saved you. Always be charitable."



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## The Morning Star and The Evening Star.



Once upon a time something extraordinary happened. If it had not happened it would not be told.

There was once an emperor and empress who were childless. So they sought out all the wizards and witches, all the old women and astrologers; but their skill proved vain, no one knew how to help them. At last the royal pair devoted themselves to almsgiving, praying, and fasting, until one night the empress dreamed that the Lord had taken pity on her, and appearing to her, said: "I have heard your prayers, and will give you a child whose like can not be found on earth. Your husband, the emperor, must go to the brook to-morrow with a hook and line, then you are to prepare with your own hands the fish he catches, and eat it."

Before it was fairly daylight, the empress went to the emperor and woke him, saying: "Rise, my royal husband, it is morning."

"Why, what ails you to-day, wife, that you wake me so early?" the emperor replied. "Has any foe crossed the frontiers of my country?"

[122]

"Heaven forbid. I've heard nothing of that sort, but listen to my dream."

And she told him about it.

When the emperor heard her story he jumped out of bed, dressed, took the hook and line, and, gasping for breath, went to the brook. He threw in the hook and soon saw the cork on the line bob. He pulled it out, and what did he see? A big fish, made entirely of gold. It was a wonder that he did not die of joy. But what did the empress say when *she* saw it? She was still more out of her wits.

The empress cooked the fish with her own hands, the royal couple ate it, and the empress instantly felt that the promise would be fulfilled.

The maid-servant who cleared away the table saw a fish-bone on the empress' plate, and thought she would suck it, to know how food tastes when prepared by royal hands.

One day the empress received the gift of a beautiful boy, as handsome as a little angel. That same night the maid-servant, too, had a son who looked so exactly like the prince that they could not be distinguished from each other. The maid-servant's child precisely resembled the royal one. The prince was named Busujok,<sup>[2]</sup> the maid-servant's son was called Siminok.<sup>[3]</sup>

[2] Busujok: Basil.

[3] Siminok: Geaphalium, cat's foot.

They grew up together, were taught their lessons, and learned as much in one day as other children in a whole year. When they were playing in the garden, the empress watched them from her window with great delight. [123]

They became tall youths and looked so much alike that people could never tell which was the prince and which the maid-servant's son. They were haughty in bearing, both were charming, winning in speech, and brave, brave to a fault.

One day they determined to go hunting. But the empress was constantly fretting herself to find some way of recognizing her own son, for as their faces were alike and their clothes precisely the same, she often could not distinguish one from the other. She therefore thought of putting some mark on the prince. So she called him, and while pretending to be playing with his hair, knotted two locks together without his knowledge. Then the youths went off to hunt.

They hurried joyously through the green fields, skipped about like lambkins, gathered flowers, sprinkled themselves with dew, watched the butterflies flit from blossom to blossom, saw the bees gather wax and honey, and enjoyed themselves to the utmost. Then they went to the springs, drank some water to refresh themselves, and gazed unweariedly at the sky, which met the earth on the horizon. They would fain have gone to the end of the world to see it close at hand, or at least far enough to reach the spot where the earth grows marshy before it comes to an end.

Next they went into the woods. When they saw the beauties of the forest, they stood still with mouths wide open in astonishment. Consider that they had not beheld any of these things in their whole lives. When the wind blew and stirred the leaves, they listened to their rustling, and it seemed as if the empress was passing by, drawing her silken train after her. Then they sat down on the soft grass, under the shade of a big tree. Here they began to reflect and consult each other about how they were to commence hunting. They wanted to kill nothing but wild beasts. They did not notice the birds which hopped around them and perched on the boughs of the trees; they would have been sorry to hurt them, for they liked to listen to their twitter. It seemed as if the birds knew this; they showed no fear, but sang as if they were going to split their throats; the nightingales, however, trilled only from their craws, that their songs might be the sweeter. While they stood there consulting, the prince suddenly felt so overwhelmed with fatigue that he could hold out no longer, but laying his head in Siminok's lap, asked him to stroke his hair. [124]

While he was doing so, Siminok stopped and said:

"What is the matter with your head, Brother Busujok?"

"What should be the matter? How do I know, Brother Siminok?"

"Just see," replied Siminok, "two locks of your hair are tied together."

"How is that possible?" said Busujok. This discovery vexed the prince so much that he determined to go out into the wide world.

"Brother Siminok," he said, "I'm going out into the wide world, because I can't understand why my mother tied my hair while she was playing with it." [125]

"Listen to reason, Brother Busujok, and do nothing of the sort," replied Siminok; "if the empress tied your hair, it certainly was not for any evil purpose."

But Busujok remained firm in his resolve, and when he took leave of Siminok, he said to him:

"Take this handkerchief, Brother Siminok, and if you ever see three drops of blood on it, you will know that I am dead."

"May the Lord help you, Brother Busujok, that you may prosper; but I beg you once more by my love, stay!"

"Impossible," replied Busujok.

Then the youths embraced each other, and Busujok departed; Siminok remained behind, gazing longingly after him till he was out of sight.

Siminok then returned to the palace and related all that had happened.

The empress was insane with grief. She wrung her hands and wept till it was pitiful to see her.



But she did not know what to do, and at last comforted herself a little by gazing at Siminok. After some time the latter took out the prince's handkerchief, looked at it, and saw three drops of blood on it. Then he said:

"Oh! my royal brother is dead. I shall go and look for him."

Taking some provisions for the journey, he set out in search of Busujok. He passed through cities and villages, crossed fields and forests, wandering on and on till he reached a small hut. There he met an old woman, whom he asked about his brother. The crone told him that Busujok had become the son of the emperor who reigned in the neighborhood. [126]

When Siminok reached this emperor's palace, the princess, as soon as she saw him, thought that he was her husband and came running to meet him. But he said: "I am your husband's brother; I have heard that he is dead, and came here to learn something about him."

"I can not believe it," replied the princess. "You are my husband, and I don't know why you deny it. Has my faith been put to any test, and have I ever deceived you?"

"Nothing of the sort. But I tell you truthfully that I am not your husband."

The princess would not believe this, so Siminok said:

"The Lord will show the truth. Let the sword hanging on yonder nail scratch whichever of us two is mistaken."

Instantly the sword sprang down and cut the princess' finger. Then she believed Siminok, and gave him the hospitality which was his due.

The next day he learned that Busujok had gone out hunting and had not yet returned. So he, too, mounted a horse, took some greyhounds, and rode after his brother, following the direction in which he had gone. He rode on and on till he reached a forest, where he met the Wood Witch. As soon as he saw her, he set off after her. She fled, he pursued, until perceiving no way of escape she swung herself up into a tall tree. [127]

Siminok dismounted, tied his horse to a tree, made a fire, took out his provisions, and began to eat, occasionally tossing the greyhounds something.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I'm so cold," said the Wood Witch, "my teeth are chattering."

"Get down and warm yourself by the fire," replied Siminok.

"I'm afraid of the dogs," she said.

"Don't be frightened, they'll do you no harm."

"If you want to do me a favor," the Wood Witch answered, "take a strand of my hair and tie your dogs with it."

Siminok put the hair in the fire.

"Oh! how horribly the hair I gave you smells—you have put it in the fire."

"Go away from here and don't talk any more nonsense," replied Siminok. "One of the hounds put its tail a little too near the fire and scorched it, that's what smells so badly. If you are cold, come down and warm yourself, if not, hold your tongue and let me alone."

The Wood Witch believed him, came down, approached the fire, and said:

"I am hungry."

"What shall I give you to eat? Take what you want of all I have."

"I should like to eat you," said the Wood Witch, "prepare for it."

"And I will devour you," replied Siminok.

He set the hounds upon her to tear her to pieces.

"Stop," cried the Wood Witch, "call off your dogs that they may not tear me, and I'll give you back your brother with his horse, hounds, and all." [128]

Siminok called off the dogs.

The Wood Witch swallowed three times and up came Busujok, his horse, and his dogs. Siminok now set his hounds upon her, and they tore her into mince-meat. When Busujok recovered his senses, he wondered at seeing Siminok there and said:

"Welcome, I'm glad to meet you so well and gay, Brother Siminok, but I've been asleep a very long time."

"You might have slept soundly till the end of the world, if I had not come?" he replied.

Then Siminok told him every thing that had happened from their parting until that moment.

But Busujok suspected him; he thought that Siminok had won his wife's love, and would not believe him when he told him the simple truth—that such an idea had never entered his head.

Now that Busujok had once begun to be jealous of his bride, he acted like a lunatic! So, being overpowered by evil thoughts, he made an agreement with Siminok to bandage the eyes of their horses, mount them, and let them carry their riders wherever they would.

This was done. When Busujok heard a groan he stopped his horse, untied the bandage, and looked around him. Siminok was nowhere to be seen. Just think! He had fallen into a spring, been drowned, and never came out again!

Busujok returned home and questioned his wife; she told just the same story as Siminok. Then, to be still more certain of the truth, he, too, ordered the sword to jump down from the wall and scratch the one who was wrong. The sword leaped down and wounded his middle finger. [129]

The prince pined away, lamenting and weeping bitterly for the loss of Siminok, and sorely repenting his undue haste, but all was vain, nothing could be changed. So, in his grief and anguish, he resolved not to live any longer without his brother, ordered his own eyes and those of his horse to be bandaged, mounted it, and bade it hasten to the forest where Siminok had perished. The horse went as fast as it could, and plump! it tumbled into the very same spring where Siminok had fallen, and there Busujok, too, ended his days. But at the same time the morning star, the emperor's son Busujok, and the evening star, the maid-servant's son Siminok, appeared in the sky.

Into the saddle then I sprung,  
This tale to tell to old and young.



[130]

## The Two Step-Sisters.

**O**nce upon a time there was an old widower, who had one daughter; he married again and took for his wife a widow, who also had a daughter. The widow's daughter was ugly, lazy, obstinate and spiteful; yet as she was her mother's own child, the latter was delighted with her and pushed every thing upon her husband's daughter. But the old man's child was beautiful, industrious, obedient and good. God had gifted her with every virtuous and lovable quality, yet she was persecuted by her spiteful sister, as well as by her step-mother; it was fortunate that she possessed endurance and patience, or she would have fared badly. Whenever there was any hard work to be done, it was put upon the old man's daughter—she was obliged to get dry wood from the forest, drag the heavy sacks of grain to the mill; in short, every task always fell to her lot. The whole livelong day she had no rest, but was kept continually going up stairs and down. Still the old woman and her treasure of a daughter were constantly dissatisfied, and always had something to find fault with. The step-daughter was a heavy cross to the second wife, but her own daughter was like the basil plant, which is placed before the images of the saints. [131]

When the step-sisters went to the village in the evening to spin, the old man's daughter did not allow herself to be interrupted in her work, but finished a whole sieve full of spools, while the old woman's daughter with difficulty completed a single one. When they came home late at night, the old woman's daughter jumped nimbly over the fence and asked to hold the sieve till the other had leaped over it too. Meantime the spiteful girl hurried into the house to her parents, and said she had spun all the spools. The step-sister vainly declared that they were the work of her own hands; mother and daughter jeered at her words, and of course gained their cause. When Sunday or Friday came the old woman's daughter was brushed and bedizened as though the calves had licked her. There was no dance, no feather-plucking in the village to which the old woman's daughter did not go, but the step-daughter was sternly denied every pleasure of the kind. Yet when the husband came home, his wife's tongue ran like a mill-wheel—her step-daughter was disobedient, bold, bad-tempered, this, that, and the other; he must send her away from home, put her out at service, whichever he chose; it was impossible to keep her in the house because she might ruin her daughter too.

The old man was a jackanapes, or, as the saying goes, under petticoat government. Every thing his wife said was sacred. Had he obeyed the voice of his heart the poor old man might perhaps have said something, but now the hen had begun to crow in the house, and the rooster was of no consequence; yet, if he had thought of opposing them, his wife and her daughter would have soon made him repent it. One day, when he was unusually angry about what his wife had told him, he called the young girl, and said:— [132]

"My dear child, your mother is always saying that you are disobedient to her, have a spiteful tongue, and are wicked, so that it is not possible for you to stay any longer in my house; therefore go wherever the Lord may guide you, that there may no longer be so much quarreling here on

your account. But I advise you as a father, wherever you may go, to be obedient, humble, and industrious, for here with me all your faults have been overlooked, parental affection has aided, but among strangers nobody knows what sort of people you may meet, and they will not indulge you as we have done."

When the poor girl saw that her step-mother and her daughter wanted to drive her out of the house at any cost, she kissed her father's hand with tears in her eyes, and went out into the wide world without any hope of ever returning home. She walked along the road till she chanced to meet a little sick dog, so thin that one could count its ribs.

When the dog saw her, it said: "You beautiful, industrious girl, have pity on me and take care of me, I will reward you some day."

The girl did pity the poor animal, and, taking it in her arms, washed and cleaned it thoroughly. [133] Then she left it and went on, glad that she had been able to do a good action. She had not walked far when she came to a fine pear-tree in full bloom, but it was completely covered with caterpillars.

When the pear-tree saw the girl, it said: "You beautiful, industrious girl, take care of me and rid me of these caterpillars, I will repay you for it some day."

The girl, with her usual diligence, cleared the pear-tree from its dry branches and most carefully removed the caterpillars; then she walked quietly on to seek some place where she might enter into service.

On her way she came to a ruined, neglected fountain, which said to her: "You beautiful, industrious girl, take care of me, I will reward you some day."

The little maid cleared the fountain, cleaned it thoroughly, and then went on again. As she walked she came to a dilapidated oven, which had become almost entirely useless.

As soon as the oven saw her, it said: "You beautiful, industrious girl, line me with stones and clean me, I will repay you some day!"

The young girl knew that work harms no one, so she rolled up her sleeves, moistened some clay, stopped the holes in the stove, greased it and cleaned it till it was a pleasure to see it. Then she washed her hands and continued her journey. As she walked on, day and night, it happened, I don't know how—that she missed her way; yet she did not lose her trust in God, but walked on and on until early one morning, after passing through a dark forest, she reached a beautiful meadow. In the meadow she saw a little house, completely overgrown with vines, and when she [134] approached it an old woman came out kindly to meet her, and said: "What are you seeking here, child, and who are you?"

"Who should I be, good dame! A poor girl, motherless, and I may say fatherless, too, for God alone knows what I have suffered since my own mother's hands were folded on her breast. I am seeking service, and as I know nobody and am wandering from place to place I have lost my way. But the Lord guided me, so that I have reached your house and I beg you to give me a shelter."

"Poor child!" replied the old dame. "Surely God himself has led you to me and saved you from danger. I am the goddess of Sunday. Serve me to-day, and I promise that you shall not leave my house empty-handed to-morrow."

"Very well, but I don't know what I have to do."

"You must wash and feed my little children, who are now asleep, and then cook my dinner; when I come home from church I want to find it neither hot nor cold, but just right to eat."

When she had said this, the old woman set off for church. The young girl rolled up her sleeves and went to work. First of all she prepared the water for the bath, then went out-doors and began to call: "Children, children, children, come to mother and let her wash you."

When she looked up, what did she behold? The court-yard was filled and the woods were [135] swarming with a host of dragons and all sorts of wild beasts of every size. But, firm in her faith and trust in God, the young girl did not quail, but taking one animal after another washed and cleaned it in the best possible way. Then she set about cooking the dinner, and when Sunday came out of church and saw her children so nicely washed and every thing so well done she was greatly delighted. After she had sat down to the table, she told the young girl that she might go up into the attic, choose whichever chest she wanted, and take it away with her for her wages; but she must not open it until she reached her father's house.

The maiden went to the garret, where there were a number of chests, some old and ugly, others new and beautiful. But as she was not a bit covetous, she took the oldest and ugliest of them all. When she came down with it, the goddess of Sunday frowned slightly, but there was no help for it, so she blessed the girl, who took her trunk on her back and joyfully returned to her father's house.

On the way, lo and behold! there was the oven full of beautifully risen, nicely browned cakes. The girl ate and ate, as many as she could, then took some with her for her journey and went on. Soon she came to the fountain she had cleaned, and which was now filled to the brim with water as clear as tears and as sweet and cold as ice. On the edge stood two silver goblets, from which she drank the water until she was entirely refreshed. Then, taking one goblet with her, she walked

on. As she went, lo and behold! there stood the pear-tree she had cleaned, full of pears as yellow as wax, perfectly ripe, and as sweet as honey. When the pear-tree saw the girl, it bent its branches down to her, and she ate some of the fruit and took more pears to eat on the way, just as many of them as she wanted. From there she journeyed on again, and lo and behold! she next met the little dog, which was now well and handsome; around its neck it wore a collar of ducats which it gave the old man's daughter as a reward for taking care of it in its sickness. [136]

So the young girl at last reached her father's house. When the old man saw her his eyes filled with tears and his heart throbbed with joy. The girl took out the dog's collar and the silver goblet and gave them to her father; when they opened the chest together, out came countless numbers of horses, cattle, and sheep, till the sight of so much wealth instantly made the old man young again. But his wife stood as if she were dazed, and did not know what to do in her rage. Her daughter, however, plucked up courage and said:—

"Never mind, mother, the world isn't emptied yet; I'll go and fetch you still greater treasures."

After saying this she angrily set off at once. She walked and walked along the same path her step-sister had followed. She, too, met the sick, feeble dog, passed the pear-tree covered with caterpillars, the dry, neglected fountain, and the dilapidated oven which had become almost useless; but when dog, tree, fountain and oven begged her to take care of them, she answered rudely and scornfully: "Do you suppose I'll soil my delicate hands! Have you often been tended by people like me?" [137]

As they all knew that it is easier to get milk from a dry cow than to make a spoiled, lazy girl obliging, they let her go her way in peace, and no longer asked her for help. As she walked on and on, she too at last reached the Goddess Sunday. But here also she behaved sullenly, saucily, and awkwardly. Instead of cooking the dinner nicely and washing Sunday's children as thoroughly as her step-sister had done, she burned them all till they screamed and ran off as though crazed by the burns and the pain. The food she scorched, charred, and let curdle so that no one could eat it, and when Sunday came home from church she covered her eyes and ears in horror at what she found in her house. Even the gentle, indulgent goddess could not get along with such an obstinate, lazy girl as this one, so she told her to go up into the garret, choose any chest she wanted, and then in God's name continue her journey.

The girl went, took the newest and handsomest trunk, for she liked to get as much as possible of the best and finest things, but was not willing to do faithful service. When she came down she did not go to the Goddess Sunday to receive her blessing, but hurried off as if she were quitting an evil house. She nearly ran herself off her feet, in the fear that her mistress might change her mind and follow her to get her trunk back. When she reached the oven there were some nice cakes in it, but when she approached to satisfy her hunger the fire burned her and she could take none. The silver goblets were again at the fountain and the fountain was full of water to the brim, but when the girl tried to seize the cup to drink, the goblets instantly vanished, the water dried up, and the girl almost died of thirst. When she came to the pear tree it stood full of pears, but do you suppose the traveler could taste even one of them? No! The tree had made itself a thousand times as tall as before, so that its boughs touched the clouds! So the old woman's daughter might pick her teeth, she obtained nothing else. Going further on she met the dog, which again had a collar of ducats round its neck; but when the girl tried to take it off the dog bit her so that he tore off her fingers and would not let her touch him. The girl, in rage and shame, sucked her delicate little hands, but it did no good. [138]

At last, after great difficulty, she reached her mother's house, but even here she did not find herself rolling in money, for when the old man's wife opened the chest, out came a host of dragons, which swallowed her and her daughter as if they had never been in the world. Then dragons, trunk, and all vanished.

The old man could now live in peace, and possessed countless riches; his daughter he married to a worthy, capable man. The cocks now crowed on the gate-posts, the threshold, and everywhere, but the hens no longer crowed as an evil omen in the house of the old man, who had not many days of life remaining. He was bald and bent, because his wife had quarreled with him too often and looked to see if he didn't need a drubbing.



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## The Poor Boy.

nce upon a time something happened. If it hadn't happened, it wouldn't be told.

There was once a poor widow, so poor that even the flies would not stay in her house, and this widow had two children, a boy and a girl. The boy was such a brave fellow that he



would have torn the snakes' tongues out of their mouths, and the girl was so beautiful that the emperor's sons and handsome princes of every land were waiting impatiently for her to grow up, that they might go and court her. But when the girl had reached her sixteenth year, the same thing befell her that happens to all beautiful maidens—a dragon came, stole her, and carried her far away to the shore of another country. From that day the widow loved her son hundreds and thousands of times better than before, because he was now her only child and the sole joy she had in the world. She watched him like the apple of her eye and would not let him go a single step away from her. But much as she loved him she was cheerless and sad, for, dear me! a boy is only a boy, but a girl is a girl, especially when she is beautiful.

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The boy, seeing his mother so melancholy, tried to grow stronger and stronger, and counted the days before he should be large enough to go out into the world and seek his sister, little Rosy Cheeks, along untrodden paths filled with thorns. When he had reached his eighteenth year he made himself a pair of calf-skin sandals with steel soles, went to his mother, and said:—

"Mother, I have neither rest nor peace here so long as I see you so sick and sorrowful from constantly thinking of my sister; I have determined to go out into the wide world and not return till I can bring news of her. I don't know whether I shall find her, but at least I hope so, and that hope I leave with you for your consolation."

When the widow heard these words she was forced to struggle with her feelings ere she answered: "Well, my son, my child! Do what you can not help doing; when you return I shall see you again, and if you don't come back I shall not weep for you, because the journey you have in view is a long one; therefore if you are absent a long time there will always be the hope of your return."

After saying this she mixed three loaves for him with her own milk, one of meal, the second of bran, and the third of ashes from the hearth. The lad put the loaves into his knapsack, bade his mother farewell, and went out into the world like a poor boy to whom all roads are equally long, all bridges equally wide, and who does not know what direction to take. At the gate he stood still, cast one glance to the east, one to the west, one to the north, and one to the south, then took a handful of dust from under the threshold of the door, scattered it on the wind, and turned his steps in the direction that it was carried by the breeze.

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The Poor Boy walked and walked, further and further, through many a rich country, till he came to a moor on which no grass grew and no water flowed. Here he stopped and pulled out his three loaves. He began with the one made of meal, because it was the handsomest, and as he ate it his strength increased and his thirst was quenched. Again the Poor Boy walked on, journeying across the wide moor a whole long summer day until nightfall, when he reached a vast forest as extensive as the heath he had passed, but which was dense, gloomy, and forsaken even by the winds. When he entered the wood, he saw by the trunk of a tree an old woman with a bent figure and a wrinkled face. The Poor Boy, who for so long a time had seen no human countenance and heard no human speech, was greatly delighted and said merrily:—

"Good luck, mother! But how do you happen to come here, and what are you doing in this wilderness of a forest?"

"Your words are kind!" replied the old woman sighing. "Alas, age has brought me down to this; I wanted to walk a little distance and can go no further because my feet will no longer carry me."

When the Poor Boy heard this he pitied the old woman, went up to her, and asked whence she came, where she was going, and on what business she was bent. The luckless fellow did not know that this person was no other than the Wood Witch, who waits on the edge of forests and meets those who wander in these desolate regions, in order to delude them with fair words and then lead them to destruction. When he saw her so feeble, the boy remembered his three loaves, and, as if he were going home the very next day, thought he would share his provisions with her that she might get a little strength.

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"I thank you," replied the Wood Witch, who had other designs upon him in her mind; "but see, I have no teeth to chew your dry bread. If you want to do any thing to help me, take me on your back and carry me, I live close by."

"But just taste it," said the boy, who in his kindness of heart wanted to do her some good. "It is only hunger that has made you so weak, and if this doesn't help you I'll carry you as you wish."

When the Wood Witch saw the loaf made of meal she gazed at it with delight; there was something about it—I don't know what—that made even the Wood Witch long for a morsel. And as she bit into it her heart grew softer. After she had eaten three mouthfuls she felt as if she were a human being, like the rest of us, with her heart in the right place and a gentle temper.

"Learn, my son," she said to him, "that I am the Wood Witch, and know very well who you are, whence you come, and where you are going. It is a great task you have before you, for your sister is in the other world, which inhabitants of this earth can reach only in one way."

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"And what is that?" asked the Poor Boy impatiently.

The Wood Witch looked doubtfully at him.

"I don't advise you to take it," she said, "it would be a pity to lose your young life. But who knows,

perhaps you'll have good luck; I see that you have a tender heart, and whoever has that can bring many things to pass; besides, I know you—you will have no rest till you have found her. So learn—far away from here, after you have crossed six moors and six forests, you will meet on the edge of the seventh forest, which extends to the frontiers of the next world, an old witch; this witch has a drove of horses, and among them is an enchanted horse which can carry you to the other shore. But this steed can be obtained only by the person who knows how to choose it from the whole drove, after he has served the old witch for a year."

This was what the Poor Boy had wanted to know. He lost no more time, thanked the Wood Witch for her explanations, and set off, keeping straight through the dense forest, because his road was long and he was in a hurry. The Poor Boy walked like one who goes on a good errand, and hurried like a person who wants to get home early. How far he walked and how much he hurried any one can imagine, who remembers how long a time he himself required to cross a single moor and a single forest. But, when his strength failed, he bit off a piece of his loaf and instantly revived again. [144]

As he came out of the sixth forest and passed near the clear waves of a brook, he saw a wasp struggling in the water and pitied the insect. So he took a dry branch and held out one end of it to the wasp, that it might crawl up on it and then use its wings. But this wasp happened to be the queen of all the wasps in the woods, and when she found herself saved by the boy's kindness she flew upon his shoulder and said:

"Wherever you go, may good-luck be your companion. Please pull out a hair from under my right wing and take good care of it, for who knows whether it will not prove useful to you some day. If you need me, shake this hair and I'll come to you, in whatever part of the world you may be."

The Poor Boy pulled out the hair, put it carefully away, and journeyed on. Who knows how far he walked before he came to a great lake, on whose shore he saw a fish flapping on the dry land. He pitied the poor creature, which had scarcely a breath of life left, so he picked it up and tossed it into the water. But this fish was king of all the fishes, and had jeweled scales and golden fins. It swam once around the lake, breathed two or three times to recover its strength, and then came back to the boy and said:

"Wherever you go, may good-luck be your companion. Please pull off a scale from under my right fin and keep it carefully, who knows whether it may not be useful to you some day. If you ever need me, rub this scale and I'll come to you wherever you may be, as far as the water extends around the earth." [145]

The Poor Boy took the scale, put it carefully away, and journeyed on. Who knows how far he walked ere he reached the seventh moor, where no grass grew and no water flowed. There he found in his path a mole which had been surprised above ground by the daylight, and was now groping piteously about in its blindness, unable to find its burrow where its children were starving, though it was only one jump away. The youth pitied the mole, too, took it and carried it to its hill.

"Wherever you go," said the mole, "may good-luck be your companion. Please take a claw from my right paw and keep it carefully; who knows whether it may not be useful to you some day. But if you need me, scratch on the ground with this claw and I will come to you in whatever part of the earth you may be."

The Poor Boy took the claw, put it carefully away, and went on again over the endless moor toward the invisible forest that lay on the frontiers of the other world. How many days and nights he journeyed over this moor heaven only knows; but one morning, when he woke, he saw in the distance, as far off as if it were in the other world, a streak of light like the fire shepherds build at the entrance of the fold. This was the home of the witch who had the enchanted horse.

The Poor Boy was greatly delighted when he found himself so near the end of the world, and his joy increased till, on the evening of the third day, he reached the enchantress's house. Oh, dear! there he was, in the midst of the moor, just at the edge of the forest, which stretched far beyond his sight in the dusk of twilight, upon a wide plain covered with green grass, through which flowed streams of clear water, but in the middle of this plain rose a number of tall poles, on each of which was a human skull. The witch's hut stood in the midst of these poles, with a tall poplar in front of it, and on the right and left a willow tree. This proved that the Wood Witch was right—life here was by no means merry. The Poor Boy plucked up his courage and approached to enter the hut, which stood as if deserted in the middle of the moor. [146]

The old witch sat on a high three-legged chair in the entry, but before her stood a huge kettle on a big tripod, over a fire that burned without smoke. In one hand she held the shin-bone of a giant, which she used to stir the herbs stewing in the caldron. When the Poor Boy bade her good evening, she eyed him from top to toe.

"Welcome, my hero! I've expected you a long time, for this caldron has long been rattling and telling me continually that you were on the way."

The lad was much pleased with this kind reception, for the old woman did not seem to him at all peevish, as she looked kindly at him and spoke in a gentle voice. She, too, was glad, because she had again laid hands on a man, for the poles bearing human skulls protected her from the malicious elves, who could not pass through them; and there was still one piece of ground large enough for three heads, where poles had not yet been put. [147]

They now agreed that the Poor Boy should watch the drove a whole year, and in payment receive the horse he himself should choose; but if he should lose the drove he was to give up his head to the witch. The old woman instantly stuck a pole in the ground and put the hero's hat on it. Then the youth ate something, that he might not go with the drove to the pasture hungry. While the boy was eating, the witch led the mares behind the hut and began to beat them with the giant's shin bone, telling them not to drink any water during the night, nor allow the others to do so, because the water from the springs in the plain would put them to sleep, and the old woman wanted the herd to graze all night. The boy knew nothing about this.

When he came to the pasture with the drove he was attacked by so great a thirst, that he would have walked from morning till night to find a drop of water; so to quench it he lay down by a spring and drank, and even while drinking he fell asleep.

When in the first gray dawn of the next morning he woke from his slumber, the drove had vanished, leaving no trace anywhere! It is only necessary to remember that the lad's cap was already hanging on the pole to understand how great was his despair. But he gazed around him in every direction without discovering even a sign of a horse; the morning twilight was fast vanishing, and he stood utterly forsaken, not knowing which way to turn. Then he recollected the service he had once rendered the wasp, and thought that a wasp flies so fast that it might discover the drove and bring him news of their hiding-place, so he took the hair he had pulled from under the wasp's right wing and shook it. Quick as thought a buzzing noise was heard from every direction—it grew louder and louder, till one might have thought the world was going to ruin. Good gracious! There came one wasp after another, one swarm behind another, whole ranks, great clouds of wasps of all sizes, all ready to circle the earth and obey the Poor Boy's commands.

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"Have no anxiety," said the Wasp Queen; "if the drove still remains on the earth, we'll bring the horses back to you ere sunrise."

Then every thing became quiet, because the wasps flew off to every quarter of the globe and scattered all over the world. Ere long a cloud of dust appeared in the distance, swept with mad haste over the wide plain in the midst of the moor, and the drove of horses, urged by the wasps' stings, dashed up so swiftly that the earth fairly groaned under their hoofs. The Poor Boy thanked the wasps for their help, and then went to the hut as if nothing had happened.

The old woman looked askance at him, said he had done well, and then beat the mares again, ordering them to hide carefully at night. That evening the lad would eat nothing, because he thought the witch's food had caused his terrible thirst the night before; but when he went with the drove to the pasture, a burning, consuming thirst seized upon him as soon as he saw the clear water, and wherever he went springs bubbled from under his feet. At last he could no longer control himself, and relying upon the aid of the wasps, lay down beside a spring and had scarcely drunk when he instantly fell asleep. This time he woke later than on the night before, because he had gone to sleep later, so he was later in shaking the hair he had pulled out from under the wasp's wing, and the swarms of wasps were later in coming to seek and drive the horses home.

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But what did the youth see? Ere long one swarm after another returned, each bringing news that the drove could not be found on the surface of the earth and must have hidden somewhere in the sea.

The sun was about to rise. The Poor Boy took the fish-scale, rubbed it, and suddenly there appeared in the springs at his feet a school of tiny fish, that filled every channel, and asked what were his wishes and commands. He told them what he desired and instantly all the waters on the earth, rivers, lakes, and seas, began to swell and dash, while the wasps flew off to be ready to pounce upon the drove as soon as the fish forced the horses to appear.

The Poor Boy had scarcely time to collect his horses and take them home when the sun rose.

The old woman looked angrily at him, but said again that he had done well, and gave the mares a still more terrible beating; for the year consisted of three days, and if they did not hide successfully that night the hero might demand his wages.

The Poor Boy knew this too. So he began to eat his meal-loaf as he went with the drove to the pasture, and whenever he bit off a piece his strength increased and his thirst was quenched. Yet, whenever he saw the springs or heard the water rippling over the pebbles, he grew thirsty again, and so devoured the whole of the meal-loaf. He ought now to have taken the bran loaf, but did not venture to do so because he still had a long journey before him, and was afraid of being without food. Therefore he again relied on the aid of the wasps and fishes, lay down by a spring, and as soon as he had drunk fell asleep.

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When he awoke it was broad daylight, though the sun had not yet risen. He shook the hair, but the wasps came with the tidings that the drove was not on the surface of the earth, he rubbed the fish-scale, but the fishes said the horses were not under the water either; so, in his despair, he seized the mole's claw and scratched on the ground with it.

Then you should have seen the wonder! The wasps buzzed, the fish searched all the water in the world, and the moles began to rummage the earth, furrowing it in every direction as if they meant to make it into pap. When the first sunbeams touched the top of the poplar before the hut, the drove dashed like hunted ghosts to the Poor Boy; if the horses tried to go into the water the fish scared them back, if they tried to hide themselves in the ground the claws of the moles drove

them out, and so they were forced to go wherever the wasps guided them.

The Poor Boy thanked his friends for their help, and returned home just as the sun shone upon the hut. The old woman looked angrily at him, but said nothing.

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But now trouble came. The year was over, and the Poor Boy began to rack his brains because he did not know which horse in the drove he ought to choose. That's the way with over-hasty people. The Wood Witch could probably have told him this, too, if he had not left her so quickly. Now he went to work hap-hazard. Still, he thought, whatever he might hit upon he should not fare badly, for on a long journey it was better at any rate to be on horseback than on foot. Besides, he had seen the old witch's horses run and knew that they were fine animals, no worthless jades. So he went through the drove, and as he walked noticed a sick filly, which he pitied because it looked so neglected, but he did not think of choosing it. But, no matter how much he turned and twisted, he always stopped beside this animal, for he was very kind-hearted and told himself that, even if he could not make much use of it, he could at least do the poor creature some service.

"Who knows," he said, "if I should comb, brush, and curry it, perhaps it may yet make a good horse!"

So he chose it, and resolved to take with him the pouch containing the comb, brush, and curry-comb, in order to carefully tend his horse.

The old witch turned green with spite when she heard that the youth had chosen this steed, for it was the very one. But what could she do? She was obliged to keep her promise. She merely advised him to select another, better animal, telling him that he would soon be without a horse, and that good work deserved good wages, but at last she gave it to him.

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Still, a witch always remains a witch, and when the Poor Boy had mounted, taken leave of her, and ridden off, she went to the big caldron, took it off and mounted the tripod, then she changed herself in face and figure and hurried after with the speed of curses, to catch him, kill him, and get her horse back. The Poor Boy felt that something terrible was pursuing him, and set spurs to his steed.

"It's no use to spur me," said the horse, "we can't outrun her, so long as we are on her lands. But throw the comb behind you, to put an obstacle in her way."

Now the Poor Boy knew that he had chosen wisely when he took the sick filly. So he drew the comb out of the bag, flung it behind him, and it instantly became a long, high fence, which the witch could not climb over, so she was obliged to go a long way round, and he thus gained a start.

"Throw down the brush," said the horse, when it again heard the trampling of the tripod near them.

The rider threw the brush, which turned into a dense growth of reeds, through which the old hag forced her way with much difficulty and many a groan.

"Throw the curry-comb," cried the horse for the third time. When he had flung that down, the Poor Boy looked back and saw a whole forest of knives and swords, and among them the witch trying to get through and being cut into mince-meat.

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When they reached the seventh forest, where the witch's kingdom ended, the sick horse shook itself and became a handsome, winged steed, whose like was never seen before or since.

"Now hold fast," said the horse, "I am going to carry you as never hero went from this world to the other, for I, too, have a sister there whom I seek."

The Poor Boy was dazed by the swiftness with which the horse flew over the forest and alighted in the other world through a large opening in another part of the woods. When he recovered his senses, he found himself on the shore of the other world with the horse, which now shook itself a second time, changed into a handsome prince with long, curling locks, and said:

"Wherever you go, may good luck be your companion, for you have released me from the spell the Wood Witch laid upon me. Learn that I am the son of the Red Emperor and set out to seek my sister, but on the edge of the forest I met the Wood Witch, who complained that she could walk no further and begged me to carry her on my back; but when, out of pity, I let her get on my shoulders, she changed me into a horse and condemned me to retain that form until a hero took pity on me and mounted me, that I might carry him to the other world, there I was to regain my human form."

The Poor Boy was greatly overjoyed to find himself no longer alone. He took the bran loaf, broke it in halves, and gave one portion to the prince, that they might be brothers till death. The prince tasted the bread, and as he ate his strength and his love increased. They told each other their experiences, and then went on their way.

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Far, far off, just at the end of the coast-line, rose shining buildings, which must be the dragons' palaces. The country here was so beautiful, that one would have gladly traveled through it forever, it was so radiant with light, so green, so rich in flowers, birds of beautiful plumage, and tame, sportive animals. And in this country men never grew old, but remained exactly the same age as when they entered it, for here there were no days, the sun neither rose nor set, but the light came of itself, as if from a clear sky. The dragons, however, were nowhere to be seen, and



the two brothers for life continued their way. After they had walked as far as a three-days' march, they reached the beautiful palaces and paused before them, because they were so marvelously lovely, with high towers, and walls built of stones as soft as velvet, covered with plates of snow that had been dried in the sun. But they seemed empty and deserted.

The Poor Boy and the prince entered, went through all the rooms filled with costly ornaments, and, seeing no one, thought that the dragon must surely have gone hunting and determined to wait for him. But they were surprised that they did not find their sisters here. Each stretched himself on one of the beautiful divans and was going to rest, when suddenly both started up, amazed by what they heard.

Dear me! It was a song, so touching that it would have softened the very stones; it made those who listened feel as if they were in heaven, and the notes were in a woman's voice. The two companions did not listen long, but hurried off in the direction from which the sound came. [155]

This is what they saw—in one part of the palace was a glass tower, and in this tower sat a girl spinning, singing, and weeping, but her tears, in falling, were instantly changed to pearls. This maiden was so beautiful that, if she had been in the world, two men would have killed each other for her sake. When the heroes beheld her, they stood motionless and gazed longingly at her, but the girl stopped spinning, and neither sang nor wept, but looked at them in amazement.

She was not the sister of either youth, but as usually happens in such cases, the Poor Boy supposed she was the prince's sister, and the prince thought she was the sister of the Poor Boy.

"I'll stay here," said the Poor Boy, "and you can go on, deliver my sister, and marry her."

"No, I'll stay here," replied the prince, "you can go on and release my sister, for this maiden shall be my wife."

Now came trouble! When they understood that the lovely girl was the sister of neither, the handsome heroes seized their swords and were on the point of fighting as men do fight when they are obliged to divide any thing.

"Stop," said the fair girl, "don't attack each other. It is better first to discover whether I am really what I seem to you, or, after all, only a shadow! I am the Bodiless Maiden, who will not obtain form in this world until the dragon has stolen me from the other shore. I shall then be as you see me now, shall spin, sing, and weep, because I shall think of my mother who is spinning, singing, and weeping; and your sisters, who were stolen by the two older brothers of the dragon who rules this palace spin, sing, and weep, too." [156]

On hearing this, the two heroes wanted to set off at once, in order to lose no more time on the way.

"Stop, don't be over hasty," said the Bodiless Maiden. "You probably think that you will conquer the dragons by mere will? Great deeds await you. The old she-dragon put me here, that I might constantly spur on her youngest son, because it is written that all three brothers are to be married at the same time. The two older brothers keep your sisters prisoners, but can not wed them till the youngest son has stolen me. Whenever he comes home from hunting, he stops there where you are standing, gazes longingly at me, then arranges his weapons and feeds his horse with red-hot coals, but can't set out yet because my hour has not come. So stay and conquer him here, that he may not steal me while you are on your way, for you would then be too late in reaching your sisters. Yet mind one thing; you can not conquer him outside of his court-yard, because he is invisible. So, when he comes home, he throws his club at the gate with so much force that the earth quakes, the walls fall down, and any mortals who might be inside are buried alive. If you feel that you have strength enough to hold the gates on their hinges, so that they can not give way when he hurls the club against them, stay, otherwise go, in God's name, for it would be a pity to lose your young lives." [157]

The Poor Boy and the prince looked at each other, understood that the deed must be done, and resolved to stay. While the Poor Boy went to the gates to hold them, the prince drew his sword and awaited the dragon in the middle of the court-yard. You can perceive that this was no joke.

Very little time passed, when suddenly, crash! the club struck against the iron-barred gates so that one might have believed the world was falling to pieces. The Poor Boy thought the muscles of his heart would crack in two under the terrible strain, and the walls would crumble to their foundations—but he held the gates on their hinges. When the dragon saw that the palace did not fall down, he stood still in surprise.

"What does this mean?" he said. "I must have grown very weak since yesterday." He did not suspect what awaited him.

When, with some difficulty, he opened the gate, he did not notice the Poor Boy, but went straight toward the prince, who stood in mortal terror in the middle of the court-yard, for, after all, what would you expect? A dragon is a dragon, and not a girl in woman's clothes.

We won't linger over the story any longer, we know what always happens when dragons and princes meet. They began the battle. The prince was a hero, but the dragon was the youngest of three brothers! They fought with swords, who knows how long? then, when they saw that neither could conquer the other in that way, they fought hand to hand, while the Poor Boy held up the palace, that it might not fall down on their heads. [158]

When the Poor Boy saw that his strength was failing and neither was conquering the other, he called loudly: "Seize him and throw him on the ground, I can hold out no longer."

The prince grasped the dragon, summoned up all his strength, and hurled him on the ground so that his bones cracked and he lay senseless; then he hastily took to flight, ran through the half-open gate, and pulled the Poor Boy after him; the walls fell, the huge splendid palaces toppled down, and, as it were, buried the dragon alive. Nothing remained standing except the glass tower, now empty and deserted. The Bodiless Maiden had vanished from it the very moment that there was no longer any one who could have stolen her from the other world.

The two comrades thanked the Lord that they had been able to accomplish their task so far, and journeyed on, walking and walking, till they reached the palace of the second dragon. Already in the distance they saw the glass tower and heard the wailing song; but the Poor Boy's heart beat higher, because the nearer he approached the more distinctly he recognized his sister's voice. When they reached the beautiful great palace and saw the girl in the glass tower, both rushed up to break into the turret and clasp her in their arms.

But affairs could not be managed so easily. The girl in the glass tower, who was really the Poor Boy's sister, looked at them in surprise; but when he told her that he had come to rescue her from the dragon's claws, she replied that she did not know him, and that neither in face nor form did he bear any resemblance to her brother. Great was the Poor Boy's grief when he saw that his sister wanted to have nothing to do with him, though for her sake he had crossed so many moors and encountered so many dangers, but his sorrow became still greater when she began to complain that she was dying of love for the dragon. Every day, she said, he came and gazed ardently at her, yet day after day kept her a prisoner and did not marry her. Still, this was endurable to the Poor Boy, because she was only his sister; but when the prince saw the girl, heard her voice, and perceived her love for the dragon, he became perfectly frantic. [159]

"Well then, if you won't come, we'll carry you off by force!" he said, ready to take the whole palace on his back and fly with it to the other shore.

"Gently, gently," said the girl; "if it came to that, I need only pull a nail out of this glass wall to bring the whole palace toppling down upon your heads. But I pity your youth, and advise you not to stay here long, because my betrothed husband might catch you, and you will have no one to mourn for you."

The Poor Boy now took his ash-cake from his knapsack and said: "Sister, just taste this bread, and then say that I am not your brother."

She held out her hand and the glass walls opened; but after she had taken the bread and tasted it she felt that it had been mixed with her own mother's milk, and was seized with such terrible homesickness that one might have wept for pity. "Forward!" she said hastily, "let us fly, for if he finds us here, woe betide you." [160]

The Poor Boy took her in his arms and kissed her, because she was his sister, but the prince embraced and kissed her, too, because—because he was the Poor Boy's sworn brother.

Then they agreed to serve this dragon as they had served his brother, so they waited awhile, received the dragon as he deserved, conquered him, and after thanking God that they had overcome this peril too, journeyed on again to deliver the emperor's daughter.

But now came fresh trouble. The princess did not want to be rescued, and the prince had no token with him by which she might have recognized him as her brother. In vain the Poor Boy told her that if she did not come willingly, he would carry her off by force; she kept her hand on the dangerous nail and it was impossible to coax her.

I must mention that it would go hard with them if they waited for the dragon; for there were only two champions, and if one held up the palace by keeping the gates on their hinges and the other waited for the dragon in the middle of the court-yard, there was no one who could protect them from the nail.

"Let me attend to it," said the Poor Boy, who, since he had seen the princess, had grown fairly frantic. "Either his life or mine!"

As we perceive, he had determined to fight the dragon in the open ground, where he could not see him,—a thing never heard of since fairy princes first began to fight the dragon's brood; for if it is hard to conquer a dragon at all, it is doubly difficult to vanquish one when he is invisible, and no one had ever thought of such an exploit. [161]

The prince and the Poor Boy's sister hid themselves in a ditch near the palace, that the dragon might not see them; but the Poor Boy stationed himself a little behind the gate and waited for the dragon to hurl his club, in order to get near him, for when he no longer had a club he would be obliged to fight either with his sword or with his fists.

Ere long, crash! the club struck the iron-barred gate, but the Poor Boy was not slow, he opened the other gate and ran out with it, leaving the palace to fall in ruins behind him.

"Come on, if you have the courage to show yourself," he shouted, believing that the dragon would make some reply and thus betray himself.

But the dragon felt that he had found his match, and did not think of speaking, but, invisible to

the youth, approached, drew his sword, and aimed straight at his enemy's head to hack it off, but the blow only broke the lad's jaw. The wound hurt the Poor Boy, but it pleased him, too, because he now knew where to look for his foe; so he rushed in the direction from which the blow had come, struck out, and felt that he hit flesh, struck again, and again felt that he had hit, and so continued to deal short, swift thrusts, with, which he drove the dragon before the point of his sword. Suddenly he perceived that he no longer hit any thing and the dragon had escaped, so he stood cowering, like a person who does not know from whence the next blow will come.

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The dragon again aimed straight at the Poor Boy's head, and as he hacked, struck off his right ear.

"I'll pay you for that," shouted the youth, rushing upon him again. But his strength was now greatly diminished, and he only hit the dragon twice before he lost him from the point of his saber.

The princess was watching their battle from her tower, which had remained standing, and as she watched wondered at the Poor Boy's heroic courage; but when she saw the dragon aiming a third blow at the youth's head, she called: "Dear hero, turn to the right and spit three times, then you can see your foe."

When the Poor Boy heard this, he felt a hundred thousand times stronger than he had been before, and as he turned to the right, spit, and saw the dragon, he rushed upon him, seized him in his arms, and squeezed him so that he crushed all his bones and flung him on the ground as dead as a mouse.

The prince and the Poor Boy lost no time, but prepared to journey home. The princess kissed the Poor Boy and his ear and his chin instantly healed, so that he looked even handsomer than before. Then the two comrades went to the dragon's stables, which were hidden under the foundations of the fallen palace. Each took an enchanted horse, mounted, lifted his betrothed bride upon it, and hurried homeward.

If the Red Emperor had been only an ordinary mortal he would have rejoiced, but he was a sovereign to boot! He divided his empire between his son and his daughter's husband; the Poor Boy went to his poor mother's house to bring her to court and, when she had arrived, a wedding was celebrated, dear me! a wedding that will be talked about as long as the world stands.

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Into the saddle then I sprung,  
This tale to tell to old and young.



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## Mother's Darling Jack



nce upon a time something happened. If it had not happened it would not be told.

There was once a man who had a child. This child was the youngest of seven which the Lord had given him, so it was destined from its birth to be lucky. It was christened John, because all dunces and upstarts are named John. The father loved little Jack like the very apple of his eye. It could not have been otherwise, since the boy was the youngest of seven children and the smallest, chubbiest, and fattest of them all. But the father doesn't count for every thing. He comes and goes, appears and vanishes, the house is only a sleeping-place for him. The mother is the real soul of the household; she bathes one, feeds another, and scrubs for a third. Jack was his mother's boy, his mother's pet, his mother's darling, his mother's handsomest and brightest child.

They say it is not well for one person to be every thing, the lowest to be highest, and the child to govern the house. Jack grew larger every day, and the larger he grew the more quarrelsome, obstinate, and consequently self-willed he became. So there was often, nay, to tell the whole truth, *very* often, anger in the house on the boy's account. Jack daily heard some harsh word; but as it proved that words made no impression, punishment frequently followed. Ah! but Jack was the youngest of seven. The one who punished suffered, not the one who was chastised. If the father whipped Jack, the mother wiped away his tears; if the mother slapped him, she took care not to let her husband know it. It is a bad example, when a child breaks a pot, for the mother to set to work to pick up the pieces; things are then in a bad way, and it is well not to waste another word about them.

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So it ended. Jack became a very disobedient child, and disobedience avenges itself on the disobedient. If his father wanted to teach him anything, and said: "My dear Jack, look, do it so, this is right; this is the way oxen are harnessed in front of carts, this is the way the nail is driven

into the wheel, this is the way sacks are carried," and other useful lessons, Jack's mind was fixed on other things, and he replied, "Oh! let me alone." And so from one "Oh! let me alone," to another "Oh! let me alone," Jack grew into a big boy without having even learned so much as that a plow has handles, a mill is not a mortar, and a cow is not an ox. And he couldn't do much in this way.

One day his father was preparing to go to the fair. Every thing was ready except one pin, which had not yet been put through the yoke.

"Father," said Jack, "I'm coming with you."

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"It will be better for you to stay at home, that you may not be lost in the market," replied his father.

"I want to go—"

"I won't take you."

"I *will* go."

"I won't take you."

Every body knows what forward children are. The instant they are told that a thing can't be had, they want to seize it by force. His father could not help himself, so he set Jack in the wagon and drove off with him to the fair.

"Mind," he said, "you must keep close to me." "Yes, father," said Jack, obediently, for the first time in the memory of the family. And until they reached the end of the village, Jack sat as if he were nailed to the back of the cart. At the end of the village he put out one foot, then he raised his head and began to look around him. Finally he stood up, leaned on the side of the cart, and began to watch the wheels. He could not understand how one wheel moved of its own accord, how one spoke hurried after another, constantly going forward without stirring from the spot, nay, without moving from under his own nose.

They reached the woods. Jack perked up his nose and stared with his mouth wide open. The trees on the right and left set out and ran with all their might, one after another. There must be witchcraft in it. Jack jumped out of the cart and again felt the solid ground under his feet. But he once more stood with his mouth wide open. The trees now stood still, but the cart moved on further and further. "Stop, father, stop, so I can see how the wheels turn," the boy called after a while.

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But now his hair fairly bristled with fear. He heard his shout repeated from ten different directions, while his father drove on without noticing his cry. "Father!" he called again, and again he heard the word ten times. Jack was terribly frightened, and seeing that no place was as pleasant as home, began to run back there. Nothing but a cloud of dust could be seen behind him. He ran on and on toward home till he turned into the wrong road.

Now you can see how unfortunate it is for inexperienced people not to listen to the advice of wiser ones! Jack had done wrong in trying to run home when he did not know the way through the forest. He ran for a long time, then gradually slackened his pace and at last began to walk, but kept on through forest after forest, across a meadow, and through the woods again, then across another meadow, till he was completely tired out, and weary of his life.

"Lord, have mercy on me, I will always be obedient in future," he cried, at last—and his heart must have been very heavy when he uttered such words.

After that he did not walk much further. A short distance off, on the edge of the woods, stood a village. Jack jumped for joy when he saw it, and did not stop till he was in the middle of it. Then he went from house to house, and the further he went the more he wondered that he found all kinds of houses except his own home. He did not know what to do, and began to cry.

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"What are you crying about, my son?" asked a man who was coming back from the fields in front of a cart drawn by four oxen.

Jack told his story, and the man pitied him. "What is your name?" asked the kind-hearted peasant. "Jack," replied the boy.

"But your father, what is his name?"

"His name is father," the lad answered.

"What is the village where you belong called?"

"Village!" he said.

So Jack could answer no questions, and the man could do nothing to help him. He therefore took him into his service as plow-boy, for he needed just such a lad to guide the oxen while he held the handles of the plow. Thus Jack became the servant of a worthy man in the village on the edge of the forest. But he was of little use, because he had not paid attention when good instruction was given him. And whoever does not know how to do any thing well, must expect a great deal of scolding.

One day Jack's master was preparing to go to market. "Listen, Jack," he said, "grease the cart

thoroughly, for we're going to market to-morrow."

Jack said "Yes," took the grease, and began to scratch his head. He did not know how to grease a cart. He had never listened when he had been told, nor looked when he might have seen it; so now he did not know what to do. Finally, from what he had hitherto learned, he recollected that the beginning of a cart is at the yoke, that is, the pole. So he thought he must commence there if he wanted to do the business thoroughly. He greased the thills, the pole, even the rack of the cart. Here he stopped, for there was no grease left. So he went to ask for some. [169]

"Master," he said, after entering the room, "give me some more grease."

"Why in the world do you want more grease?" replied his master angrily, "I gave you enough to grease the cart three times over."

Jack said that there had only been enough for the thills, pole, and rack. When his master heard such words, he took Jack by the ear, led him out, and gave him such a beating that never again in his whole life did he forget that only the axles of a cart are to be greased. Well, what was the mother's darling to do—he was obliged to bear it, and then pay attention, that he might learn how to grease a cart.

After the cart was ready, the oxen were put in and the master took his seat in front, but Jack crouched in the back of the cart like a little heap of misery, sobbing now and then from having wept so much. "Silence," said his master sternly, "don't let me hear another word from you!" This was the last thing before they drove off.

Jack sat as still as a mouse; he was almost afraid to breathe. At last, this grew tiresome. So he began to watch the wheels again. But he was wiser now, and did not wonder at the wheels or the trees. Yet he saw something he could not understand. Often as he had seen a wheel go round, he had never noticed the pin spring from it. The cart passed over a big stone, and, "klirr," the pin bounced out of the axle and fell on the ground. It was pretty to look at, but the lad didn't understand it. He would have liked to ask his master, but the farmer had ordered him to be silent. After some time the nut loosened. Jack thought he understood why. Directly after—bump dropped the nut, too, and was left behind the cart. Jack started and was going to say something, but looked at his master and remembered that he had been ordered to keep still. But one thing he did understand—if the nut had dropped on account of the nail, the wheel would come off for want of the nut. He had scarcely comprehended this, when crack! the wheel fell into the dust and was left behind the cart. [170]

The cart moved on awhile upon three wheels, then it upset, breaking the pole in two. Now they were in a bad fix.

"There it is," cried Jack in terror, "didn't I say that would happen?"

We will waste no more words on this subject! The farmer was in *such* a rage! To be in the middle of the road with a broken pole is no joke. The farmer seized Jack, gave him another sound thrashing, and then told him to be off that he might cause him no more trouble. He was really in the wrong, for he had himself forbidden Jack to speak. But Jack was to blame, too—if he had always obeyed, he would have learned long before just how far such an order went. He had been too obedient, obstinately obedient. And that isn't well either.

The farmer continued his journey as best he could, but Jack was left on foot in the middle of the road. Alas! Woe betide him, I really don't know what he is to do. He turned into a path he did not know, and hoped to reach home. Again he walked over meadows and through forests, walked for a long, long time, till his feet would scarcely carry him. This time he found a village in a beautiful meadow, and outside the village was a man watching a flock of sheep grazing. [171]

"How do you do, good sir!"

"Thank you kindly, may you grow tall, my son."

One word led to another, and Jack briefly told the man his whole story, from beginning to end, and the peasant was pleased, because, just at that time, he needed a shepherd-boy to drive the little flock to pasture, lead them to water, and watch them that they might not mingle with others. They were a particular breed of sheep, and he would not have had them injured on any account. Such sheep, it was reported, were owned only by one emperor, from whom the peasant had obtained the single lamb. So they were sheep, well—we can imagine how beautiful they were, since they had descended from a lamb that belonged to an emperor!

Jack was glad, too, because he found himself in luck again. So they made a bargain, and Jack became a shepherd boy.

"You must watch the sheep the whole livelong day, drive them down into the valley to drink, and when it grows dark bring them back to the fold. If it seems cold, make a fire at the entrance of the pen, and that the sheep may not freeze, drive them into the fold." These were the peasant's orders, and Jack said he would do exactly as he was told. [172]

During the day Jack watched the sheep; when he was thirsty he led them down to drink, and as it grew dark drove them to the fold. This fold was a strange contrivance. Jack had never seen one before. It was inclosed by a fence of woven willow branches, roofed with rushes that the rain might not injure it, but in one place an opening had been left, over which was a roof made of

reeds, supported by posts. "That's the entrance to the fold," said Jack to himself, delighted with his penetration.

As he was cold he made a fire in the opening, just under the reed-roof. A fire is a fine thing, and Jack warmed himself by it. Then he remembered that his master had told him he must drive the sheep into the fold, to keep them from freezing. True, he did not understand why they should be any warmer inside the fold than outside, but he did as he was ordered. Seizing the finest ram, the one which wore the big bell round its neck, he pushed it through the opening into the fold. But lo and behold! The fire was burning in the gap, and the ram was so scorched that not a thread of wool was left on its body.

"Oho, now I understand it," cried Jack, still more pleased. "The sheep must go through the fire to keep them from freezing."

And, as he felt that he was doing right, he thrust all the sheep into the fold one after the other.

Suddenly he noticed that the fence, the thatching, and the roof above the opening had all taken fire and were blazing merrily. Jack stood perfectly still. He had never seen any thing of the sort and rejoiced over carrying out his orders so well, for he perceived that the sheep could not possibly be cold in the midst of the fire. So he contentedly watched the work he had accomplished. One thing he did wish—that his master was there, so that he might have said, "See how well I understand tending sheep." [173]

And the wish was fulfilled. His master was just sitting at the table eating bread and onions, because it was a fast day. He looked out of the window and saw a great fire on the mountains, and gazing more attentively at it, noticed that it was in the direction of his fold. This seemed queer. With his mouth full he left the house, walked faster and faster, broke into a run, and went higher and higher up the hill-side till at last, panting for breath, he reached his fold.

Alas! Alas! What a sight! The fold burned down, the sheep of the imperial breed one and all roasted, so that one might have supposed they were nothing but overripe melons. That was a bad job, really a very bad job! Jack had done a great deal of mischief, and might be thankful to escape with a flogging. And so it happened. The farmer, enraged, nay, fairly furious, seized the cunning shepherd and beat him, beat him so that he would have nearly killed him had not Jack luckily escaped from his hands. But after he got away Jack took to his heels and ran with all his might, so that he did not look round until he was in the woods.

What was to be done then? That's the way a person fares when he has no sense! If he had behaved himself, he would have been sitting quietly in the house eating barley-sugar and milk. [174]

Jack walked on and on through the forest, turning to the right and left, forward and backward, hither and thither, on and on he went, poor boy, trying to find some path that led home. He was so hungry and thirsty that he sucked the dew from the leaves and ate the oak-apples and acorns he found on the ground; then he grew tired and cross and frightened. Woe betide any one who loses the way in a forest!

Night came on, and darkness surprised him in the terrible woods. His hair stood on end and he was so terrified that a chill ran through every vein when he heard the wolves, bears, and all sorts of wild beasts howling and panting in the forest. There was no escape now. Then he saw a large tree with a hole in its trunk big enough to shelter him. Nearing it he noticed that this hole had been hollowed out. That was all right. He would hide in it to keep from being devoured by the wild beasts, and was so delighted to find himself safe that he no longer felt sorrowful or hungry. When we have escaped a great danger, we no longer think of small annoyances. Jack fell asleep from fatigue, and was just dreaming that he was at home eating millet and milk, when suddenly, piff, paff, puff, he heard a shot and started up in terror.

What had happened? Only a few paces from him twelve big, horrible robbers, foot-pads, had assembled with their captain, made a fire, roasted an ox, and were just tapping a cask of good wine; they were going to have a carouse. When Jack saw the ox on the spit he began to feel almost famished. Dear me! he was so hungry that he would gladly have turned into a wood-worm and gnawed the tree. The poor lad, in his inexperience, did not know what terrible people robbers are, so he came out of the hole and approached them. This was not wise. Robbers are not to be trifled with. [175]

Jack said he would like something to eat too. The robbers all stared at him, then drew their knives and swords and began to whet them to cut him in pieces and kill him before you could say Jack Robinson. That's the way with robbers. They don't stand on much ceremony.

"Stop," said one of them. "Might not this boy be useful to us?"

"How?" asked another.

"Perhaps he's the seventh child, then he can find the iron-wort for us," said the first speaker.

"That's true!" they all shouted.

So they questioned Jack, and were wild with delight when they learned that he actually was the seventh of seven children. The point in question was this—the robbers had learned that the emperor had received an immense sum of money, all in gold, from a merchant who had long been his debtor; the wicked men wanted to steal this treasure. But the emperor had put it in a room

closed with seven iron-barred doors, and on each door were seven locks wrought with great skill, so that no one could open them. So this was a real imperial business, which required careful consideration. Therefore, the robbers had gone to a witch, that she might give them instruction and a powerful charm by means of which they could force their way through the royal locks and iron-barred doors. The witch had told them that nothing except iron-wort would open the locks, and that the plant could be found only by the seventh of seven children while he was still an innocent child, in the gray dawn of morning, when it gleamed in the meadows among the other herbs. Moreover, whoever had the plant must then make a gash in his finger, lay it in the cut, and leave it there till the wound had healed, so that it might remain in the finger. After that any piece of iron, lock, bolt, or chain, no matter how strong it might be, would open at his bidding. Such a plant would be to the robbers not merely a source of amusement, but a valuable possession. So they entertained Jack and made him a soft bed where he could sleep soundly; but they told him that they would kill him if he didn't find the plant. All night long poor Jack dreamed of searching for the stalk of the herb. At the first gray dawn the robbers waked the boy and sent him to look for it.

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Jack crept along on all fours, and while in this position, looking over the stalks of the plants in the meadow, he instantly saw one that glistened. That was the one he wanted! That was iron-wort!

Among the robbers was a one-eyed man, who had been locked up in the imperial dungeons and escaped loaded with fetters. The chains had afterward been filed off, but the handcuffs were made of a special kind of iron which fire did not melt and the file did not scratch. Jack touched the handcuff with the plant, and "klirr!" it fell rattling to the ground.

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"Aha, may you be lucky, my son, you have freed me from an annoyance," said the delighted robber.

But when the captain took the plant from Jack's hand to remove the second handcuff, he labored in vain, the iron would not obey him. The witch had not told them that the herb would obey no one except the person appointed by fate to find it.

So the robbers saw that the iron-wort would do them no good, and perceiving this they became very angry and sharpened their knives and swords to kill Jack.

"Stop," cried the one-eyed brigand. "You have said that you would not murder him if he could find the plant for us. He has found it. As men of our word, we must not kill him."

And they did not, for robbers are men of their word; whether it is good or evil, what they have promised they perform. Yet, fearing Jack might give them up to justice, they found another way to get rid of him.

What did they do? They seized Jack and put him in an open cask, then closed it, drove iron bands around it, and went away. It was an evil deed.

So Jack went from good to bad, and from bad to worse, till at last we see him fastened up in a wine-cask. What was to become of him! just think, inside of a cask—that's the end of every thing! Jack began to cry, howl, and shriek till the hungry wolves heard him and came running up, thinking they could devour him. But they could do nothing but lick their chops. Jack was shut up in the cask. As soon as he discovered that the wolves were near, he looked through the bung-hole and kept perfectly still.

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The wolves then fell upon the remains of the ox and fought greedily over the bones. One, the largest and fiercest, seized a bone and crouched down with it close by Jack's cask—Jack hardly dared to breathe.

Suddenly he saw the wolf's hairy tail come through the bung-hole. Jack was terribly frightened. The tail came further and further in, and Jack grew more and more alarmed. At last the wolf shook itself and leaned further back, so that the whole tail entered and touched Jack's nose. This was a bad business! Jack trembled with fear, and in his terror clutched the wolf's tail with both hands and held on with all his might. The wolf was frightened, too, and took to flight, dragging the cask after it. You ought to have seen the wonder; helter-skelter went the brute, banging the cask against the trees, up hill and down dale. The wolf running, the cask following, Jack holding tight to the tail—that was worth seeing! Suddenly, helter-skelter the cask struck against a wall and burst open. The wolf ran on, but Jack found himself at home again, holding fast in both hands the wolf's tail, which had been torn off.

So fared mother's darling Jack. Whoever knows any thing more may continue his story.



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## Tellerchen.



nce upon a time something very extraordinary happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was once a husband and wife. The husband had a son by a former marriage, and the wife had a daughter by her first husband. This wicked woman could not bear the sight of her husband's son. One day she said: "Husband! If you don't send that boy away, I can't eat at the same table with you any longer."

"But where shall I send him, wife? Let him stay till he is a little older, then he will set up housekeeping for himself."

"I mean just what I told you—choose."

When the man saw that he could do nothing with his wife, he said to the boy: "My dear son, you see I am growing old. I can no longer do work enough to need no assistance. Your mother won't have you here. So go wherever the Lord may lead you to earn your daily bread, and, if it is His will, I'll come to see you now and then if I can."

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"I see, dear father, that my step-mother can't bear the sight of me, yet I don't know why. I have never been disobedient to her, but have always done every thing she told me; still, it is all in vain, she can't endure me. So I will go and work wherever God may guide me. I shall be able to earn my daily bread, for I'm a stout, capable lad. But come and see me if you can, father, for I feel as if I should die of longing for you."

"Go and prosper, my dear son; may the Lord help you."

"May we have a happy meeting, dear father."

And the poor boy, with tears streaming down his cheeks, left his father's house. He walked on till at last he met a rich man, to whom he hired himself as a servant. He remained in service seven years, and his master was well satisfied, but suddenly such a longing for his father seized upon him that he could bear it no longer. He told his employer that he was going to see his parents, and his master said:

"Boy, you have worked on my farm seven years, and served me well. Does the place no longer suit you, or have you been offered higher wages elsewhere, that you want to leave me?"

"No indeed, master. But I long to go home,—I feel as if I wanted to see my father again. If you think you still owe me any thing, please settle my account."

"Well, my boy, one can't keep a servant by force, and you fixed no rate of wages when you came to me. As a reward for the services you have rendered, you may choose from my herds two head of horned cattle and ten smaller ones."

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When the boy heard this, he hardly knew what to do with himself in his delight at the thought of having earned so much by his labor. He went among the herds and flocks, looking up and down, and wondering which animals he should choose. He did not want to take the best ones, because he thought his services were not worth so much. But neither did he want to select the worst, he could not make up his mind to that. So he chose from those of medium value. He did the same with the horned cattle. But in searching his eyes fell upon an ox, which also gazed longingly at the youth. So he took this ox and a cow.

Now he had no other thought in his mind except to go to his parents, believing that his step-mother would no longer look askance at him. So he bade his master good-by and went away. Just think, the ox was bewitched, but the boy did not know it. He named the animal Tellerchen.

He reached home. His father died of joy and came to life again when he saw his son, who had grown tall and handsome, and so sensible too. But the wicked old step-mother behaved like seven evil demons,—nay, like the witch she was. The youth staid in his father's house, helped him work in the fields, drove the cattle to pasture, and made himself very useful. Whenever he went to the pasture with the cattle his mother gave him a cake; but it was made of ashes, and he could not eat it. What was he to do? At noon, instead of having something to eat like every body else, he sat under the shade of a tree and wept over his lot, but he could not bring himself to tell his father, lest he should make trouble between him and his wife. He had no comfort at home, no companions abroad, and so he grew sad and thoughtful. One day, when he was crying with hunger, and even the herdsmen who had left their oxen were eating, Tellerchen suddenly began to speak and said:

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"Master, don't grieve any longer, throw the ash-cake away, seize my right horn, and eat and drink what you will find there."

"Why, Tellerchen," replied the youth, "there must be witchcraft about you too. Where was such a thing ever heard of, and how long have you been able to talk?"

"Mind what I tell you. I see you are an excellent lad, and I am sorry you should weep your youth away. Just try my advice, and you'll see that it will be profitable to you."

And it was. The youth seized Tellerchen's right horn. Behold what happened! He drew out a roll as white as snow, and a glass of wine which would have made any one's mouth water. The lad ate



and drank.

The step-mother noticed that the youth's face had grown fuller, that he was in good spirits, and did all his work cheerily. Instead of seeing him grow thinner day by day, as she had expected, he constantly gained flesh. She soon discovered that Tellerchen must be at the bottom of the mystery, for she perceived that the boy took much better care of him than of the other cattle. How should she manage to find out what he did and ate in the woods? She secretly sent her daughter after him, and ordered her to watch what the youth did while pasturing the cattle. The girl followed her step-brother without his knowledge, watched him, returned to her mother and said, "Mother, what I have seen to-day is beyond telling!" [183]

"You met the Wood Witch?"

"A wrong guess," the daughter replied.

"You have seen a wizard, a dragon, or a griffin?"

"No indeed! Heaven forbid!"

"Or did a handsomer, richer, and more sensible youth follow you?"

"What an idea! But it's useless for you to rack your brains, you can't guess."

"Then tell me what you saw, and don't chatter about it any longer."

"Mother, my step-brother's ox is enchanted."

"Didn't I always say that there was something the matter with the accursed beast?"

"If you could have seen how he hugged and kissed him, sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left cheek, mother. I really felt as though my heart would stop beating. Then directly after he seized his right horn and pulled out some white rolls and wine, which he devoured as if the wolves were after him. I tell you my mouth watered when I saw him eat so greedily. Yet what amazed me still more was to hear the ox talk. I stood with my mouth wide open, staring at him."

"Never mind, I'll get even with him."

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The step-mother did not like the ox, and urged her husband to have him slaughtered, neither more nor less. All night long she teased him about it. The poor old man told her that the animal was not his, but his son's, that he was a fine beast and might yet be very useful to them. But she would not listen, and never stopped talking until he had promised to kill the ox. Luckily the youth was awake and heard it all. As soon as morning dawned he went to Tellerchen to curry and clean the animal as he always did, but began to weep, and told the ox the fate in store for him. Tellerchen told him he must stand outside the house on the bench by the door, and when the people were chasing him, to catch him and take him to the shambles, he must jump on his back as he passed by. This was done, and after the ox had escaped he took his master to a forest far more beautiful than any the boy had ever seen. There they built huts, and lived as if they were in clover, for the grass in the surrounding meadows was so tall that a man might have lost himself in it, and was always so green and blooming that it made excellent pasturage.

One day, when the youth was sitting comfortably before his hut, playing on the flute, while the ox grazed at some distance, up came an enormous bull, so fat that his hide seemed ready to burst.

"Why did you come here, youngster, with your Tellerchen, to drink my water and feed on my grass?" he asked.

"I didn't know that this was your property," answered the youth, "Tellerchen brought me here."

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"Then tell him he must come to the Gold Bridge to-morrow and fight with me." After saying this, he went away.

When the ox came home at night he found the youth more sorrowful than ever before. "What ails you, master, that you stand there as if you were stupefied?" asked the ox.

"What ails me?" replied the youth. "Why, I'm in a fine fix!" And he repeated all that the bull had said.

"Never mind, master, don't worry about it, leave that to me."

Early the next morning the ox left the lad in the hut and set off to the Gold Bridge to fight with the bull; he fought till he had pushed him under the bridge, and then came back home safe and sound.

Two days after another bull came, somewhat smaller than the first one. After saying the same things the other had said, he summoned Tellerchen to fight at the Silver Bridge. The ox again found his master weeping, soothed him as he had done before, and went to fight the second bull and hurl him under the bridge.

After several days a third bull appeared, a feeble, unsightly, ugly, dirty animal, and said to the boy: "Who gave you leave to come here with your Tellerchen to drink my water and spoil the grass in my meadows?"

"What business is it of yours?" replied the youth pertly.

"If it isn't my business, whose affair should it be?" replied the bull. "Whichever of you two will dare to fight with me may come to-morrow to the Copper Bridge."

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"Don't worry," replied the youth carelessly, "we will come."

When Tellerchen returned from the pasture in the evening, his master, with great amusement, told him every thing that had happened.

"Your mirth is out of place," replied the ox, "for my time has now come. The bull, sick and emaciated as he was, will overpower me. Watch our battle to-morrow, for I will not let you fight with him; you are young and delicate, and still have a great deal to see in the world. When you perceive that he is conquering me and about to push me under the bridge, rush forward and seize my left horn, but don't open it till you have reached home."

When the youth heard this, he began to weep so that he could not be quieted, and grieved so much all night long that he had no sleep.

Early the next morning he went with Tellerchen to the Copper Bridge, where the puny-looking bull awaited them. They began the struggle, and fought and fought until toward the afternoon. Sometimes the ox gored the bull, at others the bull the ox, and the victory still remained undecided. But when the afternoon was nearly over the ox's strength failed, and, while the bull was carrying him off and in the very act of hurling him under the bridge, the boy rushed up and wrenched off his left horn.

He wept,—Heaven knows how bitterly the poor lad wept by the bridge. But seeing that his Tellerchen did not come out again from under the bridge and it was growing dark, he set off with his horn, and a heart bleeding with grief. He spent the night on a hill. The next day hunger vexed him, and thinking he should find something to eat in the horn Tellerchen had left him, he opened it.

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What, I beg to ask you, do you suppose happened then! Whence came the countless multitude of all sorts of cattle? How could he drive them home? and to get them back into the horn again was impossible. He owned this to himself and began to weep bitterly. While thus lamenting, lo and behold! a dragon came up to him and said:—

"What will you give me, boy, if I put all these beasts back into the horn for you?"

"Half of them," replied the lad.

"I've no fancy for *that*," said the dragon, "I want something else."

"Tell me what it is, and I'll see."

"When you love life best I am to be allowed to come and take the dearest thing you have, to devour it."

The lad, without exactly knowing what he was doing, agreed.

The dragon rapped three times with its tail and put all the cattle back in the horn, which the boy then took and went to his father, whom he found alone. No one knew what had become of the old woman and her daughter, they had vanished from the house.

When the peasant saw his son grown into a youth he almost lost his senses with joy, but managed to calm himself. His son opened the horn, and instantly the fields and surrounding country were so filled with cattle that every body was bewildered.

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"Do all these flocks and herds belong to you?" asked the old man.

"All, father. What shall we do with this multitude of beasts."

"Relieve the sorrows of the widows and the poor," he replied.

The youth followed his father's advice. There was no day the Lord bestowed on which he did not render some service to those who needed aid. So it happened that not a single pauper was left in the neighborhood. News of the wealth and benevolence of the old man's son reached the imperial court, and as the emperor had a very clever and beautiful daughter, he sent to ask the youth to become her suitor.

When the young man heard that the emperor wanted him for a son-in-law he was greatly astonished. But, on being summoned to the court, he went there and behaved with so much good sense and dignity that the sovereign was not at all sorry he had cast his eye upon him. The princess liked him because he was a handsome, proud, spirited Roumanian youth. Then, after having agreed among themselves, a wedding was celebrated whose fame spread through the whole country. The young man's father was there too.

After the dances and amusements of the marriage were over and every body had gone home, the old man, according to ancient custom, placed in the room where the emperor's son-in-law and his bride were to sleep a roll of snow-white bread. Then he, too, went to rest.

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What happened during the night? The emperor's son-in-law suddenly saw the dragon, which, with one jaw on the upper cornice of the door and the other on the threshold beneath, told the young fellow it had come to settle their account and he must now give up to be devoured the bride sleeping beside him, whom he loved like the apple of his eye.

The old man's son, who had long since forgotten the settlement, did not know what to do. He dared not rush upon the dragon and kill it, because he knew that they had made this bargain; his father had often told him that, when a man has given his word, he has also pledged his soul. Yet his heart would not let him yield up his beloved wife for the dragon to devour. While he was torturing himself in trying to think what he could do to neither break his promise nor give up his bride, the bread on the table began to jump about and said:

"Hi, dragon, I've been sowed, grew up, was mowed down and fastened into a bundle, yet I bore it, do you now bear your trouble, too, and go into the depths of the sea."

The dragon stood waiting. The bread went on:

"Then I was carried to the barn, horses trampled on me, I was winnowed and taken to the mill. Bear your troubles as I've borne mine, and go, that we may hear your name no more."

The dragon still waited, and its tongue darted about in its mouth like lightning. The emperor's son-in-law and his bride remained perfectly quiet. The bread spoke again:

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"Then I was ground, taken home, sifted, kneaded with water, put into the oven, and baked till my eyes almost started out of my head, yet I bore it. Do you bear it too, you accursed dragon, and may you burst."

The noise that echoed through the air, as the dragon burst, was so loud that every body in the palace awoke. Men came running to the spot, what did they see? A monster of a dragon, burst and split open. It was so huge that all shrank away in terror.

Afterward they took the carcass, carried it out of the palace, and gave it to the ravens. Then the emperor's son-in-law related the whole affair. When the people in the palace heard it, they all thanked God for having worked such a miracle and permitted the emperor's children to escape safe and sound. Then they lived in peace and happiness and did good every where, and if they have not died, they may be alive now.

Into the saddle then I sprung,  
This tale to tell to old and young.



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## The Fairy Aurora.

Once upon a time something happened. If it hadn't happened, it wouldn't be told.



There was once a great and mighty emperor, whose kingdom was so large that no one knew where it began and where it ended. Some believed it was boundless, others said that they dimly remembered having heard from very old people that the emperor had formerly engaged in war with his neighbors, some of whom had proved greater and more powerful, others smaller and weaker than he. One piece of news about this emperor went all through the wide world—that he always laughed with his right eye and wept with the left. People vainly asked the reason that the emperor's eyes could not agree, and even differed so entirely. When great heroes went to the emperor to question him, he smiled evasively and made no reply. So the enmity between the monarch's eyes remained a profound mystery, whose cause nobody knew except the emperor himself. Then the emperor's sons grew up. Ah, what princes they were! Three princes in one country, like three morning stars in the sky! Florea, the oldest, was a fathom tall, with shoulders more than four span broad. Costan was very different, short, strongly built, with a muscular arm and a stout fist. The third and youngest prince was named Petru—a tall, slender fellow, more like a girl than a boy. Petru did not talk much, he laughed and sang, sang and laughed, from morning till night. Only he was often seen in a graver mood, when he pushed back the curling locks from his forehead and looked like one of the old wiseacres who belonged to the emperor's council.

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"Come, Florea, you are grown up, go to our father and ask him why one of his eyes always weeps and the other always laughs," said Petru, one fine morning to his brother Florea. But Florea would not go; he knew by experience that the emperor was always vexed if any one asked him that question.

Petru fared just the same when he went to his brother Costan.

"Very well, if nobody else dares, I'll venture it!" he said at last. No sooner said than done, Petru instantly went and asked.

"May your mother blind you! What's that to you?" replied the emperor wrathfully, giving him one

cuff on the right ear and another on the left. Petru went sadly away, and told his brothers how his father had served him. Yet, after the young prince had asked what was the matter with the eyes, it seemed as though the left one wept less and the right one laughed more.

Petru plucked up his courage and went to the emperor again. A box on the ear is a box on the ear, and two of them are two! It was no sooner thought than done. He fared just the same the second time. But the left now only wept occasionally, and the right one seemed ten years younger. [193]

"If that's the way things stand," thought Petru, "I know what I have to do. I'll keep going to him, keep repeating the question, and keep receiving the cuffs on the ear until both eyes laugh."

No sooner said than done. Petru never made the same remark twice.

"My son Petru," began the emperor, this time in a pleasant tone and laughing with both eyes, "I see that you can't drive this anxiety out of your head, so I'll tell you what is the matter with my eyes. Know that this eye laughs when I see that I have three such sons as you, but the other weeps because I fear that you will not be able to reign in peace and protect the country against bad neighbors. But if you bring me water from the fountain of the Fairy Aurora that I may bathe my eyes with it, both will laugh, because I shall then know that I have brave sons on whom I can rely."

Such were the emperor's words. Petru took his hat from the bench by the stove, and went to tell his brothers what he had heard. The princes consulted together and soon settled the matter, as is proper among own brothers. Florea, being the oldest, went to the stables, chose the best and handsomest horse, saddled it, and bade farewell to home.

"I will go," he said to his brothers; "and if, at the end of a year, a month, a week, and a day, I have not returned with the water, you can follow me, Costan." With these words he departed. [194]

For three days and three nights Florea did not stop; his horse flew like a ghost over the mountains and valleys till it reached the frontiers of the empire. But all around the emperor's dominions ran a deep gulf, and across this abyss there was only a single bridge. Here Florea halted to look back and bid farewell to his native land.

May the Lord preserve even a Pagan from what Florea now beheld when he wanted to go on—a dragon! But a dragon with three heads and the most horrible faces, with one jaw in the sky and another on the earth. Florea did not wait for the dragon to bathe him in flames, but set spurs to his horse and vanished as if he had never been in existence. The dragon sighed once and disappeared, without leaving a trace behind.

A week passed; Florea did not return; a fortnight slipped by, but nothing was heard of him. A month elapsed; Costan began to search among the horses to choose one. When morning dawned after a year, a month, a week, and a day, Costan mounted his horse, took leave of his youngest brother, and saying to him, "Come, if I am lost too," rode off as Florea had done.

The dragon at the bridge was now still more terrible, his heads were more frightful—and the hero fled still faster. Nothing more was heard of the two brothers; Petru remained alone.

"I am going to follow my brothers," he said one day to his father. [195]

"Then may God go with you," replied the emperor. "He alone knows whether you will have better luck than your brothers."

So the monarch's youngest son also bade him farewell and set off for the frontiers of the empire. On the bridge stood a dragon still larger and more horrible, with jaws even more yawning and frightful. The creature now had seven heads instead of three.

Petru stopped when he beheld this monster. "Get out of the way!" he shouted. The dragon did not stir. Petru called a second and a third time, then rushed forward with uplifted sword. Instantly the sky darkened so that he saw nothing but fire—fire on the right, fire on the left, fire before him, fire behind him. The dragon was spitting fire from every one of its seven heads. The horse began to neigh and rear, so that our hero could not strike with his sword.

"Hold! This won't do!" said Petru, dismounting and seizing the horse's bridle with his left hand, while he held his sword in the right.

That plan would not do either. The hero saw nothing but fire and smoke.

"I'll go home—to get a better horse," said Petru, and he mounted his steed, and went away to come back again.

When he reached the place his nurse, old Birscha, was waiting for him at the court-yard gate.

"Ah, my son Petru! I knew you would be obliged to come back again, because you didn't set out right."

"How ought I to have gone?" asked Petru, half angrily, half sadly. [196]

"You see, my dear Petru," the old nurse began, "you can't reach the fountain of the Fairy Aurora unless you ride the horse which your father the emperor rode in his youth; go, ask where and whose that horse is, then mount it and depart."

Petru thanked her for her directions, and then went off to inquire about the horse.

"May the light grow black to you!" said the emperor. "Who told you to ask me that? It must surely have been that witch of a Birscha. Are you crazy? Fifty years have passed since I was young, who knows where the bones of the horse I rode then are rotting? It seems to me that there's one strap of the bridle lying on the stable floor. It's all I have left of the horse."

Petru went off in a rage and told his old nurse the whole story.

"Just wait," cried the old woman, laughing. "If that's the way things are, very well. Go and bring me the piece of the bridle, I shall know how to turn it to some account."

The floor was covered with saddles, bridles, and straps; Petru chose the most tattered, rusted, and blackest, and carried it to the old woman, that she might do with it what she had promised. The old nurse took the bridle, smoked it with incense, muttered a short spell over it, and then said to Petru. "Now take the bridle and strike the pillars<sup>[4]</sup> of the house with it."

[4] Roumanian peasant cottages usually have several pillars in front, which support the projecting roof.

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Petru did as he was told. The old woman's charm worked well. Scarcely had Petru struck the pillars when something happened—I don't know how—that utterly amazed him. A horse stood before him, a horse whose superior the world never saw. Its saddle was made of gold and jewels, its bridle glittered so that one dared not look at it for fear of being blinded. A beautiful horse, beautiful saddle, and beautiful bridle for the handsome prince!

"Jump on the bay's back, my young hero," cried the old woman, making the sign of the cross over horse and rider; then she repeated a short charm and went into the palace.

After Petru had leaped on the horse he felt thrice as much strength in his arm and thrice as much courage in his heart.

"Hold fast, master, for we have a long journey and must go swiftly," said the bay, and the hero soon saw that they galloped, galloped, galloped, as never horse and hero had galloped before.

On the bridge now stood a dragon whose like had never been there, a dragon with twelve heads, each one more terrible, more fiery than the others. Ah, but the monster found its match. Petru did not quail, but began to roll up his sleeves and spit upon his hands. "Out of the way!" he shouted. The dragon began to spit fire. Petru wasted no more words, but drew his sword and prepared to rush upon the bridge.

"Hold, calm yourself, master," said the bay, "do as I tell you; press the spurs into my flanks, draw your sword, and be ready, for we must now leap over the bridge and the dragon. When you see that we are directly over the monster, cut off its head, wipe the blood from your sword on your sleeve, and put it in the sheath, that you may be prepared to fight when we touch the earth again."

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Petru struck in the spurs, drew his sword, hacked off the head, wiped the blood away, thrust the blade into its sheath, and was ready when he again felt firm ground under the horse's hoofs. So they crossed the bridge.

"Now we must go on," Petru began, after he had cast one more glance back to his native land.

"Forward," replied the bay, "but you must now tell me, master, how we are to hasten. Like the wind? Like thought? Like longing? Or like a curse?"

Petru looked before him and saw nothing but sky and earth—a wilderness which made his hair bristle with horror.

"We will change our pace and ride like each in turn,—not too fast that we may not grow weary, and not too slow lest we should be late."

They rode on,—one day like the wind, one like thought, one like longing, and one like a curse, until in the gray dawn of the morning of the fourth day, they reached the end of the wilderness.

"Now stop and go on at a walk, that I may see what I have never beheld," cried Petru, rubbing his eyes like a person waking from sleep or one who beholds something that seems like an illusion. Before the eyes of the young prince stretched a copper forest—trees, saplings, shrubs, bushes, ferns, and flowers of the most beautiful varieties, all made of copper. Petru stood staring, as a man gazes who beholds something he has never seen or heard of. He rode into the wood. The blossoms along the wayside began to praise themselves and tempt Petru to gather them and make a garland:

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"Take me, I am beautiful and give strength to him who breaks me," said one.

"Oh, no, take me, for whoever wears me in his hat will be loved by the greatest beauty in the world," said another. Then a third and a fourth, each lovelier than its companions, stirred, and in sweet tones tried to persuade Petru to gather it.

The bay sprang aside whenever it saw its master stoop toward a flower.

"Why don't you keep quiet?" cried Petru, somewhat sternly.

"Pick no blossoms, you will fare badly if you gather them," replied the bay.

"Why should I fare badly?"

"A curse rests on these flowers—whoever gathers them must fight with the Welwa<sup>[5]</sup> of the wood."

[5] Welwa, an indescribable monster that exists in the imagination of the Roumanian peasantry.

"With what sort of a Welwa?"

"Now let me alone! But listen; look at the flowers and gather none of them, keep quiet." Having said this the horse went on at a walk. Petru knew by experience that he would do well to heed the bay's advice. So he turned his thoughts away from the flowers. But it was all in vain! If one is unlucky, he can't get rid of his ill-fortune even if he tries with all his might. The flowers still offered themselves to him, and his heart grew weaker and weaker. [200]

"Come what may," said Petru after a while, "I shall at least see the Welwa of this wood, that I may know what the monster is like and with whom I have to deal. If I am fated to die by its hands, it will kill me in some way, and if not I shall escape, though there should be hundreds and thousands like it." Then he began to pull off the flowers.

"You have done wrong!" said the bay anxiously. "But as the thing has happened it can't be changed, so gird yourself and prepare to fight, for here is the Welwa."

The bay had scarcely spoken and Petru had hardly twined his wreath, when a light breeze blew from all quarters of the compass and soon rose to a gale. The gale increased until everywhere there was naught save gloom and darkness, gloom and darkness. The ground under Petru's feet trembled and shook, till he felt as though somebody had taken the world on his back and was dragging it away at full speed.

"Are you afraid?" asked the bay, shaking its mane.

"Not at all," replied Petru, summoning up his courage, though chills were running down his back. "If a thing must be, all right; let it be as it is."

"You need not fear," replied the bay, to encourage him. "Take the bridle from my neck and try to catch the Welwa with it."

The horse had just time to say this and Petru had not even a chance to unfasten the bridle properly, when the Welwa stood before him, a monster so frightful, so terrible, that he could not look at it. It has no head, yet it is not headless, it does not fly through the air, yet neither does it walk on the earth. It has a mane like the horse, horns like the stag, a face like the bear, eyes like the polecat, and a body that resembles every thing except a living being! Such was the Welwa which rushed upon Petru. [201]

Petru rose in his stirrups and began to strike, sometimes with his sword, sometimes with his arm, till the perspiration ran down his body in streams.

A day and night passed away; the battle was not yet decided.

"Stop, so that we can rest a little while," said the Welwa, panting for breath.

The hero let his sword fall.

"Don't stop!" cried the bay quickly, and Petru set to work again with all his might.

The Welwa now neighed once like a horse, then howled like a wolf, and again rushed upon Petru. The battle went on for another day and night, and was even more terrible than before. Petru grew so weary that he could scarcely move.

"Stop now! I see I am dealing with a person who understands fighting. Stop!" said the Welwa for the second time. "Stop and let us settle our quarrel."

"Don't stop!" cried the bay.

Petru fought on, though he could scarcely breathe. But the Welwa no longer rushed so fiercely upon him and began to act with more care and caution, as people do when they feel they have not much strength. So the fight lasted till the dawn of the third day. When the rosy light of morning began to glimmer, Petru—how, I don't know, it's enough that he did it—threw the bridle over the head of the wearied Welwa, which instantly became a horse—the handsomest horse in the world. [202]

"Sweet be your life, for you have delivered me from enchantment," said the transformed Welwa, and began to caress the bay charger. Petru learned from their conversation that the Welwa was a brother of the bay horse, and had been bewitched many years before by Holy Wednesday.<sup>[6]</sup>

[6] Miercuri-Mittwoch (Wednesday) and Mercuria, that is, feminine form of Mercury.

Petru tied the Welwa to his horse, sprang into the saddle, and continued his journey. How did he ride? That I need not say. He rode swiftly till he got out of the copper forest.

"Stand still, and let me look at what I have never seen before," said Petru again, when they came out of the copper forest. A still more marvelous one now stretched before him, a forest of

glittering bushes bearing the handsomest and most tempting flowers—he was entering the Silver Wood. The blossoms began to talk still more sweetly and enticingly than they had done in the Copper Forest. "Gather no more flowers," said the Welwa that was tied to the bay, "for my brother is seven times stronger than I."

But did my fearless hero restrain himself? Scarcely two minutes had passed ere he began to gather flowers and twine them into a wreath. The tempest howled louder, the darkness was greater, and the earth quaked still more than in the Copper Forest; the Welwa of the Silver Wood rushed upon Petru with seven-fold greater fierceness than the other Welwa had done. But he was not idle either. The battle again lasted for three days and three nights, and at dawn on the fourth morning our hero bridled the second Welwa. [203]

"Sweet be your fortune, for you have delivered me from enchantment!" said the Welwa, and they pursued their journey along the road by which they had come.

"Stop, stand still, go on at a walk, and let me gaze at what I have never seen before," cried Petru for the third time; then he covered his eyes with his hand lest he should be blinded by the rays streaming from the Gold Forest. He had already beheld marvelous things, but never even dreamed of a sight like this.

"We will stand here or we shall fare badly," cried the horses in one breath.

"Why should we fare badly?" asked Petru.

"You'll pluck the flowers again. I know your heart will give you no rest until you do! And our youngest brother is seven times seven times stronger and more terrible than we three together. So let us go round the forest," said the bay.

"Certainly not," replied Petru; "let us go through it! Let us see all, since we have seen something, and experience all, now that we have experienced part. Have no fear, I have none!"

I need not tell you that Petru did again what he had already done twice. Oh dear! How could he help it? [204]

Scarcely was the wreath twined when something began which had never been experienced before. It was not a more furious tempest or greater darkness, neither did the earth quake more violently. No! I don't know how or what it was, but it seemed to Petru as though somebody had got into the middle of the earth to overturn it. What happened was something awful, and may Heaven preserve any one from it!

"You see!" said the bay angrily, "why couldn't you keep quiet?"

Petru saw that he saw nothing more, began to feel that he felt nothing more, and understood that he could understand nothing more, so he made no reply, but girded his sword tighter and prepared to fight. "Now the Welwa can come," he cried, "I will die or throw the bridle over its head." He had scarcely uttered the words when something whose like he had never beheld before approached him. A dense fog surrounded Petru, a fog so dense that he could not even see himself in it.

"What's this?" cried the champion, somewhat startled, when he began to feel that he was aching all over. But he was still more alarmed when he perceived that he could not hear his own voice through the mist. So he began to strike about him with his sword to the right and left, before and behind, in every direction, and with all the strength he had—as a man does when he sees that matters are growing serious. So he fought on during a day and a night, without seeing any thing except thick darkness, or hearing any thing except his own perspiration trickling down his horse's flanks. For some time he had even felt as if he were no longer alive, but had died long before. Suddenly the fog began to scatter. At dawn on the second day it disappeared entirely, and when the sun rose in the sky Petru's eyes again saw the light. He felt as if he had been born anew. [205]

The Welwa? it seemed to have vanished from the earth.

"Get your breath now, for the battle will begin again presently," said the bay.

"What was that?" asked Petru.

"The Welwa," replied the horse, "the Welwa changed into fog. Get your breath, it is coming again."

The bay had hardly spoken and Petru had hardly had time to breathe, when he saw approaching from one side something,—but what it was he did not know. Water, yet it was not like water, for it did not seem to flow on the earth, but in some queer fashion to fly, or move in some way—Enough, it left no trace behind and did not fly high. It was something that appeared to be nothing.

"Oh, dear!" cried Petru.

"Take courage and defend yourself, don't stand still," said the bay, but could not utter another word, for the water filled its mouth.

The fight began again. Petru struck about him without stopping for a day and a night, not knowing at what he was aiming, and fought without knowing with whom. When the next day [206]

dawned he felt that his feet were paralyzed.

"Now I am lost!" he cried somewhat angrily; yet he began to show himself doubly brave and dealt still stronger blows. The sun rose and the water vanished, one could not tell how or when.

"Get your breath!" said the bay, "get your breath, for you haven't much time to lose. The Welwa will come back directly."

Petru made no answer; the poor fellow was so tired that he did not know what to do. So he settled himself more firmly in the saddle, seized his sword with a tighter grip, and thus prepared awaited the approach of the foe he saw advancing.

Such a thing, how can I describe it? It was like a man dreaming that he sees something which has what it has not, and has not what it has—this was the shape in which the Welwa now appeared to Petru. Oh, heavens! how could the Welwa now be a gold forest after having twice left it in disgrace? It flew with its feet and walked with its wings, its head was behind and its tail was before, its eyes were in its breast and its breast was on its forehead—and as for the rest, no mortal could describe it.

Petru shuddered in every limb, and crossed himself twice, then he plucked up courage and began to fight as he had already fought once, and also as he had never yet fought before. The day passed and Petru's strength failed. Evening came, and Petru's eyes began to grow dim. When midnight arrived he felt that he was no longer on horseback. He himself did not know how and when he had reached the earth, but he was on foot. When night was yielding to day Petru could not keep up, but sank on his knees.

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"Stand up, gather your strength once more!" cried the bay, seeing that his master was losing his vigor.

Petru wiped away the perspiration with his shirt-sleeve, strained every nerve, and once more stood erect.

"Now strike the Welwa on the mouth with the bridle?" said the bay.

Petru did as he was bid. The Welwa neighed so loudly that Petru thought he should be deafened, then, though so tired that it was scarcely able to move, rushed upon the hero. The fight was now not long. Petru managed to throw the bridle over this Welwa's head, too.

When broad day came, the hero was riding on the fourth horse. "May you have a beautiful wife, for you have delivered me from enchantment!" said the Welwa.

They rode on, and when night was shrouding the day, they reached the borders of the Gold Forest.

While pursuing their way Petru began to get tired, and, in order to have something to do, examined the beautiful wreaths. "What shall I do with the wreaths?" he said to himself. "One is enough for me. I'll keep the handsomest." So he threw down the copper one, then the silver one, and reserved only the gold garland.

"Stop," said the bay horse. "Don't throw the wreaths away. Dismount and pick them up, they may yet be useful to you."

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Petru did as he was told and rode on. Toward evening, when the sun was only a hand's breadth above the horizon and the little flies were beginning to swarm, our rider reached the edge of the forest. Before him stretched a wide moor, on which as far as the eye could wander nothing was visible. The horses stopped.

"What is it?" asked Petru.

"We may fare badly here," replied the bay.

"Why should we fare badly?"

"We are now entering the domain of Holy Wednesday. So long as we ride through it, we shall experience nothing but cold, cold, cold. Fires are kept burning all along the roadside, and I'm afraid you will go and warm yourself."

"Why shouldn't I warm myself?"

"You'll fare badly if you do," said the bay anxiously.

"Forward," said Petru fearlessly, "I will be cold, too, if necessary."

The further Petru entered Holy Wednesday's kingdom the more he felt that it was no pleasant region. At every step the air grew colder and frostier, there was so much cold and ice that it froze even the marrow in one's bones. But Petru was no coward, he proved as brave in enduring hardship as he had been in battle. Along the roadside one fire after another was burning, and beside these fires were gathered groups of people who called to him in the sweetest, most enticing words. Petru's very breath froze, yet he did not yield, but ordered the bay to go on at a walk. How long our hero battled with the cold and frost can not be told, for every body knows that Holy Wednesday's kingdom is longer than one stone's throw or even two. The cold there is not moderate, but bitter, so bitter that even the rocks are split by the frost. That's the way it is in that country. But Petru had not grown up without some hardships, so he only ground his teeth,

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though he was so benumbed that he couldn't even wink.

They reached Holy Wednesday. Petru dismounted, flung the bridle over the bay's head, and entered the house.

"Good morning, mother."

"Thank you, my frozen hero!"

Petru laughed, but made no answer.

"You have proved yourself a brave fellow," said Holy Wednesday, patting him on the shoulder. "Now I'll give you the reward." She went to an iron chest, opened it, and took out a little box. "See," she said, "this casket has been destined from the earliest times for the person who penetrated the realm of the cold. Take it and guard it carefully, for it may be of great service to you. When you open it, you will receive news from whatever place you desire and truthful tidings from your native land."

Petru thanked her for her words and her gift, mounted his horse, and rode on. After he was a good stone's throw away, he opened the magic box. "What do you command?" asked something inside.

"Give me news of my father," replied Petru rather timidly.

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"He is sitting in the council chamber with the elders of the kingdom."

"Is he prospering?"

"Not especially; he has troubles."

"Who is annoying him?" asked Petru, somewhat sharply.

"Your brothers, Costan and Florea," the voice in the box answered. "As it seems to me, they are trying to wrest the scepter from him and the old monarch says that they are not yet worthy of it."

"Forward, bay, we have no time to lose," cried Petru. Then, shutting the box, he put it into his knapsack.

They hurried as ghosts flit when whirlwinds are blowing and vampires hunting at midnight. How long they rode can not be told, but it was a long, long time.

"Stop! Let me give you another piece of advice," said the bay after a while.

"Well, tell me," said Petru.

"You have been tormented by the cold, now you'll have to encounter heat such as you never felt before. Keep up your courage, and don't let yourself be attracted to the cool places."

"Forward!" replied Petru. "Don't be anxious—if I didn't freeze, I shan't melt."

Indeed! This heat was enough to melt the very marrow of one's bones, a heat that exists nowhere except in the kingdom of Holy Thursday.<sup>[7]</sup> The further they went the greater the heat became. Even the iron of the horses' shoes began to melt, but Petru would not yield. The perspiration ran down his body in streams, he wiped it away with his sleeve, and rode swiftly on. As for the heat, intense as it became, there was something else that tortured Petru more. Along the roadside, always a good stone's throw apart, were cool valleys with cold springs ready to quench the traveler's thirst. When Petru looked at them, he felt as if his heart was shriveled and his tongue dried up with thirst. Lilies, violets, and roses grew in the soft grass around the springs, and on these beds of flowers reclined girls so beautiful that heaven only knows how it would have been possible for them to be lovelier. Petru would fain have shut his eyes in order not to see such bewitching creatures any longer.

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[7] Joi—Thursday and Jupiter.

"Come, hero, come to the cooling waters, let us amuse you," called the enticing maidens.

Petru silently shook his head, he had lost the power of speech.

They rode on so for a long, long time. Suddenly they felt that the heat was beginning to lessen, and on a distant hill-top a hut appeared. This was the dwelling of Holy Thursday. Petru approached, and when almost at the door Holy Thursday came out and welcomed him. Petru expressed his thanks, as is customary among distinguished and well-behaved people, and they entered into conversation as people who have never seen each other are in the habit of doing. Petru brought news of Holy Wednesday, related his adventures, and mentioned the goal for which he had started, and then bade her farewell, for he really had no time to lose. Who could tell how far he still had to go to reach the Fairy Aurora?

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"Wait a little while, until I can say a few words to you," said Holy Thursday. "You are now about to enter the domain of Holy Friday;<sup>[8]</sup> go to her and tell her that I wish her health and happiness. When you return, come to me again, and I'll give you something that will be useful to you."

[8] Vineri means Friday as well as Venus.

Petru thanked her and rode on.

He had scarcely ridden long enough to smoke a pipeful of tobacco, when he entered a new country. Here it was neither hot nor cold, but like the climate in spring when the lambs are being weaned. Petru began to breathe easily, but he was on a desolate moor consisting of sand and thistles.

"What can this be?" asked Petru, when he saw an object something like a house, but a long, long distance off; just where his eyes beheld the end of the dreary heath.

"That is Holy Friday's house," replied the bay; "if we ride on, we may be able to reach it before dark."

And so it happened. Night was just closing in as the hero slowly neared the distant house. On the moor was a throng of phantoms flitting on Petru's right and left hand, before and behind him.

"Don't be afraid," said the bay. "Those are the Whirlwind's daughters; they are dancing in the air, waiting for the moon eater." [213]

So they reached Holy Friday's house. "Dismount and enter," said the bay.

Petru was about to do what he had been told.

"Stop, don't be in such a hurry," the horse continued. "Let me first tell you what you are to do. You can't go into Holy Friday's house so unceremoniously; she is guarded by the Whirlwinds."

"What am I to do?"

"Take the copper wreath and go with it to the hill you see yonder. When you reach the top, begin to call: 'Good Heavens, what beautiful girls, what angels, what fairy-like creatures!' Then hold the garland aloft, and say: 'If I only knew whether any body would take this wreath from me—if I only knew! If I only knew!' and hurl the garland away."

"Why should I do that?" asked Petru, as a man is in the habit of questioning, when he wants to know the cause of his acts.

"Silence! Go and do it," replied the bay curtly, and Petru, without further words, did as he was bid.

Scarcely had the hero flung the wreath aside, when the Whirlwinds rushed upon it and tussled around it.

Petru now turned toward the house.

"Stop," cried the bay again, "I haven't yet told you every thing. Take the silver wreath and knock at Holy Friday's window. When she asks 'Who is there?' say that you came on foot and have lost your way on the moor. She will rebuff you. But you mustn't stir from the spot. Say to her: 'I won't go away, for ever since I was a little child I have always heard of Holy Friday (Venus) and—I didn't have steel shoes made with calf-skin straps, did not travel nine years and nine months, did not fight for this silver wreath I want to give her, did not do and suffer all these things merely to turn back now that I have reached her.' Act and speak as I have told you—what follows must be your own care." [214]

Petru made no reply, but went up to the house. As it was perfectly dark, the hero did not see the dwelling, and was guided only by the rays of light streaming through the window. When he reached the house several dogs began to bark, because they knew some stranger was near.

"Who is fighting with the hounds? May his life be bitter," cried Holy Friday angrily.

"It is I, Holy Friday!" said Petru, with laboring breath, like a man who likes and yet is not quite satisfied with what he is doing. "I have lost my way on the moor, and don't know where I can spend the night." Here he stopped, not daring to say more.

"Where did you leave your horse?" asked Holy Friday rather sharply.

Petru reflected; he did not know whether he ought to tell a lie or speak the truth, so he made no answer.

"Go, in God's name, my son, I have no room for you," said Holy Friday retiring from the window.

Petru now repeated what the horse had told him to say. Scarcely had he done so, when he saw Holy Friday open the window. [215]

"Let me see the wreath, my son," she said sweetly, in a gentle tone.

Petru gave her the garland.

"Come into the house," said Holy Friday, "don't be afraid of the dogs, they know what I want."

It was even so. The dogs began to wag their tails, and followed Petru as they follow a master returning home from the fields at night. Petru said "good evening" as he entered, laid his hat on the oven, and when Holy Friday invited him to sit down took his place on a bench by the stove. They now talked about everyday matters, the world, the wickedness of mankind, and similar things, without any special reason or purpose. It appeared from her talk that Holy Friday was very much incensed against men; but Petru agreed with her in every thing—as is proper for a person who is sitting at another's table.

Heavens, how old the aged dame looked! I don't know why young Petru devoured her so with his eyes, that he might have given her the Evil eye. Was he counting the wrinkles in her face? He would have needed to be born seven times in succession, and each time live seven times as long as an ordinary human life, to have leisure to number them all. But Holy Friday's heart laughed with joy, when she saw Petru completely absorbed in gazing at her.

"When the present state of things had no existence," Holy Friday began, "before the world was made, I was born, and was so beautiful a child that my parents created the earth, in order to have somebody to admire my loveliness. By the time the world was made I had grown up and, amid all the marveling at my beauty, the Evil eye fell upon me. Since then every century a wrinkle has formed on my face. And now I am old!" Holy Friday's grief and anger would allow her to say no more. [216]

In the course of the conversation Holy Friday told Petru that her father had once been a great and powerful emperor, and once, when a quarrel broke out between him and the Fairy Aurora, who ruled the adjoining country, he had been shamefully mocked at by his neighbor. Then she began to say all sorts of things about the Fairy Aurora. What was Petru to do? He listened in silence, now and then saying: "Yes, yes, it is really too bad." What else could he do?

"But I will set you a task, if you are a brave champion and will perform it," said Holy Friday, when both began to be sleepy. "At the Fairy Aurora's is a spring—whoever drinks from it will bloom like the rose and the violet. Bring me a jug of the water, and I shall know how to show you my gratitude. It's a difficult task, heaven knows! The Fairy Aurora's kingdom is guarded by all sorts of wild beasts and terrible dragons. But I want to tell you something else, and give you something too."

After Holy Friday had said this, she went to a chest bound with iron on every corner and took out a tiny little flute.

"Look," she said to Petru, "an old man gave me this when I was young. Whoever hears its notes falls asleep and sleeps till they are heard no longer. Take the instrument, and play upon it so long as you remain in the Fairy Aurora's kingdom. No one will harm you, for every creature will be asleep." [217]

Petru now told his hostess what he meant to do, and Holy Friday was still more delighted. They did not talk much more. Why should they? it was already long past midnight. Petru said "good night," thrust the flute into its case, and went up to the garret to get some sleep. When morning dawned, the hero was already awake and the morning-star had hardly risen in the sky ere he was up. He took a large manger, filled it with red-hot coals, and went out to feed his horses. After the bay had eaten nine and each of the other horses three full cribs of fire, Petru led them to the spring, watered them, and prepared to continue his journey.

"Stop," Holy Friday called from the window. "I have a word more to say. I want to give you a piece of advice."

Petru went to the window.

"Leave one horse here, and go on with only three. Ride slowly until you have reached the Fairy Aurora's kingdom. Then dismount and enter her country on foot. Then, when you return, come so that you will leave all three steeds lying in the road and arrive here on foot."

"I will obey every word," said Petru, trying to go on.

"Don't be in a hurry, I haven't finished yet," Holy Friday continued. "Don't look at the Fairy Aurora, for her eyes bewitch, her glances rob a man of his reason. She is ugly, too ugly to be described. She has owl's eyes, a fox's face, and cat's claws. Do you hear? Don't look at her. And may the Lord bring you back to me safe and sound, my son Petru." [218]

Petru thanked her for her counsel and lingered no longer. Where should he find time to gossip with old women? He left the bay horse in the meadow and continued his journey.

Far, far away, where the sky meets the earth and the stars talk to the flowers, appeared a bright rosy glow, almost like that of the sky in early spring, only still more beautiful and wonderful. This was the Fairy Aurora's palace. The whole space between was filled with flowery meadows. Then, too, it was neither warm nor cold, neither light nor dark, but midway between, just as it is on St. Peter's day when one rises early in the morning to drive the cattle to pasture. Petru rode through this beautiful region with a happy heart. How long he rode can not be told in human language, for in that country night does not follow day and day night; it was always early morning with soft, cool breezes, a viewless sun, and a dim light—the reign of day and night first began in Holy Friday's land. After a long journey, Petru saw something white appear amid the rosy glow of the sky. The nearer he approached the more distinctly he saw what was now before his eyes. It was the fairy-palace. Petru gazed and gazed, then drew a long breath like a man who says, "Oh, Lord, I thank thee!" But ah, how beautiful this palace was! Lofty turrets stretching far above the clouds, walls white as sea-shells, and brighter than the sun at noon-day, a roof of silver—but what kind of silver? it did not even glitter in the sun—and the windows were all spun from air and set in frames of dull gold. Over all these things the merry sunbeams played, as the wind plays with the shadows of the branches in the spring, when it is so indolent that it scarcely stirs. [219]

Petru could not stay long, for he was in a hurry; so he dismounted, let the horses graze on the dewy grass, took his flute, as Holy Friday had directed, and saying, "God be with me!"

commenced his tremendous task. He had scarcely walked three stones' throws when he saw a giant, lulled to sleep by the sweet notes of the flute. This was one of the guardians of the Fairy Aurora's palace. As he lay there on his back Petru began to measure him by paces. I won't exaggerate, but he was so big that when Petru had walked from his feet to his head he heaved a sigh, he did not exactly know whether from fatigue or fear. It would have been no wonder if he was astounded. The rising moon is not so large as the giant's eye. And this eye was not even like other people's, but in the middle of the giant's forehead. Such was the eye! What could the rest have been! Petru was a brave hero, but he heartily thanked God, the flute, and Holy Friday, that he had not got into a fight with this monster of a man, and softly continued his way. The prince had walked about as far as a man usually goes before he feels inclined to sit down in the shade, when he encountered still more terrible foes. Dragons, each with seven heads, were stretched out in the sun sound asleep, some on his right hand, others on the left. How these dragons looked I can not describe: nowadays every body knows that dragons are not things to be trifled with or laughed at. Petru hurried swiftly past them, but I really don't know whether it was from haste or fear. And it would have been no wonder if he was afraid! A dragon is a dragon!

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The prince now reached a river. But let nobody suppose it was an ordinary stream; milk flowed instead of water, not over sand and gravel, but over gems and pearls, and it ran neither slowly nor quickly, but both slowly and quickly at the same time, like the days of happy mortals. This was the river that flowed around the palace without ever stopping or moving. On the bank, each one leap from the other, lions were sleeping. And such lions! They had golden hair, and teeth and claws tipped with iron. These were the guardians of the other bank of the river, where there was a beautiful garden, as beautiful as gardens can only be in the Fairy Aurora's realm. On the shore grew the fairest flowers and upon these blossoms fairies, each more beautiful and bewitching than the others, slept sweetly side by side. Petru did not even dare to glance that way. The prince now asked himself how he was to get across the stream. It was broad and deep and had only one bridge, and this bridge, too, was unlike any other in the world. On each bank was a bridge-head, each guarded by four sleeping lions! But as to the bridge—no human soul could cross it. One saw it with the eyes, but felt nothing but empty air if he tried to set foot on it. Who knows of what material it was made! Perhaps a little cloud.

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Enough, Petru remained on the river bank. Cross? That he could not do. Swim over it? That was not to be thought of! What should he do? Well, we needn't worry about Petru, he isn't easily frightened. He turned and went back to the giant. "We'll run the risk," he thought, "we'll talk to each other. Wake up, my brave fellow," he shouted, pulling the monster by the sleeve of his coat. When the giant awoke he stretched out his hand toward Petru—just as we do when we try to catch a fly. Petru blew upon the flute, and the giant fell back to the ground. So Petru waked him and put him to sleep again, three times in succession,—that is, he waked him three times and made him go to sleep three times. When this was to be done for the fourth time, Petru unfastened his cravat, tied the giant's two little fingers together with it, then drew his sword, and, tapping the monster on the breast, cried, "Wake up, my brave fellow!"

When the giant saw what a sorry jest had been played upon him, he said to Petru: "Hark ye, this is no fair fight! Fight honestly, if you are a hero!"

"Wait a while, I want to talk with you first," said Petru. "Swear that you will carry me over the river, then I'll release you for a fair fight."

The giant took the oath, and Petru let him rise. When he was fairly awake he rushed upon the prince to crush him at a single blow. But he had met his match. Petru was more than a day old, and he, too, dashed boldly on the foe. They fought for three days and three nights; the giant seized Petru and hurled him on the ground so that he drove him into the earth up to his knees, but Petru buried the giant to his waist; then the giant thrust him into the ground to his breast, and finally Petru forced the giant down to his neck. When the giant found himself cornered in this way he cried out in terror, "Let me go, let me go, I own myself conquered!"

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"Will you carry me over the river?" asked Petru.

"I will!" he replied from the hole in the ground.

"What shall I do to you if you break your promise?"

"Kill me; do whatever you choose with me, only let me live now!"

"Be it so!" said Petru, then taking the giant's left hand he tied it to his right foot, stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth so that he could not cry out, bandaged his eyes to prevent him from seeing, and led him to the river.

When they reached the stream the giant put one foot on the opposite bank, took Petru on the palm of his hand and set him carefully on the further shore.

"That's right!" said Petru; then he blew on his flute and the giant sank down on the river bank.

When the fairies, who were bathing in the milky waves of the river, heard the sound of Petru's flute they felt sleepy, came out, and fell asleep on the blossoms along the shore, where Petru found them when he got down from the palm of the giant's hand. He did not venture to linger long with them. They were beautiful, heaven knows! What must the Fairy Aurora herself be? Or was she the ugliest among the fair ones? The prince did not stop to ask himself many questions, but set off to see.

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When he entered the garden, he began to wonder again. Much as he had seen and experienced, he had never beheld any thing so beautiful. The trees all had golden branches, the waters of the fountains were clearer than dew, the wind blew with a musical sound, and the flowers whispered sweet, loving words. Petru wondered still more when he found that there was not a single unfolded blossom in the garden, nothing but buds. It seemed as if the world had stood still here, and it was always spring. Yet when did the flowers bloom, if they had not yet had time to open? And, if they did not bloom, why was it? This question, and many another one, Petru asked himself on his way to the palace. No one barred his progress, no one interfered with his thoughts, every body was asleep; the nymphs beside the fountains, the birds on the boughs, the deer in the thickets, and the butterflies on the flowers, all were sunk in dreams by the music of the flute. Nay, even the wind no longer played with the leaves, the sunbeams no longer drank the dewdrops from the grass, and the river had ceased to flow. Petru alone was awake, awake with his thoughts, and his wonder at these thoughts. He reached the court-yard of the palace. Around it stretched a thick, beautiful grass-plot—a grass plot that swayed like the wind. Before him was the gate—a gate made entirely of flowers and other beautiful things. Below and beside the gate were more flowers, each one more beautiful than the other, so that Petru fancied he was treading upon clouds as he passed over them. On the right and left slept fairies, who should have guarded the entrance of the court-yard. Petru looked around him in every direction, said once more, "God be with me!" and entered the palace.

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What Petru saw I can not describe; surely every body knows that the palace of the Fairy Aurora can be no ordinary place. Around it were petrified fairies, trees with golden leaves, and flowers made of pearls and gems, columns wrought of sunbeams, steps as soft and lustrous as the couches of princesses, and a sweet, soothing atmosphere. Such was the court-yard of the Fairy Aurora's palace, and it could have been no different. Why should it? Petru went up the steps and entered the palace. The first twelve rooms were hung with linen, the next twelve with silk; then came twelve decked with silver and twelve with gold. Petru passed swiftly through the whole forty-eight, and in the forth-ninth apartment, which was the most magnificent of all, he found the Fairy Aurora. The chamber was large, broad, and high, like one of the finest churches. The walls were covered with all sorts of silk and beautiful things, and on the floor, where one sets one's foot, was something, I don't know exactly what, but something as glittering as a mirror and as soft as cushions, besides many other beautiful things, such as a Fairy Aurora must have. Where should there be lovely things, if not in her palace! As has been said, Petru fairly held his breath when he saw himself in the midst of so much beauty. In the center of this church, or whatever it was, Petru saw the famous fountain on whose account he had taken so long a journey, a fountain like any other, with nothing extraordinary about it. One couldn't help wondering that the Fairy Aurora allowed it to be in her room. It had staves such as were used in ancient times, but they had evidently been allowed to remain for some special purpose.

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And now I will tell a wonderful thing. Beside the fountain lay the Fairy Aurora herself—the real Fairy Aurora! The couch was made of gold and heaven knows what else, but it was a beautiful one, and on it slept the Fairy Aurora, resting on silken cushions filled with spring breezes. Of course she was not beautiful. Why should she be? Had not Holy Friday said that she was a combination of hideous things? Why should we delay in our words? Perhaps Holy Friday was right! It might be so. Enough—when Petru looked at her as she slept there on her couch, he held his breath and no longer played on the magic flute—he was petrified by this wonder of wonders. No, she was beautiful, far, far more beautiful than one would expect the Fairy Aurora must be! I'll say no more.

On the right and left of the couch slept twelve of the prettiest fairies in the kingdom, who had evidently been overtaken by slumber while waiting on their queen. Petru was so absorbed in gazing at the Fairy Aurora that he did not notice them till, no longer hearing the flute, they stirred in their sleep. Petru, too, trembled, and began to play again. The whole palace was once more sunk in slumber, and the prince advanced three paces.

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Between the couch and the fountain was a table on which were a tender white loaf, kneaded with roe's milk, and a goblet of red wine, sweet as a morning dream. This was the bread of strength and the wine of youth. Petru looked once at the bread, once at the wine, and once at the Fairy Aurora, then with three steps more reached the couch, the table, and the fountain. When he stood beside the couch he fairly lost his senses—he really could not control himself, and stooping bit the Fairy Aurora. She opened her eyes, and looked at the prince with a glance which made him lose his senses still more. He played upon his flute that she might fall asleep again, placed the golden wreath on her brow, took a piece of bread from the table, drank a sip of the wine of youth, then bit the fairy again, ate another mouthful of bread, and drank more wine. This he did three times in succession. Thrice he bit the Fairy Aurora, thrice he ate of the bread, and thrice he tasted the wine. Then he filled the jug with water from the fountain and vanished like a piece of good news.

When the hero entered the garden he found an entirely new world. The flowers were flowers, the buds had opened, the fountains played faster, the sunbeams danced more cheerily on the palace walls, and the fairies' faces looked more joyous. All this was due to the three bites.

Petru went away by the same road that he came, amid the fairies and flowers, on the palm of the giant's hand, past lions, dragons, and other monsters. Then, seated in his saddle, he cast one glance back and saw that the whole world behind him was in motion. Hi! But they had somebody before them worth chasing. Not like the wind, not like thought, not like longing, not like a curse, but even faster than happiness vanishes, Petru hurried on his way. The pursuers were left

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behind, and the prince reached Holy Friday on foot. Holy Friday knew that he was coming by the neighing of the bay horse, which had felt its master's approach three days off, so she came to meet him, bringing some white bread and red wine.

"Welcome back, prince!"

"Good morning, thank you kindly, Holy Friday."

Petru then handed her the jug of water from the Fairy Aurora's fountain, and his hostess thanked him most warmly. They exchanged a few words about the prince's journey, the Fairy Aurora's palace, and the beauty of this sister of the Sun—then Petru saddled the bay, for he really had no time to lose. Holy Friday listened sometimes joyously, sometimes bitterly, sometimes merrily, sometimes angrily, but when she saw that Petru was surely going, to carry home his portion of the water from the fairy fountain, she wished him health and happiness.

Petru did not stop till he reached Holy Thursday. Here he dismounted and entered as had been agreed, but did not stay long, merely greeted her, talked a little while, and then said farewell.

"Stop, let me tell you something else before you go on," said Holy Thursday anxiously. "Take care of your life; enter into conversation with no one, don't ride too fast, don't let go of the water, believe no promises, and fly from lips that speak sweet words! Go as you came, the way is long, the world is wicked, and you have something very valuable in your hand, so listen to me. I give you this handkerchief, it is made neither of gold, silver, silk, nor pearls, but striped linen; take good care of it, it is enchanted. Whoever carries it no thunderbolt can strike, no lance stab, no sword slay, and no bullet pierce." [228]

Such were Holy Thursday's words. Petru took the handkerchief and listened to her counsel; then dashed off on the bay, hurrying as fairy princes do hurry, when seized by homesickness. Petru did not dismount at Holy Wednesday's, but said, "How do you do," from his horse's back and rode on. Just at the right time he remembered his enchanted box, and, wishing to know what was going on in the world, drew it out of its case. He had barely pulled it out and not wholly opened it, when the voice inside said:

"The Fairy Aurora is angry because you took the water away. Holy Friday is angry because she has broken her jug, your brothers Florea and Costan are angry because you have wrested the empire from them."

Petru began to laugh when he heard of so much anger. He did not exactly know what else to ask. "How did Holy Friday break the jug?" he said at last.

"She began to dance with joy, and fell down with it." [229]

"How have I wrested the empire from my brothers?"

The box now began to relate how Florea and Costan, as the emperor was now old and blind in both eyes, had gone to him and begged him to divide his kingdom between them. The emperor had replied that no one should rule the land except he who brought water from the Fairy Aurora's fountain. "As the brothers understood his meaning they went to old Birscha, who told them that you had been there, accomplished the feat, and set out on your way home. Your brothers consulted together and are now on their way to meet you, kill you, take the water from you, and reign over the country."

"You lie, you accursed box," cried Petru furiously, when he heard all this, and dashed the casket upon the ground so that it broke into seventy-seven pieces. He had not ridden much further, ere he saw the clouds of his own country, felt his native breezes, and beheld here and there, in the distance, one of the mountain peaks on the frontiers of his home. Petru stopped, that he might see more distinctly what it seemed to him that he only fancied he perceived.

He was just going to cross the bridge on the borders of the empire, when he thought he heard a distant sound, as though some one were calling him, and even shouting his name: "Ho! Petru!" He wanted to halt.

"Forward, forward," cried the bay. "You'll fare badly if you stop." [230]

"No, no, stop! Let us see who and what it is, and what is wanted. Let me look the world in the face!" So saying, Petru turned the bay's bridle.

Oh, Petru, Petru! Who told you to stop? Wouldn't it be better for you to remember what Holy Thursday said to you? Wouldn't it be better for you to heed the bay's counsel? That's the way of the world, you can do nothing to change it!

When he turned, he saw his brother Florea and his brother Costan. They were both there, and approached Petru. Forward, Petru, hurry on! Or did not Holy Thursday tell you that you must enter into conversation with no one? Or do you no longer remember the tidings Holy Wednesday's box brought you? The brothers drew near with fair words and honey on their lips. What did Holy Thursday say? Petru, Petru, have you forgotten?

When Petru saw his dear brothers, he leaped from the bay's back and rushed into their arms. Dear me! how could he help it? How long it was since he had seen a human face or heard one word of human speech! The conversation flowed as it flows among brothers. Petru was gay and happy; Florea and Costan were full of sweet words, there was honey on their lips. Only the bay

was sad and hung his head mournfully. After the brothers had talked a long time about the old emperor, the country, and Petru's journey, Florea began to frown.

"Brother Petru, this is a wicked world!—wouldn't it be better for you to give us the water to carry? People will come to meet you, but nobody will know any thing about us, whence we come, where we are going, or what we have." [231]

"Yes, indeed," said Costan, "Florea speaks sensibly."

Petru shook his head once or twice, and then told his brothers about his charmed handkerchief. They now perceived that there was only one way to kill the hero, so Florea began to talk to Petru over Costan's shoulders. About three stones'-throws off was a well of clear, cold water.

"Aren't you thirsty, Costan?" asked Florea, winking at Costan.

"Yes," replied Costan, understanding what Florea meant. "Come, Petru, let us quench our thirst, and then may God help us on our way. We'll follow you to protect you from annoyance and danger."

Don't go, Petru, don't go, or you'll fare badly! The bay horse neighed but once. Ah, but the hero did not understand. What happened then! What should happen? Nothing!—

The well was broad and deep.

The two brothers went home with the water, as if they had brought it from the Fairy Aurora.

The bay neighed again, so fiercely and mournfully that even the woods shook with fear, then rushed to the well and stood there paralyzed by grief.

This was the story of Petru, the brave, the heroic prince. It seems as if he were destined to arrive at an evil hour.

A banquet was held at the emperor's court, and all sorts of splendid ceremonies were arranged. All through the land went the news that the monarch's sons, Florea and Costan, had brought the water from the Fairy Aurora. The emperor washed his eyes with the water and saw as never mortal man had seen before. In the royal chamber behind the hearth stood a cask, and in the stave of this cask he saw a worm—the emperor could see so well that he looked through the wood. After dividing the empire between his two brave sons, he retired to his large private estates to spend his old age in peace. So ended the story of the water from the Fairy Aurora's fountain. The country celebrated the event for three days and three nights, then the people went to work again as if nothing had happened. [232]

After Petru had left the couch, the palace, and the court-yard, and the sound of his flute could no longer be heard, the Fairy Aurora recovered her consciousness, opened her eyes, raised her head, and looked around her in every direction as if searching for something, though she herself did not exactly know what.

"What was that?" she asked, half awake, half-dreaming—"Who?"

It seemed to her as if she had seen something in a vision,—no, in reality,—something sweet and pleasant. A creature like a human being, but with a more commanding glance, something unlike any thing she had ever beheld before.

"Don't you know what it was? Did you see it too! Or, have you, too, been asleep, been dreaming?"

Such were the questions the Fairy Aurora asked her attendant fays and herself. She felt as if she had had a different soul ever since she saw this wonder. But no one answered her; every one was dumb with amazement. [233]

The Fairy Aurora noticed the wreath: "What a beautiful garland! Who gathered the flowers for it, who twined them into a coronal, and who brought the wreath here and laid it on my couch?"

And the Fairy Aurora became sad.

She saw the bread on the table. Three mouthfuls were missing, one on the right side, one on the left and one out of the middle. It was the same with the wine of youth; three sips were missing, one from the top, one from the bottom, and one from the middle.

Somebody must have been there. The Fairy Aurora grew still more sorrowful; it seemed to her as if she missed something, yet she did not know what or where.

The water in the fountain was turbid. Water! Somebody has taken water away from here! And the Fairy Aurora was wrathful. How had any one been able to enter unperceived? Where were all the sharp-eyed guards? The giants, the dragons, the iron-shod lions, the fairies, the flowers, and the sun—what had they all been doing? Nobody had watched! Had nobody been at his post? The Fairy Aurora now fell into a perfect rage. "Lions! Dragons! Giants! set forth, pursue, catch, seize and bring him back." Such were the orders of the Fairy Aurora in the fury of her wrath. The command was issued and set her whole realm in commotion, but Petru had fled so swiftly that not even the sunbeams could overtake him. All returned sorrowfully; all brought sad tidings. Petru had crossed the frontiers of the kingdom, had gone where the Fairy Aurora's guards possessed no power. [234]

The fairy queen now forgot her anger in her grief, and sent forth the Sun to make seven days into

one, to search, gaze, and bring tidings. During this seven-fold long day the Fairy Aurora did nothing but watch the course of the Sun; she gazed and gazed till the tears began to stream from her eyes, I don't know whether from looking so long or from her great sorrow and yearning.

Lo and behold! On the seventh day the Sun came home,—red, tired, and sad. More bad news. Alas! Petru was where the sunbeams could not penetrate.

When the Fairy Aurora saw that this last trial had also been vain, she gave strict orders throughout her whole country that the fairies should no longer smile, the flowers no longer send forth fragrance, the breezes no longer blow, the springs no more pour forth clear waters, nor the sunbeams shine. Then she commanded that the black veil of darkness should be let down between the world and her empire, a veil so thick that only a single sunbeam should pierce it, to convey the tidings that the sun would not move through the sky until the person who had taken the water from the fountain should come. And this news went through the darkened world. The people agreed that the great light had been solely for the emperor's eye-sight. Nobody in the world saw except the emperor, nobody perceived the annoyances of the darkness except the emperor, and nobody was more unhappy than the emperor. So he advised and commanded his sons, Florea and Costan, to set out and free the world from darkness. [235]

Whoever lies once, will lie a second time; Florea mounted his horse and rode by the way Petru had smoothed to the Fairy Aurora's kingdom. When he had nearly reached her court, the fairy felt that some stranger was approaching.

"Is any body coming?" she asked, rather sharply.

"Some one is coming," replied the dragons who mounted guard at the bridge.

"How is he coming? Over or under the bridge?"

The bridge was what we know. Florea passed under it.

"The hero is passing under the bridge!" replied the dragons, somewhat amused.

"See to him, or the light will become black to you," said the fairy, receiving Florea at his entrance. Florea was thrilled by the sight of so much beauty.

"Welcome, my hero! Did you steal the water?"

"Yes, you are right, I took it."

"Did you drink the wine?"

Florea remained silent.

"Did you eat the bread?"

"No," said Florea.

"Did you bite me?"

Florea was silent.

"Then may you lose your sight! I'll teach you to tell another falsehood!" said the fairy, angrily, giving Florea two cuffs, one on the right ear and the other on the left, till every thing grew as dark before his eyes as mortal sin. Two dragons led the blind prince out of the palace, and the matter was settled. [236]

Costan now set out to follow his brother's example. He set out for the Fairy Aurora's palace, reached it, and fared just as Florea had done—he, too, left it a blind man.

There was now not a single ray of light in the whole earth. The world was deprived of light on account of one emperor's eyes.

After the Fairy Aurora had found that she could not recover Petru, she summoned every one in her whole domain; the fairies, the flowers, in short, all her subjects. Even the sun himself was obliged to come down from the sky, unharness the horses from his chariot, lead them to the stable, and go to the Fairy Aurora's palace. When all were thus assembled, the beautiful queen gave them no further commands, but in her grief and suffering bade farewell to all her subjects, thanked them for their love and confidence, and sent them out into the world, that each one might act according to his own ideas, keeping only two lions, two large and two small dragons, and two giants, that she might have somebody to guard the bridge. She sent all the fairies into the garden, telling them not to come back to the court till she was happy once more, then gave orders that the flowers should henceforth cease to smell so sweet that every human being would carry them away, the winds wail so piteously that no mortal could help weeping to hear them, the springs send forth bitter waters, and the sun daily cast seven times seven cold rays into the world. After saying all these things, she went to the great wheel on which the threads of human life are wound, stopped it, so that it could no longer turn, and human existence became changeless. Then the Fairy Aurora hid herself from the world in the darkest and dreariest corner of her whole palace. [237]

The big and little dragons and the giants went out into the wide world and hid themselves for very shame in the most secluded caves and deserts, so that they could no longer be seen by any human eye; the lions shook the gold from their manes, the iron from their teeth and paws, and



became furious with rage; the fairies concealed themselves in the garden; the flowers, springs, and winds obeyed the Fairy Aurora's will; and the cold rays of the sun, lacking both warmth and light, can still be seen in the sky on summer nights. Human life was at a stand, time ceased to move. Two lions, two big and two little dragons, and two giants mounted guard at the bridge. How long the Fairy Aurora's kingdom remained in this state is not known and can not be told. Much time passed without moving.

Holy Friday, too, at last noticed that the Fairy Aurora was angry; the scanty sunbeams, and the whirlwinds which shook the whole world, had brought her the tidings. She was half angry, half pleased,—angry because she could no longer see around her, and pleased because her brave, handsome prince had escaped and her beautiful neighbor was sorrowful. She was provoked, too, because her jug with the wonderful water was broken. But when Holy Friday saw that the darkness did not lessen, the light did not return, and even the very last sunbeam vanished from the earth, she realized that the Fairy Aurora was not jesting, and she ordered the whirlwinds to set out together and remove the great veil on the frontiers of the empire, that light might enter the world. The winds departed, each one more furious, more fierce, more terrible than the other—as whirlwinds usually are. It seemed as if they were taking the world away with them, and meant to tarry on it no longer. They reached the veil and dashed against it. Oh, how strong they were! But the veil did not stir. The whirlwinds blew against it again and again, three times in succession, then they gave up the attempt. They saw that the veil was firmer than the earth itself. After lingering a few moments they returned, wearied and covered with disgrace, and once more circled around the earth in their wild rage. You can imagine what happened to every thing that came in their way. Nothing good at any rate. Alas! alas!

[238]

The whirlwinds returned to Holy Friday and told her about the veil. Holy Friday was now not only half-angry, but wholly enraged, so she sent the whirlwinds to the emperor's court to tell Petru he must intercede with the Fairy Aurora and promise to do whatever she asked, that light might return to the world. The whirlwinds set out again—this time somewhat more slowly and peacefully, as people depart when engaged on a good errand to a friendly person. They reached the palace. Petru was not there. The whirlwinds began to act somewhat more willfully. Petru had perished on the way. The whirlwinds circled around the palace from the left, then from the right, then from the center, turned it, twisted it, raised it, and hurled it, till there was nothing left of it. Then they returned to Holy Friday's hut with the news of Petru's death.

[239]

"Go into the world, every one of you, move every thing that can be moved, and find Petru. Bring him to me dead or alive!" said Holy Friday, after she had heard the sad tidings.

For three days and three nights the whirlwinds did not stop blowing. Thrice they uprooted trees, drove the rivers from their beds, dispersed the clouds by beating them against the rocks, swept the bottom of the sea and destroyed the surface of the earth. It was all in vain. They came back to the house, each one more tired, angry and mortified than the other.

Only one still lingered: the Spring wind, the soft, lazy, warm Spring wind. What had become of him? They all knew that he could not have accomplished much. Who knows? Weary as he was, he had perhaps lain down somewhere in the shade. Nobody troubled his head any more about him. Suddenly, after a short time, when all were racking their brains to discover Petru, the leaves began to stir gently.

Holy Friday felt the soft air, and went out. "What news do you bring?" she asked the favorite of all the winds.

"Sad, very sad, yet good,"—whispered the young wind. "After I grew tired of so much searching, destroying, and pulling, I reached an empty well, and, being rid of my brothers, thought I would rest a while before setting off for home."

[240]

"And you found Petru at the bottom of the well?" cried Holy Friday, joyfully.

"Yes, and the bay by his side."

"May your speech be sweet, your breezes soft, and may you ever bring good tidings!" said Holy Friday; then she commanded him to hasten to Holy Thursday and tell her she must be ready with the gold crucible, for Petru was in a sad case:—from there the Spring wind was to rush to Holy Wednesday and tell her she must come to the well with the water of life. "Do you understand?" said Holy Friday. "And go as fast as you can," and they all set off together.

They reached the deserted well. There was nothing left of Petru except bones and ashes. Holy Wednesday took the bones and fitted them together—not a single one was missing. Holy Friday ordered the whirlwinds to search the bottom of the well, turn up all the dust, and collect Petru's ashes. This was done. Holy Thursday made a fire, gathered the dew from the flowers into the gold crucible, and set it on the flames. When the water began to boil, Holy Wednesday repeated three spells, looked once to the east, once to the west, once to the north, and once to the south, and threw the herb of life into the boiling water. Holy Friday did the same with Petru's ashes. Holy Thursday counted one, two, three, and took the crucible off the fire. Petru's ashes and the herb of life were made into a fragrant salve. The Spring wind blew upon it once and stiffened it, then Petru's bones were smeared with it seven times from head to foot, seven times from foot to head, seven times across one way, and seven times across the other, and, when this was done, up sprang the hero, a hundred thousand times handsomer, braver, and prouder than before.

[241]

"Jump on the horse!" said Holy Friday.

As soon as the bay felt his master on his back, he began to neigh and stamp. The animal was more spirited than ever.

"Where shall we go?" the horse asked gayly.

"Home," replied Petru.

"How shall we ride?"

"Like a curse."

Petru expressed his thanks for the service done him, and set off; he rode and rode as fleetly as a curse flies, till he came to the emperor's court.

Nothing was left of the palace except the ground where it had stood. No trace of any human being who could have uttered a word or given any tidings was to be found. At last old Birscha came out of a ruined cellar. Petru learned what had happened and its cause, turned his bay, and went back even more swiftly than he had come. He did not even stop to take breath until he reached the Fairy Aurora's kingdom. The time that had passed since every thing had been in the condition the queen had commanded, can not be told in words. It must have been a long period.

When Petru reached the bridge the sun had only three bright rays, seven warm, and nine cold ones left; all the others had gradually been lost. [242]

The Fairy Aurora felt that some remarkable person must be coming, for it seemed just as it had done when she woke from the dream that had made her so sad. She was longing for something, she knew not what, just as she had then.

"Who is coming?" she asked in a low tone.

"Hold firmly, master," said the bay.

Petru struck in the spurs, drew the bridle, and felt nothing until he was on the other side of the bridge.

"The hero is coming! *Over* the bridge!" cried the guards, waving their hats in the air.

The Fairy Aurora did not stir nor speak.

Petru suddenly rushed up to her, clasped her in his arms, and kissed her—just as fairy princes always kiss bewitching fairies.

The lovely fairy queen felt as she had never felt before. She said nothing more, asked no more questions, but made a sign to have the bay led into the stables of the sun, and entered the palace with Petru.

The fairies began to smile merrily, the flowers to smell sweetly, the springs to pour forth clear waters, the winds to blow cheerily, the wheel of life whirled faster than a top, the black veil fell, and the radiant sun rose high in the heavens, higher than it had ever done before. And in the world there was a light like the sun's, so that for nine years, nine months, and nine days it was so terribly bright that nothing could be seen. [243]

Petru rode home, brought back his old father and mother, had a wedding so magnificent that tidings of it spread through ninety-nine countries, and became emperor of both kingdoms.

His brothers, Florea and Costan, had their sight restored so that they might witness Petru's happiness.

This, dear children, was the story of handsome Prince Petru and the Fairy Aurora, queen of the Land of the Sun.

Petru lived and reigned in peace and health, and who knows whether, by God's help, he may not be reigning still.

**[THE END.]**

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