

THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OF THE RUSSIAN GRANDMOTHER'S WONDER TALES, BY
LOUISE SEYMOUR HOUGHTON AND FRIEDRICH S. KRAUSS

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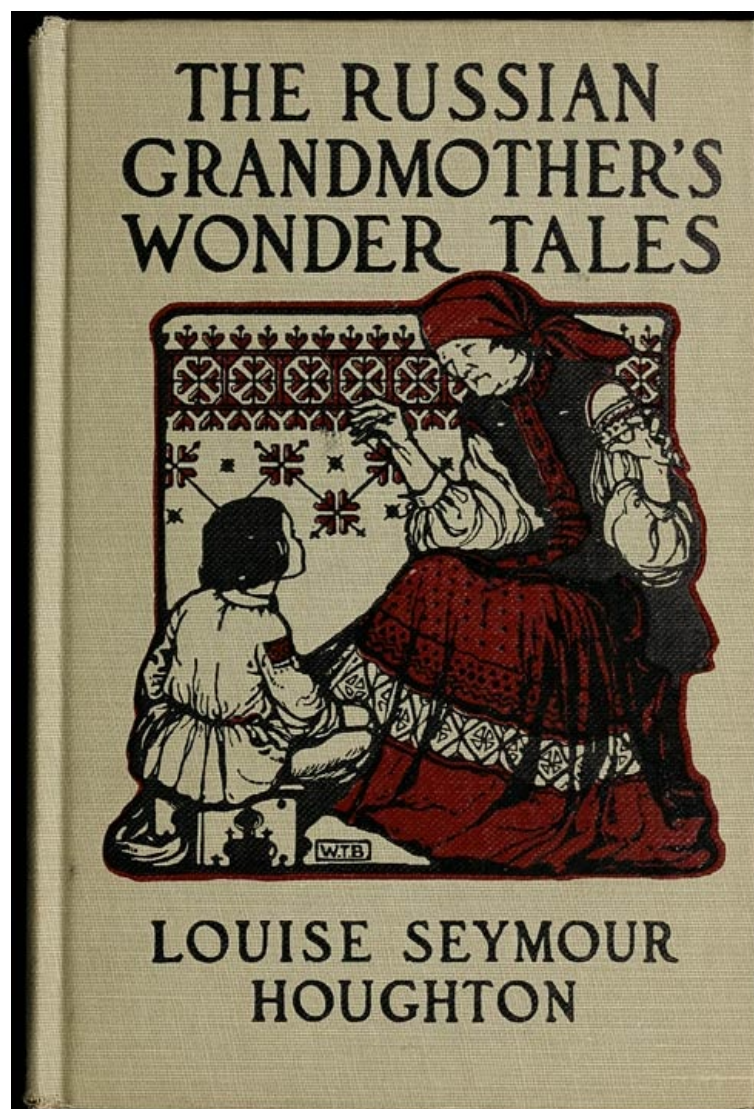
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GRANDMOTHER'S WONDER TALES ***

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THE
RUSSIAN GRANDMOTHER'S
WONDER TALES

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The old woman stole out to the tree, crept under the bed, and there hid herself

The
Russian Grandmother's
Wonder Tales

BY
LOUISE SEYMOUR HOUGHTON

ILLUSTRATED BY
W. T. BENDA

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK

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TO

THE FIVE GRANDCHILDREN

PHILLIPS, SHERRILL, MARGARET, RUSSELL, AND CAROLINE

PREFACE

The stories which the Russian grandmother told will be found, with many others, in a German collection of "Tales and Legends of South Slavonia," put forth in Vienna some twenty years ago by Dr. Friedrich Kraus, an ardent student of folklore. I have sketched in a slight background of peasant village life as it still exists in some parts of Southern Russia, because this is the proper setting of these stories; and I have been careful to clothe them as nearly as I might in the simple language in which they are told to-day by many a village fireside in South Slavonia.

I frankly confess to having received from Mr. Joel Chandler Harris the suggestion which I have thus carried out. It was an unerring literary instinct which impelled him to put upon the lips of *Uncle Remus* and in the environment of a Southern country home of half a century ago the stories which he had found among the colored people of the South. Folk-tales, of whatever character, speak the more directly home to the hearts of children, whatever their own intellectual environment, in proportion as their setting is most nearly that which naturally belongs to them. Just as the highest value of the Homeric poems is their revelation of the heart of man, showing that in all ages and under all conditions heart answers to heart as face answers to face in water, so the folk-tales of all peoples in their native form have a higher function than simply to amuse, a higher than mere literary value; they are the child's best introduction to the study of human nature.

The children will not be the less interested in the stories which the Russian grandmother told to the little peasant boy if they discover in her wonder-tales some analogies with stories that they already know. The adventures of *Master Reinecke* and *Mrs. Petz*, of *Isegrim* and *Lampe*, will surely remind them of the Uncle Remus tales; they will find some suggestion of *Kamer-es-zaman* and the

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Princess Budoor in the story of "The Beg and the Fox," a hint of the "City of Brass," in that of "The Vila in Muhlenberg," a faint reflection of the "Arabian Nights" story of the *Fisherman* in the tale of the "Three Eels," and they will be especially pleased to recognize their old friend—and *Sindbad the Sailor's*—the roc, in the bird *Kumrikusha*. The transformations which are so enchanting a feature of the "Arabian Nights" are here suggested in the story of "Steelpacha," while the dress of feathers, most universal of folk-fancies, found among every people in the world, and most perfectly developed in the Arabian "Story of Hassan of Bassora," here appears in the tale of "The Golden Apple-tree and the Nine Pea-hens."

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That these stories originated in that fountain-head of wonder-tales, the East, is very evident. They give more than a few suggestions of biblical story: the servant sent to announce the readiness of the feast (a courtesy of which I was myself the recipient in Syria last winter), the Delilah-like importunities by which the youngest sister lures from *Steelpacha* the secret of his strength, are perhaps the most striking instances.

Although this preface is not written for the children, yet as there are children who occasionally dip into prefaces, let me call the attention of such to the difference, both in style and point of view, between these stories and those which they have received from the brothers Grimm, from Hans Andersen, and from a host of later writers. All of these drew their material from the same sources as those of the Russian grandmother; but their cultivated minds have worked this material into exquisite literary forms. Not so your own nurses, or even your mothers, who told you wonder-tales before you were old enough to read. Not so the village story-tellers in far-away parts of the world, who, like the Russian grandmother, still hand down to the children the stories they received from parents and grandparents. These sometimes lose the connection; they add little local touches—sweet wine from Zagorjé, going home to Varazdin, and the like—they give to certain incidents the setting with which they are themselves familiar; most artlessly they interweave such results of modern invention and discovery as are familiar to them, with such blank ignorance of physical facts as is shown by bringing in the sun, the moon, the winds, as persons. Many of you know how beautifully George Macdonald did this sort of thing in his story "At the Back of the North Wind," and you perfectly well perceive the difference between that story and such a tale as, for instance, "So Born, So Die," in this book. When you are older you will recognize that it is precisely the difference between literature and folk-lore.

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That many of these wonder-tales passed through Mohammedan minds on their way to the Russian grandmother, or her great-grandmother, is evident. "The Beg and the Fox" is a striking case in point; it almost seems as if the story ought, like the stories of the "Arabian Nights," to close with the exclamation, "There is no God but God, the High, the Great!"

The humor of these stories, however, is unmistakably Slavonic. There is a fine pungency—not Oriental, though Oriental humor is very pungent—in certain of the endings, "I have heard a lie, I have told a lie, and God give you joy!" or after a peculiarly impossible story, "Whoever believes it will be blessed!" The underlying pathos of the story of the Basil-plant suggests the exquisite sentiment of Hans Andersen's "Steadfast Tin Soldier"; but its excessive simplicity, its dropped threads of thought, forbid the idea that it has been worked over by any more sophisticated mind than that of the Russian grandmother.

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In this simple-hearted story-teller I have tried to reproduce some lineaments of the peasant mother to whom, he tells us, Dr. Kraus owes his first impulse to folk-lore research. She was one of nine children of a poor pedler, brought up in a village of charcoal burners, deep in a Slavonian forest. She was illiterate, like our Russian grandmother, but like her intelligent and learned in the wonder-lore of her people. Her son pays her a lovely tribute in the preface to the first volume of his collection:

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She grew up like a flower in the hedge-row, among the simple peasant folk whose manners and spirit she made entirely her own. The villagers, who had a little education, therefore called her, contemptuously, *baba vracana* (the little old sorceress), but the illiterate peasants lovingly named her *nasá baba Eva* (our little mother Eve). But for once the villagers were right, my mother is a sorceress; else, how comes it that I so constantly fall under the spell of her enchantments ... I solemnly declare that if there is a true word in metempsychosis, and it is left to our choice to return to the present state of existence, nothing would so sorely tempt me back, no crown, not even that of learning—as the simple assurance of the All-Father that he would give me again the same dear mother, though I were to go begging with her through the world.

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THE RUSSIAN GRANDMOTHER'S WONDER-TALES

CHAPTER I

THE LITTLE BOY AND THE GRANDMOTHER

The little boy's father was *starosta*, that is, Elder of the village, and the house the little boy lived in was grander than any other, on whichever side of the long street you might look. For it had two rooms opening into the court, and all the other houses, even that of the *pop*, who said Mass in the church on Sunday, had only one. And this grand house was not crowded like the other houses, where the grandparents and the parents and all the married sons and their wives and children lived in the one room. The *starosta* was not a *bolshak*, or head of a family, of the old-fashioned sort. He did not consider that he had a right to rule his children like a despot and make them work for him, however old they might be, as many of the fathers in the village did. He even approved of young people setting up housekeeping by themselves. Therefore, though some of the older *bolshaks* shook their heads and said harm would come of it, when the little boy's elder brother married he permitted him to have a house of his own. It was at the far end of the village.

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Thus, in the little boy's house there were only the grandmother, the father and mother, the three daughters, the half-grown son, and the little boy. They were not at all crowded, you see, for they had two rooms. The cowherd woman and the two *moujiks* who helped the *starosta* on the land, slept, of course, in the stalls with the cattle under the shed that went around three sides of the court. In their warm sheepskin coats, made with the wool outside, they would not have been at all cold, even if the cows beside which they slept had not kept them warm.

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The family always slept warm, too, for father, mother, and all the children slept on the great tile stove which occupied the centre of the larger room, and in this stove the fire never went entirely out. The grandmother did not sleep on this stove, however. The *starosta* greatly honored his old mother, and to her he gave the second room in the house for herself alone. She had a stove all to herself, and slept on it all alone, except when the little boy ran away from the great room and cuddled down beside his grandmother for the night.

She did not tell him stories then, for night is the time for sleeping, and grandmother was tired after a long day in the fields. But on rainy days, when the *starosta* would not permit his old mother to do field work, grandmother would sit at home and spin, and then for happy times!

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It was growing cold weather; the harvests were all in, the rains had begun, and grandmother was sitting by the stove, with her distaff and spindle and a basket of wool by her side. In came the little boy, settled himself in a snug place on the stove-top, and said, very coaxingly:

"Tell me a story, little grandmamma!"

The grandmother ceased the song she had been singing, and answered:

"Shall I tell you about the Wolf that wanted to be a Roman?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" exclaimed the little boy. "Tell me about the wolf!"

So the grandmother began.

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THE WOLF AS A ROMAN

Once upon a time, Isegrim, the Wolf, sat in the forest and thought to himself, "Why should I be a wolf and go around devouring the other beasts? It would be much better for me to go out into the world. What if I should go to Rome? Yes, that's it, I will be a Roman!"

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Off he set in the best of spirits, and on the way he met a Sow. The Sow bristled up in terror, but Isegrim cried out, "Don't be frightened, Gruntelind! I am done with Gruntelinds forever. I am going to be a Roman."

Not long after he met a He-goat. The He-goat was greatly frightened when he saw Isegrim, but the Wolf cried out, "Don't be frightened, Longbeard! I'm not bothering myself with Longbeards. I am going to be a Roman."

Next he met an old Mare. She was horribly frightened, but he quieted her, saying, "Don't be frightened, Skinny-bones! I don't waste my time with old jades like you. I am going to be a Roman."

On went the Wolf for two whole days, when he began to feel a mighty hunger. So he turned back, and presently he came to the pasture where he had met the old Mare. Now was the Mare terrified. She quaked with fear, and well she might, for

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the Wolf said to her, "Mare, I am going to devour you!"

"How dare you say so!" exclaimed the Mare. "You told me you were a Roman."

"Roman here or Roman there," snarled Isegrim, "I am going to gnaw your bones."

"Very well," returned the Mare; "if there is no help for it, come again by and by, when I am plumper and juicier."

So the Wolf went on his way. Presently he met the He-goat. "Ho, Longbeard," cried he, "your time has come!"

"I dare you to touch me!" replied the He-goat. "You are not a Wolf; you are a Roman."

"Roman here or Roman there," retorted the Wolf, "I shall dine on you to-day."

"What must be, must," replied the He-goat; "but since you are bound to eat me, just grant me life till the woods are green again."

The Wolf was beguiled, and on he went till he met the Sow. "Listen to me, Gruntelind," said he; "I am going to make short work with you now."

"You daren't do it," replied the Sow. "You are no Wolf; you are a noble Roman."

"Roman here or Roman there," said the Wolf, "I am bound to eat you."

"Very well," replied the Sow; "since you insist, come another day, when I am fatter."

The Wolf consented, and away he went to look for that Mare again.

"Listen now, Skinny-bones," said he; "you are to die on the spot."

"If your mind is really made up," replied the Mare, "I have nothing to say; but first look at my left hind hoof, for my master had me shod the other day, and the smith marked my age upon the horseshoe. Read how old I am, and then you will be able to boast what an old Mare you have eaten."

The Wolf thought this a fine plan, and he drew near. Then the Mare raised her hoof and dealt Isegrim so smart a blow on the head that he ran off with a cracked crown, as fast as his heels could carry him.

On the way he met the Sow. "See here, Gruntelind," he said to her, "there is no escape this time."

"Very well," replied the Sow; "since there is no help for it, just lead me around by the ear until I say good-by to all my kith and kin."

Isegrim seized her by the ear, when she set up so shrill and piteous a squealing that the Swine all rushed to the spot from far and near, and falling upon Cousin Isegrim they almost tore him in pieces. Mangled and bleeding, he made his escape, and meeting the He-goat, he said, "Your time has come."

"If that is the case," replied the He-goat, "just stand in the middle of the field, with your mouth wide open, and my brothers and I will jump down your throat, one after the other. Then you won't be hungry again for many a long day."

This plan greatly pleased Isegrim, and he took his place in the middle of the field, with his mouth wide open. Then all the He-goats ran against him, butting at him, before and behind, till he could neither hear nor see, and it was all he could do to escape to the nearest wood.

There he spied a Cock, and said to him, "Now, see here, Gockeling, I am not to be fooled by you, at any rate."

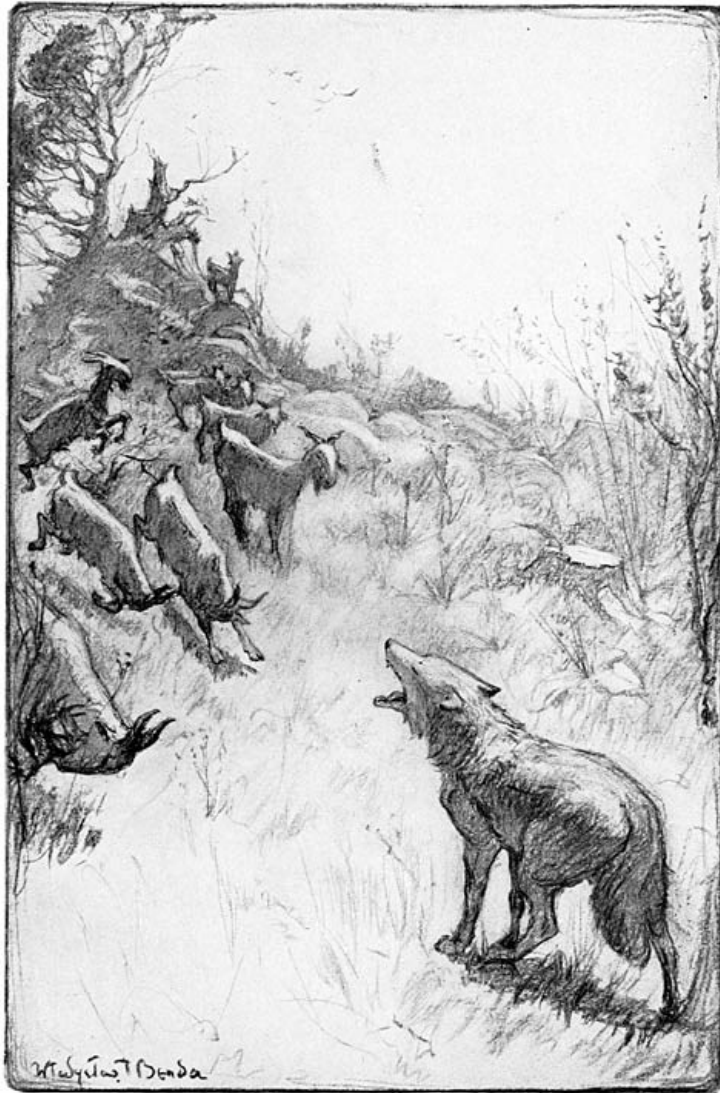
The Cock replied, "Just look at me once, how thin I am and what big feathers I have. Why should you bother to pluck me? It would save you a world of trouble if I got up into this tree and just flew down your throat."

Isegrim thought this a fine idea. So Gockeling flew up into the tree. He hopped from branch to branch until he was in perfect safety, and then crowed loud and lustily to proclaim his escape.

At this the Wolf sank into deep thought. "My father lived comfortably," he said to himself, "and was never a Roman; neither should I have been one—it has served me right. My father was no expert in Mares' paces, yet he lived in peace and happiness; neither should I have been one—it has served me right. My father was

no Swine musician, but he lived well for all that; neither should I have been one—it has served me right. My father never measured a field with He-goats, but he grew gray honorably for all that; only one thing rankles—that this scoundrel up in the tree crows over me so. It would be none too good for me if some one should jump from behind the tree and knock me over the head.”

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Took his place in the middle of the field, with his mouth wide open

As luck would have it, a *moujik* was standing behind the tree, and he fetched the Wolf a blow on the head with his axe. Then Isegrim cried out with his last breath, “Well, I vow, on this blessed day one can’t even talk to himself without being made sorry for it!”

The little boy was thoughtful for a few minutes. “Did you know that Wolf, little grandma?” he asked at length.

“No, not I,” replied the grandmother; “it was my great-great-grandmother who knew him.”

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CHAPTER II

THE MOTHER’S FÊTE-DAY

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It was the fête-day of the little boy’s mother, and she was dressed in the beautiful clothes that had been her mother’s and her grandmother’s festival clothes. Her gown, which she called her *sarafam*, was of a lovely light-blue stuff, and on her head she wore a diadem of gold, all studded with little pearls. Many of the village people came to kiss the *baboushka*’s hand and to bring her gifts, so that the house was quite crowded with people drinking coffee and talking loudly. When the

baboushka went to church to offer thanks she put on her long fur-trimmed *chougaii* (we should call it a coat), and over that a thick, wadded *duchegreika*, or hug-me-tight. It was a cold day, and she was not too warmly clothed, but if her fête-day had come in the heat of summer she would have worn these things just the same.

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The little boy went to church with his mother, and when they came back he was very hungry. But the feast-table was not yet spread, for the *starosta* and the older children were still in the fields pulling stubble. The grandmother was not in the fields, for the day was too cold, so the little boy went into her room. She had on her festival clothes in honor of the feast, but she was spinning as usual and humming a little song.

"I'm so hungry, grandmother," said the little boy.

"Would you spoil the feast by eating now?" asked the grandmother. "The best way is to forget all about being hungry till the feast begins."

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"How can I forget?" asked the little boy. "My mouth cries 'food!'"

"If little grandmother puts a story in your ears will your mouth cease crying?" asked the grandmother.

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried the little boy.

So grandmother told the story of

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THE SICK LION

Once upon a time a Lion lay sick in his den. Master Petz, the Bear, called to pay his respects; whereupon the Lion thus spoke:

"Dear Bruin, tell me the honest truth—is it, or is it not very close in this den?"

"Yes, indeed!" replied Petz, "it does smell horribly here." Upon this the Lion flew into a rage and tore the Bear into a thousand pieces.

Lampe, the Hare, was standing near the door of the den, and observed this mishap. Tremblingly he approached the Lion, who asked him, "Tell me, dear Lampe, is it not close in my den?"

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"Oh, dear, no!" replied the Hare; "why should it be close? On the contrary, the air seems to me delightfully fresh."

"You lie!" retorted the Lion, in high dudgeon; "it is not delightfully fresh; on the contrary, it is disgustingly close," and he tore the Hare limb from limb.

Isegrim, the Wolf, saw and heard all this, for he was standing near the door of the den. He stepped in, and bowed low before the Lion, who immediately put the same question to him, "See here, Isegrim, tell me truly and honestly, is it close in my den or not?"

"Neither, sire!" replied the obsequious Wolf.

"Oh, you good-for-nothing liar!" roared the Lion, "it must be either one or the other; either it is close or it is not," and he seized him and tore him to pieces.

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Reinecke, the Fox, was looking in from outside, and now he drew near to pay his respects. So the Lion asked him, "See here, Master Reinecke, do you tell me now, is it close in my den or not?"

"Pardon me, august monarch," replied Reinecke very humbly, "but by all I hold blessed I am not able to tell you, for I have taken such a cold that, upon honor, I cannot smell. But I do hate a lie from the bottom of my heart."

And the Lion spared Reinecke's life because he had such a clever wit.

"Will the *Báby* and the little boy graciously come to supper?" asked the cow-herd woman, opening the door. "The gracious *baboushka's* feast is ready."

So the little boy and his grandmother, whom they call the *Báby* in Russia, gayly went in to the feast.

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CHAPTER III

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

It was Saturday afternoon, and the little boy had been with his mother to the village vapor-bath. After that he had been dressed in his Sunday clothes. His white shirt, which he called his *roubachka*, hung outside of his best *portki*, or loose, colored trousers. His legs were wound round with many bands of colored cloth, called *onontchi*, and on his feet he wore *bachmaki*, or shoes. When he grew to be a man he would wear very high, large-topped *sapoghi*, with his trousers tucked into them, like his father, and then he would not need *onontchi* on his legs. But he was only a little boy yet.

The *popod'ya* had come to call on his mother. She was the priest's wife, and was very old, and the little boy did not care for what she and his mother were talking about. So he stole away into his grandmother's room. The grandmother was kneeling before the *ikon*, the sacred picture of the Virgin and Child, which hung on the wall with a tiny lamp lighted before it. The little boy would not disturb his grandmother while she was saying her Saturday evening prayer, but he hoped she would not be long. Perhaps she was almost through, for presently she rose from her knees, lifting herself by her stick. The little boy ran to help her, and led her to the stove. She sat down upon it, for her knees were cold from the clay floor, and the little boy climbed up beside her.

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"Now the work is all done, little grandma," he said, putting his hands on either side of her face, "and you can tell me a long story, can't you?"

"Hum, hum!" said the grandmother, pretending to look cross. "Why should I tell you a long story?"

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"Oh, because I have my Sunday clothes on, and must not play in the dirt!" replied the little boy. "Don't you know a long story, grandma?"

"Would you like to hear about

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"WHITELING'S WAR WITH ISEGRIM?"

asked the *Báby*.

"Yes, indeed, that I should!" cried the little boy.

So the grandmother began:

Once upon a time there was a *moujik* who had a perfectly white Dog, which he called Whiting. Now Whiting had struck up a great friendship with Isegrim, the Wolf, and one day each made a solemn compact never to betray the other in any of their stealings.

Not long after, Isegrim said to Whiting one day, "I intend to make a call upon your master's swine to-night; so do you keep no watch, but just lie as still as possible, and don't wake up the whole family with your barking, as you usually do, for you know that they will move heaven and earth to capture me."

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"Kill all the swine, if you like," replied Whiting; "I won't betray you."

"A word is enough, brother; I shall be there," said Isegrim; and so the friends parted.

Punctually at nightfall Isegrim appeared and greeted Whiting heartily, saying, "I gave you my word, and as you see, here I am."

"Get to work, then," replied Whiting; "you have nothing to fear from me."

Isegrim crept cautiously to the swine-pen. He had all the work in the world to get in, and once in, he had hardly begun his meal when the swine broke out in fearful squealings and gruntings. Whiting, at the house-door, no sooner heard the noise than he began to bark and whine with all his might, waking all the family with his

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noise.

"What makes our Whiteling howl so?" they said. "We must go out and see what the trouble is."

So all the family went out, and hearing the squealing of the swine, they hastened to the pigpen. Peeping in, they saw the Wolf and set upon him with clubs and fists, belaboring him so soundly that he barely escaped with a whole skin.

Waiting till the family had returned to bed, Isegrim crept back, and seizing Whiteling by the throat, "Aha!" he cried, "I have caught you now. You pledged me your word not to bark, and you broke your promise. No, I'll never forgive you. Just look at me once, what a plight I'm in."

Whiteling began to beg. "Ah, let me go, let me go, dear, sweet brother Isegrim; forgive me just this once; I'll never do it again; come again and steal whenever you like; you may be perfectly sure of me!" [22]

"Will you ever play me another such trick?" asked Isegrim.

"Never, never again!" said Whiteling.

"Very well, then," said the Wolf, "you may go free this once; but next time, remember, hold your tongue!"

A few days later Isegrim paid the swine a second visit, but he had hardly crept into the pen when Whiteling set up a howl so loud and clear that all the household sprang out of bed to see what was the matter. A second time they found the Wolf, fell upon him, and beat him half-dead. The unlucky visitor barely escaped with his life, and full of wrath, he hid behind the hedge and waited till the household were asleep. Then, seeing Whiteling before the house-door, he cried to him, "Just wait once, Whiteling; your last half-hour strikes when you fall into my clutches! If you weren't just where you are, safe at the house-door, I'd soon pay you off; but my time will come before long." [23]

Again Whiteling began to beg. "Dearest Isegrim, it is indeed true that I have brought you into a terrible pickle, but don't kill me; let me go this time. I'll never do it again."

But the Wolf replied, "Neither now nor ever; you cheated me out of that meal of swine's flesh, and three days from now you must meet me in battle. I will summon my forces, and do you summon yours—that is, if you can muster any. If you don't show up, I'll soon know where to find you, and I'll drag you there myself!"

"All right," returned Whiteling, "come what may, I'll be there without fail."

So Isegrim hastened away to get his troops together, and meeting the Wild Boar he said to him, "Will you be on my side? There is going to be war between me and Whiteling three days from now." [24]

"Oh," replied the Wild Boar, "indeed I will be on your side!"

A little farther Isegrim met Master Petz, the Bear, told him the whole matter, and begged him to be on his side. Petz most cheerfully promised his help.

Later, he met Reinecke, the Fox, and told him the whole story. Reinecke assured him that he might certainly count upon his help—how could he ever hesitate to stand by his old crony against the common enemy?

Then said Isegrim, "Now we are quite enough; but I must spy out Whiteling and learn what forces he has. Then I will let you know that we are all ready for war."

Isegrim betook himself to Whiteling's house, and standing in the lane looked over the hedge. "Are you ready, Whiteling?" he asked. "To-morrow is the day."

"I shall be ready," replied Whiteling in a tone of deepest dejection; "but tell me precisely, where is the battle to be?" [25]

"You know very well," replied Isegrim; "yonder, under the tree we agreed upon."

"Very well," said the Dog, and slunk sorrowfully away to the other side of the farm-yard. There the Tomcat met him and said, "Why, my dear Whiteling, what can be the matter, what makes you so sad?"

And Whiteling answered, "My dear Grimalkin, you don't know where the shoe pinches. Will you come to my aid?"

"Why, what are you talking about?" asked the surprised Cat.

"Just think of it," replied the Dog, "to-morrow I have to fight Isegrim; we have declared war to the knife."

"Oh, oh, my Whiteling, cheer up! I'll stand by you to the death. Just you go to friend Quacker, the Drake, and engage his help."

With a lighter heart Whiteling sought friend Quacker and begged his friendly aid. [26]

"To be sure, to be sure; I am your comrade. Why should I leave a friend in the lurch? Go to friend Ganner, the Gander, and ask him if he feels like having a part in the war."

So said and so done. Whiteling found the Gander, explained the affair and begged for his help. "Of course, why should I not be ready to help? Aren't you our guard every night to keep Reinecke from making off with us?"

"Now," said Whiteling, "I think we are strong enough."

Early next morning Isegrim met his allies upon the battle-field under the appointed tree. He hid the Wild Boar beneath a thick bed of moss which grew upon the ground, and bade Reinecke climb into the tree, saying, "You must be our sentinel, Master. Keep watch when Whiteling appears with his troop, and give us secret intelligence. You, too, Petz, must scramble up the tree, but I will crouch down in ambush behind the trunk." [27]

Meanwhile Whiteling was also disposing his forces. "Grimalkin and Ganner, you are the infantry. I see that your weapon is ready, Grimalkin" (for Grimalkin held his tail upright, by way of musket); "and you, Ganner, must hiss your very best. Quacker, you shall be the drummer. I reserve to myself the command. March according to orders, and fall to when I give the word."

So Whiteling and his comrades went gayly to the battle—Whiteling and his drummer in front, Grimalkin and Ganner bringing up the rear. Quacker drummed his prettiest—"Quack-quack, quack-quack, quack-quack!" The Gander hissed and the Tomcat strutted along in dignified silence, carrying his tail straight upright like a musket.

When Reinecke perceived the approaching company he cried to Isegrim, "Cousin, cousin, here come two soldiers with a drummer and a captain!" [28]

"What's that you say?" asked Isegrim in dismay.

"I say, here come two soldiers with a drummer and a captain," replied Reinecke. "The soldier is loading his gun, he takes aim, he is about to fire——"

"Alas! woe be to us poor fellows," moaned the Wild Boar from under the moss. "It's all over with us! We fight with unequal forces!"

"Courage, courage, fellows," cried Isegrim, trying to rally his troops; "just bear yourselves bravely; all is not lost; we'll make short work of them yet!"

In the midst of all this confusion Whiteling and his troops reached the spot unperceived. Grimalkin, catching a glimpse of the Wild Boar's ear sticking out of the moss, took it for a mouse, and springing upon it, bit into it with his sharp teeth. The Wild Boar sprang up in terror and took wildly to flight, while Grimalkin, no less terrified, scrambled frantically up the tree into the very face of Master Petz. The Bear, not prepared for this unexpected encounter, lost his balance and tumbled to the ground, half-killing himself by the fall. More frightened than ever, the Tomcat scrambled blindly up to the tree-top. [29]

"Now, it's my turn," thought Reinecke to himself, and immediately tumbled down in affright. Grimalkin tumbled after, while the Drake kept drumming, "Quack-quack, quack-quack, quack-quack," and Ganner hissed with all his might. Thus was Isegrim's host ignominiously routed. The Wolf himself, however, still cowered behind the tree, his head buried in the moss.

When the besiegers had withdrawn, Isegrim's scattered forces drew together and began to count their honorable scars. Said Master Petz, "More dead than alive from my heavy fall, I barely managed to make my escape." [30]

"A piece of my ear is gone," said the Boar. "He cut it off with his sword."

"Let us be thankful, fellows," concluded Reinecke, "that we are no worse off, for if they had been able to fire off one more cannon we should have been hopelessly lost!"

"I wish I knew that Dog," said the little boy. "I think he is wiser than our Watch."

"The beasts were wiser those days," replied the grandmother. "That was my great-great-grandmother's time."

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CHAPTER IV

THE FIRE OF SHAVINGS

The snow had fallen heavily, and some of the sheep were missing. The two *moujiks* put on their warm sheepskin clothes and went to look for them, taking Watch, the sheep-dog, with them. The *starosta* sat in the house, making a plough-handle out of a tree-branch which he had cut down one day long ago because he saw it was the right shape for a plough-handle in case he should ever need a new one. The little boy gathered up the shavings that fell from under the long, two-handed knife. He played with them until he was tired of them, and then he gathered them all in the skirt of his shirt and carried them to his grandmother's room.

[32]

"I have brought you some shavings to make you warm, grandmother," he said.

His grandmother opened the stove-door, where the fire was smouldering, carefully covered up, for fuel is dear. The little boy put his shavings in, one by one, and watched them as they slowly caught fire and broke into a blaze. When they were all burned up he went and stood by his grandmother.

"Did they make you warm, little grandma?" he asked.

"Nice and warm," answered the grandmother. "Now, what can I do for you in thanks?"

"A story, a story!" cried the little boy, climbing upon the stove to be comfortable. And the grandmother told the story of

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THE BEAR, THE BOAR, AND THE FOX

A Bear, a Boar, and a Fox once went into partnership to till a field and raise some wheat, that they might earn their bread honestly. Said the Boar, "I will break into a granary and steal the seed, and with my snout I will plough up the field."

[33]

"I will be the sower," said the Bear; and Reinecke added, "I will spread the earth over the seed with my tail."

So the field was ploughed and the seed sown. By and by came harvest-time, and the friends took counsel together as to the reaping. Said the Boar, "I will cut the grain." Said the Bear, "I will bind the sheaves." And the Fox said, "I will glean the scattered ears."

The grain was cut and the sheaves set up. The next thing was the threshing. Said the Boar, "I will provide the threshing-floor." "I will carry the sheaves," said the Bear, "and will do the threshing into the bargain." "I'll shake out the sheaves," said the Boar, "and break off the ears from the stalks." "I will clear away the chaff with my tail," said the Fox.

[34]

"I will winnow the grain," said the Boar, "and separate the straw from the wheat;" and Gossip Petz added, "And I will attend to the dividing."

And so the grain was threshed.

Next came the Bear to do the dividing, but he was neither fair nor honest, for he gave the Boar all the straw and kept all the grain for himself, not leaving the least thing for the Fox. At this Reinecke flew into a rage and threatened them both with the law, saying he would bring the emperor's officer to divide it all fairly and squarely.

Away he went for the officer, leaving the Boar and the Bear greatly terrified. Said Master Petz to the Boar, "Just bury yourself in the straw, my child, while I clamber up into yonder pear-tree." The Boar at once vanished under the straw, while the

Bear scrambled up into the pear-tree.

Meanwhile Reinecke set out, and on the way he met a Cat, whom he invited to come and hunt mice with him upon a certain threshing-floor.

[35]

The Cat gladly accepted the invitation, for she full well knew that there are plenty of mice in a threshing-floor; but on the way she kept hunting birds in the bushes along the roadside. The Bear, who was watching from the pear-tree, espied her from afar, and called down to the Boar:

“We are in a pretty scrape, dear Boar, for here comes Master Reinecke and a fearful monster with him. He wears the fur coat of a Marten and is killing birds upon the wing all along the way.”

By this time the Bear lost sight of the Cat, which had reached the threshing-floor under cover of the grass, and was creeping about in the straw in search of mice. Full of curiosity, the Boar stuck his head out a little way to see what was going on; when the Cat, mistaking his snout for a mouse, sprang forward and buried her claws in it. At this the Boar gave a fearful grunt, and rushed frantically into a neighboring stream, while the Bear, who, from the uproar, concluded that the Cat had killed the Boar and would seize him next, tumbled headlong from the pear-tree in terror, and breaking his neck by the fall, perished miserably.

[36]

So Master Reinecke got all the grain and the straw into the bargain.

“I am glad he got it all,” said the little boy. “It wasn’t fair of Petz and the Boar to serve Reinecke that way.”

“Master Reinecke is generally able to look out for himself,” said the grandmother.

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CHAPTER V

FROST-BITTEN TOES

There was a great shouting and hurraing in the court, for the *moujiks* had found the sheep and were driving them home. The little boy ran out to see them come in. They were trembling with cold and looked very weak, for they had had nothing to eat for two days. They had been buried under the snow, and it had taken all that time to find them. They were glad to go into their pen, and the little boy was glad when his father gave him a pail with food in it and let him help the *moujiks* feed them.

The cow-herd woman came to watch. “You should not have come out in bare feet,” she said to the little boy. “Where are your *bachmak*?”

[38]

“Your feet are bare,” replied the little boy.

“I am old and am used to it,” said the cow-herd woman. “You will freeze your toes.”

When the sheep were all fed the little boy’s toes began to ache, and he ran into the house. “Keep away from the fire,” said his eldest sister, who was weaving at the loom in the corner. “If you go near the fire your toes will sting.”

The little boy’s toes were stinging already, and he began to cry.

“Run away to grandmother,” said the eldest sister. “She will warm your toes with her hands.”

The grandmother heard the little boy crying and she came to the door to see what was the matter, for it makes a grandmother’s heart ache to hear a child’s cries. When she saw the bare toes, white with cold, she gathered the little boy up in her arms and carried him to her room. There she sat down, far away from the fire, took the cold feet in her hands and rubbed them to make them warm. Then the little boy stopped crying.

[39]

“They are warm now,” he said. “But I don’t want to get down. It is nice in your lap.”

"You may sit here while I tell you a story," said the grandmother. "Then you must get down, for I haven't finished my stint of spinning."

"I will," said the little boy; and the grandmother told him the story of

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THE MAN, THE HARE, THE FOX, AND THE BEAR

Not far from a Hare's form a Bear once had her den, and Master Lampe often gave himself the treat of visiting the den in Petz's absence and teasing the little Petzes.

"You dear little birds," he would say, "do let me hear your enchanting songs!" And he would spit at them, and make all manner of game of them into the bargain.

[40]

Whenever Mrs. Petz came home the young ones would bitterly complain how a little Hare had been there making game of them. At this old Petz waxed very angry, and growled, "Just wait once, wait, Master Lampe! I'll catch you yet and fling you into a hole."

So Mrs. Petz hid herself in the back of the den, and sure enough along came Master Lampe and began to tease the young bears. No sooner did Mrs. Petz hear him than she sprang upon him from her hiding-place. But, quick as lightning, Lampe was off in the woods, with Mrs. Petz after him. Lampe fled through bush and brier, Petz always close upon his heels.

At last Lampe sprang through a cloven tree and Petz followed him. Unluckily she stuck fast in the narrow cleft and, do what she would, she could not escape from her prison.

[41]

Presently a Man came along, and Mrs. Petz implored him thus:

"Ah, Man, do set me free! I know where there is a hollow tree full of honey in the forest; you could bring a great cask and fill it as full as you like."

"Are you telling the honest truth?" asked the Man.

"The honest truth," replied Mrs. Petz. "I can make you rich in honey, and all I have to say is to give you this warning: Never, if you love your own life, do you tell a living soul how a miserable little Hare made a fool of a strong She-bear."

The Man promised her, trust and true, and lifting his axe he struck a blow at the cloven tree. The tree fell apart, Petz was again free, and she at once led the Man to the honey-tree. The Man returned home, yoked up his oxen, put a cask in the cart, and went to the wood for the honey. When he had filled the cask he returned home.

[42]

Meantime it had grown dark, and Petz crept noiselessly behind the cart and crouched down under the peasant's window, saying to herself, "Just wait, you fellow, till I listen a little!"

The Man brought the cask of honey into the house, and the children, seeing the prize, crowded around the father with questions. "O little father, where did you get that honey?"

"I found it in the forest, dear children."

Then the wife put in her word. "Tell me, father, how did you come by so much honey?"

And the Man replied, "Oh, don't bother me! It was an old trotter of a Bear that was chasing a little Hare and got stuck fast in the cleft of a tree. Then I came along and helped her out of the scrape, and for thanks she showed me the hollow tree where the honey was. So I brought it home. But it served her right, the lazy old fat tramper; what business had she chasing a Hare?"

[43]

Mrs. Petz did not lose a word of all this, and she growled to herself, "Just wait once, wait! I'll be even with you with a vengeance for jeering at me."

She went away home, and presently the Man, wife, and children all went to bed. Early next morning the Man got up and went out to till his field. He yoked his oxen, filled a sack with grain, put it and a plough into the cart, and with a "Gee-up, you oxen!" set out for his field, which lay on the edge of the forest. He was just about to begin ploughing when Mrs. Petz came along.

"Oho, cousin, so there you are! Didn't you promise me, trust and true, not to say a word to mortal soul of what had happened to me, and didn't you go home and tell the whole story to your wife and children? Hey?"

[44]

But the Man replied, "Friend, what an idea! I haven't said a word to any one."

"Silence!" interrupted the Bear. "I was listening under your window."

Then the Man thought to himself, "Well, the cat is out of the bag, sure enough. She knows the whole story."

"And now," said Mrs. Petz, "it is all up with you."

Now little Master Reinecke was listening to all this, and he rustled in the bushes with his tail, and cried:

Man, Man!
Wit in the head
And a club in the hand!

For, in fact, the *moujik* had a mighty ox-goad in his hand, and he stood there quaking with fear of the enraged She-bear, and trying to contrive how he should get out of the scrape. Reinecke never stopped crying:

[45]

Man, Man!
Wit in the head
And a club in the hand!

At this a bright thought struck the Man, and he resolved to try his luck. So he poured the grain from his sack upon the ground and said to Petz:

"I am a pious Christian and have not yet prepared for death, either by confession or penance. So do you, Mrs. Petz, step into this sack, and as penance for all my sins I will carry you around the field, heavy as you are. When I have gone around the field two or three times with you on my back, you may do with me what you like."

"Gracious Heaven," cried Mrs. Petz, "how high I shall hold my head when people say that a man carried me around upon his shoulders!" But scarcely had she crawled into the sack when the Man tied it up tight and belabored her head with his ox-goad until she gave up the ghost.

[46]

Then Reinecke stepped up to the Man and asked, "And what am I to get, Man, for the good counsel I gave you?"

"What shall I give you?" asked the Man. "Will you have geese?"

"No."

"Ducks?"

"No."

"Hens?"

"No."

"Then what the mischief do you want?"

"I want to bite off your nose."

At this the man thought to himself, "What the dickens! How should I look going around without a nose?"

Cold sweat broke out all over him, and he cried aloud in agony. Reinecke heard him, and said, "Oho, what does this mean?"



Step into this sack, ... and I will carry you around the field

The Man gave a second and a third cry; it startled the Master, and he asked, "Now what's all this about?"

[47]

"Oh, nothing," replied the Man; "only last evening I fed nine hunting-dogs, and they are trying with all their might to get out!"

But Reinecke interrupted him: "The cuckoo take your nose and all the rest of you, only don't let your hunting-dogs come out here until I have put my hide in safety!" And away he went, across lots and out of sight.

So the Man saved his nose, and full of joy he went home that night, carrying Petz with him.

"Master Reinecke wasn't so clever that time," said the little boy.

"He is not always clever," said the grandmother. "But he was very clever when he took revenge on Isegrim."

[48]

"Oh, tell me that, tell me that!" cried the little boy.

"Not now," said the grandmother. "Did I not tell you that I had not done my stint of spinning? Come this evening after supper and I will tell you. Now run away home."

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CHAPTER VI

AFTER SUPPER

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The little boy could hardly eat at supper-time, and as soon as possible he ran to his

grandmother's room. She was knitting in the dark, for the stock of candles was getting low, and she could knit without looking.

"Have you come for the story?" she asked. "I was expecting you."

So the little boy climbed to his place on the stove, and the grandmother began the story of

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REINECKE'S REVENGE ON ISEGRIM

Once upon a time Reinecke kneaded mud-cakes, baked them, and spread them with honey. When they were all ready he betook himself to the turkey-tenders and begged them to give him a turkey in exchange for his honey-cakes. The turkey-tenders were not to be so easily hoaxed, and they sent him to the swine-herds, assuring him that the swine-herds would give him a sucking pig for his honey-cakes. [50]

He therefore sought the swine-herds and begged for a sucking pig in exchange for his cakes. The swine-herds would give him none, but sent him to the cow-herds, who might give him a calf in exchange for the cakes. So he went to the cow-herds and begged them to give him a calf and take his honey-cakes in exchange.

The cow-herds declined, and sent him to the stable-boys, who would surely give him a colt in exchange for the honey-cakes. So he went to the stable-boys and offered to exchange his honey-cakes for a colt. They gave him a beautiful colt and took in exchange the honey-cakes. So Reinecke went away, leading the colt, and leaving with the stable-boys a strict injunction on no account to break one of the cakes until he should have disappeared behind a certain hill. [51]

The stable-boys obeyed the behest, but when they afterward tried the cakes and broke their teeth upon them, they perceived that they were made of clay, and they at once set off in pursuit of the Fox. But Master Reinecke had so much the start of them that they were obliged to turn back, weary and overheated, having had their trouble for their pains.

Now when Reinecke reached home he made a stall of wicker-work for the colt, and devoted himself entirely to the care of him. Day after day he brought him green, juicy grass and cool, refreshing drink, and whenever he brought them he always called to the colt in these words: [52]

O colt, tender little colt,
Open the door for me!
Juicy grass and cooling drink
Bring I here for thee!

Then the colt would open the door. Reinecke gave the colt very strict instructions on no account to open the door to any other voice or words.

One day Isegrim came. He had often heard Reinecke call to the colt to open the door, and now he began to call in his coarse voice:

O colt, tender little colt,
Open the door for me!
Juicy grass and cooling drink
Bring I here for thee!

But the colt at once perceived that this was not Reinecke's voice, and it did not stir to open the door.

Then Isegrim hid himself cunningly behind the stable-wall to wait for a better chance. [53]

Pretty soon along came Reinecke with grass and water. As soon as he reached the stable he cried in his soft treble voice:

O colt, tender little colt,
Open the door for me!
Juicy grass and cooling drink
Bring I here for thee!

The colt recognized the voice, opened the door at once, and began to tell how some one had been there and asked him to open the door, but he had not opened because the voice sounded rough. Upon this Reinecke said, "On no account open

the door to a rough voice, but only to a soft one.”

The next day, when Reinecke was gone, along came Isegrim, who had overheard the whole conversation from behind the stable-wall. He crouched down as low as possible, and cried, in a very soft voice:

[54]

O colt, tender little colt,
Open the door for me!
Juicy grass and cooling drink
Bring I here for thee!

The unhappy colt was deceived and opened the door. Alas! Isegrim fell upon him, seized him by the throat, and ate him up—all but the head and the tail, which he left lying there. Then he made off, having closed the door behind him, that nothing might be seen from without.

When Reinecke came home he began to call, as usual:

O colt, tender little colt,
Open the door for me!
Juicy grass and cooling drink
Bring I here for thee!

But no one asked him in nor opened the door. So he peeped in between the osiers, and when he saw nothing in the stall but the colt’s head and tail he knew all that had happened and had not the least doubt as to who had brought this great misfortune upon him. He tore the door open and set up a long, woe-begone howl. Then he went out quite heart-broken and laid himself down in the road for dead.

[55]

After a while a man came by in a wagon, and finding Reinecke in the road he picked him up and threw him into the wagon, intending to strip off his skin as soon as he reached home. Now this man had three cheeses in a knapsack in his wagon, and presently Reinecke roused himself from his feigned death, arose softly, stole the three cheeses out of the knapsack, and made off. As soon as he had reached a safe distance he devoured two of the cheeses and went on his way, holding the third under his chin.

In the course of his travels he met friend Isegrim, who had eaten his beloved colt. Isegrim no sooner saw Reinecke with the cheese than his mouth began to water, and he asked him how he had come by it. Then Reinecke, truthful as usual, replied that he had sucked it up out of a brook.

[56]

“And where may that brook be found?” asked Isegrim hastily.

“Follow me,” answered Reinecke; “I will lead you to it.”

Now it happened that this meeting took place at the full of the moon, about midnight, and a beautiful, star-bestrewn sky shed a magical half-darkness over everything. Reinecke led Isegrim to a brook and, showing him the reflection of the moon mirrored in the flowing water, said:

“Do you see that great cheese there in the water? Now suck up the water in great gulps and you will suck up the cheese at last, just as I did.”

So simple Isegrim sucked up the water in great gulps, until it began to run out at his ears. Reinecke very kindly plugged up his ears and cried to him:

[57]

“Keep on sucking, dear Isegrim; you’ll soon have it!”

Simple Isegrim went at it again, and sucked until the water ran out of his eyes. At once Reinecke stopped up his eyes, crying again:

“Keep on, dear Isegrim, you’ll soon have it now!”

Poor Isegrim sucked on, until the water ran out at his nose. Then Reinecke stopped up his nose and climbed upon his back, saying he was sick and could not walk, and Isegrim must carry him.

The Wolf, in very woful plight, set out to carry the Fox, when Reinecke tuned up and sang:

The sick is carrying the well!
The sick is carrying the well!

And he kept on repeating the same words until Isegrim asked:

“What’s that you’re singing, cousin?”

[58]

"Nothing, nothing, dear Isegrim; they are only the fantasies of illness!" and he kept up his song:

The sick is carrying the well!
The sick is carrying the well!

So it went on till they came to a house where a wedding was being celebrated. When the wedding-guests heard Reinecke's song they came out of the house and praised his singing. Thereupon he said that he could sing a better song than that if they would let him go into the house and up into the loft. To this they agreed.

When Isegrim, with all the trouble in the world, had carried Reinecke up into the loft, which was floored only with loose planks, then Reinecke opened all the places he had plugged up, and the water ran out of Isegrim's eyes and ears and nose and poured down through the cracks upon the wedding-guests below. The guests ran nimbly up into the loft, but Reinecke still more nimbly made his escape through the window, while Isegrim was half-beaten to death by the enraged wedding-guests and his body thrown out into the road. [59]

Then Reinecke came creeping back and taunted Isegrim. "This long time I have been wearing out shoe-leather to get the best of you, because you ate up my colt!"

And with these words away he went, leaving Isegrim to his fate.

"That served Isegrim right," said the little boy. "He had no business to eat up Reinecke's little colt." [60]

CHAPTER VII

THE SNOWY DAY

The grandmother sat in her room spinning, and singing a sad little song. Grandmother's songs were always sad, for that is the way with the songs of the Russian peasant women, whose lives are very hard. But the little boy had never heard any other kind, and he was very fond of hearing his grandmother sing. He was lying on the stove, watching her spin, for it was still snowing, and he was tired of playing alone in the court. The snow was so deep now that none of the mothers would let their little children go into the street. The big children were all at work. Only little children play every day in Russia. The big children work, except on holidays. [61]

"Do you know any more stories about Master Reinecke, little grandma?" the little boy finally asked.

"Perhaps I do," replied the grandmother. "Let me see; did I ever tell you about

"THE BIRD, THE FOX, AND THE DOG?" [Contents]

"No," said the little boy. "Do tell that, please!"

So the grandmother began:

Once upon a time there was a Bird which built her nest in a hedge, laid her eggs there, and began to brood over them. Now a little Fox got wind of the matter, and he thought to himself, "Aha! there's a fine breakfast for me!" So he left the Bird to brood over her eggs, waiting for the time when the young ones should hatch out.

When that time came he paid a visit to the Bird, which was singing gayly in the hedge, and said to her: [62]

"Good-morning, dear cousin. Oh, how beautiful you are and how sweet is your song! But still more enticing are your young ones in the nest, and I mean to eat them up!"

The little Bird answered, smiling, "Ah, ah, you are not as clever as I thought you, if you are thinking of eating these tiny birds! They would not make you a mouthful. Just wait awhile till they are grown; then come, and you may eat both them and me."

So the Bird appointed a day, and Reinecke went off in high glee, whistling merrily.

In the meantime the Bird went to a Dog and promised him a delicious meal—nothing other than Reinecke, in fact—telling him that he had nothing to do but hide in the bushes on the appointed day, and he could easily master the Master. The Dog smiled blissfully at the news, saying:

[63]

"This is what I call a stroke of luck! I'll tell you what, little Bird, I'll hide in the bushes, and when Reinecke comes, do you beg him to let you sing one last song. Then perch yourself on a twig and sing out loud and clear. That shall be the signal for me, and I will spring out of my ambush, and—snap!—all will be over with Master Reinecke."

When the appointed day arrived Reinecke came gleefully along, trolling this lay:

"Fat little birds are right good cheer,
So here I am, my Gossip dear!

Well, Gossip, how goes it?"

"As well as possible," answered the little Bird. "What I have promised I will perform; I have only one last boon to crave: let me sing my favorite song just once more!"

"Sing away, for all I care," answered Reinecke; "only make it short."

[64]

So the little Bird perched herself upon a twig and began her song. In a twinkling the Dog rushed out upon Reinecke, but the Master was on the alert and took to flight, with the Dog close upon his heels. At last Reinecke took refuge in a hole, while the Dog hid himself at the entrance, keeping up a sharp lookout.

Then Reinecke began to talk to himself, and said to his feet:

"Well, my fine feet, how have you got on?"

"Finely," answered the feet; "we did our very best to outrun the Dog."

"Good, good! You deserve all praise! And you, my good ears, how did you behave yourselves?"

"Very well; we listened most intently to know whether that dreadful Dog was close behind us."

"Good! That was gallant! And how did you behave, my dear, sweet eyes?"

[65]

"Oh, we spied around in every direction to discover the first hole!"

"Bravo! That was good of you." Then Reinecke looked at his long tail and asked:

"And how is it with you, my beautiful, long, bushy tail?"

And the tail answered, "Very badly; I am your steering rudder, and you rushed along so unmercifully, dragging me through bush and brier, that I am miserably scratched and torn. Really, I should not have been worse off if the Dog had caught me."

"Aha!" cried Reinecke, in high displeasure, "so you are my open enemy, are you? All the others are faithful; you alone would willingly have betrayed me. Out with you, out, my declared foe! You shall no longer stay under the same roof with me!"

So Reinecke thrust his tail out of the hole. Snap!—the Dog had it between his teeth, dragged the Fox out of his retreat, tore him in pieces, and was thus rewarded for all his trouble. And the little birds were rid of their enemy.

[66]

"It was not nice of Reinecke to want to eat little birds," said the little boy. "I think he deserved to be punished."

"He got off without punishment another time," observed the grandmother.

"How was that?" asked the little boy eagerly. "Won't you tell me that story? Do! It is not supper-time."

"No, it is not supper-time, and the story is a short one," said the grandmother. "So I will tell you about

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"THE FOX AND THE DOVE"

Once upon a time there was a Dove which built her nest in a high tree. Every year, about the time when her young ones were beginning to get feathers, Reinecke would come along and say to the Dove:

[67]

"Give me your young ones to eat; throw them down to me of your own accord, or I will gobble you up as well as them!"

The Dove, frightened at the threat, would throw down the young birds. Thus it had happened year after year.

Now one day, as the Dove sat most melancholy upon her nest, a Great Bird flew up and asked why she was so sad and down-cast. And the Dove answered that it was because Reinecke would soon come and eat up her young ones.

Upon this the Great Bird replied, "Oh, you goose! Why do you throw them down to him? Just bid your good friend to please give himself the trouble to come after them. Then you'll soon see him sneak away with his tail between his legs, for Reinecke cannot climb a tree."

So when the time came round and Reinecke again presented himself, the Dove said to him, "If you want meat for dinner, just be so kind as to come up and help yourself."

[68]

When the Fox saw that he must go away empty he asked the Dove who had counselled her to speak thus, and she answered:

"That Great Bird that has a nest yonder near the stream."

Reinecke at once betook himself to the stream and remonstrated with that Great Bird for building his nest in so exposed a place, asking what he did in case of a high wind.

The Great Bird answered, "When the wind blows from the right I turn to the left; when it blows from the left I turn to the right."

"But what do you do when it blows from all sides?" asked the Fox.

"Then I stick my head under my wing," said the Great Bird, showing how he did it. But quick as a wink, when the Great Bird stuck his head under his wing, the Master sprang upon him and seized him, saying:

[69]

"You know how to give counsel to others, but not to advise yourself!"

So he ate him up.

The little boy pondered this story for a while. At last he said, "Grandmother, why did that Great Bird say that Reinecke could not climb a tree? He has climbed a tree a great many times."

"This one was not a story of this *mir*," replied the grandmother. "It is a story from another *mir*, where my mother's mother was born. The foxes there are different."

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CHAPTER VIII

THE ELECTION MEETING

There were many men gathered in the little boy's house, for the time of the *zemstvo* was drawing near, and the men of the village must choose one of their number to go away to the large city which was the capital of the district to help make laws for the district. That is what the *zemstvo* is for. The noblemen go, of

course, and every village chooses one villager to go.

They met in the little boy's house to choose their delegate, partly because the little boy's father was *starosta*, and partly because his house was the largest. Though they were many, there was room for them all on the bench of masonry that ran around the four walls of the room, and was covered in the most honorable places with bright calico. It was a very cold day, and the bench was as far as possible from the stove, but they were not cold, for the chinks between the upright boards which made the walls of the *starosta's* house were well stopped with tow, and, besides, the men all had on their warm *kaftans*, or over-blouses, and their fur-lined boots. [71]

There was a great deal of talking, and the little boy's mother and sisters were very busy with the *samovar*, making tea and handing it round. They had to be very careful to keep the water in the *samovar* boiling madly, for tea is not good unless it scalds your mouth. At least so they think in the little boy's village.

The little boy had been told that he must keep very still; but it is as hard to keep a little Russian boy still as a little American boy, for both are very fond of play. The little boy did not find it amusing, and presently he crept very quietly toward the door. [72]

"Where are you going?" asked his mother.

"To see grandmamma," answered the little boy.

"Be careful not to disturb her; she is busy," said the mother.

The little boy ran quickly out of the room.

The grandmother was indeed busy. She had her short skirt turned back, a short-handled broom of twigs in her hand, a great earthen jar of water beside her, and she was hard at work scrubbing the floor.

"Wipe your feet very clean," she said, "and don't bring dirt upon my nice floor."

The little boy wiped his feet very clean, and tiptoed across to the stove. It was really quite amusing to watch his grandmother scrub, especially when the water made little pools in the hollows, worn by many years of walking over the clay floor, and she had to flirt it out with little whisks of the broom. He watched her very quietly until she had shaken out her broom and emptied the jar into a great tub in the court. Then she came back and sank heavily into her chair, saying: [73]

"Ouf! little grandmother is tired!"

"Too tired to spin, little grandma!" exclaimed the little boy eagerly.

The grandmother smiled. "But not too tired for a story—is that what the little boy means?"

"Oh, you're not, you're not!" cried the little boy gleefully.

"Listen then, and I will tell you about

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"THE FOX AND THE HEDGEHOG"

A Hedgehog met Master Reinecke in a field, and said to him, "Hello, Master! Whither away?"

"Oh, I'm just loafing around!" answered the Fox. [74]

"Tell me, now," said Reinecke after a while to the Hedgehog, "how manifold is your understanding?"

"Threefold," answered the Hedgehog.

"Why, how is that?" asked the Fox.

"Why, you see, I have one sense above, one below, and the third everywhere," replied the Hedgehog; and added, "And how manifold is your understanding?"

"Oh, mine is seventy-sevenfold," answered the Fox.

"Well, well!" said the Hedgehog.

Thereupon they walked along through the fields, and so eagerly were they talking that they gave no heed to the way, and presently stumbled into a Wolf's den. Then was good counsel precious! How should they ever get out of this scrape?

Said Reinecke to the Hedgehog, "Come now, search around in your head-piece for a means of getting out of this pickle."

"I should have done that before," answered the Hedgehog, "but I was afraid that by and by you would curse me. How shall I, a little Hedgehog, with only a threefold understanding, devise anything better than you, who have a seventy-sevenfold understanding?"

[75]

However, after talking back and forth a long time, the Hedgehog made this suggestion, "Say, Reinecke, just seize me by the ear and throw me up out of the den, because I am the smaller."

"Yes, but how shall I get out?"

"Oh, just stick up your tail and I will pull you out!"

So Reinecke seized the Hedgehog by the ear and tossed him up out of the den. Then he called upon him to keep his word. "Hello there, Gossip, now pull me out!"

"Do you know what," answered the Hedgehog, "I'll tell you something. I have only a threefold understanding, and yet I found a way of helping myself. Now do you help yourself with your seventy-sevenfold understanding."

[76]

By this time a *moujik* came along, and finding the Fox in the den he made short work with him. But the Hedgehog crept away through the thicket with his threefold understanding, while Reinecke, with all his seventy-sevenfold understanding, was carried off by the *moujik*.

"Reinecke was too proud of himself," said the little boy.

"It is a great sin to be proud," observed the grandmother. "The *pop* said so on Sunday in church."

There was a pause. Then the little boy said coaxingly:

"You are tired yet, little grandmother!"

"It *was* a short story," replied the grandmother, patting the little boy on the shoulder, "and grandmother is a little tired still. She will tell you the story of

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"MASTER REINECKE AND GOCKELING, THE COCK"

Once upon a time, Reinecke, the Fox, met Gockeling, the Cock, and said to him, "Come, show me how your hens cackle!"

The Cock, quite willing, stretched out his neck and began to crow, when in a trice Reinecke pounced upon him and seized him by the throat.

"O Reinecke!" cried the Cock, "first give thanks to God, who has sent you so good a meal!"

And Reinecke fell into the Cock's trap, for he stood upon his hind legs and began to give thanks. Quick as thought the Cock flew up into the nearest tree, and cried to Reinecke:

"Well, cousin, how does my fresh meat taste?"

"That was very clever of the Cock," said the little boy. "But, grandmother, I don't think that Fox belonged to our *mir*, for he was not at all clever. He must have belonged to your mother's mother's *mir*."

[78]

"You are perfectly right," replied the grandmother. "That is a story from her *mir*. And as it is a very short story, I shall tell you just one more."

So the grandmother told the story of

THE DISAPPOINTED BEAR

Once upon a time a little old woman, who was walking in the forest, climbed up into a wild-cherry tree to gather cherries. Now a Bear espied her, and he came under the tree and cried, "Come down, old woman, that I may eat you!"

"Go along with you!" answered the old woman. "Why should you eat a scrawny old woman like me? Here, gnaw upon my shoe till I come down, and I will take you to my house; I have two little children there, named Janko and Mirko; they will make you a right savory dish. So have patience till you get them." [79]

So said the little old woman and threw down one of her shoes. Master Petz gnawed and gnawed upon it, but the more he gnawed the hungrier he grew. Greatly enraged, he screamed up to the old woman:

"Come down, you old wench, and let me eat you!"

"Just wait a little longer, till the old wench has gathered enough cherries," she answered. "Here, gnaw this other shoe awhile; she'll soon come down and show you the way to her house." So saying, she threw down the other shoe.

When Petz found that the second shoe was no juicier than the first he made no further effort, but contented himself with thinking of the fat little children at the old woman's house. When she had gathered cherries enough, down she came and went home, the Bear tramping along behind her. [80]

When they reached the house the old woman said, "I'll tell you what, first let me give the children a good supper, that they may be all the fatter; and meanwhile do you run about till evening to get up a better appetite."

So Petz went away and ran about in the woods all the rest of the day, and at evening he came back to the hut.

"Here I am, little mother!" he cried; "now bring out Janko and Mirko, and see me polish them off. I am starving to death!"

"Oho!" answered the little old woman from within, "Janko has made the door fast with bolts, and I have just put Mirko to sleep. I couldn't think of waking him. And little mother is so old and weak that she can't unbolt the door alone. Come some other day." [81]

Then Master Petz perceived that he had been fooled, and he walked reluctantly away, with drooping snout and an empty stomach.

"I'm glad he didn't get Janko and Mirko," said the little boy. [82]

CHAPTER IX

CAT AND DOG

The little boy was playing in the court with the *moujik's* dog that helped to guard the sheep. It was a clear, cold day, but the little boy was not cold, for he had on his warm quilted *kaftan*, or blouse, his cap, which he called his *chapka*, on his head, and on his feet were sandals made of the tough bark of the linden-tree. He was not going to risk frozen toes another time!

The sheep-dog was old and rather cross, but he was always kind to the little boy. But when the house-cat followed the cow-herd woman out of the house, where she had gone to carry some milk, the dog bristled up and growled. The cat spat at him, and this was too much. He sprang at her, but kitty was too quick for him. She flew across the court and scrambled nimbly up to the shed roof by one of the supporting poles. The dog was too old and heavy to follow her, and he sat on his haunches in the court below, bristling and snarling, the cat spitting back at him and evidently enjoying the fun. The cow-herd woman and a *moujik* who was at work in the court were laughing heartily; the little boy's brother, who was cutting [83]

wood in the shed, came out to see what it was all about. The little boy was highly excited, and he ran to call his grandmother to come and see.

But by the time the grandmother had risen slowly from her chair—for her rheumatism was bad that day—and had gone to the door, leaning on her stick, the fun was all over. The cat had gone around to another side of the shed, and lay basking in the sun, out of the dog’s sight; the *moujik*, the cow-herd woman, and the little boy’s brother had gone back to their work. Only the dog remained, looking up at the deserted roof and growling at nothing. [84]

The little boy went with his grandmother into the house.

“Grandmamma,” he asked, “why does the dog always quarrel with the cat?”

“My great-grandmother told me why,” replied the grandmother. “I will tell you that story now, if you like.”

“Oh, do, do!” cried the little boy.

“It is the story,” said the grandmother, “of

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“WHY THE DOG CANNOT ENDURE THE CAT, NOR THE CAT THE MOUSE”

In olden times, as my great-grandmother told me, dogs enjoyed great freedom, and among other privileges they had a right to all the meat that fell from the table. To guard this right for all time they drew up a manifesto, and copied it upon parchment. In this manifesto this right was expressly made known. For a long time the King of the Dogs had charge of this document, but finally he confided it to the care of his private secretary, the Tomcat. And the Tomcat carried the proclamation up into the garret and hid it behind a beam where no one could possibly find it. [85]

Now it happened that behind the beam dwelt a young Mouse, and on one of his walks he stumbled upon the roll. He tried to drag it from its hiding-place, but the stiff parchment stuck fast, and he could not pull it out. But it was quite within reach of his little teeth, and the Mouse was highly delighted with his lucky find, for now he had something to nibble upon. Day by day he paid a visit to the parchment and whetted his teeth upon it.

Now it presently happened that one day a Dog picked up a piece of meat and was caught and his paw well rubbed with hot ashes. Weeping, he appeared before the King and told him the whole story. [86]

Then the King immediately summoned his private secretary, the Tomcat, and commanded him to show the proclamation. The Tomcat hastened to bring the parchment without delay; but, to his misfortune, what did he find? Only a few fragments!

It was at once clear to him that this was the deed of some little Mouse. He told the story to all the other Cats, who, to express their grief and sorrow, began to mew most piteously. When they had sufficiently expressed their feelings they declared war against all Mice.

After this the Tomcat made his report to the King of the Dogs, and the King immediately summoned the *Dog-zemstvo*. The Dogs came together from all parts—sheep-dogs, wolf-dogs, boar-hounds, house-dogs; and to them all the King gave command that from thenceforth and forever they should treat the Cat as the common enemy. Thus all cats would be made to rue that Tomcat’s carelessness. [87]

And that is the end of the story.

“Now I understand all about it,” said the little boy. [88]

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A PLEASANT SURPRISE

A very delightful surprise awaited the little boy. A few days after the meeting in his house his mother told him that the *mir* had elected his father deputy to the *zemstvo*. In a few days he must go to the capital of the district, and he had decided to take the little boy and his mother with him. That was news indeed! The little boy ran to tell his grandmother. Or, rather, he hopped on one foot all the way, for he was so glad that he had to do something unusual.

The grandmother was delighted with the news. "You will go on the railroad," she said. "That is a great thing. There were no railroads when I was young, and I should not like to travel on one. A good sledge with three horses is far safer, I think. But the railroad is faster, your father tells me, and that is something in cold weather."

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The little boy ran back to find out how soon they were to go. "Shall we go to-day?" he asked his mother.

"Oh, no, not to-day!" she answered.

"To-morrow, then?"

"Not to-morrow, but perhaps the day after to-morrow."

"That is a long time!" sighed the little boy.

"You must have patience," said the mother. "There is no virtue so necessary in this world as patience."

The little boy wandered back to his grandmother's room.

"Grandmamma," he said, "mother says I must have patience; but I don't know how. We are not going to start on the journey for two whole days."

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"Perhaps I can help you," said the grandmother. "If I were to tell you a story now?"

"Oh, yes, that would help, little grandma!" cried the little boy. "I can be very patient when you tell me stories."

"This one," said the grandmother, "is about

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"THE FOX AND THE BADGER"

A Fox and a Badger met in the mountains and made an alliance, agreeing that whichever of them found anything good to eat should share it with the other, like a brother.

Now the Master knew where there was a trap set and baited with a great piece of meat. He therefore led the Badger there and showed him the meat.

"See, dear nephew," said he, "how your clever uncle has led you to a place where we can both have a grand feast. But you are more limber than I, so just slip gently in and pull out the meat, while I keep watch that the *moujik* who put it here does not suddenly catch us napping."

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The Badger agreed without further words. He slipped into the trap, and was about to pull the meat from the hook, when—snap!—his forefoot was fast in the trap. The Badger broke out into a howl of distress, "Help, uncle, help! I am lost!"

Reinecke ran quickly to the trap, but instead of freeing the Badger he at once began to gnaw the meat.

"Just have a little patience," he said, "till I have eaten this morsel before some one comes from the village. Then I will pull your leg out of the trap."

Now Graybeard saw plainly that the Master had played a trick upon him, and he quickly seized him by the nape of the neck. At this moment the *moujik* came running up, crying from afar, "Hold on, my falcon-badger! By my faith, I will not rumple a hair of your head!"

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So the *moujik* killed the Fox and stripped off his skin, saying to the Badger, "You may go free; his skin is worth five *kopeks*, but yours only two. Go, in God's name!"

“It wasn’t fair of Reinecke,” observed the little boy.

“No, it wasn’t fair, and so he got punished,” said the grandmother.

The little boy was silent for a few minutes. Then he said:

“Little grandma, I am not patient yet.”

“Oho!” said the grandmother, “if my stories don’t help you to be patient, there is no use in my telling them.”

“But they do help, grandmamma,” said the little boy. “I am a little patient now, just a very little. If you told me another story I should be more patient still.”

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The grandmother laughed. Then she told the story of

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THE STAG AND THE HEDGEHOG

A Stag and a Hedgehog were once standing upon a steep hill, and the Hedgehog invited the Stag to roll down with him into the ditch.

“Do you roll down first,” replied the Stag.

Without further words the Hedgehog rolled himself into a round ball and rolled down the slope. The Stag followed and broke his neck.

Then thought the Hedgehog, “What shall I do with you now?” At last the thought occurred to him to call a butcher, and he immediately set out to seek one. On the way he met a Fox.

“Whither away?” asked Reinecke; and the Hedgehog answered, “To seek a butcher.”

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“Gossip,” said the Fox, “I am a butcher.”

“Then show me your teeth, Master,” said the Hedgehog.

Reinecke showed his teeth, but the Hedgehog told him they were not sharp enough, and went on his way.

After a while he met a Wolf, who asked him, “Whither away, Gossip?”

“To seek a butcher,” said the Hedgehog.

“I am a butcher, sure enough,” said the Wolf.

“Then show me your tools.”

Isegrim showed his teeth, and the Hedgehog, well pleased, said to him, “Follow me, then.”

The Wolf followed him, and they came to the dead Stag. In a trice the Wolf had torn him in pieces, and inviting all his kindred to the feast, he gave each of them a fine morsel, and kept a whole leg for himself, without the least consideration for the Hedgehog.

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“Well, and what am I to get?” asked the Hedgehog, quite vexed; and the Wolf replied, “The entrails.”

This seemed to the Hedgehog very unfair, and he began to reason with Isegrim. But the Wolf only answered, “If you aren’t satisfied, go to the judge and make a complaint.”

So the Hedgehog went to seek a judge, and the Wolf followed after. Now the Hedgehog knew where there was a trap, and he led Isegrim in that direction. The Hedgehog tapped lightly upon the knocker, but this quite disgusted Isegrim.

“Wait, let me knock!” said he, and he thumped with all the strength of his paw. So he was caught, and the Hedgehog ran away laughing.

The story is done.

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"It is done too quick, little grandmother," observed the little boy after a moment's thought. "I am not patient yet."

"Then my medicine is not the right kind," said the grandmother. "Run away home and hold some yarn for your sister. I heard her say that she was going to knit some warm mittens for you to wear on the journey. Holding yarn is an excellent school for patience."

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CHAPTER XI

THE PATIENT LITTLE BOY

The door of the grandmother's room opened very slowly, and the little boy peeped in.

"Grandmother, I did hold the yarn, and I am very patient now. Do you think you could tell me another story?"

"It is such a good thing to be patient," said the grandmother, "and so hard to learn, that I am sure you deserve a reward. So come in and shut the door tight, and I will tell you about

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"THE COCK AND THE HEN"

Once upon a time there was a man who had lived many years in peace and quietness with his wife. At last, however, they fell into a violent quarrel and decided to separate at bed and board and to divide their goods between them.

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Short hair is soon brushed, and the division was soon made, for their whole possessions consisted of a Cock and a Hen. And the wife said, "I'll take the Hen for my share, and you may have the Cock."

By and by the husband fell ill, and he went to beg his wife to give him just one little egg, for he was very hungry. But she answered him scornfully:

"Hum, hum, where is your Cock? Let him lay you a little egg; if he won't do it, kill him!"

At this the man returned home quite crestfallen, and said to his Cock, "Come, my fine fellow, this can't go on any longer! You do nothing but eat and drink, and never bring me so much as a bright penny. Go out into the world and seek your fortune!"

[99]

In deep dejection the Cock sighed, "Ah, where shall I find anything?"

However, he sallied forth sturdily, and in the forest he met Isegrim. The Wolf said to him, "Whither away, my fine fellow?"

"Oh, I'm going out into the world to seek my fortune!"

"May I go with you?"

"Not another word; be my comrade."

So the two travelled up and down the world until Isegrim was too tired to go another step, and the Cock said to him:

"Well, dear uncle, can't you walk farther than this?"

"Alas, no!" said the Wolf.

"Then slip yourself into me."

In a trice Isegrim was in the body of the Cock, who went on, quite at his ease.

Shortly after he met Reinecke, and said to him, "Whither away, Master?"

"Whither away? Into the world to seek my fortune."

[100]

"Then join my company," said the Cock.

So they went up and down the world until Reinecke was quite exhausted and could go no farther.

"What, Master!" said the Cock, "do you give out so soon? Well, just slip yourself into me and I'll carry you."

Master Reinecke slipped quickly into the Cock, who bravely went on his way.

After a time he came to a little Brook. "Little Brook, whither away?"

"Oh, through the world!"

"Come with me, then, and be my comrade."

So they went forward until the little Brook, for very weariness, could go no farther.

"Does your strength give out so soon, my little Brook?" asked the Cock.

"Alas, yes!" replied the little Brook.

"Then slip into me; I'll carry you," and in a moment the Brook had slipped into the Cock.

[101]

In the course of time the Cock met a swarm of Bees. "Whither away?" he asked.

"Oh, into the wide world to seek a shelter!"

"Then come along; be my comrades."

They had not gone far before the swarm of Bees grew tired and could go no farther, and the Cock invited them to crawl into his body.

So the Cock, carrying the swarm of Bees, the Brook, the Fox, and the Wolf in his body, arrived at a great city. In this city reigned a King and his wife, the Queen. The Cock flew straight to the roof of the royal palace and spent the night there. At early dawn he began to crow lustily:

Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!
One kick for the King, for the Queen two!

This enraged the King terribly, and he commanded his chamberlain to catch this impudent crower and chain him in the royal stables, that he might be trampled to death by the horses' hoofs. The chamberlain caught the Cock, threw him into the stable, and shut the door well.

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Then the Cock told the Wolf to slip out, and during the night Isegrim strangled all the horses and ate up a whole colt. Then he broke a hole through the wall, by which he and the Cock escaped. The Cock perched himself again upon the roof and began his song of yesterday:

Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo.
One kick for the King, for the Queen two!

In a moment the King sprang out of bed, called his chamberlain, and ordered him to send and see what had happened in the stable, that the Cock was out of doors and crowing. The chamberlain hastened to the stable, saw the strangled horses, and brought the news to the King.

[103]

At this the King flew into a still greater rage, and gave command to catch the Cock and throw him among the geese. The chamberlain seized the Cock and locked him in the goose-pen, where there were several hundred geese. Then the Cock said to the Fox, "Come forth, Master, and finish up with all these geese!"

Reinecke was soon at work, and by daybreak every goose was strangled. Then the Fox groped a hole through the pen, and he and the Cock slipped comfortably out. The Cock flew again to the roof and sang as on the former day:

Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!
One kick for the King, for the Queen two!

The King was more enraged than ever, and sent to see what had happened to the geese. The servant found them all dead, and brought the news to the King. Then the King commanded that the great bake-oven should be heated and the Cock thrown into it. The servant caught the Cock and threw him into the very middle of the hot oven. Then the Cock sang:

[104]

Little Brook, flow quickly out;

Put the oven fire out!

And the little Brook flowed out into the oven and extinguished the whole fire.

The next morning the people came to see if the Cock was dead, when, lo! he was already perched upon the roof, singing:

Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!
One kick for the King, for the Queen two!

Now the King was beside himself with rage. He rushed out to catch the Cock himself, and not knowing, in his excitement, what to do with him, he thrust him under his night-clothes. Then the Cock told the swarm of Bees to come out and sting the King. "Buzz, buzz!" out they came, and stung the King till he was all one wound. [105]

At this the King commanded his servants to lock up the Cock in his treasure-chamber, that he might miserably starve to death. The servants seized the Cock and carried him to the treasure-chamber, but they were so frightened that they ran away as fast as their heels could carry them, forgetting to fasten the door. There were great heaps of shining, brand-new ducats in the treasure-chamber, and the Cock made the best of the opportunity by swallowing a number of them and hiding one under each of his feathers. Then he flew away to his old master's house. He perched upon a tree in the yard and began to crow:

O, little father, little father!
Spread some plates abroad for me,
I'll give ducats bright to thee!

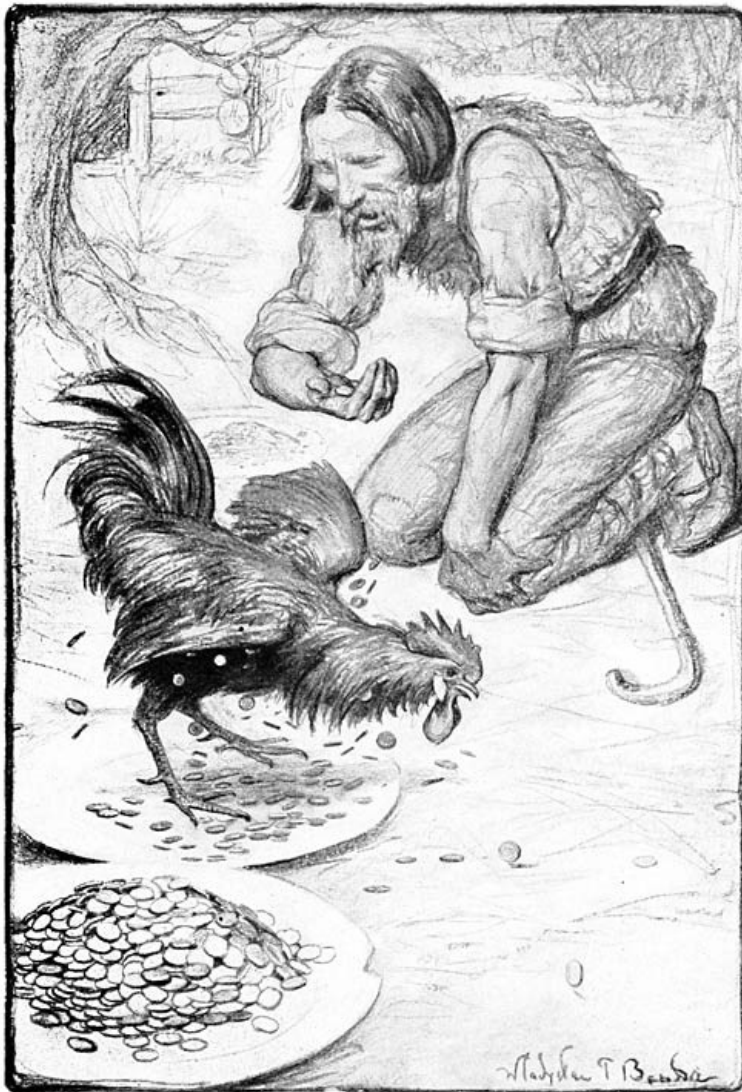
The old man, overjoyed, spread out three plates under the tree. Then the Cock shook himself, and a shower of golden ducats fell and lay upon the plates in three great heaps. The old man was perfectly happy to have so much money, and from this time forward he let the Cock want for nothing. [106]

His former wife soon heard that he had become enormously rich, and she came to see him.

"Ah, come," said she to him, "give me a few ducats!"

"Not if I know it! Why would not you give me one little egg, eh? Go back and tell your old Hen to bring you ducats."

The old woman ran back to her home and commanded her Hen, "Go out into the world and seek your fortune, and bring me home some ducats."



A shower of golden ducats fell, and lay upon the plates in three great heaps

The Hen went sadly forth, betook herself to the refuse heap and began to scratch in the litter. After long scratching she found a copper *heller* and a needle. She picked them up, and also stuck a little stone under each of her feathers. Then she flew back to the court-yard and began to cackle:

[107]

O, little mother, little mother!
Spread some plates abroad for me,
I'll give ducats bright to thee!

Filled with joy, the old woman hastened to spread out four plates under the tree. Then the Hen shook herself, and let fall on one plate the worn *heller*, but only little stones on all the others.

"Is that all?" exclaimed the old woman angrily.

"No, here is something more," clucked the Hen, and she slung the needle into the old woman's eye.

Upon this the old woman beat the Hen soundly, and went back to her husband's house, begged his pardon and made it all up with him. Whenever he wanted an egg she gave him one, and he always gave her a ducat in exchange.

[108]

Little boy, if you are good you shall get an egg for nothing!

"I am good, grandmother," said the little boy. "Will you give me an egg?"

The grandmother laughed. "That is only the way the story ends," she said. "But it is dinner-time, and if your mother will let you take dinner with me I will give you an egg. Run away and ask her."

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CHAPTER XII

THE SHEEP-PLAY

The dinner was over, the plates washed and put away, and grandmother was busy with her spinning. The little boy was amusing himself with some bits of wool that had fallen to the floor, for everything is a plaything to a Russian child. The bits of wool were sheep, and a wooden stool was a sheepfold, and a bit of fuel that had fallen when grandmother covered up the fire was the sheep-dog. It was a very nice play.

The room was very quiet, for, though the little boy talked all the time to his sheep and his dog, he had been taught to talk softly in his plays, as all children must do when a whole family lives in one room. He talked very softly indeed when he saw that grandmother had leaned her head against the straight back of her rush-bottomed chair and was taking a little nap. Presently the distaff fell from her lap to the floor and awakened her.

[110]

“Why, I must have been asleep!” she said, and went on with her spinning.

At last the sheep, which had been wandering away upon the hills that rose between the hollows in the clay floor, had all been discovered by the sheep-dog and herded, one by one, in the fold. The little boy was tired of playing, and he sat on the stool to listen to his grandmother’s singing. Grandmother was always singing when she was not telling stories to the little boy.

“Why can’t you tell stories while you spin, as well as when you knit?” asked the little boy.

“Oh, that isn’t the way!” said the grandmother. “When it is dark and I take my knitting I can tell a story, but not now. You’d better go home till it begins to grow dark; then come, and we’ll see what story little grandmother can tell.”

[111]

The winter day was very short, and it was not long before the little boy came back. Grandmother was still spinning, but she laid aside her distaff and spindle, took her knitting down from the shelf, and began the story of

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THE BEG AND THE FOX

Once upon a time there lived in a certain village a Beg whose whole property consisted of a horse, a greyhound, and a musket. He had no other occupation than hunting, and by this he gained his living.

One fine day he mounted his horse, threw his musket over his shoulder, called to his greyhound, and set off to hunt upon the high mountains. After riding a long distance he reached an elevated plain, where he tied his horse to a tree and went forward into the thick woods, with his gun upon his shoulder and his dog by his side. While he was hunting on the mountain a Fox drew near to the horse and lay down in the grass beside him.

[112]

The Beg hunted about in the woods for a long time, but he only made out to kill a single deer. When he went back to his horse and saw the Fox lying there beside it he was astonished, and raised his musket to make an end of the Master. But when the Fox saw what the Beg was about to do he sprang up quickly and implored him, for the love of Heaven, to spare his life, promising to be a faithful guard and protector to his horse.

The Beg took pity on the Fox and gave him his life. Then mounting his horse, he laid the deer before him, set the Fox behind him, and went home. On arriving at home he put the deer upon the spit to roast for supper, and threw the offal to the Fox, that he might have a good meal too.

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So the night passed. In the first dawn of morning the Beg again set out, taking the Fox along. He went again to the same high plain, tied his horse to the same tree, and went forward to hunt, leaving the Fox to guard the horse. After his departure the Fox remained alone for a time. But he soon had company, for a Bear came along, intending to devour the horse. But the Fox stopped him and begged him to spare the horse, advising him to stay till the Beg returned, for he was a good master and would feed them both at his house. The Bear joyfully accepted this proposal, and lay down beside the Fox to await the worthy Beg’s return.

When the Beg came back from hunting he was not a little surprised to see the Bear lying peacefully with the Fox beside the horse, and he quickly raised his musket to him. But the Fox sprang forward and began to beseech the Beg to spare the Bear and take him home with him. The Bear, he said, would keep him company in guarding the horse, and would rush to the Beg's aid in every need and danger. At these entreaties the Beg laid down his gun, threw across his horse the two deer which he had killed, and returned home in high good-humor, accompanied by the Fox and the Bear.

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The following day the Beg went hunting again and left his horse on the same high plain. This day a Wolf joined the company and was taken home with the others. On the fourth day a Mouse and a Mole presented themselves and were accepted in the family, and at last came the bird Kumrikusha,¹ which was so large that it could easily have carried away the horse and his rider through the air. All these animals were fed by the Beg at his own house.

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One day the Fox said to the Bear, "Up, Master Petz! Bring me here a log! I will sit upon it and give orders, and you must all execute them."

Upon this the Bear betook himself to the forest and dragged home the trunk of a mighty tree. Then Reinecke climbed upon it and uttered the following discourse:

"All right! Well, then! See here, now, worthy companions and friends! We must marry our Beg."

"Good!" replied the others; "but how shall we begin? For we don't know where to find a maiden for him."

"The Emperor has a daughter," replied Reinecke; "let us marry our Beg to her. Kumrikusha, do you begin. Set off at once for the imperial castle, lie in wait for the young lady when she takes her walk, seize her and bring her here."

[116]

Kumrikusha, nothing loath, set out at once, alighted near the imperial castle, and watched for the Emperor's little daughter. Just at nightfall she came out of the castle to walk, accompanied by her waiting-woman. In a trice Kumrikusha was upon the spot, seized the Princess, set her upon his back, and flew homeward.

When the Emperor heard of the abduction of his daughter he was beside himself with grief, and offered to reward with untold wealth the person who should bring her home again. But all in vain, for no one dared undertake the adventure, until at last, one day, a gypsy-wife presented herself before the Emperor and said to him:

"Lord Emperor, what shall I get if I bring you back your daughter?"

The Emperor could hardly believe his own ears, and he cried out in delight, "Ask what you will, it shall be granted; only bring her back safe!"

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The gypsy-wife went home, took some beans in her hand, and began to practise enchantment with them, according to ancient custom. She soon divined from the beans that the Princess was distant ten days' journey, and she at once prepared to follow her. She took a piece of carpet and her riding-whip, seated herself upon the carpet, cracked the whip, and up rose the carpet into the air. It carried her straight to the place where the Beg was living with his wife, the Emperor's daughter.

Arrived within a short distance of the Beg's stronghold, the gypsy-wife let herself down to the ground, left her carpet and riding-whip lying there, and found a hiding-place where she could see the Princess when she came out before the door for her evening walk. She had not long to wait. The Princess soon came out for a little walk, and in a trice the gypsy-wife was at her side, entering into conversation with her. As they talked she gradually led her farther and farther away from the Beg's castle, and at last turned off into a by-path, where the carpet lay.

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No sooner did the Princess see the carpet spread upon the grass than she exclaimed, "Why, here is a carpet! Let us sit down upon it."

Nothing could have pleased the gypsy better. They sat down together. The gypsy took up her riding-whip, struck the carpet, and away they both went through the air, straight to the imperial castle.

The Emperor's joy was boundless when he saw his daughter, and he richly rewarded the gypsy. But he shut the Princess up in a room and strictly forbade her to leave it, appointing two maids to watch and wait upon her.

When Reinecke heard what had happened to his Beg's wife, he summoned his companions to a council and addressed them in the following words:

[119]

"Friends and comrades! We have indeed married our Beg to the Emperor's daughter, but, as you see, she has been forcibly taken away from us, and here is our Beg a lonely bachelor again. Nothing remains for us to do but to bring the Princess back to our Beg. But this is an undertaking beset with difficulties. The Emperor keeps his daughter under strict watch, and never permits her to leave her chamber. You see, therefore, that only stratagem can avail us here."

"What, then, shall we do?" asked Petz.

"There is nothing better to do than for me to transform myself into a beautiful striped kitten and play about under the Princess's window. When she sees me she will send her maids down to catch me. But I shall not allow myself to be caught until the Princess herself comes down. At the very moment she appears, do you, Kumrikusha, arrive upon the scene, seize her, and carry her to our Beg. Meanwhile I shall look sharp to outrun the pursuers and get off with a whole skin."

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Thus spoke the Master, and all the others agreed that the plan was good.

The bird Kumrikusha immediately took the Fox under his wing, flew with him into the kingdom where the Emperor's daughter languished, and set him down near the imperial castle. The Master no sooner felt solid ground under his feet than he transformed himself into a beautiful striped kitten, crept under the balcony where the Princess was sitting, and began to spring about in the most graceful and fantastic manner. Thus he succeeded in attracting her attention, and, as he had anticipated, the Princess at once sent her maids down to bring the kitten to her. But Reinecke, though in a cat's form, was still a fox at heart, and was not to be caught at any price.

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When the Emperor's daughter saw this she herself went down to catch Pussy. But hardly had she stepped out of the door when the bird Kumrikusha swooped down, seized her, and bore her home to the Beg, while Reinecke ran off in another direction and thus saved his skin.

As soon as the Emperor heard of this mishap he ordered out his hounds to hunt the cat that had decoyed away his daughter. But the cat, when he saw himself chased, took refuge in the cleft of a rock into which the hounds could not follow him. So they returned home from a bootless chase.

Then the cat crept out, transformed himself back into a fox, and followed Kumrikusha, who by this time had brought the Princess home to the Beg.

The Emperor, convinced that he should not recover his daughter by peaceful means, levied an immense army and declared war against the beasts. When Reinecke heard of this he summoned the other animals that lived with the Beg, and which, as I have told you, were a Bear, a Wolf, a Mouse, a Mole, and the bird Kumrikusha, and spoke to them thus:

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"Listen! The Emperor, with his whole army, is marching against us to exterminate us. Very well; let us also summon our forces, that we may make a brave stand against him. Master Petz, how many bears can you muster?"

"More than three hundred."

"And you, Isegrim?"

"I can bring five hundred wolves."

"And you, Mouse—speak up; how great is your command?"

"I can bring three thousand mice."

"And how many moles can you bring, Mole?"

"Eight thousand."

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"And you, Kumrikusha, will you join us?"

"Yes, with two or three hundred birds like myself."

"Good! Now go and levy your forces as has been agreed. When they are assembled, come here, that I may tell you what to do next."

As soon as Reinecke had given these orders the beasts all betook themselves to the forest in order to summon their troops. Soon heaven and earth resounded with the din of approaching multitudes. Here came the army of the Bears, there came the Wolves, and close behind were the Mice and the Moles. Woods and fields were filled with them, and when they were all drawn up in martial array Reinecke held a review and gave the following orders:

"You, Bears and Wolves, must lead the van, and when the Emperor has encamped for the night do you fall upon the camp and kill all the horses. On the second night, you, Mice, must gnaw all the saddles, for they will have procured fresh horses in the meantime. On the third night, you, Moles, must dig around the camp a subterranean passage fifteen ells broad and twenty deep. And as soon as the army is stirring in the morning, you, Kumrikushas, must rain down great pieces of rock upon them."

[124]

The review ended, the several detachments of the army of the beasts set forth. The first night, when the imperial host had encamped, the Bears and the Wolves fell upon the imperial horses and tore them all to pieces. Early in the morning the soldiers announced to the Emperor that wild beasts had killed all the horses during the night. The Emperor made diligent search into the cause of the sudden calamity, and meanwhile he commanded that fresh horses should be procured without delay. This was done and the army moved on.

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During the second night's encampment the Mice came and gnawed all the trappings of the horses. In the morning when the soldiers awoke and saw that all the saddles were nibbled they told the Emperor, who at once commanded that new ones should be made. This done, again the army marched on.

The third night the Fox sent the Moles to surround the camp with a subterranean passage fifteen ells broad and twenty deep. That the work might be the sooner accomplished, he directed the Bears to carry away the loosened earth. The Moles began the work about midnight, leaving only one hole open at one side where the earth was to be carried out. While the Moles were digging under the ground and throwing up the clods, the Bears were busily carrying the earth to some distance from the camp.

When the Emperor's troops awoke in the morning they mounted their horses to ride away; but hardly had they gone a few steps when they began to fall through the treacherous earth. At the same time the Kumrikushas let fall a rain of rocks and stones upon them.

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When the Emperor saw his great army thus miserably perishing he cried aloud, "Let us beat a retreat! It is the judgment of God upon us for undertaking to make war upon the beasts. Let them keep my kidnapped daughter, in Heaven's name!"

Immediately the army wheeled about to retreat, but even on that side the earth gave way beneath their feet.

"God is punishing us already," cried the Emperor in despair, "by causing the earth to swallow us up! Oh, why, then, does He slay us with stones and rocks from the sky?"

The confusion was universal; every one was pushing and crowding his neighbor; and so the Emperor's whole army melted away.

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After a time the Fox removed his residence to Stamboul and began to rule there, and the Beg gave up hunting and went also to Stamboul to be near his Fox. There, with his wife, whom no one again dared to kidnap, he lived in joy and peace until his blessed end.

The little boy had left his stool and was standing near his grandmother, his eyes shining in the darkness. When she stopped speaking he drew a long breath.

"That was a good Fox, grandmother," he said. "I should like to know that Fox."

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¹ *Kumrikusha* is from a Slavonic root signifying "the bird of the desert."

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CHAPTER XIII

GETTING READY

It was very interesting in the little boy's house the next day, for the mother was getting ready for the journey and the sisters were helping. There was food to be cooked and there were clothes to be washed, and it all made a very pleasant bustle. The little boy was in the thick of it all. He thought he was helping, though perhaps the others thought differently. At any rate, he was in a state of most

delightful excitement.

When it grew dark the work was all done, and the little boy went to the grandmother's room.

"We are all ready, grandmother," he said, "and I have been patient all the time!"

"Well, well!" said the grandmother. "Surely you deserve a reward, then. Shall I tell you a story?" [129]

"Oh, dear little grandmother, yes!" cried the little boy. "Will it be about Reinecke?"

"Not about Reinecke, nor any of the animals you know," said the grandmother; "it will be about

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"THE SEVEN STARS"

Once upon a time there was a King who had a wonderfully beautiful daughter. But there came a Dragon and stole her away and vanished, leaving not a trace behind.

So the King called his High Chamberlain and commanded him to go forth into the world and seek the Princess, and on no account to come back without her.

The High Chamberlain set out and searched throughout the whole world, but nowhere could he find the slightest trace of the King's daughter nor the least clew to her whereabouts. However, an old woman advised him to go to such-and-such a country and inquire for the Dragon-mother, for she alone was able to give him information about the stolen Princess. [130]

And, verily, the High Chamberlain followed this counsel. After most toilsome wanderings he at last arrived safely at the Dragon-mother's house and begged her to give him such information as she had as to the abiding-place of the King's daughter.

The Dragon-mother answered, "My dear friend, stay here over this night. What God has given us we will share with you—you shall not suffer hunger in my house. As soon as my sons, the Dragons, return home from afar I will ask them about the Princess. I have five sons, each one wiser and cleverer than the other. The first has the power of stealing anything that he takes a fancy to; he could steal the calf from the cow or the foal from the mare, and they never observe it. The second can follow up the trace of any lost object, though it have been lost for years. The third draws a sure arrow upon anything that he can see. The fourth can build an impregnable fortress in an instant, and can hide anything he chooses within it, so that no one can possibly find it. And the fifth is as bold as a falcon and as swift as the lightning when there is anything to be overtaken and caught." [131]

While she was speaking, her sons, the Dragons, came home, and the mother inquired of them if they knew anything of the whereabouts of the King's lost daughter.

"To be sure," they answered. "She is with a more powerful Dragon than we. He stole her away from her father, the King, and now keeps her in one of his castles."

"I adjure you," interrupted the High Chamberlain, "help me to find her. I may on no account appear before the King and live unless I bring his daughter with me. My master will not show himself ungrateful to you." [132]

The Dragons declared themselves quite willing to help him. The second brother traced up the scent, and the first brother stole the lovely maiden and brought her back with him. But the more powerful Dragon pursued after them, took her away, and flew up into the air to carry her to a place of safety.

Then the third brother fitted a bolt to his crossbow, drew it, sped the arrow, and hit that Dragon in the very middle of his heart. With a fearful outcry the Dragon fell from the clouds and was dashed to little bits upon a rock. And thus it would inevitably have been with the King's daughter, whom the Dragon held tightly clasped, had not the fifth brother flown swiftly and caught up the maiden, so that she was kept safe and sound.

But now ensued a sudden and unlooked-for danger, for the dead Dragon's brother drew near, and several other monsters with him; and it would soon have been all over with the brothers if the fourth had not speedily erected a strong fortress, in which all the brothers, the King's daughter, and the High Chamberlain safely [133]

concealed themselves.

For a long time those hideous Dragons lay in wait around the fortress; but they finally went away, having accomplished nothing. Then the five brothers, the gracious maiden, and the High Chamberlain came out and went home to the Dragon-mother.

And the eldest son said, "Is it not true, little mother, that the maiden belongs to me, who rescued her from that furious Dragon?" The second brother said, "But you would never have found her nor rescued her if I had not traced up the scent." The third brother interrupted, "Of what good would it have been that you, eldest brother, rescued her, and you, second brother, traced up the scent, if I had not destroyed the monster at the right moment? Therefore, in all right and reason, the maiden belongs to me." [134]

Here the fifth brother struck in. "By right the maiden belongs to me; for if I had not caught her up in the very nick of time she would not now be in the land of the living." And the fourth brother said, "If you will consider the whole matter impartially, you will see that I have the most righteous claim upon the maiden; for all your trouble would have gone for nothing if I had not made the castle at the right moment and hidden her, and you, too, to come within it."

And now the Chamberlain put in his word. "All your pretensions are idle. The maiden is mine; for if I had not told you that she was stolen away, the first would not have rescued her, nor the second traced up the scent, nor the third destroyed the monster, nor the fifth caught up the maiden, and the fourth would have concealed no one in his castle." [135]

Thus all the six strove for possession of the maiden, until the Dragon-mother put in her word. "If this is so, then you are all in the right; but the maiden can surely not belong to you all. But you can all take her for your sister and love and protect her as long as you and she live."

And so they did, and in remembrance thereof they and the maiden were set in the sky, and can be seen there to this day, and men call them "the Seven Stars."¹ At least, so goes the story.

"Dragons are different from Reinecke and Petz and Isegrim," observed the little boy. [136]

"Don't you like them as well?" asked the grandmother.

"I like them," answered the little boy, "but I don't know them as well as I know Reinecke and Isegrim. I am not used to them, grandmother."

"You will get used to them while you are at your other grandmother's, where you are going to-morrow," said the grandmother. "The stories of her commune are not at all the same as the stories of this commune."

"Why not, grandmother?" asked the little boy.

"I don't know why not," answered the grandmother, "but it is always so. Every commune has its own stories. There are many dragons in those of your other grandmother's commune. Now you are going out into the world, you will get very wise, for you will know the stories of two communes." [137]

¹ The Pleiades.

CHAPTER XIV

MOTHER'S-MOTHER

The happy day had come. The little boy was all ready for the journey, dressed in a colored shirt hanging over his full trousers—the white shirt must be kept clean for Sunday, you know—his *kaftan* well belted down and with a small fur collar at the neck, and on his head a high *kolpak*, or fur hat, just like his father's. His legs were covered by *onontchi*, well wrapped around and cross-gartered with colored strings, and on his feet he had fur-lined shoes, for third-class cars are very cold. The little boy's mother had on all her warm clothes, with a long fur overcoat, just

like that the father wore, over all her other wraps; and the father, besides his great fur overcoat, had on his fur *kolpak* and high fur-lined boots, into the wide tops of which his full trousers were tucked. He had a great basket in his hand, containing food for the journey and a pair of fowls and some other things for the mother's-mother whom they were going to visit. In his inside pocket the father had the papers of the *mir* which he must carry to the *zemstvo*. So they were all ready.

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All the men and children of the village accompanied them to the station, which was in the midst of a wide plain a quarter of a league beyond the last house. There was a good while to wait; the train was not due for half an hour, but that did not matter. The grown folk had a deal of talking to do—all the privileges that they hoped the *starosta* would secure from the *zemstvo* for the commune. As for the children! Well, this was the chance of their lives, for their station had a playground, with swings, wooden horses, and giant's strides, and it was not often they had such privileges, especially the uniformed school-children. For when once a Russian child puts on the school uniform, play is pretty nearly over for him for the rest of his life. So they made the most of their opportunity. It was not a cold day for January, and if it had been they would not have minded.

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When the train came lumbering in, as it did after a while, half a dozen more children jumped down from the second and third class cars and ran to the playground. The other children made way for them, for station playgrounds are for travelling children, and they had the first right. Yet there was room for them all. But the little boy was impatient to be on his travels, so he ran to his mother, and was very glad when the men of the commune had said their last words to their representative, and the *starosta* led his wife and little boy to a good place in a compartment where there was room for the *samovar*. Presently the first warning was given. The children came running from the playground; there was a chorus of good-bys. The second warning sounded, and the train jolted away. The little boy was a travelling child at last!

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At every stop where there was a playground—there was not one at every station—he would run out and have a swing, his mother going with him, for he was a little boy to be among strangers. After a while he was hungry, and then his mother unpacked her basket and set the *samovar* a-going, and gave a lump of bread and a big piece of sausage to each, with unlimited cups of scalding tea that made them nice and warm. After that the little boy leaned his head against his mother, and then—most wonderful!—they were already at the capital, and the stars were shining. Where had the afternoon gone?

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He had not time to ask, for his father had swung him upon his shoulder and was carrying him through the crowd, and there, outside the wicket, was a little old woman, with such a nice face, who fell upon his mother's neck and kissed her again and again.

"That is your other grandmother," said his father. "Your mother has not seen her since she was married, and that is many years ago."

And then the other grandmother caught the little boy from his father's arms and kissed him and cried over him, till the little boy did not know whether he ought to cry or not.

He became very well acquainted with the other grandmother the next day. She did not seem like his own dear little grandmother at home, but she was very nice. He called her mother's-mother, because she was not his real grandmother, he thought; and the other grandmother laughed and said that would do very well.

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In the afternoon, when his father had gone back to the *zemstvo*, and his mother was clearing up after dinner, which she said her mother was not to do while she was there, the little boy went and stood by his other grandmother's chair.

"Mother's-mother," he said, "little grandmamma told me that you knew some nice stories."

"Yes," said mother's-mother, "I suppose I do. They are not like your little grandmamma's stories. The stories of this commune are different. They are more about the Vilas than those of your commune are. Yours are mostly about Reinecke and the other beasts, are they not?"

"I like Reinecke and the beasts," said the little boy. "But I should like the Vilas, too, mother's-mother."

"Then I will tell you about them," said the other grandmother. "Sit down on that stool—it was your mother's when she was a little girl. That is right. Now I will tell you about

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“THE VILA OF MUHLENBERG”

Once upon a time there was an aged widow who had only one son, whom she watched and cherished in her old age. Now there was a great war at that time all over the world; every man who could bear arms was forced to go into the army, and among others the widow’s son. There he so distinguished himself for bravery on every occasion that he was promoted to be Captain.

Now it happened one time that they suffered a defeat. Among the wounded was our Captain, and as he lay on the ground he prayed God to spare his life, at least until he had seen his old mother. He was in the greatest danger, for all around him the enemy was killing the wounded. Suddenly an aged dame stood before him and asked him what he was praying for, promising him that she would grant his wish. [144]

Without taking time to think, he answered, “Give me a horse, that I may escape before the enemy murder me.”

Upon this she struck upon the earth with the staff that was in her hand, and softly murmured a few words. Suddenly a noble steed stood before him, all saddled and bridled; he had only to mount it. He looked around to thank the old dame, but she had vanished.

The Captain sprang into the saddle, gave the horse the spur, and flew from the spot like an arrow from the bow. He rode on for a long time without noticing in what direction the horse was carrying him, when suddenly it stopped.

He looked around and saw before him a great city with many church-towers which shone so brightly that they fairly dazzled his eyes. He rode into the city, and was overcome with astonishment, for all around him was nothing but stone. Men, women, animals, everything he set his eyes upon was turned to stone, for this was an enchanted city. And the horse was a Vila, and had vanished from under him as soon as he had entered the precincts of the city. [145]

Perhaps he himself would have remained the whole day upon the spot, as if turned to stone, had he not suddenly beheld before him a maiden with golden hair. When she saw him she uttered a cry and hastened up into the golden castle.

He followed close upon her footsteps, but before the castle-gate he met the same old woman who had given him the horse. He greeted her prettily and asked her what was all this about—the golden-haired maiden and the enchanted city. Hereupon the old dame told him the following story:

“Many, many years ago this city was the greatest and the most beautiful in the whole world. An Emperor lived here, who was so benevolent and such a lover of justice that whenever he heard that any one had done his neighbor a kindness he rewarded him so richly and with such distinction that he could live to his dying day in peace and happiness. On the other hand, he was unmercifully severe to evil-doers and caused every one who was guilty of any sort of crime to be put to death at once. [146]

“For this reason some wicked men killed him and his only son. But as they were murdering the son they heard an awful voice, which said:

“‘Miserable wretches! you have killed him who was your benefactor and father. Be accursed, therefore, for a thousand years, until a youth shall come and loose you from this ban!’

“But the Emperor’s daughter, whom the Lord God had given to me, remained alive, for God said, ‘She shall be the reward of him who frees you.’ Meantime, however, she was turned to stone until the moment when you entered the city. Then she awoke, cried, ‘The Liberator is come!’ and brought the news to me. You yourself have seen her.” [147]

So spoke the old dame, and, full of joy, the young man asked her what he was to do in order to loose the city from the spell. She answered:

“I can give you no counsel, but you will soon find that out above. And now, as you have no more need of me, farewell, in God’s name! But first I will tell you who I am. I am a Vila. If ever you should fall into any trouble, you have only to call, ‘Vila, stand by me!’ and you shall be helped.” She spoke, and was already gone.

The young man and the maiden were now in doubt as to what they ought to do. They would gladly have wedded each other, but where find a priest, or even any one else? So they went into a church to pray to God; and the maid said to the [148]

youth, "From this hour you are my husband and I am your wife till death. But go at least and set the bells a-ringing, that our nuptials may be celebrated in some way."

Hardly had the first note pealed forth from the bells when everything breathed and lived—the men, the beasts, everything, in short, which had been turned to stone. Then all the people broke out into the cry, "God save our Liberator, now and evermore!"

The first thing was to celebrate a magnificent wedding, when the *pop* united the pair forever in the presence of the whole assembled people. Every one rejoiced, eating and drinking as if they never meant to leave off.

The young couple lived for several years in joy and happiness, until at last the King was overcome with an ardent longing to see his dear mother. He confided this wish to his wife, whereupon she led him into the royal stables and presented him with four horses, saying:

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"Here, I give you these four horses. You must know that they are Vilas, and they will take you to your home, for you have no idea how far away it is. But if any one there asks you where you have been and what you have been doing all this time, beware of telling them the truth, for if you relate your adventures the Vilas will vanish, and you will never be able to come back to me again."

He promised her everything that she asked and set out for home. When he arrived he found his dear mother no longer living. His heart was wrung with sorrow, for there he stood alone in the world, brotherless, sisterless, without a single relative.

The people questioned him incessantly, until at last in a moment of weakness he yielded to their importunities and told them his story. But the words had hardly passed his lips when the horses vanished. He was inconsolable for their loss, for he loved his wife more than his own soul.

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He therefore determined to seek her out, even if it cost him his head. So he travelled on and on and on until he came to the Moon. There was no one at home but the Moon-mother, for the Moon had just gone out. When the Moon-mother saw the young man she was full of pity for him, and said:

"Do you not know, unhappy one, that my son will tear you in pieces as soon as he gets home? But come, I will hide you!" And she hid him in a chest.

When at last the Moon came home, tired and cross, he called out in a thundering voice, "Woman, there is a Christian soul staying here! Out with him!"

His mother besought her son to spare the young man's life, and finally she succeeded in mollifying him.

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"Well, then, I won't do him any harm," said the Moon; "only let him show himself."

Upon this the old mother opened the chest and brought the young man before her son. The youth drew near to the Moon, bowed low before him, and said:

"Mighty Moon! you shed your mild rays over the whole earth; tell me if you know anything of a city called Muhlenberg."

The Moon replied, "I indeed shine over the whole round earth, but I have never heard of any Muhlenberg. Therefore, I counsel you, seek out my brother the Sun; perhaps he can tell you something about it."

The young man thanked the Moon, and went to the Moon's brother, the Sun, and said, "Your brother the Moon sends greeting, and says, in case you know anything about the city Muhlenberg, you are to tell me."

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The Sun replied that he knew nothing of any such city, and sent him to the North-wind, saying, "This wind blows everywhere and searches out the most hidden corners; perhaps he knows the city."

But the North-wind sent him to the East-wind, and the East-wind sent him to the West-wind, and the West-wind sent him to the South-wind, the most fearful of all the winds.¹

When the young man appeared before the South-wind, he bowed low and said, "I bring you greetings from all your relatives, the Sun, the Moon, the North-wind, the East-wind, and the West-wind, and you are to give me some information about the city Muhlenberg."

Said the South-wind, "I have just come from Muhlenberg. There will soon be grand doings in that city, for the Queen is going to be married."

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Then the young man implored the South-wind to take him there. The South-wind answered:

"It is pretty far from here, and you don't know the way; but take this apple, and wherever it rolls do you follow it, and you will come to Muhlenberg."

The young man bade the South-wind adieu and followed the apple, going on for a long, long time. Suddenly he came upon some robbers. He went up to them as if they were old acquaintances, exclaiming, "Good-day to you, brothers! Are you right well? Here I am with you at last!"

They really believed that he was one of themselves, so they took him with them, and showed him a coat which had the power of rendering invisible the person who wore it. Next they showed him a pair of boots that would enable one to put a mile behind him at every step. He put on both the coat and the boots, as if to test the truth of the story, and immediately made off. The robbers could not even think of trying to follow him, since they could not see him. [154]

So he rolled the apple again along the ground before him, and at last he arrived at Muhlenberg. He heard music in every part of the city, cannons were thundering, and above all swept the South-wind.

When the South-wind saw him he went down and greeted him, saying, "So here we are, at last, in Muhlenberg!"

The young man now went into the city, and, being still invisible, he helped himself to all the food and drink he wanted, and refreshed himself with his gossip, the South-wind. Then, taking leave of him, he made his way into the royal palace which had once been his own. There he saw the Queen beside the newly chosen spouse whom she was about to marry, and heard her sigh:

"Just seven years ago to-day my beloved husband deserted me!" [155]

Upon this he began to sing a song which he used to be always singing when he was king. She recognized it at once, and, full of joy, cried out, "That is my husband, my first good fortune! My wedding-guests, drink the foaming wine and take your leave. I have no need to marry, for my husband has come home again, my only joy and bliss!"

And from this time they lived long and happily together. And the Queen bore to her husband a son with a mole like a golden sword upon his arm, and a beautiful golden-haired daughter.

So ends the story.

"I should like to go to the Moon," observed the little boy.

"They don't go nowadays," said the other grandmother. "That was long ago, before my great-grandmother was born." [156]

¹ This is evidence that the story originated in lands where the sirocco is dreaded.

CHAPTER XV

THE LITTLE BOY HOMESICK

The little boy did not know what to do with himself, for they were very busy getting dinner ready against his father's return from the *zemstvo*. He did not know how to play in this house as he did in his own; he felt a little homesick, and presently he began to cry.

"What does that mean?" asked his mother, who was making the onion-soup.

The little boy only cried the more. "I want my little grandmamma!" he said. "She would tell me a story."

"I'll tell you a story," said the other grandmother, who was making noodles. "Come and stand by me. But there must be no more crying, and it must be a very short story, for I am busy. Is that a bargain?" [157]

A SHORT STORY

Once upon a time a Hungarian was crossing a brook. He had on a woollen coat with short sleeves. As long as were the sleeves, so long will be this story. If the sleeves had been longer, the story would have been longer too.

“That is a very short story,” said the little boy.

“So I promised you,” said the other grandmother. “I have kept my part of the bargain, have I not? Now do you keep yours, and after dinner I will tell you a longer one. Only remember, no more tears!”

The little boy kept his part of the bargain, and after dinner the other grandmother told him about

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THE GOLDEN APPLE-TREE AND THE NINE PEAHENS

Once upon a time there was an Emperor who had three sons. Before his palace stood a golden apple-tree which bloomed and bore ripe fruit in one and the self-same night; but it was always plundered by some one who left not the slightest trace behind.

At last the father said to his sons, “Who can have made away with the fruit of our apple-tree?”

Upon this the eldest son said, “I will watch the tree to-night, and will teach the rogue to know better!”

So when twilight began to fall he went and laid himself down beneath the apple-tree to guard it. But he fell asleep just as the apples began to ripen, and when at dawn he awoke, the tree had been already stripped. He therefore went to his father and truthfully told him the whole story.

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Then the second son pledged himself to guard the tree; but it happened with him precisely as with the other. He fell asleep under the apple-tree, and when the dawning light awoke him not an apple remained upon the tree.

It was now the turn of the youngest son to watch the tree. He made himself ready, went out to the tree, prepared his bed immediately under it, and laid himself down to sleep. Just at midnight he suddenly awoke. He cast a glance upward into the tree, the fruit of which was just beginning to ripen. The whole castle glittered with its golden sheen.

At that very moment nine golden Peahens came flying by; eight of them settled upon the apple-tree, but the ninth flew down upon the young man’s bed and transformed herself into a beautiful maiden—a more beautiful was not to be found in the whole empire.

[160]

So the two kissed and caressed each other until after midnight, when the maiden stood up, thanked him for the apples, and would have gone, but he entreated her earnestly to leave him at least one. She gave him two—one he was to keep for himself, the other he might give to his father. Then she transformed herself into a Peahen and flew away with the others.

At daybreak the imperial Prince arose and carried the apples to his father, who was overjoyed at the sight, and heaped praises upon his son.

When evening came again the imperial Prince made ready his resting-place, as on the former evening, in order to watch the apple-tree. Having had the same experiences as on the preceding night, he again brought two golden apples to his father.

When this had gone on for several nights the brothers became envious, because they had not succeeded in guarding the apples. So they went to an old hag, who

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promised to spy upon the Prince and discover how he managed to guard the apple-tree so successfully. When evening came on, the old woman stole out to the tree, crept under the bed, and there hid herself.

Presently the youngest imperial Prince came out and betook himself, as usual, to rest. About midnight the nine Peahens came, and eight settled down upon the tree while the ninth flew down to the bed and transformed herself into a maiden. The old hag slyly seized the long braid of the maiden's hair, which hung down below the edge of the bed, and cut it off. But the maiden sprang up quickly, transformed herself again into a Peahen and flew away, with all her companions following her, and so vanished.

The imperial Prince sprang up and cried out, "What is this?" He searched around and perceived the old hag under the bed, seized her, dragged her out, and the next day commanded that she should be put to death. [162]

But the Peahens never returned to the apple-tree, and the imperial Prince mourned and bewailed himself without ceasing. At last he resolved to search for his little Peahen throughout the whole world, and never return home until he had found her. He told his resolution to his father, who tried to turn him from it, advising him to put the idea out of his head, and promising to find him another maiden, though he should have to search through his whole empire. But he spoke of deaf ears; the prince was firm, and set out with his servant to seek for his Peahen.

For a long time he wandered up and down the world, and one day he came to a lake, beside which he saw a magnificent great castle. In the castle he found an ancient dame, the Empress, and a little girl, her daughter. He asked the dame, "In Heaven's name, little mother, can you give me any news about nine golden Peahens?" [163]

And the dame answered, "To be sure I can, my son! They come every midnight to bathe in this lake. But leave those Peahens in peace. You shall have my little daughter, a splendid girl, and all my treasures shall be yours as well."

But he had no ear for the old dame's offer and no eye for the daughter, being filled with longing to see the Peahens. He arose early in the morning and went out to watch for the Peahens on the border of the lake.

But the old dame had bribed the Prince's servant and given him a pair of bellows such as one blows the fire with, adding these directions:

"Do you see these bellows? When your master goes down to the lake, blow slyly upon his neck with them. He will then fall into a deep sleep and will not be able to speak with the Peahens." [164]

And to this the wretch of a servant consented.

When they were upon the lake-shore he seized a favorable opportunity and blew upon his master's neck with the bellows, whereupon the poor Prince fell into a deathlike slumber. He had barely fallen asleep when the nine Peahens arrived; eight alighted in the lake, but the ninth flew to the Prince upon his steed, and began to embrace and try to waken him. "Awake, my life! Awake, my heart! Awake, my soul!" But he moved no more than the dead.

When the Peahens had bathed they all flew away, and he immediately awoke and asked the servant, "What is the matter? Have they been here?"

The servant answered that nine Peahens had flown down to the lake; eight had gone into the water, but the ninth had come to him, the Prince, upon his horse, had caressed and tried to awaken him. At these words the poor imperial Prince had nearly laid violent hands upon himself. [165]

The next day he again mounted his steed and rode slowly along the lake-shore, his servant behind him. The servant again found an opportunity to blow upon his neck with the bellows, whereupon the Prince fell into a deathlike slumber. Scarcely was he asleep when the nine Peahens arrived; eight went down into the lake, but the ninth flew to him upon his steed, and began to embrace him and try to awaken him, saying, "Awake, my life! Awake, my heart! Awake, my soul!"

But all in vain; he slept sounder than the dead.

Then she said to the servant, "Tell your master to wait for me here again tomorrow, for he will never see us here again after that," and she again flew away. [166]

She was scarcely gone when the imperial Prince awoke and asked the servant, "Have they been here?" The servant replied, "To be sure, and they left word for

you to expect them here again to-morrow; but after that they will never again come to this place."

When the unhappy Prince heard this he was beside himself, and tore his hair for grief and pain.

At dawn of the third day he again went down to the lake and rode along the shore, but at the fleetest pace possible, in order not to be overtaken by sleep. But even this time the servant found an opportunity to blow upon his neck with the bellows, whereupon the Prince immediately stretched himself out upon the horse's back and fell asleep.

He was hardly asleep when the nine Peahens came flying to the spot. Eight of them went down into the lake, but the ninth flew to him upon the horse and began to embrace him and to call, "Awake, my life! Awake, my heart! Awake, my soul!" But all in vain, for he slept like the dead. [167]

Then the Peahen said to the servant, "When your master awakes, say to him, *he must drive the upper wedge after the lower* before he will be able to find me." With these words the Peahens flew away.

When they were gone the imperial Prince awoke and said to the servant, "Have they been here?" The servant answered, "To be sure, and the one which seated herself upon your horse gave me orders to tell you that *you must drive the upper wedge after the lower*, and then you would find her."

When he heard this the Prince drew his sword and struck off the servant's head. Then he went on alone through the world.

After long, long wanderings he reached a high mountain, where he spent the night with a hermit. From him he asked tidings of the nine Peahens. The hermit answered: [168]

"My son, you are surely fortune's own child! God himself has led you in the right way. It is hardly more than half a day's journey from here to there. You have only to ride straight forward and you will come to a great gate. Then turn to the right and you will come straight to the city where their castle is."

By morning dawn the Prince awoke, dressed himself, pressed his warmest thanks upon the hermit, and set out in the direction indicated. He went straight forward, reached the great gate, passed through it, and about noon he perceived a dazzling city, at sight of which his heart cried out for joy.

In the city he inquired for the castle of the golden Peahens. At the castle-gate a guard stopped him, asked after his country and station, and when he had given the required information the guard went in to announce him to the Empress. [169]

When she heard of his arrival she ran to meet him like one beside herself—being, of course, in human form; and giving him her arm she led him into the castle. Great joy reigned through all the place, and after a few days the pair were married, and he remained thenceforth beside his beloved wife.

After a time the Empress went on an excursion, leaving the Prince at home in the castle. Before going she gave him the keys of the twelve rooms on the ground floor, with the words, "You may go into all of them except the twelfth. Open that one on no account, for you stake your head in that game." With this warning she went away.

The imperial Prince remained alone in the castle, and began to wonder, "What can be in that twelfth room?" Upon this he opened one room after the other, and when he came to the twelfth he hesitated awhile about opening it. But the thought, "What can be in there?" gave him no rest. [170]

He therefore resolved to open the room; and lo! in the middle of it stood a great open cask encircled with iron hoops, and a voice from within cried, "In Heaven's name, brother, I adjure thee, give me a glass of water! I am perishing with thirst!"

The imperial Prince took a glass of water and poured it into the cask, whereupon one hoop of the cask fell off. Then again the voice cried out of the cask, "For Heaven's sake, brother, I am perishing with thirst! Give me another glass of water!"

The imperial Prince poured in another glass of water, and the second hoop fell from the cask. A third time the voice cried from the cask, "In Heaven's name, brother, I am perishing with thirst! Give me one more glass of water!" [171]

The imperial Prince poured in a third glass, whereupon the third hoop dropped off,

the cask fell asunder, and a Dragon flew out, and meeting the Empress upon the way, he carried her off as a prize. Soon her attendants came in with the news, and the unhappy imperial Prince knew not what to do for grief.

He finally decided to set out once more in search of his wife, and so he wandered a long time up and down the world until he came to a sheet of water upon the border of which he saw a little Fish floundering about in a puddle. When the Fish saw the Prince he begged him earnestly:

“For Heaven’s sake, be a brother to me and throw me back into the water! Some day I may be of the greatest use to you. Only pull off one of my scales, and if you need my help rub it a little.”

The imperial Prince took up the Fish and pulled out one of its scales. He threw the Fish into the water, but the scale he wrapped up in his handkerchief.

[172]

After a time, while he was still wandering about in the wide world, he came upon a Fox which was caught in a trap. When the Fox saw him he cried, “For Heaven’s sake, be a brother to me and set me free from this trap! I shall soon have occasion to do you service; only take one of my hairs, and when you need my service rub it a little.” So the imperial Prince took the hair and set the Fox at liberty.

Later, as he was going over a high mountain, he found a Wolf in a trap. The Wolf also said to him when he saw him, “For Heaven’s sake, be a brother to me and set me free. I will be your helper in time of need; only take out one of my hairs, and if you need my aid rub it a little.”

So the imperial Prince took the hair and set the Wolf free, and then went on his journey.



The third hoop dropped off: the cask fell asunder, and a dragon flew out

After a long time he met a man, to whom he said, “In the name of Heaven, brother, have you ever heard where the Dragon-emperor’s castle is?”

[173]

The man cheerfully told him, even to the very moment when he would best present himself there. The imperial Prince expressed his thanks, went straight on, and at last, nearly dead with fatigue, he arrived at the Dragon’s castle. He found his

beloved one there, and both were overjoyed at the meeting.

Then they took counsel as to the best way to attempt a flight. They finally came to a decision, and, making ready with all despatch, they mounted their horses to flee. But they had hardly left the castle when the Dragon came riding home. He entered the castle, but the Empress was gone!

So he said to his horse, "What shall we do now? Shall we eat and drink comfortably, or shall we hasten after the fugitives?"

[174]

The horse replied, "Eat and drink; we shall soon overtake them. That is the least of your troubles."

After dinner, therefore, the Dragon mounted his horse, and in a trice had overtaken the fugitives. When he came up to them he snatched the Empress from the Prince, with the words, "Go, in God's name! I forgive you this time, because you gave me water; but never come back again, as you value your life."

The unhappy Prince went on a little farther, but the longing of his heart was too strong, and he turned about. The next day he reappeared in the Dragon's castle. He found the Empress alone and drowned in tears. They again took counsel how they might escape, and the imperial Prince thus spoke his mind:

"When the Dragon comes home, ask him where he obtained that horse. Then do you tell me, that I may try to get one of the same kind, to outrun him if possible." With these words he went away.

[175]

When the Dragon came home the Empress coaxed and cajoled him, talking of all sorts of things, until at last she said, "Well, upon my word, you have a fleet horse! Tell me, in Heaven's name, where did you get him?"

He replied, "Where I got him it would not be easy to get another. In such-and-such a high mountain lives an old woman who has twelve horses, each one finer than the other, all standing before their mangers. But in the corner stands a wretched, mangy horse; at least he looks so at a first glance, but in fact he is the best one of all. He is the brother of my horse. Heaven itself would not be too far off for the owner of that steed. But whoever would get him from that old hag must serve her for three days. She has a mare and a foal, and she will require that they be watched for three nights. Whoever succeeds in doing so may choose among her horses. But if any one enters her service and fails to keep watch of the mare and colt, off goes his head!"

[176]

The next day when the Dragon was from home the imperial Prince came to learn what the Empress had discovered. Then he went to that high mountain where the old woman was, and greeted her with, "God bless you, little mother!" and she answered with the pious greeting, "God help you, my little son! What good luck brings you here?"

He: "I have a mind to enter your service."

She: "Very well, my little son. If you will keep watch of the mare and foal for three whole days, then you may take your choice among my horses; but if you fail, off goes your head!"

Upon this she led him into the courtyard. It was surrounded by a close paling, and on every pale was stuck a human head. Only one was unoccupied, and this one cried incessantly, "Old woman, put a head here!"

[177]

The old woman showed all this to the Prince, with the words, "You see, all these were in my service without being able to guard the mare."

The imperial Prince was not to be frightened by such an exhibition, but remained to serve the old woman. When it grew dark he mounted the mare and rode out into the field, the foal running along beside the mother. He sat constantly upon her back, but toward midnight he fell asleep, and when toward dawn he awoke he found himself astride a block of wood, holding fast to the halter.

When he saw this he was filled with horror, and sprang up to search for the mare. In the course of his search he came upon a piece of water. It reminded him of the little Fish which he had rescued from the puddle and thrown into the lake. He therefore took the scale out of his handkerchief and rubbed it a little between his fingers. The Fish immediately spoke from the water, saying to him, "What is your desire, brother soul?"

[178]

He answered, "That old hag's mare has given me the slip. I know not where to find her."

The Fish returned, "She is here with us; she has transformed herself into a fish and the foal into a little fish. Just strike upon the water with the halter and say, 'The old hag's mare still lives!'"

So he struck upon the water, saying, "The old hag's mare still lives!" and the mare became what she had been before and swam to the shore with her foal. He therefore put the halter upon her neck again, mounted her, and returned to the house, the foal running along by her side.

When they reached the house the old woman gave him food; but she led the mare into the stable and beat her with the oven-fork, saying, "Go among the fishes, you wretch!"

[179]

The mare answered, "Indeed, I did go among the fishes, but they are in league with him and they betrayed me."

Upon this the old hag rejoined, "Then go among the foxes!"

Before dark the Prince again mounted the mare and went out into the field, the foal running alongside. He sat continually upon the mare, but toward midnight he fell asleep upon her back, and when he awoke he found himself astride a block of wood, holding fast to the halter.

When he saw this he was overcome with terror and sprang upon his feet to seek the mare. Suddenly he remembered what the old woman had said to the mare, and he drew the Fox's hair out of his kerchief, rubbed it between his fingers the least bit, and behold! the Fox stood before him, saying, "What is the matter, brother soul?"

[180]

The Prince answered, "The old hag's mare has escaped me, and I do not know where to find her."

The Fox: "She is among us; she has changed herself into a fox and the foal into a fox-cub. Just strike upon the ground with the halter and say, 'The old hag's mare still lives!'"

So the Prince struck upon the earth with the halter, saying, "The old hag's mare still lives!" and the mare again returned to her former shape and stood before him with her colt, as if she had just arisen from the earth. So he put the halter upon her, mounted, and rode back to the house, the foal running quietly at her side.

Arrived at home, the old woman placed food before him; but she led the mare into the stable and fell upon her with the oven-fork, saying, "Go among the foxes, you wretch!"

[181]

The mare answered, "Indeed, I did go among the foxes, but they are in league with him and betrayed me." She answered, "Then go among the wolves!"

When evening came the imperial Prince mounted the mare and rode out to the field, with the foal running alongside. He sat continually upon her back, but about midnight he fell asleep, and when he awoke he perceived that he was astride a block of wood, with the halter in his hand. When he saw this he sprang to his feet and began to search for the mare; but in a moment he remembered what the old woman had said, and without delay he drew forth the Wolf's hair from his kerchief and rubbed it between his fingers.

There was the Wolf upon the spot. "What is the matter, brother soul?"

The Prince answered, "The old hag's mare has escaped, and I do not know where she is."

[182]

The Wolf: "She is here among us; she has changed herself into a wolf and her foal into a wolf-cub. But strike upon the earth with the halter and say, 'The old hag's mare still lives!'"

So he struck upon the earth with the halter, saying, "The old hag's mare still lives!" and, as before, she suddenly appeared, with the foal at her side. Then the imperial Prince put the halter upon her, mounted, and rode home, the foal running quietly by her side.

Arrived at home, the old woman gave him food; but she led the mare into the stable and trounced her well with the oven-fork, crying to her, "Why did you not go among the wolves?"

The mare answered, "Indeed, I was among the wolves, but they are in league with him and betrayed me."

So the old woman came out, and the imperial Prince said to her, "See here, old

woman, I have served you true and faithful; give me the wages you promised to give me."

The old woman: "What has been promised must be performed, my son; take your choice among the twelve horses in my stable."

But he answered, "Ah, how should I choose? Give me the one in the corner—that mangy one there; these fine steeds don't suit me."

The old woman tried to talk him out of it. "What whim is this, choosing that mangy beast when there are so many splendid horses here?"

But he stood by his choice, and said, "Give me the one I want; that was the agreement."

The old woman saw no help for it, and gave him the mangy horse, whereupon he took leave of her and went away, leading the horse by the bridle. As soon as he found himself in the forest he rubbed and curried his horse until his coat shone like pure gold. Then he mounted him and set out at full speed. The horse flew like the wind, and in a twinkling had borne him to the Dragon's castle.

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As soon as the imperial Prince had entered he said to the Empress, "Get ready for the journey as quickly as possible!"

In a moment both were ready. They mounted the horse and set forth in the name of God.

Somewhat later the Dragon came home and found the Empress gone. He therefore asked his horse, "What now? Shall we eat and drink at our ease, or shall we pursue after them?"

And the horse replied, "Eat or not, drink or not, pursue or not, you will never overtake them."

When the Dragon heard this he sprang upon his horse and rushed after them.

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When the pair saw the Dragon coming on behind them they were overcome with affright and spurred the horse to greater speed. Now the horse was a Vila, and he said to them, "Have no fear; you have no need to hasten."

Now and again, as the Dragon gained upon them, the Dragon's horse cried to the Prince's horse, "For Heaven's sake, brother, wait a little. I shall burst if I have to chase you any longer."

But the other answered, "What a fool you are to carry that demon upon your back! Rear up smartly and dash him upon the rocks, and come with me!"

When the Dragon's horse heard this he ducked his head with all his might, and, throwing out his hind legs, he flung the Dragon upon the rocks, where he was dashed to fragments. Then the Dragon's horse joined the fugitives, the Empress mounted him, and so they went safely home to their own empire, and reigned there until their dying day.

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"I like Vilas very much, mother's-mother," said the little boy. "Can you tell any more Vila stories?"

"Father says we are going home to-morrow," said the little boy's mother, who had long ago finished the housework and was sitting there with her knitting.

"But it isn't night yet," said the little boy eagerly. "You could tell me another story before night."

"Tell him the wonderful story you used to tell me when I teased you for another," said the mother, laughing.

"Well," said the other grandmother; and she told

THE WONDERFUL STORY

"Ah, little mother, little mother, come, tell me a pretty fairy tale!"

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"Well, would you like to hear the story of the Black Bear and the Ram? It is a very

sad story.”

“Oh, yes, yes!”

“I didn’t say ‘Oh, yes, yes,’ but ‘Would you like to hear the tale of the Black Bear and the Ram?’”

“Yes, indeed, only tell it quick!”

“I didn’t say ‘Yes, indeed, only tell it quick,’ but ‘Would you like to hear the tale of the Black Bear and the Ram?’”

“O dear mother, if you don’t tell it soon I shall begin to cry!”

“Did I not tell you it was a sad story? However, I did not say ‘O dear mother, if you don’t tell it soon I shall begin to cry,’ but ‘Would you like to hear the tale of the Black Bear and the Ram?’”

“Would you like to hear the tale of the Black Bear and the Ram?”

“There, you see, you know most of it already, and there is only the end:

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“The Black Bear and the Ram,
The Ram and the Black Bear,
They couldn’t endure each other,
And so my story ends there.”

Done already?

The little boy listened with a very sober face. Finally he said:

“Why did you use to tell mother that story?”

“Because that is the way to silence teasing children,” replied the other grandmother. “They used to do just the way it tells in the story in my great-grandmother’s time.”

Again there was a pause. The knitting-needles clicked fast.

“Am I a teasing child?” asked the little boy at last.

“No, you are not, bless your little heart!” said the other grandmother. “Mother’s-mother likes to tell you stories. Only you should not sit quiet too long. You ought to play now.”

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The little boy went close to the other grandmother’s side, and looking up into her face, he said very coaxingly:

“But I am going away to-morrow, little mother’s-mother. Won’t you tell me one more story?”

“Run out and see if the sun is setting,” said the other grandmother. “If it has not yet gone down I will tell you another story.”

The little boy ran out in the greatest hurry. The other grandmother’s house was upstairs and it had no court—that was why she kept neither cow nor fowl. So he had to run down the dark stone stairway, and he was in such haste that he fell down the last two steps. But he picked himself up and ran out. There at the far end of the long street was the sun, still quite above the clouds that would wrap him up in bed by and by.

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The little boy ran upstairs, breathless. “He is up, mother’s-mother! He hasn’t gone to bed yet! The story, please!”

And the other grandmother told about

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THE YOUTH AND THE VILA

Once upon a time there was a father who had three sons. Two of them passed for clever, but the third and youngest was stupid, as every one agreed. When people wanted anything done they only called upon the two clever ones, while they would not let the stupid one have anything to do with them.

In their father's garden was a silver pear-tree which every night bore flowers and fruit; but the pears were regularly plucked and carried away by the Vilas. "What the mischief!" said the eldest and the second brother, "how long is this thing going to last?" and they determined to mount guard over the tree. But to their youngest brother they said, "You are too stupid for this work."

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So they carried feather-beds and pillows out under the tree, lay down, and went to sleep. While they were sleeping the Vilas came, plucked the pears, and went away. As soon as they were gone the brothers awoke, went back to the house, and told what had happened.

Then the stupid brother declared that he would watch the tree. That he might not be overcome with sleep he made himself a bed of thorns; but in spite of all he fell asleep. Yet he awoke when the Vilas came, and saw one of them standing at his side. He pulled out one of her hairs, whereupon the Vila vanished.

When morning came he saw that the hair was of gold. Going home, he told what had happened to him, and declared his intention to go through the world to seek out that Vila. But the two clever brothers answered, "What would you be able to find? It is better for us two clever ones to go and seek her. Something may come of it then."

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So the two set out upon their way. The eldest found a shovel and took it with him, and it did him good service. For when they got to the Moon they found the door locked. Then they dug under the door and went in. They found only the Moon-mother at home, and of her they inquired if such-and-such a Vila lived there.

The Moon-mother answered, "She lives in the Sun. How will you get there? But see, here is a spider; she shall spin you a chain that will reach from here to there."

The spider went to work, spun a chain, and fastened it to the lock of the Sun-door. So the brothers set out upon this bridge; but while they were on the way the Sun came home, opened the door, and snapped the chain in two. So the brothers fell off, and very luckily they tumbled into their god-father's cabbage-garden. So they felt no harm, but went home and told their adventures.

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Then the stupid brother set out. He found an ancient crone and begged her to show him the way to the Moon. The old crone told him it was not very hard to go there, and gave him a bucketful of down. So he seated himself in the bucket and flew up to the Moon.

He entered the house and asked if a certain Vila lived there who looked so-and-so. The Moon-mother answered, No, she lived in the Sun. So he flew up to the Sun, arrived there safely, and carefully hid his bucket in the cellar in the coolest place he could find, that it might not be melted by the heat.

Meantime the Sun came home and asked, "What is your wish?"

"I seek such-and-such a Vila."

The Sun brought her out and gave her to him, and he seated himself beside her in the bucket and set out.

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When they were half-way home the Sun came out to see how the travellers were getting on; and he shone on them so scorchingly that all the down was melted, the bucket lost its balance, and the youth and the Vila fell down to earth and were caught in a tree. They cannot go down, for under the tree sits an old wizard sorting out a capful of human hairs. But the Vila slipped softly down the tree and put the wizard to sleep. Then the youth clambered down and took the Vila home.

They reached his father's house, where he told all his adventures; but the Vila was invisible to every one but her rescuer, so that no one believed his story. Then the Vila began to weep, and the brothers said, "Good! now we believe that she is here, but just where she is we do not know."



Then the youth clambered down and took the Vila home

Meantime the old wizard under the tree awoke, started out, and came into the room where they were. He greeted the Vila with "Good-day!" whereupon she became visible to every one as a beautiful maiden.

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Soon after the youth married her. I was present at the wedding, ate and drank with the old man and conversed much with him; and we moistened our throats so often with sweet wine from Zagorje that my grandfather and I can taste it yet.

"Can you really, mother's-mother?" exclaimed the little boy.

The other grandmother laughed. "That is only the way it ends," she said. "Some stories end that way."

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CHAPTER XVI

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THE LITTLE BOY SLEEPLESS

The little boy could not sleep. The room was full of people very excitedly talking about the action of the *zemstvo* on some subject of importance, and although he did not understand a word that they were saying, the talking and the thought of tomorrow's journey kept him awake. He was lying on a pallet laid upon the bench against the wall in a far corner of the room, and he turned over so often that at last he fell upon the floor. He tried hard not to cry, but he could not quite help it.

The other grandmother picked him up and cuddled him in her arms. "Go to sleep," she said, patting him gently.

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The little boy shut his eyes, but in a minute they were open again.

“Mother’s-mother, I can’t sleep. Couldn’t you tell me one more story, very softly, so that the others can’t hear?”

The other grandmother laid the little boy back upon his pallet, covered him up warm, and told him about

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THE VILA IN THE GOLDEN CASTLE

Once upon a time there was a father who had three sons. One day he bade the eldest go into the garden and keep watch that the swans did not eat the flowers. The son kept watch a long time, but at last sleep overcame him, and immediately the swans came and ate up the flowers.

Now these were not really swans, but Vilas.

Upon this the second brother betook himself to the garden, and with the same result.

Then it was the youngest brother’s turn; but this one put thorns under his head, so that he could not go to sleep. He lay there in a doze until the swans arrived; then, springing nimbly upon his feet, he caught one of them, which changed herself into a Vila. Upon this the other swans flew away, and the Vila and the youth both lay down and fell asleep.

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Shortly after a girl came along that way and cut off the Vila’s hair. When the Vila awoke she fell into the deepest dejection over the loss. The youth asked her, “My beloved, wherefore so sorrowful?” and she answered, “Some one has robbed me of my hair.”

She remained with him for a whole week. Then, as it chanced, he was obliged to go away somewhere, and she improved the opportunity to quit the house—not, however, without leaving word that he would find her in the golden castle.

When he returned home and asked after her, he learned that she had gone to the golden castle. He therefore set out to find it. After much walking he came to a great forest, where he met an old man, whom he asked if he could give him any information about the golden castle.

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The old man said he knew nothing about it, but perhaps a still older man, who lived a long way off in the forest, might know where it was. After long wandering the youth found this man, but neither could he give him any information, but sent him to a still older man. So he sought out the third old man, and from him he received the desired information.

The young man set out in the direction indicated, arrived at the castle, and perceived his beloved one, who smiled kindly upon him. In the castle he found an old Vila, who told him that he should not have her daughter to wife until he had executed the order which she was about to give. Then she handed him a wooden hoe, with the words:

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“If you wish to be my son-in-law you must root up all this forest, plant vines in its place, and bring me wine from their fruit; and all must be done to-day.”

This command he certainly could not obey; but his beloved one drew near and asked him, “Why are you so sorrowful?”

He answered, “Why should I not be sorrowful? I can surely never obey that command.”

Then she cut down a tree, and the whole forest was uprooted; she planted a vine, and the whole vineyard was planted; she pressed one grape, and the work was already done.

When he brought the wine into the castle the old Vila said:

“You must perform another task. In a single day you must sow wheat, reap and thresh it, and store it away in the granary.”

He would not have been equal to this task either had not his beloved one done it for him.

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When he showed the old Vila the threshed wheat she was still not satisfied, but said:

"If you wish to be my son-in-law you must gild the whole castle." To this end she gave him a golden nut.

He succeeded in gilding a hand's breadth, but more he could not do. Then his beloved came to his help; she only made a cross, and in a twinkling the whole was done.

Still the old Vila said, "If you are positively determined upon being my son-in-law you must to-morrow guess which Vila is yours. I may tell you beforehand that they all look precisely alike, even to a hair."

Then his beloved one told him to notice well. When all the Vilas were standing in a row, a little dog would come and nose around her alone, and he must say, "That one is she." She also gave him a comb, and a brush into the bargain, saying that they would be of the greatest use to them in their flight.

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The next day, when the Vilas stood in a row before him, the little dog came and nosed around one of them. He at once said that this was she, and immediately they took to flight, the old Vila after them.

She had almost overtaken the fugitives, but the youth threw the brush behind them, and a thick forest grew up at their back, so that they gained a considerable start. But the old Vila soon overcame this hinderance, and had nearly caught up to them when, at the very moment, he threw the comb behind him. Instantly a great river flowed between them which the old woman could not cross.

Thus the two got away at last, arrived safely at home, married, and lived in happiness till their dying day.

The little boy made no remark. He was sound asleep.

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CHAPTER XVII

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HOME AGAIN

It was already dark when they reached home, though it was not late, for January days are very short. There had been no children at the station, only men, and the walk home had seemed very long to the little boy. The men were talking very loudly, sometimes even angrily—they did not seem to be pleased with what the little boy's father told them about the *zemstvo*. It had not done what the people of the village wanted.

"Well, God and the *mir* for us all!" said the little boy's father as they reached the house.

All the family were gathered to meet them—the grandmother, the oldest brother and his wife, and the brother and sisters who lived at home. They were glad to see the little boy, but they all seemed more interested in what the father had to say about the *zemstvo*, and the little boy could not understand that at all. Though his grandmother held him by the hand and occasionally patted him on the head, she hardly spoke to him. Presently, however, she went to her own room, taking the little boy with her, and then it was his turn! His little tongue ran fast as he told her all about the journey and the other grandmother and the stories she had told him.

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"You never told me about the Vilas, little grandma," he said.

"Did I not tell you that the stories of her *mir* are not the same as the stories of our *mir*?" replied the grandmother. "I do not know those Vila stories."

"But you know other stories, very nice stories, little grandmamma," said the little boy. Then, after a pause, "Please tell me one now!"

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Then the grandmother told the story of

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Once upon a time there was an Emperor and an Empress who for many years had been childless. One day the Empress wished for a son, were he no bigger than a hedgehog. The proverb says, "What one wishes for, that one gets," and so it was with her, for she shortly gave birth to a son who looked exactly like a hedgehog and was covered all over with sharp spines.

Far and wide the news was spread abroad through the world, and the parents were much ashamed of such a son. Nevertheless, they had him educated in all useful knowledge, and he had so clever a head that by the time he was fourteen he knew all knowledge through and through.

By this time his parents could no longer endure him near them, and they assigned to him a great forest as a place of abode, feeling certain that he would then fall a prey to a wolf or a fox or some sort of a beast. They strictly commanded him not to return before the expiration of seven years. They gave him permission, however, to take with him anything that he especially cared for; but he would take nothing with him except a Sow and a great Cock upon which he was wont to ride. With these he went away into the forest.

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Year out, year in, Prince Hedgehog remained in the forest, and he raised so many swine that at last they were too many for even him to count. Finally he thought to himself, "My seven years are up; I will go back home." So he quickly gathered his swine together and drove them to the city of his parents.

When they perceived afar off the immense drove of swine, they thought, "Here comes a wealthy swine-drover." But soon they recognized their son, who was riding upon his Cock behind the swine and making straight for the imperial castle. So they received him into the castle and showed him the best of hospitality, dividing his swine among different pens, for they filled every swine-pen in the city.

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While they were at table they asked their son how he enjoyed himself in the forest, and said that if he wished to go back there they would give him a goat this time. But he declared that he was not going back, for he had made up his mind to marry.

The astonished parents replied, "Why, what maiden would love you and take you for a husband?" The poor youth knew no answer to this question, so he mounted his Cock and rode away.

Now the parents thought he would never come back again. But he was a clever fellow, and he went as a suitor to the King of of a neighboring country who had three unmarried daughters.

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When he found himself near the city the Cock flew up with him to the window of the room in which the company were assembled enjoying themselves. The Cock crowed with all his might, until the chamberlain went to the window and asked what he wanted. The Hedgehog answered, "I come a-wooing."

Then the King permitted him to come into the room, and offered him the welcome-cup, according to ancient manner and custom. Then the King again asked him what business brought him, and Hedgehog, the imperial Prince, answered him shortly and to the point, "I come a-wooing."

The King immediately assured him that he had only to choose one of the three unmarried daughters. The Hedgehog chose the youngest, but she would not have him for a husband until her father threatened to have her shot unless she gave a cheerful consent.

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She saw no help for it, and thought to herself, "I can never get out of this scrape; come what may, I'll take him. We have gold and treasure in abundance, and we shall easily get along through life."

When the Hedgehog had received her consent he went back to his parents and told them what had happened to him. His parents would not believe him, and sent the chamberlain to inquire if it was true that the Emperor's son, the Hedgehog, was to marry the King's daughter. When the chamberlain returned and told the Emperor that his son had spoken the truth, the Emperor ordered his horses to be harnessed, and went with his wife to visit the King, riding in their carriage, while their son rode behind on his Cock.

When they arrived they found everything ready for the wedding. But, according to custom, the bridal party were obliged to go to the church a few days before the marriage to pray and confess to the *pop*. When the young lady came to confession she asked the *pop* how she might manage to get rid of the Prince and not be obliged to marry him.

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The *pop* gave her a sound scolding, and said in conclusion, "Just keep quiet and all will end well. Mark what I say, and remember it well. When you are come into the

church and are taking your place in the sacristy, do you follow close behind the others. When you get to the high altar sprinkle your bridegroom thrice with holy-water, and be careful to prick yourself each time with one of his spines. Then three drops of blood will trickle out of your hand, and you must let these also fall upon him."

After confession the bridal pair went home to breakfast. The next day—it was a Sunday—the bridal party went at half-past eleven into the church, and the bride did in every respect as the *pop* had counselled.

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And, behold, the Hedgehog was transformed into a beautiful youth whose like was not to be found in all the world. Then the bridal party sat down upon the benches and heard Mass, and the *pop* united them and preached them a sermon how they should cleave to each other all their lives long.

After that they went back to the house, and the wedding-feast lasted until late in the night. The wine was very good. I sat at the head of the last table, drank yellow wine out of a painted cup and ate half a swine all by myself.

"Some stories end that way, don't they, grandmother?" asked the little boy.

"Yes," said the grandmother, "some of them do."

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE BETROTHAL

Easter Day had come, and everybody in the house was giving and returning the Easter greeting. The little boy ran into his grandmother's room.

"Christ is risen, little grandmamma!" he said.

"He is risen indeed," the grandmother answered.

The older brother and sisters came to salute their grandmother.

"Christ is risen!" each one said to her, and to each she answered:

"He is risen indeed."

Then they all went to the parents' room for the morning prayer. They did this every morning, for Russian peasants are very devout; but Easter was a special morning, and they sang many hymns and said many prayers. When they had finished, the married son and his wife came in.

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"Christ is risen, father and mother!" they said.

"He is risen indeed," the parents answered.

After church, which seemed very long to the little boy, they all came home to dinner. With them came a strange young man whom the little boy did not know. When they sat down at table he sat at the head and the little boy's elder sister beside him. She had beautiful flowers in her hair.

"Why does sister wear flowers in her hair?" the little boy asked his grandmother softly.

"Because she is a bride," whispered the grandmother. "She is betrothed to that young man. He will be your brother when they are married next autumn."

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All the afternoon there were games and merriment, and many people came to congratulate the young people and to drink tea. As the merriment grew louder the little boy grew tired of it, and he went to ask his grandmother for a story. She, too, was tired of the lively doings in the other room, and she very willingly told him about

THE DESERTER

Once upon a time there was a deserter who was three times faithless to his colors. Twice had he undergone the punishment due to desertion; the third time, he knew, he was face to face with death. So he resolved to flee by night and hide himself by day in some ditch or thicket, for he was afraid that in the daylight he might be recognized and arrested.

One night, as he was hastening onward, he saw a glimmer of light in the distance, and thought to himself, "I will go toward that light; perhaps it will somehow help me out of my trouble." [215]

When, however, he came up to that light all he saw was an opening just wide enough for him to creep into. The moment he was inside thick darkness fell upon him. He could find his way neither in nor out; but on groping around he at last came upon a staircase, up which he climbed and found himself in a passageway. Through this passageway he went for a long, long time, until at last he stumbled upon a door. He opened the door and stepped into a room, but it was pitch dark there too; so he groped all about until at last he stumbled upon another door and entered another room.

So on he went through eleven rooms, and finally reached the twelfth, where at last he found a lighted candle upon a table. The room was beautifully fitted up, and he thought within himself, "Come what come may, I shall make myself at home in this room." [216]

So he stretched himself upon a couch. He lay there for a while lost in thought, when, lo and behold! the table began to lay itself. When the cloth was spread, all sorts of good cheer began to appear upon it.

"Come what come may," he thought to himself again, "I am hungry." So he fell to and ate to his heart's content. When he had eaten all that he could swallow he threw himself upon the couch again and began to consider.

Suddenly three women entered, clothed entirely in black. One seated herself at the piano, while the two others danced. Tired as he was, when he saw this he arose and skipped about with them. After this entertainment they began to talk with him, speaking of one thing and another, and finally came round to the question how he might break the spell that bound them. [217]

They told him the very way and manner of doing it, saying that he had nothing more nor less to do than to pass the night in a certain room which they would show him. A ghost would come there and pester him with all sorts of questions—who he was, how he had come there, and other things. But he must not say a mortal word to all these questions, not though the ghost tormented him in all sorts of ways; if he could only hold out in silence the ghost would vanish, and then he would feel not the least pain from all the torments he had been enduring.

Our deserter fell in with the proposition without further words, and the ladies escorted him to the fateful room with the sound of music and left him there alone. When they were gone he undressed himself, bolted the door securely, and lay down in bed. But he could not sleep, for his head throbbled with expectation of what was about to happen. [218]

At eleven o'clock a sudden knock was heard at the door. He dared not make a sound, for he was firmly resolved to ransom himself, the ladies, and the enchanted castle; so he kept as still as a mouse. Again the knocking came, but he made no answer. At the third knock the door flew open, and in walked a gigantic form all clothed in flames.

The giant placed himself at the bedside and began to ask the man whence he was and why he had come; but the deserter never uttered a word. Then the giant seized him, threw him upon the floor, and began to torment him; but no sound passed the sufferer's lips. At the stroke of twelve the ghost departed, with the words:

"Though you wouldn't tell to-day, you will to-morrow, when we all three come."

He spoke, the door flew open, closed again, and he was gone. The young man arose from the floor, lay down upon his bed, and fell sweetly asleep, without feeling the least harm. [219]

Next morning came the three ladies, all in white up to their knees, and led him, with the sound of music, back to the room where he had been on the previous day. They placed a chair for him and set a delicious breakfast before him. When he had plentifully breakfasted he fell asleep and snored till evening.

When he awoke he asked how late it was. The ladies replied that it was nine o'clock; and they gave him a good supper and led him again to the same room to sleep.

At the stroke of eleven some one knocked at the door. He made no sound, but at the third knock the door flew open and three ghosts entered. The one who had been there the night before asked him the same questions as before, but received no better answer. Then one of them seized him and flung him into one corner, and another into another, and so they tossed him about until the poor fellow lay helpless against the wall, all covered with blood.

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When the clock struck twelve the spokesman said to him, "Though you won't answer to-night, you will to-morrow, when we all four come." With these words they disappeared.

He again lifted himself up, lay down upon his bed, and felt no harm. In the morning the three ladies came, all in white up to their girdles, and escorted him, to the sound of music, into the other room, where, after breakfast, he again fell asleep.

At night they again escorted him to his chamber to sleep. When they were gone he did not go to bed as usual, but began to consider how he might avoid the fearful torment in store for him. First he looked out at a window, but his gaze fell upon a frightful abyss enclosed by rocky precipices. He went to the second window, but there it was no better, but seemed to be even more fearful.

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So nothing was left him but to heap all the furniture of the room before the door, in hope thus to escape his tormentors. But he soon gave up this hope, for about midnight the knocking began. He made no answer, but at the third knock the door flew open and all the furniture returned to its own place.

The ghost who had before questioned him now began to repeat his questions, commanding him to tell who he was and how he came there; but the young man was not to be made to speak. Then the spokesman ordered one of his comrades to go below and bring up an anvil and four hammers, and when these had been brought, one of the ghosts blew up a fire and threw the young man upon it. When he was heated to a glow they laid him upon the anvil and beat him with hammers until he was as flat as paper. But with all this he was not to be forced to speak.

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The time was up and the ghosts must go. Before they went they told him that he and all around him were blessed; and then the door flew open and they vanished. He again arose, laid himself upon the bed, and sank at once into slumber.

Next morning the three ladies, all in white from head to foot, came, with the sound of music, to thank him for ransoming them, and they gave him leave to choose among them for a wife. Now the youngest of them had grown nearest his heart, and he declared himself ready to marry her, not at once, but later, for first he wished to see something of the world.

This being the case, they gave him a ham, a wooden flask of wine, a loaf of bread, three dogs, and a pipe which hung by a golden chain, and they told him that these dogs would come to his aid in every time of need; he had only to call them by means of his pipe. And should he be tired, he had only to seat himself upon one of them. So he took all these things and went forth to see the world.

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One day when he was travelling through a forest he arrived at a castle and turned aside to enter. But the steps which led up were of such a kind that he could not climb them; so he seated himself upon one of his dogs and the animal carried him up. As he passed through the entrance he peeped through a window and saw a Tiger and his wife, who was combing his hair.

He went in to where they were, and the Tiger at once arose, led him from room to room, and showed him many wonderful things. Everything pleased the young man, except that the Tiger's wife kept the dogs shut up in a room apart.

When he entered the fourth room he went around it, gazing upon the many statues and paintings; and while thus doing he stepped upon a board which gave way and let him fall into a cellar where it was as dark as pitch. He groped around for a way of escape, but a damp, heavy wind seemed to sweep all around him, and first he would wound his hand and then his foot. So he thought to himself, "You won't come safely out of this!"

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After a while the Tiger let himself down by a rope, butcher-knife in hand, intending to kill him. The young man begged for a half-hour's respite, that he might do penance for his sins. This was granted, but the time soon flew by, and the Tiger was already whetting his knife to stab him, when the young man sprang aside, and his hand met the chain upon which the pipe was hanging. He blew upon it, and quick as thought the dogs were on the spot. He set them upon the Tiger, but as they fell upon him the Tiger begged humbly for life, promising that his wife would draw him and his dogs up out of the cellar.

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So it came to pass; but they were no sooner out than he again set the dogs upon the Tiger, who again began to beg, promising to give him a salve which had the power of fastening against the wall any one upon whose back it was rubbed, and keeping him there fast and firm until he chose to let him go.

The youth took the salve and went on farther, till he reached a city which was all shrouded in mourning. He entered and asked why every one was in mourning, and received answer that a fearful Dragon was to come that day and carry off the Emperor's daughter.

At this he laughed heartily, and said, "That may easily be helped; just go and announce to the Emperor that I am ready to ransom the Princess, if it is agreeable to him." This was announced, and the Emperor received him into the castle with great joy.

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As the appointed time for the Dragon's coming had arrived, the young man placed himself in readiness. At the stroke of twelve the Dragon suddenly appeared, driving four horses. The young man was waiting for him, and as soon as the Dragon had taken the Princess by the hand to carry her off he spread the salve upon his back, pressed him against the wall, and set his dogs upon him. At the same time he belabored him with the butt-end of his musket, till the Dragon was quite exhausted and began to beg off, promising to give a written agreement never again to molest the Princess. When he had written the paper in his own blood and signed it he vanished through the window.

Then the Emperor knew not what to do for joy. He offered his daughter to the soldier to wife, or, if he liked it better, the half of his kingdom. But the young man declined both offers and returned to his own ladies, where he married the youngest with the greatest festivities. As they came out of church to go to their house a new city sprang up all along the roadside. The hilarity was great. I myself was among the guests, and after I had made merry to my heart's content I set out upon the way home to Varazdin.

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"Did you ever live in Varazdin, grandmother?" asked the little boy.

"No, surely not," said the grandmother. "That is just the way the story ends."

"Oh!" said the little boy.

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CHAPTER XIX

IN THE FIELDS

Spring was coming on finely, and everybody was at work in the fields—everybody, that is, who was not in the army. From every one of the wooden houses that stood on either side of the highway, with their gable ends to the street, had gone a son, a husband, a laborer to the war that was waging so fiercely, no one quite knew where. The little boy's married brother had gone to the nearest garrison town. He had barely had time to make the acquaintance of his little new-born daughter when he was summoned. He went very willingly—all of them did. There was not a man in the village who did not adore the Emperor, who was not ready to die for him, though not one of them had ever seen him.

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So there were few men to work in the fields, and all the women and girls must go. This they were used to; it was so every year. The little boy's mother was there, and his sisters, the eldest one wearing in her hair the flowers that showed that she was betrothed. As far as one could see over the wide, treeless plain there were women and girls working, with only here and there a man who, like the *starosta*, was needed for the affairs of the village, or who, like the *moujiks* who looked after the

sheep, were too old to go.

The little boy was very proud when his father let him go to the field and help drop the seed into the furrows. He was thus at work when an old *moujik* came along and stood watching them. He was a very ragged old *moujik*, for he was very poor; but he was a polite old man, as all Russian peasants are, and when the little boy's mother came along with her hoe, covering up the seed, he lifted his greasy old *shapka* to her with great courtesy.

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"It's a good thing that the little boy is at work," said the old *moujik*. "They can't begin too early. There is much to do in God's blessed world."

"It is only for a little while," said the mother. "I shall send him to school soon."

"Ah, school, school!" said the old *moujik*, shaking his head. "It only takes the children's time when they ought to be at work; it costs money, and what good does it do? There were no schools in my time."

The little boy was tired when dinner-time came, and his mother left him at home with the grandmother.

"I have been working hard, little grandma," he said. "Don't I deserve a story?"

"Let me see," said the grandmother, and there was a twinkle in her eyes. "Did I ever tell you about

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"THE HUNTER?"

"No," said the little boy; "tell me that!"

Once upon a time there was a Hunter who had three dogs. The first he called "Run-fast," the second "Catch-the-hare," and the third "I-know-it-better." One day the Hunter went out to hunt, and he called his first dog, Run-fast, and his second dog, Catch-the-hare, and the third dog—what under the sun did I say was the third dog's name?

"I-know-it-better!" cried the little boy eagerly.

"Very well, then," said the grandmother, laughing a little. "If you know it better, tell the story yourself!"

"O grandmother," said the little boy after a moment of surprise, "that's not a story!"

"Isn't it?" asked the grandmother. "My great-grandmother said it was. Well, perhaps you will like better the story of

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"THE WATCH-TOWER BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN"

Once upon a time there was a King who had three sons and one daughter. He kept the daughter in a cage and guarded her as the eyes in his head.

When the maiden was grown up she begged her father one evening to let her go out and take a walk before the castle with her brothers. The father consented, but hardly was she out of the door when suddenly a Dragon came swooping down from the sky, seized the maiden from among her brothers, and carried her away with him high into the clouds.

The brothers rushed headlong back to their father, told him of their misfortune, and begged permission to go and seek their stolen sister. The father consented, gave them each a horse and everything needful for a journey, and they set out.

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After many wanderings they came across a watch-tower which stood neither on earth nor in heaven. When they reached the place it occurred to them that their sister might be within, and they at once began to take counsel among themselves

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as to how they should reach it.

After long consultation they decided to kill one of their horses, cut his skin into a long strap, fasten the end to an arrow, and shoot it up into some place in the watch-tower where it would hold securely. Then they could easily climb up. The two younger brothers asked the eldest to sacrifice his horse, but he would not; nor would the second brother. So the youngest brother slew his horse, cut the hide into a long strap, bound one end to his arrow, and with his bow shot it up into the tower.

But now, when it came to climbing up by the strap, the eldest and second brothers declined, whereupon the youngest undertook the adventure. Arriving at the tower, he went from room to room, until at last he came to one where he saw his sister sitting, with the Dragon's head in her lap, the Dragon being fast asleep. [234]

When the sister perceived her brother she was greatly terrified, and softly entreated him to flee before the Dragon should awake. This he would not do, but seized his cudgel, struck out boldly, and dealt the Dragon a heavy blow upon the head. The Dragon, without awaking, put his hand up to the spot, murmuring, "Something hit me right here."

As he said this the Prince fetched him a second blow upon the head, and again the Dragon murmured, "Something hit me here." But now, as the brother made ready to strike a third time, the sister made a sign showing the Dragon's vulnerable spot, and the brother, giving a powerful blow, killed him as dead as a mouse. [235]

Then the Princess pushed him from her, flew into her brother's arms, and smothered him with kisses. After this she took him by the hand and began to lead him through all the rooms. First she led him into a room in which a black fox, with a harness of pure silver, was standing before a manger. Then she led him into another room, where a white horse, with a harness of pure gold, stood before another manger. Finally she led him into a third room, where a brown horse stood before a manger, his harness all studded with diamonds.

When they had gone through these rooms, the sister led her brother into a chamber where a maiden sat before a golden embroidery-frame, working with golden threads. From this room she led him into another, where a second maiden was spinning gold thread, and at last into a room where a third maiden was stringing pearls, while at her feet a golden hen, with a brood of chickens, was picking up pearls from a golden basin. [236]

When they had gone through all these rooms and seen all they wanted to see, they went back into the room where the dead Dragon lay, dragged him out, and threw him head-foremost down to the earth. When the other brothers saw him they were almost convulsed with terror. But now the youngest brother let down to them first their sister and then the three maidens, one after another, each with her work. As he let them down he allotted one to each of his brothers, and when he let down the third, that is, the one with the hen and chickens, he reserved her to himself.

But his brothers, filled with envy because he was the hero who had discovered all these things and rescued their sister, cut the strap to make it impossible for him to return. Then they rode away, and coming upon a shepherd-boy with his sheep, they dressed him like their brother and brought him home to their father, forbidding their sister and the maidens, with fearful threats, under any circumstances to reveal the secret. [237]

After a time word came to the youngest brother in the tower that his brothers and the shepherd were about to marry those three maidens. On the day appointed for the eldest brother's wedding he mounted the white horse and flew down into the midst of the wedding-guests just as they were leaving the church, and struck his brother lightly upon the back with his club. The brother fell from his horse, and the other flew back to his watch-tower.

When the second brother's wedding-day came he again flew down upon his steed, gave the second brother a blow upon the back, so that he fell from his horse, and again flew away. But when he at last heard that the shepherd was about to marry the third maiden he again mounted his steed, flew among the wedding-guests just as they were coming out of the church, and dealt the bridegroom such a blow upon the head with his club that the fellow lay dead upon the spot. [238]

In a trice the Prince was surrounded by the wedding-guests, who were determined that he should not escape this time. He made no attempt to do so, however, but remained where he was, made himself known as the King's youngest son, revealed the trick his brothers had played upon him by means of the shepherd, and told how they had left him in the watch-tower where he had found his sister and killed the Dragon.

His sister and the maidens bore witness to the truth of his story, and when the King heard all this he banished the two elder brothers from his presence, married the youngest to the maiden of his choice, and decreed that he should be heir to the throne after his own decease.

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“That is a real story, grandmother,” said the little boy. “But it was not so very long. Couldn’t you tell me just one more?”

“If you will promise not to ask for another,” said the grandmother, “I will tell you a short one. But you must not ask for another.”

“I promise,” said the little boy.

Then she told him about

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THE BRIDGE

Once upon a time there was a man who had a grown-up son. One day the old man said to his son, “My dear son, you are now big and strong enough to earn your own living; so go out into the world and seek a place of service.”

So the youth went out into the world and came to a large village, where he hired himself out as shepherd to a rich *moujik*. It was his duty to drive the sheep to pasture early every morning. The flock was enormously large and filled the whole valley. The pasture, however, was on the other side of a stream, and unluckily a storm had carried away the bridge the night before. Only a narrow plank remained, and this was so frail that but one sheep could cross at a time. There was nothing else for the shepherd to do, therefore, than to drive the sheep slowly, one by one, to the other side.

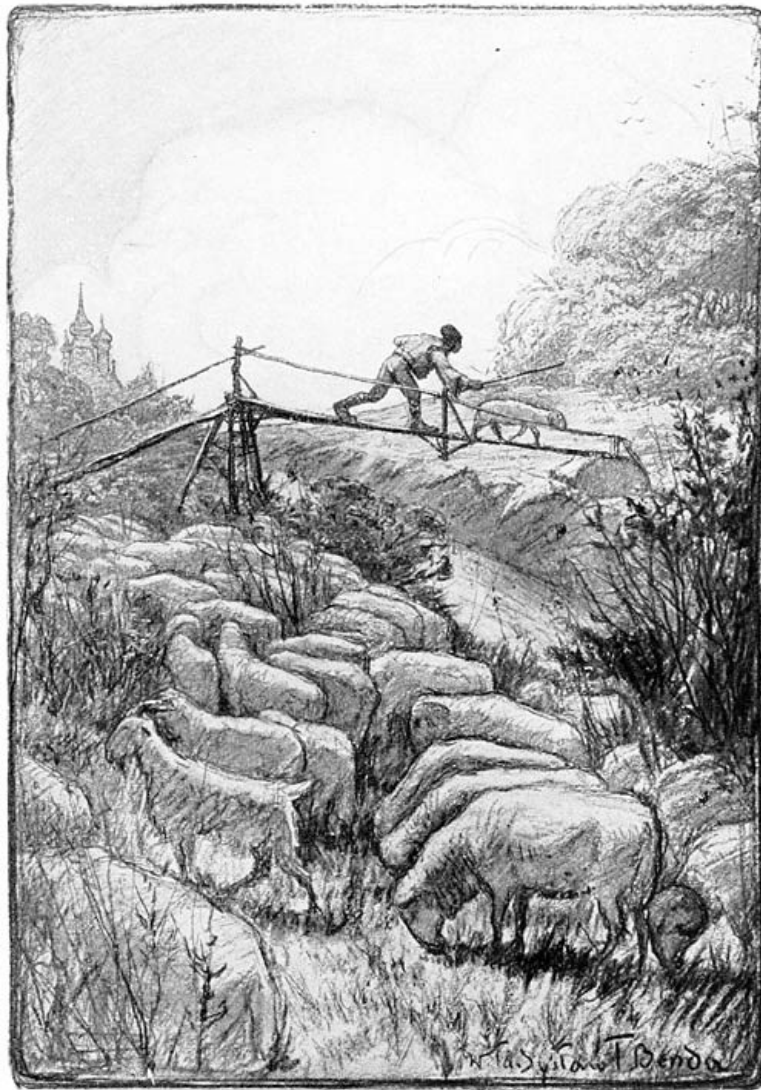
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Here the grandmother got up and went to the stove as if she had finished.

“But, grandmother,” said the little boy, “what happened next? Tell the rest!”

The grandmother laughed. “Wait until the shepherd has driven all the sheep over the bridge.”

“Yes, but when will that be?” asked the little boy.



Drive the sheep slowly, one by one, to the other side

"When there are no more left on this side," said the grandmother.

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"Was that one of your great-grandmother's stories?" asked the little boy.

"Yes," said the grandmother. "Don't you like it?"

"I like it a little—the first part of it," said the little boy. "But——"

"Remember your promise!" said the grandmother.

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CHAPTER XX

TRINITY-MONDAY

You would hardly know the village. As you looked down the street it would seem as if a forest of tall masts and poles had suddenly sprung up. Before every house they stood, two tall uprights—very, very tall—with a beam across the top, and from the beam two very long poles hanging, with a board connecting the lower ends. Yes, they were swings, but not swings like yours, for they were made of these long, long poles instead of ropes.

The sun was hardly up when the little boy came out of the court and made a dash for the swing. There were boys and girls on every swing as far as you could see down the street, and in some of them were fathers and mothers, too, for Trinity-Monday is a great holiday, and no one works who is not obliged to.

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It was still very early. The hot mid-summer sun had hardly peeped above the distant hills. The little boy had a long, long day for swinging.

In the swing next door were three children standing up, and their father with them, swinging very high and shouting joyously. The father, in a very loud, deep voice, would shout a long "Boo-oo-oo-m!" and then the children would cry, in their shrill treble, "Hurra-a-a-r!" with a long roll of the "r." All down the street they were "boom"-ing and "hurra-a-a-r"-ing; it was a beautiful noise.

The sisters came running out, and after them the brother and the father. And what swing went so high as the little boy's swing? And from before which house was there so deep a "Boo-oo-oo-m!" or so shrill and joyous a "Hurra-a-a-r!"? The fun went on all day, the children visiting from swing to swing, and the fathers and mothers taking a turn now and again. What a joyful Trinity-Monday!

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The grandmothers did not swing. They sat in the house-doors with the babies of the young mothers or took their knitting and exchanged calls with one another. The long day seemed very short even to them.

By the time sunset came the little boy was thoroughly tired out with delight. He came and lay down on the bench in the court where the grandmother was sitting. For once her hands were idle. She was thinking of her own swinging days, a long, long time ago.

"There is time for a story," said the little boy, "and you are doing nothing, little grandmamma."

The grandmother smiled indulgently and told him the story of

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SO BORN, SO DIE

In olden times, when all the world believed in Christianity, there lived in India a pious Christian. This man resolved to lead a hermit's life; and, as he was wandering up and down through India, he found a great cave, where he took up his abode, that he might lead a life wholly pleasing to God. Thus passed away many years while he dwelt in the solitude of the wilderness, far from any living soul.

One evening, when he had said his evening prayer and lain down upon his bed of moss, he thought in his heart, "O Thou my God! I have already tarried many years in this solitude, and it has never been vouchsafed to me to convert a single soul to Thy holy faith. For in the many years which I have spent here I have seen no human being nor any living creature."

While thinking thus the Hermit stretched himself upon his bed and sweet sleep fell upon his eyelids. He awoke at daybreak, said his morning prayer, and then became aware of a little Mouse, which looked confidingly at him and glided toward him into the cave.

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Then said the Hermit, "Praise and glory to Thee, O God, that I again look upon one of Thy creatures!"

Little by little there grew up between the Mouse and the Hermit such a warm friendship that the two were perfectly inseparable. The hoary Hermit derived the greatest joy from this friendship, and he constantly besought God to transform the little Mouse into a young girl, to be a daughter to him.

His prayer was answered; the little Mouse became a fair young girl, and the old man felt at last that his life would not have been spent in vain, since it was vouchsafed to him to instruct this creature of God in the good and right way.

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So passed away the Hermit's life in peace and piety until the young girl had attained the full bloom of maidenhood. Then thought the Hermit:

"I am already full of days; I have lived always to the glory of God, and the end of my life draws near. It would be a sin if this beautiful creature of God, who knows nothing of the world, should be left to grow old and wither away in this solitary vale. It would be better that she should marry."

Impelled by this thought, he called the maiden to him and said, "My little daughter, you are now grown up and old enough to be married. You ought also to see the world, for this place where we live is not the whole world. The world is large, and there are in it many beautiful creatures of God whom you have never seen."

The maiden answered, "I thank you, my father; may your will be done in each and

every thing. Only let me make one request, that you will find me a husband to my liking, and, before all things, let him be that creature of God which is stronger than any other in the world.”

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The Hermit consented and set off upon his quest. In the course of his journey he met the Moon, and greeted him with, “God be with thee, thou holy Moon, strongest of all God’s creatures! I have a daughter; take her for thy wife!”

The Moon answered, “What foolish talk is this? I the strongest of God’s creatures! I shine in the night, but as soon as the Sun overtakes me he robs me of my light. Address yourself to the Sun; he is stronger than I.”

The Hermit now betook himself to the Sun, and said, “God be with thee, O strong and shining Sun! Thou art the strongest of all God’s creatures. I have a daughter; take her for thy wife!”

And the Sun replied, “Thou errest in taking me for the strongest. The clouds are stronger and mightier than I, for when I shed abroad my rays then the clouds unroll themselves and veil my splendor. So they are stronger than I.”

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Then the Hermit sought a Cloud, and greeted him with, “God be with thee!” and said, “Thou Cloud-man, strongest and mightiest of all God’s creatures, I have a daughter; take her for thy wife!”

And the Cloud-man answered, “That cannot be, for the Wind is stronger than I. When I spread myself over the bright expanse of heaven, then comes the Wind and tears me into countless fragments. Go to the Wind; he is stronger than I.”

The Hermit betook himself to the Wind, hailed him with, “God be with thee!” and said, “Thou mightiest of all God’s creatures, strongest of all in the world, take my daughter for thy wife!”

The Wind answered, “Oh, old man, how should I be the strongest? When I begin to blow, the Mountain stands in my way, so that the people on its farther side know nothing about me. Go to the Mountain; he is stronger than I.”

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The old man went to the Mountain and said, “God be with thee, thou rocky Mountain, strongest thing in the world! I have a daughter; take her for thy wife!”

“Oho, old man!” answered the Mountain, “do you imagine that I am the strongest in the world? Don’t you see me riddled all over by mice, who burrow in me night and day? Search for a Mouse, for he is stronger than I.”

So the old man went to a Mouse, and said, “Thou strongest of all God’s creatures, I have a daughter; take her for thy wife!”

“I am not unwilling,” answered the Mouse, “but I have not yet seen the maiden. Bring her here first, that I may see her; then will I wed her.”

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The old Hermit returned home and said, “Well, my little daughter, I have found a husband for you; follow me!”

They presented themselves before the Mouse, and the old Hermit said, “Here is thy wife.”

“Oho, what shall I do with her?” asked the Mouse. “She cannot even get into my little palace!”

But the maiden said to the old man, “This shall be my husband; only pray to God to transform me again into a Mouse, that I may go with him.”

The old Hermit, who saw no help for it, fell upon his knees and begged God to restore his daughter to her former state. That very moment the maiden was changed into a Mouse and went with her husband.

As for the old Hermit, he still lived on piously till the end of his days, convinced that every one must die with the same nature with which he was born.

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“I should like to go to the sun, grandmother,” said the little boy.

“You would find it very hot,” said the grandmother.

“Did you ever go, little grandma?” asked the little boy.

“No one goes nowadays,” said the grandmother.

"They went in your great-grandmother's time?" ventured the little boy.

"Before her time, even," said the grandmother. "Things are greatly changed since then."

The younger sisters had come in from swinging and were sitting on the other end of the bench. The eldest sister was walking with her betrothed in the lovely summer twilight.

"No one ever went to the sun," said one of the sisters. "It is much too far off. I have learned it in school. And this world goes around it every day."

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"There were no schools in your great-grandmother's time," replied the grandmother, "and things were different then. The world did not move in those days; it rested on three great whales which were swimming in the ocean. My grandmother told me all about it."

The little boy pondered this fact for a while. Presently he said:

"One more story, little grandmother?"

It was still light, for twilight is very long in Russia. The grandmother told the story of

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THE ENCHANTED LAMBS

An Emperor once had an only daughter of surpassing beauty. In his pride he caused it to be sounded abroad through all the world that the youth who should guess the position of a certain mole on the maiden's person should have her for his wife, and the half of his empire besides. But those who did not guess right should be transformed into lambs.

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This wonderful news spread over the whole world, so that wooers by thousands came from all lands to sue for the Princess's hand. But all in vain. A countless number of them were changed into lambs.

The news came also to the ears of a youth who was as poor as a church mouse, but who was as sharp as a needle for all that. His desire to possess the beautiful maiden and half the empire grew so strong that he decided to try his fortune; not, however, by suing at once for the maiden's hand, but by seeing her first and asking her something.

Arrived at the Emperor's court, what wonders does he see! Lambs of all kinds pressed around him—God only knows how many there were.

They swarmed about him, a pitiful sight and a warning example that might well turn him from his project. He would have gone back, but at the gate was a monster of a man, wrapped in a blood-red mantle, with wings, and an eye in the middle of his forehead, who cried out in a commanding voice, "Halt! Where are you going? Go back, or you are lost!"

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So he went back and caused himself to be announced to the Emperor's daughter, who was already waiting for him. She said to him, "Did you come to get me for your wife?"

He answered, "No, Imperial Highness; but as I understood that you were thinking of marrying at the first favorable opportunity, I come to ask you if you need more bridal-clothes."

"What kind of clothes have you to offer?" she asked.

He answered, "I have a skirt of marble, a bodice of dew, a head-dress of threads made from the sun's rays, with a clasp of the moon and stars; then I have shoes of pure gold which were neither sewed nor made by a smith. So, tell me, do you wish to buy these things or not? You have but to command, and I will bring them to you, but only on one condition. When you try these things on, piece by piece, there shall be no one present but only us two. If they fit we shall soon come to terms; if not, I will never offer them to another soul, but will lay them aside and keep them for my own bride."

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The Princess agreed to this condition and gave him the order to bring the garments. And, really, he brought them to her. God only knows where he found them and how he came to possess them; it is enough for us to know that he kept

his word.

They shut themselves up in a room, and first she tried on the skirt, while he watched narrowly to see if by chance he could discover the mole. To his joy he saw it under her right knee—a little golden star; but not the slightest change in his face betrayed his discovery. He only thought in his heart, "It is well for me to-day and for all time!"

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Then the Princess tried on the bodice and all the other things, and they fitted her as if she had been poured into them. They agreed as to the price; she paid it on the spot; he packed up his gold and departed.

After a few days, having dressed himself in the finest suit that could be bought for money, he came back to sue for the hand of the Emperor's daughter. When he appeared before the Emperor he said, "Worthy Emperor, I come to woo your daughter. Make no objections; give her to me!"

"Good!" answered the Emperor; "but do you know how my daughter's hand is won? Take good care, for if you do not guess the mole you are lost; but if you do guess it she will be yours, and the half of my empire into the bargain."

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The youth bowed to the Emperor and said, "My greetings, O Emperor and father-in-law! If that is the case she is mine. She has a little star under the right knee."

The Emperor was not a little surprised that he could know this, but there was nothing for it but to yield, and so the youth was married to the Princess.

When the Emperor proceeded to give him the half of his empire the new-made son-in-law said to him, "I willingly leave this half of your empire to you if you are ready to restore these poor souls to their former condition."

The Emperor answered that this was no longer in his power, but lay in the hands of his daughter, "who now," he added, "is your wife."

So he turned to his wife with this request, and she answered:

"Cut the vein under the famous mole. Let every lamb touch the end of its tongue to the blood and moisten its underlip with it, and they will all be changed to men and live as before."

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He did as she directed, and when the lambs had all assumed the forms of men again they were invited as wedding-guests.

Thus the youth took the maiden home amid song and chime of bells, and there he treated everybody royally to meat and drink, until finally they took their homeward way. But he stayed there with his young wife, and God knows what fortunes they met with in life that are all forgotten now.

"I am sorry you have forgotten anything, grandmother," said the little boy. "It is not dark yet, and I wanted a longer story."

"It is not I who forgot," answered the grandmother. "I remember every word as it was told to me."

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"It must have been your great-grandmother," observed the little boy. "I wish she had had a better memory."

"I will tell you a short story to make up," said the grandmother. "It explains why there is so much knot-grass."

"I should like to know that," said one of the sisters. "My fingers are tired rooting it out."

So the grandmother told about

THE KNOT-GRASS

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Once upon a time an old hag got up early and went out among the mountains to gather all sorts of green herbs and practise her sorceries.

About midday she set out upon her return, and met some Knot-grass hastening to

the mountains.

“Hi! whither away?” asked the witch. “What bad luck sends you on this rough road?”

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“Upon my word, little mother, I can’t stand it down there any longer! Wherever the *moujik* digs or ploughs he does his best to root me out, tearing and clawing me with all his might. There is nothing left for me but to flee away and seek some quiet place where I can grow and spread in peace.”

“Go back to your home, little grass,” replied the old hag. “Mark my words, the more they dig and hoe about a plant the better it thrives and the more it spreads. What does the proverb say? ‘Woe to the thing that never is harvested!’”

The Knot-grass turned about, and ever since that day it has been found in meadow and field, in vineyard and garden—everywhere, indeed, where it is not wanted; and it is a hard matter to root it out.

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CHAPTER XXI

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THRESHING-TIME

It was the joyous threshing-time. The summer’s work was over. The harvest had been good, and from all the fields the high-piled carts were bringing the sheaves to the threshing-floors. On these high levels busy flails were flying, making a quick music that chimed well with the sweet, melancholy threshing-song of the girls who were gathering the wind-swept grain into bags. When the threshing was all done the little boy’s eldest sister would be married, for autumn is the time for marriages, when vegetables and pork are plenty and there is money to buy brandy from the Jew.

The grandmother had gone out with the little boy to see the threshing and to hear the threshing-song. She had sung that same song in her young days, and so had her great-grandmother before her. On the way back to the house a cow-herd woman met them—not their own, but that of a neighbor—and told them that her old master, the *bolshak*, or head of the family, was dead. The grandmother looked terror-stricken, and hastily exclaimed:

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“May the Saviour’s cross be with thee!”

The cow-herd woman went on her way to spread the news.

“Why did you say that, grandmother?” asked the little boy.

“To scare away the death angel,” replied the grandmother. “Never forget to say that when any one tells you of a death; otherwise it may come to your own house next.”

The grandmother seemed sad when she reached home. She had known the old man when she was a girl. He had been a stern and severe *bolshak* in his family, keeping all his married sons at home and making them work hard for him, not at all like her son, the *starosta*, who was so kind to his children. Nevertheless, it made her sad that he was dead. She sat quiet, distaff and spindle lying idly in her lap.

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“Grandmother,” said the little boy, “would it comfort you to tell me a story?”

“Indeed it would,” said the grandmother. “Come now, sit on that stool and hold this yarn for me, and I will tell you about

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“THE THREE EELS.”

Once upon a time there was a fisherman who on three successive days made out to catch only an eel a day. When he found only one eel in his net on the third day he cried out angrily:

“What’s the use of fishing when one gets nothing more than one eel day after

day?"

Immediately the tongue of one of the eels was loosed, and he said, "Wretched man, you little know what a precious catch you have had! You have fished up great good luck for yourself. Only now do as I advise you: Kill one of us three and divide him into four parts; give one piece to your wife to eat, the second to the mother-dog, the third to the mare, and bury the fourth in the ground just above your house. Soon your wife will bring twins into the world, the dog two pups, the mare two full-blooded stallions, and above your house will spring up two golden swords."

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The fisherman followed the Eel's advice, and indeed in the course of time everything happened as the Eel had predicted—his wife bore twins, the dog two pups, the mare two full-blooded stallions, and above his house two golden swords sprang up.

When the sons grew large and had passed a certain number of years, one of them said to his father, "Father, I perceive that you are a poor man and cannot keep us any longer; so let me take a horse, a dog, and a sword, and go forth into the world. I am young and need experience; and where my head may rest, there also will my food be found."

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When he had thus spoken he turned to his brother with the words, "Brother, God keep you! I go to seek my fortune. Do you stay at home, work, make, and save, and honor our father. Take this vial of water and give good heed to it, for if the water in it becomes dark it will be a sure sign that I have perished."

Thus he spoke and went to seek his fortune.

In the course of his wanderings he came to a great city, where the King's daughter saw him as he was taking a walk about the town. She at once fell desperately in love with him, and begged her father to invite him to the house. This he did. When the youth entered the King's apartments, and the maiden saw the sword, the dog, and the horse near by, she found everything on and about him so fine that it seemed to her nothing in the whole world could be finer. She fell more madly in love with him than ever, and said to her father, "Father, I want to marry that youth!"

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The King was very well pleased, the young man had nothing against it, so the bargain was concluded and the marriage celebrated according to form and custom.

One evening, as the youth stood at the window with his wife, he noticed in the distance a large mountain which was all a light blaze. He asked his wife what was the cause of this, and she answered, "Oh, sir, do not ask me! That is a magic mountain that spits lightnings by day and at night stands wreathed in flames, and whoever goes there to see what is the matter is instantly struck dumb and remains enchanted on the spot."

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He paid no heed to her words, but mounted his horse, girded on his sword, called his dog, and rode to the mountain. When he reached it he met an old woman perched on a rock, holding in one hand a staff and in the other a little weed. As soon as he saw her he asked her why the mountain had these peculiarities, and she told him to ride along and he would soon find out.

He did so, and the old woman conducted him to a court hedged in with the bones of heroes, and around in the court were countless men standing stark and stiff, all enchanted. He had hardly stepped into this court when he, too, as also his horse and his dog, grew rigid and changed to stone on the spot where they stood.

At the same moment the water in the brother's bottle at home grew dark, and the brother announced to the father and mother that his brother, their son, was dead and that he must go abroad and seek him.

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So he travelled from place to place and from city to city, until luck took him to that very town and to the King's palace. At sight of him the King rushed to his daughter with the good news, "Your husband has returned!"

She ran down to meet him, and thought he was her husband, for the two brothers were as much alike as the two halves of a cut apple. She thought it was the same horse, the same dog, and the same sword; and father and daughter rushed joyfully to meet him. They kissed and caressed him, the King thinking that it was his son-in-law, the daughter thinking that it was her husband.

The youth was at first quite bewildered by these signs of affection, but it occurred to him that they were for his brother, and so he feigned to be her husband and the King's son-in-law.

When night came they retired, but he laid his drawn sword in the bed between them. The woman wondered at this, but he said he could not sleep, and arose and went to the window. At sight of the magic mountain he said, "Tell me, my dear little wife, why is that mountain in flames?"

"For Heaven's sake," answered she, "did I not tell you that other evening of the peculiarities of that mountain?"

"What do you mean?" he asked her again, and she answered, "Every one who goes there is enchanted and turned to stone. I was in great fear during your absence that you had gone there."

When he heard this he guessed the trouble, and in his anxiety he could hardly wait for daybreak. As soon as it was light he mounted his horse, girded on his sword, called to his dog, and rode to the mountain. When he saw the old woman he drew his sword from the scabbard, spurred on his horse, and set the dog upon her without saying a word. The old woman fell back in a fury and called out to him not to cut her down. He answered, "Then give me back my brother!" Hereupon the old woman led his brother out and restored to him speech and soul.

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When the brothers had greeted each other, and asked after each other's health, they turned back homeward. But on the way the one who had been enchanted said, "O brother, come! Let us turn back and deliver those men from perdition—those who are enchanted as I was."

No sooner said than done. They turn around, seize the old woman, snatch from her the little weed, and begin to strike the enchanted men with it, until by degrees all of them begin to speak and move. When all those enchanted ones had been called back into life they killed the old witch. The twin brothers went back to the King's palace and all the others to their houses.

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I have heard a lie, I have told a lie, and God give you joy!

"Why do you say that, grandmother?" asked the little boy.

"That is the way it ends," said the grandmother.

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CHAPTER XXII

THE KOROWAI

There were great doings in the little boy's house. Grandmother was standing at the long table beating up the dough of the *korowai* for the eldest sister's wedding, for grandmother was greatly skilled in the making of wedding-cakes. No part of the wedding-feast is so important as the *korowai*, and the little boy watched with great interest as she mixed together the flour and eggs and lard, the molasses and fruit, the saffron and the savory seeds that go to make *korowai*. He was surprised and somewhat disappointed when, instead of putting it into the oven to bake, she spread a cloth over the great bowl and set it on a chair by the stove. He was impatient to have it baked, it smelled so nice already!

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"Aren't you going to bake it, grandmother?" he asked.

"Not just yet," she answered. "It must rise first."

She went away to her room, giving strict injunctions to be called as soon as the dough was risen enough.

The little boy did not follow her. Other things were being done in his mother's room: vegetables and apples were being pared, pork roasted, sausages stuffed—it was very exciting. Some of the neighbor-women had come to help, and the little boy was under everybody's feet at once.

"Run away, little boy," said the mother; "go ask grandmother to tell you a story."

Grandmother was quite ready. She was not spinning, she was only resting, for she had long been on her feet over the *korowai*. So everything was favorable for the story of

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MORNING-DEW

Once there were three brothers whose father gave each of them a loaf of bread and sent them to seek their fortune. When they were a good way from home, and began to feel hungry, the two elder brothers said to the youngest, whom they had always taken for a simpleton, "Let us first eat your bread, and then we will give you some of ours."

The youngest willingly shared his bread with them; but on the next day, when it was time to eat, the two brothers ate their bread comfortably without offering the other a single bit.

"Well, why don't you give me a piece of bread, when you have eaten mine all up?" he asked, and received the answer:

"If you want to get anything from us you must let us put out your eyes, that we may go around with you begging and so earn our bread."

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What could the poor wretch do? He was tortured with hunger, so he allowed them to put out his eyes. But the brothers led him out among the high mountains, left him there in the lurch, and went on to seek their fortune.

Now was the poor fellow neither to help nor to counsel. At last night closed in, and the Vilas came to dance in a ring, and one of them said, "If that man should anoint his eyes with morning-dew he would see again that very moment."

He had hardly heard the words when he began to grope about in the grass for dew, and he rubbed it on his eyes and saw again. Then he filled a glass with this dew and went on to seek his fortune.

On the way he stumbled across a Mouse which was staggering around, for the poor thing was blind. So he wet her eyes with morning-dew and she at once received her sight. The little Mouse thanked him, saying, "God reward you until I have an opportunity to show my gratitude!"

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A little farther on his way he came upon a Bee which was tumbling around and weeping bitterly, for it was blind. So he anointed the Bee's eyes, too, and it immediately regained its sight and thanked him, saying, "God reward you until I have an opportunity to prove my gratitude!"

A little farther he found a Dove rolling around in the sand. He asked her, "What is the matter that you tumble around so in the sand?" And the Dove replied, "Why do you tease me with questions when you cannot help me?" But the youth answered, "Keep quiet a moment," and he anointed her eyes. Immediately she saw again, and said, "God reward you until I have an opportunity to repay you!"

He now resumed his journey, and at last arrived in a city where, as it happened, his two brothers were in service. Here he also was lucky enough to hire himself out as shepherd.

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The brothers recognized him, and one day, when he was out in the fields, they lied to their master, telling him that the shepherd had boasted that he was able to reap all the cuckoo-corn¹ in a single night. This pleased the master much, and he commanded the youth to do this thing or it would cost him his head.

Weeping, he went out and threw himself down upon the grass. Then came the little Mouse and comforted him, telling him to go to sleep and the work should all be done. And there came a great number of mice and gnawed down the whole crop of cuckoo-corn, so that when the youth awoke in the morning he found all done. And he showed it to the master, who was greatly pleased.

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Then the brothers came to his master and accused him of having said that he could build a church in a single night. In the morning when he came home he was told that he must accomplish this work or it would cost him his head. So he threw himself down again, weeping, in the grass.

Then the Bee flew by and bade him go peacefully to sleep and she and her friends would do all the work without troubling him. And there came thousands of swarms of bees and built a church out of wax. It was still night when the master woke and saw a bright light over everything. He was frightened and called his body-servant to go with him into the church, which was already finished, even to the altars and everything else.

Then the brothers told their master another lie—how the shepherd had said that he would give a string of pearls to the daughter of the house, and that next morning the master’s little son should play with a golden apple. When he came home he was told that he must do what he had boasted that he could do, on pain of death.

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Weeping, he threw himself down in the grass, when the Dove came flying to him and said, “Dry your tears and go to rest; all shall be done.” In the morning the youth found a beautiful string of pearls and a golden apple by his side, and he gave them to his master’s daughter and little son.

Then the master called the youth into his room and asked him how he had managed to do all these things. So the youth told him how his brothers had taken away his bread, put out his eyes, abandoned him in the mountains, and everything else that had happened. Then the master had the two brothers called into his presence and caused them to be beheaded. But the youth he rewarded and gave him his daughter to wife.

Whoever believes this will be blessed.

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“The dough is rising, grandmother,” said the youngest sister, opening the door.

Every one gathered around the grandmother, for this was a ceremony of great importance. The future happiness of the young couple might depend upon it.

First the grandmother took the dough out of the bowl, kneaded it a little, shaped it properly, and laid it in the baking-pan. The mother was standing by with five candles in her hand; the grandmother took them one by one, planted them in the centre and the four corners of the *korowai*, and lighted them. Then all the women stood around and began to sing. It was a somewhat sad tune, yet very sweet. The song had many verses; the first was to the young couple, who would be “princess” and “prince” for the next three days; the next was to the Virgin; then followed verses to the sun, the moon, the stars, and to a white stone beyond the seas. It was a long song, and by the time it was finished the candles were burned down. Then the pan was carefully lifted into the oven.

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After that all was hurry and bustle. The room had to be swept, and long pieces of brightly striped cloth brought from the chest to cover the bench that ran around the whole room. The cloths were of the same colors as the brightly painted shelves above and they made the house very beautiful. There were wreaths to be made for the “princess” and the “prince,” and the bride’s wedding-dress must be laid out carefully in the grandmother’s room, where nothing could harm it.

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¹ Maize; Indian corn.

CHAPTER XXIII

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THE WEDDING

Next morning was the wedding-day, and the bustle began bright and early, for the table must be spread with all the good things, and the *korowai* in the centre. Then every one put on his best clothes. The “prince,” with as long a train of young men as the village could afford, came to the door to claim his bride. The “princess” came out of the grandmother’s room in her bridal-dress, a wreath of flowers on her head.

Some one put a wreath on the head of the “prince,” the procession was formed, and they went to church. There the *pop* preached a long sermon all about the duties of husband and wife, and said Mass, and finally married the princess to her prince. In reality it was the little boy’s eldest sister who was married to her betrothed, but for the three days of the wedding they were as much prince and princess as if they had been born in an imperial palace.

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Then followed the feast. I can never tell you of the eating and the drinking, the songs that were sung and the jokes that went around the table. Late in the afternoon the little boy went into the grandmother’s room. She had left the table an hour before.

“Grandmother,” he said, “I have eaten too much. Please tell me a story.”

"It will be very appropriate," said the grandmother, "if I tell you about

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"YOUNG NEVERFULL."

A certain housewife had a young servant-lad who devoured everything eatable that came in his way. He would rummage in the storeroom until he smelled out something good, and would give himself no rest until he had devoured it all.

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Now the woman had a jar of preserved fruit, and, as she feared that the youngster would eat it and leave her nothing to put into her pies, she said to him:

"My good boy, you have now eaten everything that I have except this jam, and you have left this just as if you knew that it was poisoned. See how good God is to have preserved you from it. One single spoonful is enough to kill one instantly; so I warn you not to touch it unless you want to die."

"Very well," answered the boy.

On the next Sunday, as the woman was getting ready to go to Mass, she said to the boy, "Cook the soup and boil the meat and roast this duck; we will have a good dinner to-day. See that you have all done and ready when I come home."

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"Very well; it shall all be done," answered the boy.

When the woman was gone he cooked the soup and boiled the meat, and then he put the duck upon the spit to roast. When he saw what a delicious brown crisp was forming all over the duck, he thought, "It can roast itself another one," and ate the crisp all off. He turned the spit and turned it, but the second brown crisp never came.

When he saw this, he thought, "When the mistress comes home she will pepper me well," and he began to consider how he could escape a beating. In his desperation he remembered the jar of poison against which his mistress had warned him the day before. With a sudden resolution he went into the storeroom and devoured the whole jarful of preserved fruit and then crouched down in a corner to wait for death.

Presently his mistress came home and cried out angrily, "What have you done to this duck?" She was about to belabor him well, when he cried, "Ah, leave me in peace, dear mistress! I shall die in a minute anyway, for I have eaten up all the poison!"

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At this the woman broke out into a laugh and could not refuse to forgive him. The duck and the preserves, however, were gone all the same.

"That was a greedy boy, grandmother," said the little boy. "Am I greedy because I ate too much at sister's wedding-feast?"

"That was only grandmother's little joke. It is not greedy to eat too much at a feast. Every one does," said the grandmother.

A wedding-feast lasts three days, as every one in Russia knows, and during all that time there was eating and drinking going on in the little boy's house, with much singing and many games, some of them pretty loud and boisterous. The second evening, when the fun had become pretty noisy, the little boy went to his grandmother for a story. She told him about

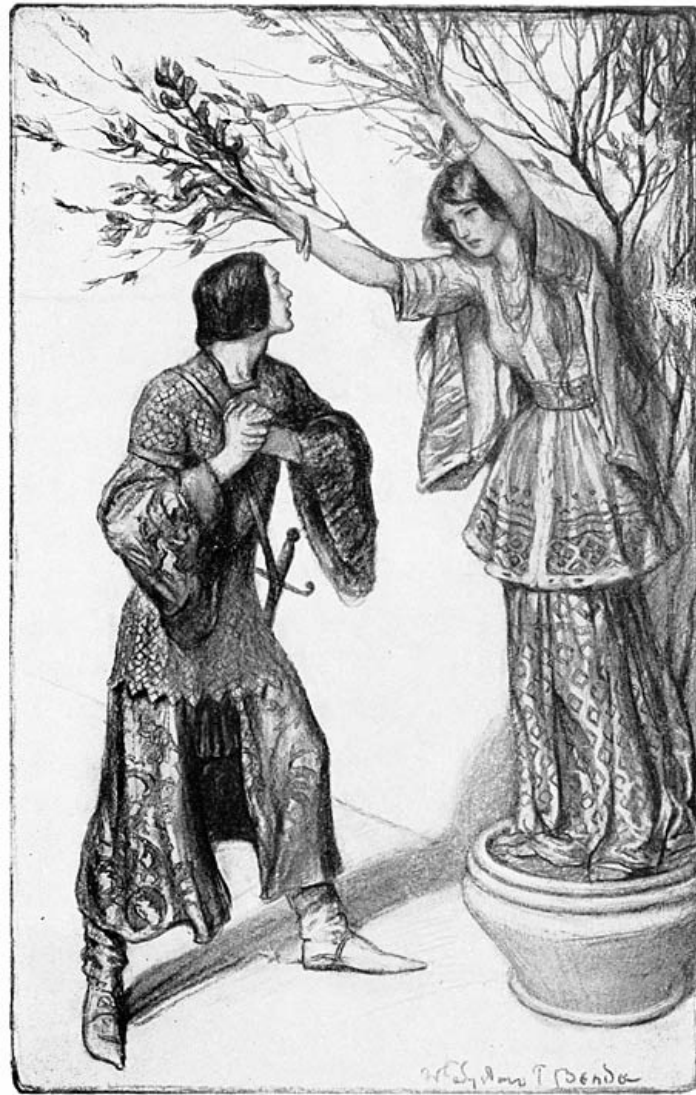
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THE BASIL-PLANT

Once upon a time there was a woman to whom it was revealed in a dream that she must fast one day in every week, for if she neglected to do so she would give birth to something other than human. The woman obeyed the behest, but one day she forgot to fast, and not long after she gave birth to a wonderfully beautiful and fragrant bush which in this world is called basil.

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The woman watched and tended the bush, and the fame of it spread through the whole world, even to a distant country, where the son of an emperor heard of it and at once set out to see it.



When he beheld the basil-plant he felt an extraordinary love for it

When he beheld the basil-plant he felt an extraordinary love for it, and he begged the mother either to present it to him or else to sell it at a high price. But she would not hear a word of it, but sent him away, saying, "It is not to be bought, even for one-half of your father's kingdom."

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Now the Prince's servant, who overheard this, whispered to his master to say no more, and he would steal the plant for him. So said and so done. The servant managed somehow to steal the plant, and brought it to the Prince. The Prince, delighted to find his dearest wish gratified, richly rewarded the servant and locked the bush safely in a room.

Some days after the Prince invited a great company to a feast, intending to take this opportunity to exhibit the basil-plant. The feast was ready, and the servants hastened to announce it to the company; but when they went back there lay all the meats and pastries scattered in the dirt of the kitchen floor!

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When they saw this they hastened to tell the Prince, and as he saw no way of getting over the difficulty, nothing was left for him but to excuse himself to the guests for that day and invite them to return upon the morrow.

The next day, when all was ready and the servants went to announce it, some one came again and threw all the food about the kitchen and broke all the dishes. The servants wondered at this no less than the Emperor's son himself, and the Prince ordered that a feast should again be prepared upon the third day and that some one should keep watch through the keyhole to discover the mischief-maker.

When the meal was ready every one left the room and peeped through the keyhole to catch the culprit. Behold, what did they see? A golden-haired maiden!

The attendants flew back into the kitchen, held the little culprit fast, and called to the Emperor's son. As soon as he beheld the maiden he was beside himself with surprise and joy, and he asked her how she had come into the kitchen.

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At first she was terrified, but at last she confessed to him secretly that she was the basil-plant which he watched and tended so carefully, and which shed such sweet perfume in his room; that she thought the feast was in honor of his wedding, and this had made her unhappy, for she had hoped that he would marry her and not another maiden.

When the Prince heard these words and saw that the maiden was beautiful beyond all comparison, he was most happy, and assured the maiden that he would marry her as soon as she had embraced the Christian faith. She declared herself ready to do this without delay.

In the meantime, however, the Prince's time of service in the army arrived, and he was so much needed that he could by no means be permitted to absent himself. He therefore called his beloved to him before his departure and said to her:

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"I must go to the army. With a bleeding heart I part from you; but, I pray you, change yourself again into a basil-plant and remain so until my return. Show yourself to no one, whoever it may be, who enters this room. And on my return, if God wills, I will ring this little bell, and then do you again take on your present form."

When he had once again kissed her she changed herself into a basil-plant, and he rode away. But two maidens who loved the Prince, and who of late had found themselves neglected and forgotten, soon learned the cause of their sorrow—namely, that the Prince had chosen another maiden. Therefore they agreed to force their way into the Prince's room and search for some token of her.

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When they were there they found nothing except his clothes and the basil-plant, and in it they saw nothing remarkable. They rummaged all around the room, trying to find some clew to the whereabouts of the maiden, and one of them in her restlessness took the little bell in her hand and rang it. The sorrowing golden-haired maiden, believing that it was the Prince who rang the bell, immediately changed herself back into human shape and suddenly appeared between the two.

At first they were all alike embarrassed, but the two trespassers soon perceived that they had found what they sought, and they seized the poor little creature, killed her, and carried her body into the mountains. In the evening the servant who had charge of bringing the maiden her supper found no basil-plant there, but in its place a horrible pool of blood. In a moment he saw the great danger of his position, and fearing the wrath of the Emperor's son when he should return home, he fled away with all speed.

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But to return to the maiden. An old woman who was going along among the mountains found the headless body and the head lying near, and, feeling compassion for the young creature, she gathered certain herbs with which she called the maiden back to life. When the poor child again awoke to life and found herself in the depths of the mountains, she fell upon the old woman's neck and promised that she would never abandon her.

But the old woman answered, "My dear little daughter, go, in God's name, wherever you like! I, a poor old worn-out woman, can hardly support myself, to say nothing of you. But you are young and strong, and, with God's help, will get on nicely."

But the maiden answered her, "Neither now nor ever, so long as God lives in heaven! You have called me back to life, and it is my debt and duty to love you till death. We shall surely make our way in the world. I will sell my golden hair, and will buy food for you; and when my hair is all sold I will gather herbs in the mountains and feed you."

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At last the old woman consented, and a few days later the maiden cut off a lock of her golden hair and sent the old woman with it to market, bidding her not to sell it for less than a hundred ducats. The old woman went straight to the very city where the Prince lived, for he had returned from camp and had ordered the whole city to go into mourning because of his lost love.

Fortunately the old woman met the Prince and asked him if he would like to buy a lock of golden hair. The moment the Prince saw the lock he was beside himself with surprise, for he perceived at once that it was his beloved's hair. So he seized hold of the old woman and asked her how she came by it. The old woman, terrified, confessed the whole.

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Upon this he quickly mounted his horse, placed the old woman upon another, and they rode to the village where the old woman lived. When they arrived they found the maiden bathed in tears, bewailing her lost lover. He rushed to her, they kissed and embraced, and then went home, taking the old woman with them.

When the Emperor's son had heard the details of the whole story he commanded the two maidens to be put to death. Then he married his own love. The old woman he honored as his own mother, and when she died he gave her an imperial funeral.

"That is a beautiful story, grandmother," said the little boy, "although there is not a Dragon nor a Fox nor a Mouse in it. There is a plant, though. I wish one of the plants in our field would turn into a golden-haired maiden—a very little one, big enough to play with me."

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"Wait till the little baby in your brother's house grows bigger," said the grandmother. "It will not be long."

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CHAPTER XXIV

AFTER THE WEDDING

The third evening of the wedding-feast had come, and with music and singing the whole village escorted the young couple to their house. They were to have a house of their own, and not live with the bridegroom's father, for so had the *starosta* insisted. Now they were there at last, and though some of the young men remained in the streets singing noisily, the bride's family went quietly home.

"It seems lonely without our princess," said the *starosta* as they gathered around the stove. "Grandmother, I know the little boy is hoping for a story. Let us all hear it. Tell one of your very best ones, that we may forget for a time that our family circle is smaller."

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The grandmother, with great willingness, told the story of

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STEELPACHA

Once upon a time there was an Emperor who had three sons and three daughters. As he was very old, his last hour drew nigh. He therefore called his children to his bedside and laid earnest command upon his sons to give their sisters, without hesitation, to the first suitors who asked for them in marriage. "Marry them off," he said to the sons, "or my curse will be upon you!" These were his last words.

After his death, day passed quietly after day for a while. Then one evening there came a loud knocking at the door. The whole palace began to rock amid a wild roaring, howling, crashing, flashing; the castle was bathed in a sea of flame. Every heart was terrified, and trembling took possession of every soul.

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Suddenly a voice cried, "Open the door, ye princes!"

Up spoke the Emperor's eldest son, "Do not open!" And the second said, "On no account open!" But the youngest said, "Then I will open the door myself!"

He sprang up and drew the bolts. Hardly was the door opened when a fearful Being rushed in, the outline of whose form was hidden in encircling flames.

"I am come," he exclaimed, "to take your eldest sister for my wife, and that at once. So give a short answer—yes or no; I insist upon it!"

Said the eldest brother, "I will not give her to you. Why should I, when I know neither who nor whence you are? You come here by night, demand my sister's hand upon the instant, and I do not even hear which way I am to turn when I wish to visit her."

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Said the second brother, "Nor do I permit you to take away my sister thus in the dead of night."

But the youngest interposed, "Then I will give her away if you two refuse. Have you already forgotten our father's command?" And taking his sister by the hand he gave her to the stranger, saying, "May she live happily with you and be ever faithful!"

As the sister crossed the threshold every one in the building fell to the ground in fear and horror. It lightened, it thundered, it crashed, it quaked, the whole fortress swayed heavily, as if heaven and earth were falling together. Gradually the uproar died away, and the rosy eastern light announced the coming morning.

As soon as day had broken the brothers searched for the traces which they supposed would have been left by their tremendous nocturnal visitor; but not a trace, not a footprint had he left behind. All was swept away.

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On the following night, at the self-same hour, the self-same flashing, crashing din was heard around the imperial fortress, and a voice without cried loudly, "Open the door, you princes!"

Paralyzed with terror, they threw open the door and a fearful Form rushed in, crying in a loud voice, "Give me here the maiden, your second sister! We have come to marry her!"

Said the eldest brother, "I will not give you my sister!"

Said the second, "I will not let my sister——"

But the youngest broke in with, "Then I will! Will you never remember what our father commanded?"

He took his sister by the hand and led her to the wooer. "Take her; she will be happy with you and always good."

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At this the powerful apparition vanished, and the maiden with him.

As soon as morning dawned the brothers sought around the castle for traces of the direction which the apparition had taken; but they found nothing under the blessed sun, nor was there the slightest clew from which they could make any sort of guess any more than if no one had been there!

On the third night, at the same hour, the whole castle was again shaken to the foundation by a horrible uproar and earthquake, and a voice called out, "Open the door, ye princes!"

The Emperor's sons sprang nimbly to their feet and drew the bolts, upon which a monstrous Form entered, exclaiming, "We are come to demand the hand of your youngest sister!"

"Never!" shrieked the eldest and second brothers with one voice. "We will not let this one go away thus by night. Surely we must at least know of this our youngest sister whom she marries and where she goes, that we may be able to visit her!"

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But up spoke the youngest brother, "Then I will give her away if you refuse. Have you quite forgotten what our father charged us on his dying bed? It is not so long ago."

He took the sister by the hand and said, "Here she is; take her home and live happily and joyfully with her!"

In a twinkling the terrible Being disappeared in the midst of a fearful uproar.

When the morning dawned the brothers felt oppressed by anxiety, being all uncertain as to the fate of their sisters. After a long interval, during which no light had been thrown upon this matter, the three brothers took counsel together:

"Good heavens, did ever one know of anything so mysterious! What has become of our sisters? For we have not the least idea of their abiding-place, nor any clew which can lead to their discovery."

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At length one said to the others, "Let us go forth to seek our sisters."

So the three brothers made ready without losing a moment. They took money enough for a long journey and went out into the wide world to seek their sisters.

In the course of their wanderings they lost their way among the mountains, where they wandered for a whole day. When night fell they decided, on account of their horses, to encamp for the night near a piece of water.

And so they did. They reached the shore of a lake, pitched their tents, and sat down to supper. When they lay down to sleep the eldest brother said, "You may sleep, but I will stand guard."

So the two younger brothers went peacefully to sleep, while the eldest brother kept watch. At a certain hour of the night the lake became agitated with a swaying

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motion which startled the watcher not a little. He soon observed a shapeless form arising out of the midst of the water and rushing straight toward him. It was a frightful monster of a Dragon, with two great flapping ears, which was rushing so fiercely upon him. The Prince bravely drew his sword and, seizing the Dragon, cut off his head. Then he sliced off the ears and put them into his wallet, and threw the head and the body back into the lake.

Meantime the day had dawned, and the brothers still lay in profound slumber, little dreaming of their eldest brother's heroic exploit. He now awaked them, but said not a syllable about his nocturnal adventure. They left that place and continued their journey, and when twilight began to fall they once more agreed to seek a halting-place near some piece of water. But they were much terrified to find themselves quite lost in a lonely wilderness. At last, however, they came upon a tiny lake, where they decided to spend the night. They kindled a fire, unpacked cooking utensils and food, and took their evening meal. After that they disposed themselves to sleep. Then said the second brother, "Do you two go to rest; I will mount guard to-night."

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The two brothers therefore lay down to sleep, but the third cheerfully sat up and kept watch. Suddenly a rustling sound from the lake met his ears, and he saw a sight which curdled the blood in his veins. A two-headed Dragon rushed tumultuously upon the brothers as if to annihilate them all three.

Quick as thought the watcher sprang up, drew his glittering sword, avoided the Dragon's attack, and cut off his two heads. Then he sliced off the ears and put them into his wallet, throwing the other parts of the monster back into the lake. His brothers knew nothing of the affair, for both slept soundly until dawn.

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When day broke the second brother called to them, "Wake up, brothers, the morning dawns!"

Immediately they sprang up, packed their goods, and set forth upon their way; but they had not the least idea where they were nor in what country.

A great fear overwhelmed them that they might perish of hunger in this wilderness, and they besought God to guide them, at least, to some inhabited village or city, or to permit them to meet some human being, for they had already wandered three days in this inhospitable wilderness without coming to the end or finding any way out.

It was rather early in the day when they came to a pretty large lake and decided to go no farther, but to make their camp on this lake-side. For they said, "If we go farther we shall very probably not find any more water near which to make our camp."

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They remained, therefore, in this place, built a great fire, supped, and made ready to sleep. Then said the youngest brother:

"Do you two go to rest. I will take the watch to-night."

So the two lay down and soon fell asleep, but the youngest brother kept a sharp lookout, and often threw a glance over the shining surface of the lake.

Thus passed away a portion of the night, when suddenly the lake boiled up, surged, foaming, upon the fire and half-extinguished it. But the watcher whipped out his sword and took his position close to the fire. Suddenly a three-headed Dragon rushed forth and made as if to kill the brothers.

Now was the hero-spirit of the youth tested. He waked not his brothers, but went forth alone to meet the Dragon. Three times he raised his sword, and each time he smote off one of the monster's heads. Then he sliced off the ears, and threw the shapeless remains into the water.

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While this tremendous conflict was going on the fire died out, having been flooded by the water. The Prince would not awake his brothers, although he had no tinder-box of his own to rekindle it with, but resolved to search around a little in the wilderness in hope of stumbling upon some one who could help him.

But nowhere was there a mortal soul! At last he climbed into a high tree and looked around in all directions to see what he might see.

As he was thus gazing far and wide his eyes were suddenly attracted by a flash of light which seemed to be very near him. He descended the tree and went in the direction of the light, hoping to get some fire wherewith to rekindle the fire for his brothers.

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He went on for a long stretch, the light seeming always to be just before him,

when suddenly he found himself standing before a cave in a rock in which nine Giants, gathered around an immense fire, were roasting two men upon a spit, one on one side of the fire, the other on the other. An enormous copper caldron, full to the brim with human flesh, was bubbling over the fire.

The imperial Prince was horrified at this sight. He would have turned back, but whither should he go? Where was there a way of escape for him? He quickly recovered his self-possession, however, and cried out, "Good-morning, valiant comrades! I have long been seeking you!"

They received him most cordially, answering, "God be with thee, if thou art a true comrade."

He replied, "Indeed I am, and shall be all my life long. I would risk my head for you."

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"All right," they answered. "If you wish to be one of us, are you ready to eat human flesh and take a share in our adventures?"

"Yes, that I will," said the Prince. "What you do, that will I do also."

"Faith, then all is well!" they said. "Sit down among us."

They settled themselves around the fire. The caldron was taken off, its contents served, and the meal began. The Prince received his share, but he knew how to manage, and, instead of eating, he slyly threw the meat, bit by bit, behind him. He did the same with the roast. Then the Giants said:

"Come, now, we must go a-hunting, for we must eat to-morrow as well as to-day."

So the nine Giants set out, with the Prince for a tenth.

"Come," they said to him, "not far from here is a town in which reigns an Emperor. His city has fed us for several years."

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As they drew near to the city they pulled up two fir-trees by the roots and carried them along. When they reached the town they set one of the trees against the wall and called to the Prince, "Come on, climb up the wall here, and we will hand you the second tree. Seize it by the point and let it down on the other side, but keep hold of the top so that we may climb down by the trunk."

The Prince accordingly scrambled up, but on receiving the second tree he called out, "I don't know where to stand it; I am not familiar with the place and dare not shove it over. Do one of you come up and show me, and then I will make it all right."

One of the Giants climbed up to him, seized the fir-tree by the point, and let it down on the other side of the wall. As he stood thus bent over, the Prince drew his sword and struck off his head, and the dead Giant tumbled off the wall into the city.

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Then the Prince cried to the others, "All right! Come on now, one at a time, that I may help you along in the same way."

One after another unsuspectingly climbed up, only to meet death at the hands of the Prince. When he had made an end of all the nine he let himself down by the fir-tree into the city, which he explored in every direction. No sound of human voice reached his ear. All was a drear, horrible desolation. "Has the whole population been robbed and murdered by the Giants?" he thought to himself.

For a long time he wandered about the desolate city, until he came to a very high tower, from one window of which shone out the light of a taper. He threw open the door, rushed up the tower stair, and hastened straight to that room.

On the threshold he stood still in amazement. The room was richly hung and decorated with gold, silk, and velvet, and not a soul within except a maiden who lay upon a couch, outstretched in deep slumber. The Prince was rooted to the spot at the sight of the maiden, for she was wonderfully beautiful. But at that moment he became aware of a great serpent which, gliding along the wall, stretched out its head directly over the head of the maiden, coiling itself up in readiness to spring and strike her upon the brow, between the eyes.

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Then the Prince sprang quickly with his pocket-knife, which in a trice he had drawn from his pocket, and pinned the serpent's head to the wall. Then saying these words, "God grant that no hand but mine may draw this knife out from the wall," he went quickly away. He climbed up by one fir-tree and down by the other, and so got over the wall. Arrived at the Giants' cave, he took some fire and ran

back to his brothers, who were still buried in profound slumber. As he kindled the fire day began to dawn in the east. He awakened his brothers, and they set forth upon their journey.

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That same day they came to the highway leading to the before-mentioned city. A mighty Emperor reigned there who used to go about the city every morning shedding bitter tears because his people were exterminated and eaten by the giants, and because of his constant fear that his only daughter would fall a sacrifice to their gluttony. On this morning he was going about the city as usual. It lay empty and deserted; the inhabitants had dwindled away to a mere remnant; most of them had found a grave in the giants' maws.

As I have said, the Emperor was thus reviewing his city when suddenly his eyes fell upon the uprooted fir-tree which still leaned against the wall, and as he drew nearer he beheld a wonderful sight: there lay the nine Giants, the very pests of the city, with their heads all cut off!

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This sight gave the King unspeakable joy. The people also gathered together to pray God that blessing and happiness might descend upon the giant-slayer. At that very moment a servant came from the imperial citadel to say that a serpent had nearly been the death of the Emperor's daughter. Upon this the Emperor betook himself straightway to the citadel, and to the very chamber of his daughter. Arrived there, he saw upon the wall the impaled serpent, and tried with his own hand to draw out the knife, but in vain.

Then the Emperor sent a proclamation through his whole empire: "Whoever has slain the giants and impaled the serpent, let him make himself known, that the Emperor may richly reward him and bestow upon him the hand of his daughter."

This proclamation was issued in every province of the empire. The Emperor also gave command that great inns should be erected upon the principal highways, where all travellers should be stopped and asked whether they knew who had overcome the giants; and whoever should discover the man, let him hasten with utmost speed to the Emperor to receive a rich reward.

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According to the imperial proclamation, great inns were erected upon the principal highways, and every traveller stopped, examined, and the whole affair explained to him.

After a while the three Princes who were seeking their sisters came to pass the night at one of these inns. After supper the landlord joined the company and began to boast of his wonderful exploits. At last he turned to the three brothers with the question, "And what doughty deeds have you done up to this time?"

Then the eldest brother began, "As I and my brothers were upon our travels it came to pass one night that we made our halt on the border of a lake in a great wilderness. While my brothers were asleep and I keeping watch, a Dragon came up out of the lake to destroy me. I drew my sword out of the scabbard and struck off his head. If you don't believe me, here are his ears." And he drew the ears out of his wallet and threw them upon the table.

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When the second brother heard this, he began, "I had the watch on the second night, and I killed a two-headed Dragon. If you don't believe me, here are the ears which I cut from his two heads for a witness." He said it and showed the two pairs of ears.

The youngest brother heard the whole in silence. The landlord now turned to him.

"By Heaven, youngster, your brothers are valiant heroes! Come, let us hear if you can also boast of any doughty deeds!"

Hesitatingly the youngest began his story: "Well, I also did a trifle. It was on the very third night, beside the lake in the wilderness. You, my brothers, were asleep. I kept watch. At a certain hour of the night the lake surged up and a three-headed Dragon arose from it, who would have annihilated us. Then I drew a sword and cut off all three of his heads. If you don't believe it, here are the three pairs of ears!"

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Upon this the two brothers were dumb with astonishment. But the youngest went on with his story: "In the meantime the fire had gone out, and I went forth to seek a light. While straying around among the hills I stumbled upon nine giants in a cave;" and so he went on and told all his adventures in order, and every one was struck with amazement at the wonderful tale.

No sooner had the landlord heard the story than he ran secretly to the Emperor and told him the whole affair. The Emperor gave him a great sum of money, and sent his people at once to bring the three princes before him.

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When they came into the emperor's presence he put the following question to the youngest: "Is it you who performed the wonders in our city, killing the giants and saving my only daughter from destruction?"

"Yes, it was I, mighty Emperor," replied the Prince. Hereupon the Emperor married his daughter to the young Prince and raised him to the highest office in the kingdom.

Then the Emperor said to the two elder brothers, "If it please you to remain in my empire, I will give you each a wife and will permit you to build strongholds for yourselves."

But they told him they were already married, and explained that they had undertaken this journey merely to seek out their sisters. When the Emperor heard this he detained only the youngest brother, his son-in-law, and to the two other brothers he gave two mules laden with gold. So the two brothers returned home to their own kingdom. [322]

Still the youngest brother thought continually of his sisters, and kept always in mind the hope of yet seeking them out. But on the other hand he was pained at the thought of parting from his young wife, and besides he knew that the Emperor would never consent to his leaving him. So he was continually racked with anxiety about his sisters.

One day the Emperor went hunting, and before setting out he said to his son-in-law, "Do you remain in the castle during my absence. I give to you nine keys which you must keep carefully by you. I give you free leave to open three or four rooms. You will find in them silver and gold in abundance; there is also no lack of weapons, or of any kind of treasure. You may even, if you feel inclined, open eight of the rooms. But beware of unlocking the ninth. Leave that one alone; for," he added, "if you do not it will be the worse for you." Upon this the Emperor departed, leaving his son-in-law at home alone. [323]

Hardly was the Emperor gone when the Prince began to open one door after another, until he had examined eight rooms in succession. His eyes beheld in them treasures of all kinds. When at last he came to the door of the ninth room he said to himself, "I have seen and done so many wonderful things, and shall it be forbidden me to enter a certain room?"

So he unlocked the door and went in. What a sight! There was a man whose legs up to his knees and whose arms up to the elbows were encased in iron; from his neck hung heavy iron chains, the ends of which were fastened to stakes driven into the floor on all sides, holding him so securely that he could not stir. Before him a stream of water gushed from a golden vessel and flowed into a golden basin which stood near; beside it was a golden jug, beautifully adorned with jewels. The man longed to drink the water, but he could not reach the jug. [324]

When the imperial Prince saw this he started backward; but the fettered man cried, "Oh, come to me, I beseech you, in the name of the living God!"

The Prince drew nearer, and the man continued, "Oh, do a pious act; let me drain a jug of water! Be assured I will reward you for it with an additional life."

The Prince considered the proposition. "Can there be anything better for me than to secure for myself an additional life?" He took the jug, filled it, and raised it to the man's lips, who emptied it at a single draught. Upon this the Prince asked him, "In the name of Heaven, who are you?" [325]

The man answered, "My name is Steelpacha."

The Prince now turned toward the door, but the man implored him, "Give me another jug of water, and I will give you a second life."

The Prince thought, "He will give me a second life; I have one into the bargain. This will be a prodigy indeed!" and he filled the jug again and put it to the man's lips.

He then turned away, and already held the door-latch in his hand when Steelpacha called to him, "O sir, come back to me! You have twice acted nobly by me; prove yourself a man a third time and I will give you a third life. Take this jug, fill it to the brim, and pour it over my head; and for this labor of love I will give you a third life."

When the Prince heard this he turned back, took the jug, filled it with water, and poured it over the man's head. The moment the water touched him the chains about his neck fell asunder and all the bonds which held him were unloosed. Quick as lightning Steelpacha sprang up, spread a pair of wings, flew out of the window, [326]

snatched up the Princess, the wife of his deliverer, took flight with her under his wing, and in a moment had disappeared from view. That was a prodigy indeed!

The Prince now looked forward with deepest dread to the Emperor's return. However, when the Emperor came home, the Prince told the whole story exactly as it had happened. The Emperor was beside himself with grief. "Why did you do thus?" said he reproachfully. "Did I not expressly forbid you to enter the ninth room?"

The Prince answered soothingly, "Don't be angry with me. I will go at once to seek Steelpacha and rescue my wife from him."

The Emperor tried to dissuade him from this plan. "Don't do that," said he; "you shall on no account move a step from this place. You have no idea who Steelpacha is. Many an army and much treasure did I waste before I got him in my power. So remain quietly with me. I will provide another wife for you. And don't be unhappy; I love you as my own son." [327]

But the Prince was deaf to all these persuasions, and adhered to his first resolution. He provided himself with the necessary money, mounted his horse, and went forth into the world to seek Steelpacha. For a long time he wandered about, and at last he arrived at a city. He was gazing around with some curiosity, when suddenly a woman called to him from a balcony, "You Prince, get down from your horse and come into the court!"

As the Prince entered the court the woman came to meet him. He looked narrowly at her and recognized his eldest sister. They flew into each other's arms and lavished sweet kisses upon each other. [328]

The sister was the first to speak. "Come out upon the balcony with me, brother."

When they were upon the balcony the Prince asked his sister whom she had married, and she answered, "I am married to the Emperor of the Dragons. My husband is himself a Dragon. So, brother, it would be worth your while to hide, for my husband often says he would cut his brothers-in-law in small bits if he ever laid eyes upon them. Let me first question him; if he promises to do you no harm I will tell him of your arrival."

So said and so done. The sister concealed her brother and his horse. The evening drew on. The Dragon's supper was ready; they were awaiting his arrival, when at last he came. When he flew in the whole earth was bathed in blinding light; but he had hardly entered when he called to his wife: [329]

"Wife, I smell men's bones. Who is here? Tell me quick!"

"No one is here," she answered.

"That is not possible," said he.

Upon this the wife said, "I want to ask you a question, and do you answer me truly and honestly. Would you do any harm to my brothers if they happened to come here?"

The Dragon-emperor answered, "I would have the eldest and the second killed and roasted, but I would do nothing to the youngest."

Upon this she said, "My youngest brother, your brother-in-law, is arrived."

When the Dragon-emperor heard this he cried, "Out with him, then!" And when the sister brought her brother from his hiding-place the Emperor ran to meet him and showered kisses upon him.

"Welcome here, brother-in-law!"

"God be with you, sister's husband!" [330]

"Where were you hiding?"

"Here I am!" And he told him the object of his journey, from beginning to end.

The Dragon-emperor said to him, "You are running the greatest risk, God help you! The day before yesterday Steelpacha flew past with your wife. I was awaiting him with seven thousand dragons, but we could not overcome him. I adjure you, let that fiend alone. I will give you money to your heart's desire; just go quietly home."

But the Prince would not hear a word of this advice, and emphatically declared that he would continue his journey on the morrow. When the Emperor saw that he

could not prevent him, nor induce him to turn back, he drew a feather out of his wing and gave it to his brother-in-law, with these words:

"Give good heed to what I now tell you. Take this feather of mine, and if you come across Steelpacha and find yourself in great danger, then burn my feather; that very moment I will come to your aid with the whole strength of my army."

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The Prince concealed the feather in a safe place and went his way. He travelled on and on until he reached a second great city. Here again, as he was going through the city, a woman called to him from a balcony:

"Ho, there, you Prince, dismount from your horse and come into the court!"

The Prince rode into the court. Behold, who comes to meet him? It is his second sister! They rush into each other's arms and kiss each other heartily. Then the sister led her brother into the castle.

When she had put the horse into the stable she asked the object of his journey, and he told her the whole story of his adventures, finally asking her, "And whom have you married, dear sister?"

She answered, "I am married to the Emperor of the Falcons. He will come home to-night. But I must carefully conceal you, for he is furious against my brothers." So saying, she concealed the Prince.

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In a little while the Falcon-emperor came home, and the whole city quaked with the tumult of his approach. Supper was served at once, but not before he had cried to his wife, "I smell men's flesh!"

The wife answered, "What are you thinking of, husband?"

At last, after talking for some time of this thing and that, she asked him, "Would you do any harm to my brothers if they were to come here?"

The Emperor said, "It would surely go hard with the eldest and the second, but I would do nothing to the youngest." Then she told him of her youngest brother's arrival.

The Falcon-emperor commanded his wife to bring her brother before him, and as soon as he beheld him he fell upon his neck and kissed him. "Welcome, dear brother-in-law!"

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"A lucky and joyful meeting, dear sister's husband!" answered the Prince; upon which they sat down to supper.

After supper the Emperor asked his brother-in-law concerning the object of his journey, and the Prince replied that he was seeking Steelpacha, and told him all his adventures. But the Emperor began to counsel him.

"Give up your journey," said he. "Just let me tell you something about Steelpacha. That very day on which he stole your wife I was awaiting him with five thousand falcons, and waged a fearful battle with him. Blood flowed knee-deep around us, yet we could not prevail against him. And how shall you, a single man, overmaster him? So I give you this well-meant advice: Go back home. So much of my treasure as your heart desires is yours; take it and go."

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But the Prince answered, "Hearty thanks for your offer, but go back with my task unperformed I will not. No, never! I must yet find Steelpacha." For he thought to himself, "Why should I not? Have I not three lives?"

When the Falcon-emperor became convinced that he could not move him from his purpose he drew a feather out of his wing and gave it to him, with these words, "Here, take this feather of mine, and if you come into great danger strike a fire and burn it. I will come at once to your aid with all my forces."

So the Prince took the feather and set forth to seek Steelpacha.

For a long time he went up and down through the wide world, until at last he reached a third city. He had hardly entered it when a woman called to him from a balcony, "Dismount and come into the court!"

The Prince turned his horse and rode into the court. Behold, here is his youngest sister! They fall into each other's arms and lavish kisses upon each other. She led the horse into the stable, the brother into the castle. Then the Prince asked, "Sister, whom have you married?"

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And she answered, "My consort is the Emperor of the Eagles; it is he whom I have married."

When the Eagle-emperor came home that night his wife met him affectionately; but he paid no attention to her greeting, but asked her, "What man has come into my castle? Tell me at once!"

She answered, "There is no one here," and they sat down to supper. During supper she asked him, as if by chance, "Would you do any harm to my brothers if they should suddenly arrive?"

The Emperor answered, "The eldest and the second I should kill without hesitation, but not the youngest. On the contrary, I would hasten to his aid at any time, as far as it was in my power."

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Then she said to the Emperor, "My youngest brother is come to pay us a visit."

The Emperor commanded that he should be presented at once, went to meet him, and greeted him with, "Welcome, dear brother-in-law!"

The other answered, "A lucky and joyful meeting, dear sister's husband!"

So they sat down to the table.

After supper they talked of one thing and another, and at last the Prince told them that he was seeking for Steelpacha. When the Eagle-emperor heard this he said everything he could think of to dissuade him from this idea.

"Dear brother-in-law," said he, "leave that fiend alone and give up your journey. Stay, rather, here with me; you shall be made happy in every respect."

But the Prince paid no heed to his words, and as soon as morning dawned he made ready and set off to seek Steelpacha. But before he went away the Eagle-emperor, who saw that he could not turn him from his purpose, drew forth a feather from his wing and said:

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"Take this feather, brother-in-law, and if ever you are in need or danger, strike a fire and burn it. I will come at once with my eagles to help you."

The Prince put the feather in his pocket and set forth.

Thus he roved around the world from city to city, going ever farther and farther, till at last one day he discovered his wife in a cavern. She was not a little surprised to see him, and cried out to him, "In the name of Heaven, husband, how came you here?"

He hastily told her his adventures, and added, "Wife, my wife! Quick, let us flee!"

But she hesitated. "Where shall we go, since Steelpacha can overtake us in a moment? He will kill you on the spot, and bring me back here again."

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But the Prince, being mindful of the three lives which Steelpacha had given him, still coaxed his wife to flee, and they set out. Hardly had they started when Steelpacha heard of it, gave rapid chase, and overtook them.

"Oho, little Prince!" he cried out, "you would steal my wife, would you?"

He tore her away from the Prince, and continued, "This time I give you your life, for I have not forgotten that I promised you three lives; but go now, and never come back again after her, for if you do your life is at stake."

With these words Steelpacha took the woman away, while the Prince remained alone, in doubt what to do next. At last he resolved to go after his wife again.

When he arrived near the cavern he waited for his opportunity till Steelpacha should be gone away; and once more he fled, taking his wife with him.

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Steelpacha soon heard of it, pursued after them, overtook them, fitted an arrow to his bow, and cried out, "Would you rather that I kill you with this arrow, or shall I cut you down with my sword?"

The Prince began to beg with all his might, and Steelpacha said to him, "This second time I give you your life, but let me tell you one thing: don't you try again to carry away this woman, for I will not again give you your life, but will kill you on the spot as dead as a mouse."

With these words he seized the woman and carried her away, while the Prince again remained alone, always planning how to rescue his wife. Finally he said to himself, "After all, why should I be afraid? I still have two lives—that one which he gave me and the one I had before."

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So he resolved to go back to his wife the next day when Steelpacha was absent.

"Come," he said to her, "let us flee!" She objected that it was useless to flee, since they would be at once overtaken; but he constrained her to go with him.

But very soon Steelpacha overtook them, and cried out to the Prince, "Wait, just wait! I will never forgive you this!" The Prince was terrified and began to beg for mercy, but Steelpacha silenced him.

"You remember that I gave you three lives? All right; now I give you the third, and you have nothing more to expect from me. So go home in peace, and beware of hazarding the life which God lent you."

When the Prince saw that he was powerless against the might of Steelpacha he turned back homeward with a heavy heart. Suddenly he remembered what his brothers-in-law had said to him when they gave him the feathers, and he said to himself, "Come what come may, I will go once more to rescue my wife, and in case of need I will burn the feathers and call my brothers-in-law to my assistance."

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So said and so done.

He went back to the cavern and saw his wife in Steelpacha's arms. He waited around till the latter had gone away, and then showed himself to his wife. She was not a little frightened, and cried out in terror, "In the name of Heaven! Is life so hateful that you come back again for me?"

He calmed her and told her that his brothers-in-law had promised to help him in utmost need. "And therefore," said he, "I am come for you once more; make ready to flee."

She did so, and they hastened away; but Steelpacha soon got news of their flight, and cried to them from afar, "Just wait, little Prince; you haven't escaped me yet!"

But as soon as the Prince saw Steelpacha he drew the three feathers and his tinder-box out of his pocket, struck a light, and kindled the feathers one by one. But while they were kindling Steelpacha overtook him, drew his sword, and cleft the Prince in half.

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That very moment what a prodigy occurred! There came flying the Dragon-emperor with his dragons, the Falcon-emperor with his falcons, and the Eagle-emperor with all his eagles, and waged battle with Steelpacha. Blood flowed in streams, but fortune favored Steelpacha, and he made off safely, carrying his prize, the Princess, with him.

The three emperors now took counsel over their brother-in-law's body, and decided to recall him to life. So they summoned three of the swiftest dragons and asked which one of them could most speedily bring some water from the river Jordan. The first one said, "I can do it within half an hour"; the second said, "I can do it in a quarter of an hour"; the third said, "I will have it here in nine minutes." The emperors said to this one, "Then set out, Dragon, as fast as possible."

[343]

The Dragon put forth all his impetuous strength, and truly within nine minutes he brought back the water from the Jordan. The emperors took the water, poured it over the two portions of the Prince's body, and scarcely had the water touched them when the young man sprang upon his feet, safe and sound, as if nothing had happened to him.

The emperors then counselled him, "Now go back home, since you have been restored to life!"

But the Prince answered that he must once more try his luck, and, by one means or another, free his wife from the clutches of that fiend. His imperial brothers-in-law remonstrated:

"Do give it up! You will surely perish this time, for you have no life at command except the one God lent you!"

[344]

But for all answer the Prince remained dumb.

Then the emperors said, "All right; if you are bent upon trying again, come what come may, at least don't attempt to get your wife away by flight, but beg her to wheedle Steelpacha into telling her wherein his strength lies. Then bring us word, that we may help you to get the best of him."

So the Prince stole secretly to his wife and told her how she should coax Steelpacha to tell her the secret of his strength. Then he betook himself to some place of safety.

When Steelpacha came home the Princess beset him with questions. "In Heaven's name, do tell me wherein your strength lies!"

Steelpacha answered, "My pretty wife, my strength lies in my sword."

[345]

Then the Princess prayed to the sword as if to God. At sight of this Steelpacha burst into a mocking laugh and said to her, "Oh, you simple woman! my strength lies not in my sword but in my arrow."

Therefore she fell upon her knees before the arrow and began to pray to it. Then Steelpacha said, "My wife, some one must have well taught you how to coax from me the secret of my strength. If your husband were alive I should say it was he who had taught you."

But she swore by body and soul that no one had taught her, no one had been there.

After several days her husband came again, and she told him that thus far it had been impossible to learn from Steelpacha wherein his strength lay. But the Prince answered, "Try again," and went away.

When Steelpacha came home she asked him anew wherein his strength lay. Upon which he answered her, "Since I see that you have a high respect for my strength, I will confess the truth about it."

[346]

Then he told her: "Far from here is a mountain-peak. On this mountain-peak lives a Fox. The Fox has a heart in which a bird is concealed; this bird holds my strength. But that Fox is very hard to catch, for he has many transformations."

The next day, when Steelpacha was away from home, the Prince came again to his wife to learn what he had told her. She repeated everything carefully, and the Prince went straight away to his brothers-in-law with the much-longed-for news. They received it with joy, and at once set out with the Prince to go to that mountain-peak.

Arrived there, they set the eagles upon the Fox, which immediately took refuge in a lake and there changed himself into a gull with six wings. But the falcons gave battle to the gull and drove him thence. He flew high amid the clouds, the falcons ever following. In a trice the gull changed himself into a fox again and tried to escape into the earth; but, falling into the power of the eagles and all the rest of the mighty host, he was surrounded and taken prisoner.

[347]

Then the emperors commanded that the Fox should be cut open and his heart taken out. A fire was kindled, the heart cut open, the bird taken out and cast into the flames. As soon as the bird was burned Steelpacha vanished forever.

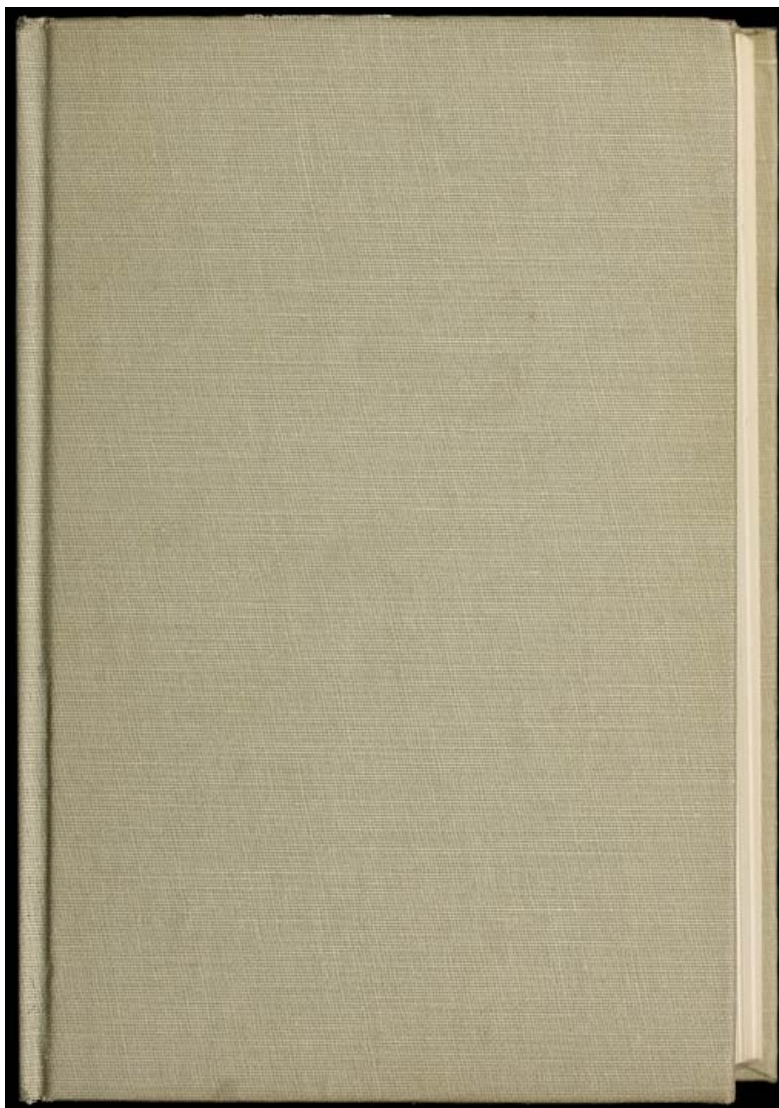
So the Prince took his wife and went happily home.

"That is one of your very best stories," said the *starosta*. "How it does bring back old times! While I was listening I could hardly believe that this big man here by the stove is I. It seemed rather as if I must be the little boy yonder."

"Did grandmother tell these same stories to you when you were little, father?" asked the little boy.

[348]

"Many and many a time. And I'll warrant she has as many more to tell you as those you have heard already. But it is late, and we have not had much sleep these last few nights. So every one to bed, and don't forget to thank God for a happy wedding and a good son and brother-in-law."



COLOPHON

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323	incased	encased

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