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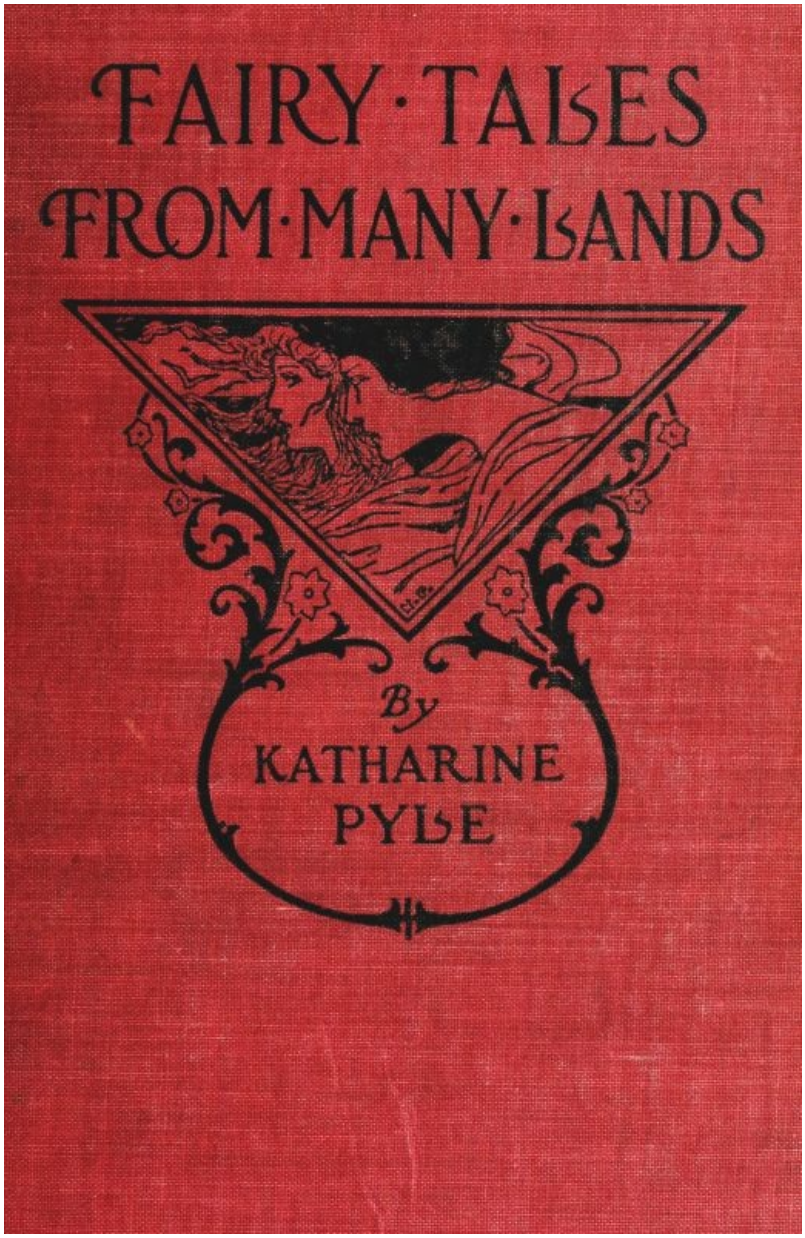
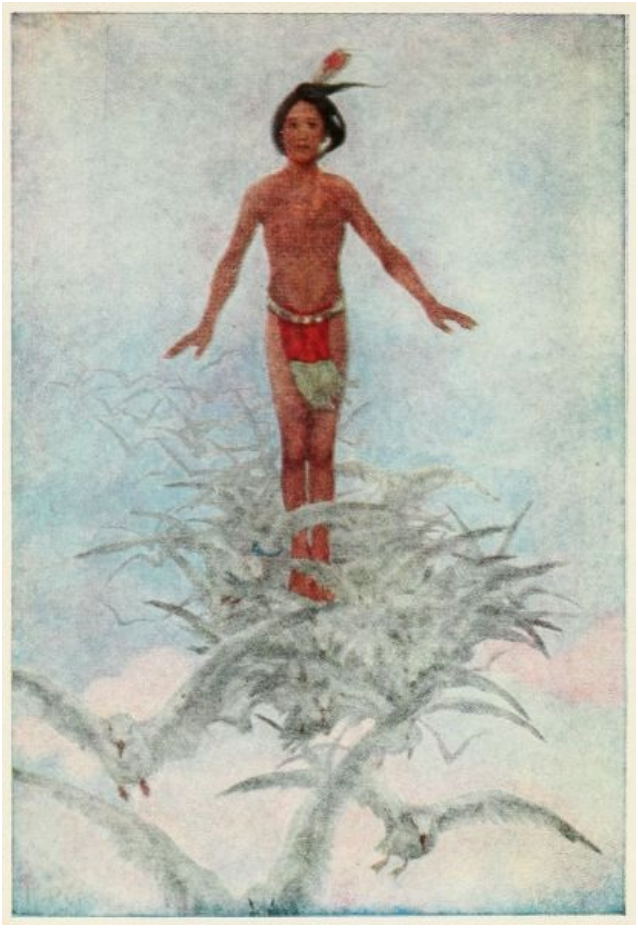


FAIRY TALES FROM MANY LANDS



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FAIRY TALES FROM MANY LANDS

BY

KATHARINE PYLE

AUTHOR OF “WHERE THE WIND BLOWS,” “THE COUNTERPANE FAIRY,”
“CARELESS JANE AND OTHER TALES,” ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

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CONTENTS

[5]

ILLUSTRATIONS

[6]
[7]

[8]
[9]

FAIRY TALES FROM MANY LANDS

[10]

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[11]

THE SEVEN GOLDEN PEAHENS

(*From the Servian Folk Lore*)

THERE was once a king who had three sons, and he had also a golden apple tree, that bore nothing but golden apples, and this tree he loved as though it had been his daughter. The king was never able, however, to have any of the fruit it bore, for no sooner were the apples ripe than they would disappear in the night, and this in spite of a guard being set around the garden to watch it and see that no one entered in.

One time the eldest prince came to the king and asked to be allowed to keep watch over the [12]
tree that night. “And if I do,” said he, “I promise you that nothing shall be allowed to approach it, not even the smallest sparrow.”

The king consented to this, so that evening the prince took his sword, and went out into the garden to mount guard over the tree. Scarcely had it become dark when he heard a sound of wings beating through the air, and this sound made him so drowsy that his eyelids weighed like lead, and he fell into a deep sleep. When he awoke it was morning, and all the apples were gone from the tree.

The prince returned to the palace, and was obliged to confess to the king that he had slept all the night through.

The king was very angry, but the second son said, “My father, allow me to keep watch over the [13]
tree the next time, and I promise you I will do better than my brother, for I will not so much as close my eyes until daybreak.”

The king was willing, so when evening came the second son took his sword and went into the garden to watch the tree as his brother had done before him.

Hardly was it dark before he heard the sound of wings, and then in spite of himself his eyes closed and he fell into a deep sleep. He never stirred until daylight, and when he sat up and looked about him every apple was gone.

After this it was the turn of the third son to watch the tree, but he was a very wise prince. He had listened to all his brothers had to say about the sound of wings they had heard, and how the sound had put them to sleep, and before he went into the garden he stuffed his ears with cotton [14]
so that he could hear nothing. Then he placed himself near the tree and began his watch.

As soon as it was dark the sound of beating wings began, and the sound drew nearer and nearer, but the prince did not hear it because of the cotton in his ears. Then a light appeared in the sky, and seven golden peahens flew into the garden. They shone so that all the place was lit up as though by the light of day. Six of the peahens settled on the branches of the apple tree and began to shake down the apples, but the seventh changed into the most beautiful princess the prince had ever seen in all his life. Her hair was like a golden cloud about her; her eyes were as blue as the sky, and from head to foot she was dressed all in cloth of gold. She began to gather up the fruit that the others shook down to her, and for awhile the prince could neither stir nor speak for wonder of her beauty. Then he took the cotton from his ears, and went over to her, and [15]
began to talk to her and ask her who she was.

At first when the princess saw him she was frightened, but presently she told him that she and the six peahens were the daughters of a king who lived far away, and that they had flown over seven mountains and over seven seas, all for the love of the golden apples. She also told him that by day she and her sisters lived in a beautiful pleasure palace their father had built for them, but when night came they changed themselves into peahens, and flew about the world wherever they chose.

After a while the day began to break, and then the princess changed herself into a peahen again, and she and her sisters flew away, but she left with the prince three of the golden apples she had gathered.

The prince returned to the palace and gave the apples to his father, and the king was delighted [16]
at the sight of them. “And did you find out who it is that steals them?” he asked.

Instead of answering him, the prince managed to put him off, and the next night he said he would watch in the garden again. Then the same thing happened. He stopped his ears with cotton, the seven peahens arrived and six alighted in the tree, but the seventh became a beautiful princess, and came across the garden to him. Then the prince unstopped his ears and they talked together until daybreak, when she flew away with her sisters, and this time, as before, she left three of the apples with him.

As soon as it was morning the prince carried the apples to his father, and now, whether or no, the king would have him say who it was who came into the garden every night to steal the fruit.

The prince was obliged to tell his story, but when he said it was seven golden peahens that [17]
stole the apples, and that they were the daughters of a great king his father would scarcely believe him. The brothers, too, laughed him to scorn, for they were very jealous of him. “This is a strange story,” they cried, “and it certainly cannot be true. Either you are trying to deceive us, or you fell asleep and dreamed it all.”

“It is all certainly true,” answered the youngest brother, “and there are the three golden apples to prove it.”

“They are no proof,” answered the others. “If you would have us believe you, keep watch in the

garden again to-night, and when the princess comes cut a lock of her golden hair and keep it to show to us. When we see that then we will believe you."

At first the prince would not consent to do this, but they were so urgent that he finally agreed, and when he went into the garden he took a pair of sharp scissors with him. After a time the golden peahens flew into the garden, and after the youngest sister had changed into a princess, [18] she and the prince talked together all night. When she was about to go the prince managed, without being seen, to take hold of a lock of her hair and cut it off.

No sooner had he done this, however, than the princess gave a sorrowful cry. "Alas, alas!" said she, "If you had only been patient for a little while longer all would have gone well. Now I must go away forever, and you will never see me again unless you journey over the seven seas and over the seven mountains to seek me." Then she changed into a peahen, and flew away with the others.

The prince was filled with despair at the thought that he had lost her, for he loved her so well that he did not know how he could live without her.

In the morning his father and his brothers came to seek him in the garden, and when they saw [19] the lock of golden hair they were obliged to believe him, and they could not wonder enough.

But the young prince saddled his horse and set out in search of his princess. On he went and on he went, and everywhere he rode he asked those he met whether they had seen seven golden peahens, but no one could tell him anything about them.

At last after he had journeyed over seven mountains, and over seven seas, he came to a palace that stood beside a lake, and in this palace lived an enchantress queen and her daughter. He knocked at the door and when the queen came to see who was there he once more asked whether she could tell him anything of the seven golden peahens who were the daughters of a king.

"Oh, yes, that I can," answered the queen, "and if you are in search of them you have not much [20] further to go. Every morning they come to bathe in this lake, and anyone who watches them can see them."

When the prince heard this he was filled with joy and would have set out for the lake at once, but the queen, seeing how young and handsome he was, begged him to come in and rest for awhile. "Why do you follow after these seven princesses?" she asked. "My daughter is a princess, too, and a beautiful girl. If you can take a fancy to her you shall marry her and live here and after I die this palace and all that is in it shall be yours."

The prince, however, would not listen to this, for he loved the golden peahen princess with all his heart, and her alone would he marry.

When the queen found that he was not to be persuaded she pretended to fall in with his wishes. "Very well," said she, "it shall be as you desire, but let me send someone with you to [21] show you the way to the lake."

The prince thanked her, and she called a servant to go with him, but before they set out she took the servant aside and gave him privately a small pair of bellows. "When you reach the lake," said she, "take an opportunity to get behind the prince and blow upon the back of his neck with these bellows. If you do this I will reward you well."

The servant promised to obey her and then he and the prince set out together.

When they reached the shore the prince sat down on some rocks to watch for the peahens, but the servant got back of him and blew upon his neck with the bellows and immediately the prince fell asleep.

Presently there was a light in the sky and the seven golden peahens came flying and alighted upon the borders of the lake. Six of them began to bathe themselves in its waters but the seventh [22] one changed into a princess. She came over to the prince and began to call to him and caress him, but she could not awaken him from his sleep.

After a time the peahens came up from the water, and the princess said to the servant, "Tell your master when he awakens twice more will I come but never again." Then she and the others all flew away together.

When the prince awoke and found that the princess had been there and had tried in vain to awaken him, he was ready to die with grief and disappointment. However, she would return the next day, and he determined he would be there watching for her and that this time he would not by any means allow himself to fall asleep.

So the next morning he hurried down to the lake again, and the servant went with him, but before they left the castle the queen gave the servant the pair of bellows, and bade him blow [23] upon the back of the prince's neck when he was not aware of it.

They reached the lake, and the prince would not sit down for he feared he might fall asleep again, but the servant managed to get back of him and blow upon his neck with the bellows. Then, in spite of himself the prince sank down in a deep sleep.

Presently the peahens came flying, and as before the youngest sister came over to the prince and began to call and caress him, but he still slept on in spite of her. Then she turned to the

servant and said to him, “Tell your master when he awakens that once more will I come and never again, but unless he cuts the head of the nail from the body he will never see me.”

When the prince awoke and heard the message the princess had left he understood that the servant had deceived him, and that the princess meant unless he destroyed the servant he would never find her. So the next day when they started out together the prince took a sharp sword [24] with him. He waited until they were out of sight of the castle, and then he turned and cut the servant’s head from his shoulders and went on down, alone, to the lake.

He had not been there long when he saw a light, and heard the seven peahens coming. No sooner had they alighted than the seventh one changed into the beautiful princess. When she saw that the prince was awake and watching for her, she was overcome with joy. “Now we shall never be parted again,” she said, “but you shall go to our palace with me and be my own dear husband.”

Then she changed him into a golden peacock, and the six peahens came up from the water and they all flew away together. On and on they went until they came to the pleasure palace the king had built for his daughters, and there the golden peacock was changed back into a prince, and [25] the peahens became seven princesses. The prince was married to the youngest one, amidst great rejoicings and they all lived there happily together.

Everything went joyfully for seven months, and then the princess came to the prince and said, “My dear husband, the time has now come when my sisters and I must go to pay a visit to the king our father. You cannot go with us, but if you will obey what I am about to tell you all will go well. We will be away for three days, and during that time the palace and all that is in it will be yours. You may go where you please except into the third cellar that is over beyond the others. There you must not go, for if you do some terrible misfortune will certainly come upon both of us.”

The prince promised that all should be as she wished, and then she and her sisters flew away together leaving him alone.

For the first day the prince did not go near the cellar and scarcely thought of it. The second [26] day he looked to see where it was, and when he came to the door it was so heavily chained and bolted that he could not but wonder what was back of it, and the third day he could think of nothing but the cellar and what was in it. At last he felt that come what might he must see what treasure it was that was kept locked away behind that door. He went down to it again and began to unfasten the bolts and bars; the last one fell and he opened the door and stepped inside and looked about him. There was nothing there to see but a great chest with holes bored in the lid, and bound about with nine bands of iron.

The prince stared and wondered, and while he still stood there he heard a groaning sound from within the chest, and a voice cried, “Brother, for the love of mercy give me some water to wet my poor mouth.”

The prince was always pitiful toward those in trouble, and as soon as he heard this, without [27] stopping to inquire what was inside of the chest he ran and fetched a cup of water and poured it through one of the holes.

Scarcely had he done this before there was a straining sound, and three of the iron bands burst asunder.

“Brother, that was scarcely enough to wet my mouth,” said the voice inside. “For the love of mercy give me another cup of water to cool my throat.”

The prince ran and fetched the water and poured it through the hole in the lid, and now three more of the iron bands burst asunder.

“More water, brother; more, for the love of mercy,” cried the voice. “That still is not enough to quench my thirst.”

The prince fetched a third cup of water and poured it into the chest, and now with a sound like thunder the last of the iron bands were broken, and out from the chest flew a great green [28] dragon. It flew up through the cellars and out of the castle, and the prince ran after it.

The seven princesses were just coming home, and without even stopping for a moment the dragon caught up the youngest one in his claws and flew away with her, and the prince still ran after them shouting like one distracted. Even after the dragon had disappeared over the mountains the prince ran on, and when he could no longer run he walked.

On and on he went, and after a while he came to a stream, and in a hole near it lay a small fish gasping for breath.

“Brother,” it cried, “for the love of mercy put me back in the water; but first take one of my scales, and if you are ever in need rub it and call upon me, and I may be able to help you.”

The prince stooped and took up the fish, but before he put it back in the water he took from it [29] a tiny scale as it had bade him. This scale he wrapped carefully in his handkerchief, and journeyed on again, leaving the fish happy at being again in the stream.

Later on he came to a forest, and under some bushes lay a fox whining to itself with its paw

caught in a trap. “Brother,” it called to the prince as soon as it saw him, “for the love of mercy open this trap and let me go free. It may be that I may succor you in a time of need.”

The prince was sorry for the poor animal, and managed to pry open the trap.

The fox thanked him, and before it ran away it told him to pull three hairs from its tail. “If you are ever in need, rub those hairs and call upon me,” it said, “and wherever I am I will hear and come to help you.”

The prince thanked him and journeyed on, and in the depths of the forest he came upon a wolf [30]
which was caught by a rock that had fallen on its paw.

“Help, brother, for the love of mercy,” cried the wolf.

The prince managed to roll away the rock, and when the wolf found it was free it gave him three hairs from its tail. “If you are ever in need, rub these hairs and call upon me,” he said, “and wherever I am I will come and help you.”

The prince thanked him and journeyed on, and before long he came out of the forest and saw before him a great castle that stood upon a mountain. While he stood there looking at it the gate opened and out rode the dragon on a great coal-black horse. Then the prince knew that this was the place he was in search of. He waited until the dragon had disappeared, and then he went up to the castle and entered in, and the very first person he saw was his own dear wife sitting alone and weeping. As soon as she saw him she jumped up and ran into his arms, and after they had [31]
kissed and caressed each other they began to plan how they could escape.

Out in the stable was another horse, and this the prince saddled. He mounted upon it and took the princess up before him, and then they rode down the mountain and away as fast as they could go.

It was not until evening that the dragon returned to the castle, but as soon as he came in and found the princess was gone he knew what had happened, and that she had ridden away with the prince.

Then he took counsel with his coal-black horse, and asked it, “Shall we ride after them at once, or shall we eat and drink first?”

“Let us eat and drink first,” answered the horse, “for even after that we can easily catch up with them.”

So the dragon sat down and ate and drank, and then he mounted his steed and rode after the [32]
runaways. He soon caught up with them, and took the princess from the prince, and set her on his own horse in front of him. “This one time I will spare you,” he said to the prince, “because you had mercy upon me when I was a prisoner in the cellar, but if you ever come to my castle again I will certainly destroy you.” Then he rode back home again faster than the wind, carrying the princess with him.

The prince waited until he was out of sight, and then he turned the horse loose and started back toward the castle, for even the dragon’s threat could not keep him away from his dear princess.

When he had come within sight of the castle again he hid himself and waited until the next day when the dragon had ridden away. Then he went up to the castle and hunted through the rooms until he found the princess.

When she saw him she began to tremble with fear and wring her hands. “Why have you [33]
returned?” she cried. “Do you not remember that if the dragon finds you here he will tear you to pieces?”

“Listen, dear one,” said the prince. “I will hide myself behind the curtains, and when the dragon comes home you must find out from him where he got his coal-black steed, for I can easily see that unless we find a match to it we will never be able to escape from him.”

This the princess agreed to do, and they talked together until they heard the dragon returning, and then the prince hid himself back of the curtains.

When the dragon came in the princess pretended to be very glad to see him, and at this he was delighted, for always before she had met him with tears and reproaches.

After a time she said, “That is a very wonderful horse that you have. Do you suppose there is another one like it in all the world?”

“Yes,” said the dragon, “there is one and only one, and that is the brother of my steed.” [34]

The princess asked him where this wonderful steed was to be found, and the dragon told her it belonged to the old gray woman who had but one eye and lived at such and such a place. “She has twelve beautiful horses standing in her stable,” the dragon went on, “but this steed is none of them. It is the lean and sorry nag that is crowded away in the furthest stall, and no one to look at it would think it worth anything, but all the same it is the brother of my horse, and to the full as good as he is.”

“And would it be possible for anyone to get that horse?” asked the princess.

“Possible but difficult. If anyone serves the old gray woman for three days, and during that time is able to fulfill her bidding he will be able to ask his own reward and she cannot refuse him; in that way can he gain possession of that horse and in no other.” [35]

The prince heard all this behind the curtain where he was hidden, and after a time, when the dragon had gone to sleep he stole out and set forth in search of the old gray woman who had but one eye.

He went on and on, and after a while he came to the house and there was the old gray woman herself looking out of the window.

He knocked at the door, and when she opened it he asked whether he might take service with her.

“Yes, you may,” answered the old gray woman, “for I am in need of a stout lad to drive my black mare out to the pasture and keep her from running away. If you can do this for three days you may ask what reward you choose and it shall be yours, but if you are not able to bring her home every evening your head shall be cut from your shoulders and set upon a stake.”

The prince agreed to this bargain, and the next morning, as soon as it was light, he drove the [36] black mare out to the pasture. Before they started however the old woman went to the black mare’s stall and whispered in her ear, “To-day you must change yourself into a fish and hide down in the stream for there the lad will never be able to find you.”

When the prince reached the pasture with the mare he determined to sit upon her back all day, for if he did that he was sure she could never escape from him. He sat there for a long time, but he grew drowsier and drowsier, and at last he fell fast asleep. When he awoke he was seated on a log of wood with the halter still in his hand, and the mare was gone.

The prince was in despair, but suddenly he remembered the promise the little fish had made him. He took out the scale which he had been carrying all this time, and rubbing it gently he [37] cried:

“Little fish, if friend indeed,
Help me in my time of need.”

Immediately the little fish stuck its head up from a stream near by. “What can I do to help you, brother?” it asked.

“Can you tell me where the black mare has gone?” asked the prince.

“Yes; she has changed herself into a fish and is hiding down in the stream with us. But do not trouble yourself about that. Just strike the halter upon the ground and call out, ‘Black mare, black mare, come out from among the fishes for it is time to go home.’”

The prince did as the fish bade him and as soon as the black mare down in the stream heard those words it was obliged to come out and take its natural shape again. The prince then [38] mounted upon it and rode it home.

When they reached the stable the old gray woman was on the watch, and she could scarcely hide her rage and disappointment at finding the serving lad had managed to bring the black mare home. However, she bade him go to the kitchen and get his supper, and she followed the black mare to the stall. “You fool,” she cried, and she was ready to beat it in her rage, “why did you not hide among the fishes as I bade you?”

“Mistress, I did,” answered the mare, “but the fishes are friends of the lad, and told him where I was, so I was obliged to come forth.”

“To-morrow, change yourself into a fox and hide among the pack. There he will certainly be unable to find you.”

After that she went into the kitchen where the lad was eating his supper.

“Well,” she said, “you have done very well so far, but to-morrow is still another day, and we [39] will see how things go then.”

On the morrow the prince rode the black mare out to pasture, and again he sat on her back so that she should not escape him. After awhile he fell asleep in spite of himself, and when he awoke he was sitting astride of a branch with the halter in his hand.

At first the prince did not know what to do; he was in despair. Then he remembered the promise the fox had made him. He took the hairs and rubbed them between his fingers.

“Little fox, if friend indeed,
Help me in my time of need,”

he said.

Immediately the little red fox came running out of the wood. “What would you have of me,

brother?” he asked.

“Can you tell me where the gray woman’s black mare has gone?” [40]

“That is easily answered. She has changed herself into a fox and is hiding with the pack. Strike the halter on the ground and call out: ‘Black mare, black mare, come from among the foxes; it is time to go home.’”

The prince did as he was told and as soon as the mare heard him calling to her in this way she was obliged to come out from the pack and take her real shape, and the prince mounted upon her back and rode her home.

When the witch saw him riding back to the house she ground her teeth with rage. As soon as she had sent him to the kitchen she went out to the black mare’s stall to beat it. “To the foxes! to the foxes! That was what I told you,” she cried.

“Mistress, I did hide among them as you bade me,” answered the mare, “but this lad is a friend of the foxes too, and they told him where I was.” [41]

“Then to-morrow hide among the wolves,” said the old woman. “He will certainly never look for you there.”

The next day it was the same thing over again. The prince sat on the mare’s back so that she should not escape him. After while he went to sleep, and the mare slipped away from him, but this time it was into a wolf she changed herself.

When the prince awoke he was in despair, until he remembered that he had still one friend to help him. He gently rubbed the hairs the wolf had given him, and said,

“Kind gray wolf, if friend indeed,
Help me in my time of need.”

Immediately the wolf came galloping out of the wood and asked the prince what he could do for him.

The prince told him how he had been set to watch the black mare and had gone to sleep and lost her; “And now,” said he, “I fear there is nothing for me but to lose my head and have it set upon a post.” [42]

“That will not happen yet,” answered the wolf. “The mare has changed herself to a wolf and is hiding with the pack. Strike the halter on the ground and call to her and she will be obliged to come.”

The prince did as he was told and called to the mare to come, and she was obliged to take her real shape and come out to him.

The prince slipped the halter over her head, sprang upon her back and rode her home.

When the old gray woman saw him coming in this way instead of upon his feet, she almost burst with rage. However, there was no help for it. The lad had earned his wages, and have them he must.

“And what is it you will choose?” asked the old gray woman.

“Give me the poor nag that stands in the furthest stall,” said the prince. “It is but a sorry looking beast, but I will be content with that,” answered the prince. [43]

When the old woman heard that she turned green in the face. She offered him first one and then another of the handsome horses in her stable, but the lad would have none of them. The sorry nag was his choice and it alone would he take, and in the end the old woman was obliged to give it to him. He rode away on it, and it was not the old gray mother’s blessing that went with him.

When they were well out of sight of the house and in the depths of the forest, the prince alighted and taking out a curry comb he had brought with him he began to rub and curry the horse, and when he had done that it shone like burnished silver.

Then he mounted again and rode on until he came to the dragon’s castle. As soon as he drew near, the princess came running down to meet him, for the dragon was away, and she had been watching from a high tower and had seen him coming. [44]

He took her up on the saddle before him and turned his horse’s head and rode away from the castle even faster than he had ridden toward it, and they had journeyed far before the dragon returned home.

As soon as he reached there and found the princess gone he knew what had happened. Then he said to his horse, “Shall we follow after them now, or shall we eat and drink first?”

“We have no time for meat or drink now,” answered the black horse, “and it will be all I can do to overtake them, for now they ride my own brother.”

Then the dragon leaped upon his horse, and off they flew, faster than the wind, in pursuit of

the prince and princess. They went on and on, and after a while the dragon came within sight of them, for though the white horse was swifter than the wind, too, he carried double and so could not go at his highest speed. [45]

Nearer and nearer came the dragon and his steed, and the prince began to beg and plead with his steed to go faster, but it answered, “There is no need of that, master; only leave everything to me and all will go well.”

Then the black horse came near enough to speak, and he called after the other, “For mercy’s sake go slower, brother. I shall kill myself running after you.”

“There is no need of your doing that,” answered the white horse. “Throw up your heels and rid yourself of the monster that sits upon your back. You have been his servant too long as it is.”

When the black horse heard this he began to plunge and kick up his heels so that the dragon was thrown from his back and falling upon a rock he was broken to pieces. [46]

But the black horse came up to his brother, and the prince set the princess upon his back, while he himself kept the white horse to ride. So they all journeyed back to the pleasure palace together, and when the six sisters saw them there were great rejoicings, and they all lived together happily in the palace forever after.

MISHOSHA, THE MAGICIAN OF THE LAKE [47]

(*From Tales of the American Indians*)

UPON the borders of a wide and lonely lake lived an Indian with his wife and two children.

Every day the Indian went off into the forest in search of game, and after he had gone the woman always sent the two boys down to play by the edge of the lake. This she did because she had a lover who came to visit her while her husband was away and she was afraid if her children saw him they might speak of him before their father.

One day the husband came back from his hunting earlier than usual. He heard voices in the lodge and stole up to it and peeped in. There he saw a strange man sitting with his wife and talking to her. The Indian was so angry that he threw the game down before the door, and strode off into the forest never to return. [48]

So silently had he come and gone that his wife did not know he had been there until she came out and saw the game lying near the door where he had thrown it and his bow and arrows beside it. Then she was frightened, for she thought he would return later when she was alone and beat her. She begged her lover to take her with him, and as he was willing they stole away together, with not a thought of the two children left playing down by the lake.

After some time had passed the two boys tired of their play and wondered why their mother did not call them as usual. They grew hungry and at last came up to the lodge for food. There all was silent and deserted. There was no sound nor movement except among the leaves overhead. The boys called aloud, but there was no answer. Beside the door still lay the game that their father had brought, and to satisfy their hunger the older brother cut some pieces from it and cooked them at the fire. When night came they crept into a corner of the lodge and began to weep. They knew now that they were deserted. [49]

After this the two brothers lived all alone. The older, Panigwun knew how to shoot, and every day he took his father’s bow and arrows and went off into the forest for game. Almost always he was able to bring something home with him.

The younger brother did nothing but play. He was very mischievous. One day when Panigwun was making a fire he carried the bow and arrows down to the lake, and began to amuse himself by shooting them into the water. Presently the elder brother saw what he was doing and called to him not to waste the arrows. The boy only ran further along the shore and kept on shooting. The elder brother ran after him and took the bow and arrows from his hands. Out in the lake a number of arrows floated on the water, and not wishing to lose them Panigwun waded out to get [50]

them. Some were quite far from the shore and by the time he reached the last one the water was up to his armpits. The younger brother stood on the shore laughing.

Suddenly from around a bend in the lake appeared a canoe, and in it sat an old man with streaming gray hair. He held no paddle, but the canoe swept onward of its own power, for it was a magic canoe, and the old man was Mishosha, the magician of the lake. When it reached the spot where Panigwun still stood the magician leaned over the side and lifted the boy into it. Then [51] he slapped the side of the canoe. "Chemann Poll," he cried. Immediately it turned and sped away toward a large island that lay in the middle of the lake.

The little boy, when he saw his elder brother being carried away from him, ran down to the edge of the lake, crying piteously. "Take me with you! Take me too!" he called. But the canoe still swept onward. He waded out into the lake as far as he dared, and stood there for some time weeping and calling his brother's name; but there was no answer, the canoe had disappeared. At last he turned and waded back to the shore. Then he threw himself down and wept bitterly. He was now entirely deserted.

Meanwhile the elder brother had been carried to the island where the magician lived. It was in vain that he begged to be taken back to his little brother, or even that the little boy might be [52] taken with them; the magician made no answer. When the canoe reached the shore of the island, Mishosha stepped from it, and motioned to Panigwun to follow him. He led the way back from the water and through bushes and past rocks and stopped at last before a lodge where two young girls were busy preparing a meal. They did not speak, but they cast looks of pity at the companion the magician had brought with him.

Mishosha spoke to the older of the two girls in a harsh voice. "I have brought you a youth who shall be your husband when you are old enough to marry. Take him to an empty lodge, and mind, no chattering on the way or you will be sorry for it."

The girl started when Mishosha spoke to her, and looked at him with terror. When he had ended she turned to obey him with such haste that she tripped over a root and fell. The magician [53] laughed a cruel laugh at the sight of her terror.

When the girl had picked herself up she led the way through the bushes, Panigwun following her, to where several empty lodges were. Here she paused, standing with her eyes cast down, and motioned to him to choose one. The boy looked about him, and was about to enter the one that seemed the most convenient, but the girl caught him by the arm with every sign of terror, and dragged him away from it. Panigwun looked at her with surprise, but she again stood with her eyes bent on the ground, waiting for him to choose.

"Since you do not wish me to have that one, I will take this," said Panigwun. He was about to enter another lodge, but again the girl caught him by the arm and dragged him from it. "Very well," said the boy impatiently, "since you will not let me choose for myself you shall choose for [54] me. Which shall I take?"

The girl motioned him to a smaller lodge that stood a little way off by itself. "I will take that lodge," said Panigwun, "if you will tell me why you choose it. If you do not tell me I will take one of the larger ones."

The girl looked about to make sure that no one was near. Then she whispered hurriedly, "Those are ill-omened lodges. Those who lived in them went out with Mishosha in his canoe and never returned. But none has ever stayed in the smaller lodge. Take it." Immediately and without another word, she slipped away and disappeared in the bushes.

Panigwun entered the lodge, threw himself on the ground and began to lament. "Oh, my poor little brother! what will you do now?" he cried. "How will you live now that I have left you. You have not even the arrows to shoot game, for I carried them away with me. My poor little [55] brother!"

He lay grieving for a long time, until the light faded and the stars came out. Suddenly he felt a light touch on his shoulder, and looking up he again saw the girl who had shown him to the lodge standing beside him. She laid her fingers on her lips as a sign for silence, and said in a voice as soft as a breath, "Mishosha is asleep. If we whisper he will not awaken, for the leaves whisper about him all night, and he is used to the sound. Down on the beach lies the magic canoe. Take it and go to visit your brother. Strike it on the side and say Chemann Poll and it will carry you wherever you wish. Only return soon, for if Mishosha awakens and finds you gone he will suspect me of helping you and punish me for it."

Panigwun would have thanked the girl, but she had disappeared like a shadow in the night. [56]

Stealing down to the beach, he stepped into the canoe; he slapped it on the side and uttered the magic words, and immediately it shot out over the dark and silent lake, and did not pause until it ran up on the shore from which Panigwun had waded that morning.

Panigwun leaped from it, and hurried up the beach to the lodge and looked in. By the faint starlight he could see his little brother lying asleep near the door, the bow clasped tightly in his hand. The older brother would have awakened him, but he remembered what the girl had said, and feared if his brother saw him he would not have the heart to leave him again. Very quietly he placed beside the child the sheaf of arrows, and also the food that the magician had sent to his wigwam for his supper. A moment he lingered, and then, as silently as he had come, he returned [57]

to the canoe, and soon was speeding back again across the water to the island.

But in the little while that Panigwun had been away the weather had changed. The sky was overcast, and the first breath of a coming storm ruffled the dark waters of the lake. He sprang from the canoe and hastened to his lodge. He had scarcely entered when there was a brilliant flash of lightning, followed almost immediately by a crash of thunder.

In the silence that followed Panigwun heard the sound of feet running toward his lodge, and the next flash of lightning showed him the magician standing in the doorway. His face was drawn and haggard with terror. He ran to Panigwun and caught hold of him, and the youth could feel how he was shaking.

"Oh, my good Panigwun, you are not asleep, are you?" he cried with chattering teeth. "I could [58]
not sleep either. I came to see whether you were comfortable. Let us sit down and talk. I am not afraid—not afraid. I have had a curious dream, and I came to talk about dreams." Again there came a flash of lightning and a crash of thunder. Mishosha fell on the floor and caught the boy by the feet. "I have never done you any harm! Say I have never done you any harm. It is the storm king. He is mightier than I. He is searching for me. Ah!" A flash of lightning brighter than the rest filled the lodge with light. "Hide me! hide me, Panigwun. What I did to-day was only in joke. To-morrow I will take you back to your brother. I always intended to. Only hide me till this terrible storm is past."

Panigwun took up a blanket and threw it over Mishosha, and the magician rolled himself up in it, and lay shaken and trembling with fear, groaning aloud at each flash of lightning brighter than [59]
the rest.

Gradually the storm died away; the thunder reverberated more dully among the distant hills; the lightning grew fainter; the terror of the storm was over.

Mishosha freed himself from the blanket, rose and walked to the door of the lodge. There he stood looking out. "The storm has passed," he said in his ordinary voice. "About dreams, I came to tell you of one I had had, but it grows late. Some other time I will tell it."

"And you will take me back to-morrow to my brother?" asked the boy.

Mishosha laughed harshly. "We will make no promises to-night. To-morrow we might think them dreams we had dreamed. Another thing I would say. Beware how you touch my canoe. And do not have a dream that you can do anything on this island without my knowing of it." He cast [60]
an evil glance at Panigwun and strode away through the night toward his own lodge.

The next morning Mishosha said to the boy, "I am going to an island to gather gulls' eggs, and you will go with me."

"But will you not take me to see my little brother first?"

"Some other time," answered the magician. "We must make an early start if we are to reach the gulls' island." He stepped into the canoe and Panigwun followed him. "Chemann Poll," he cried, and away they sped over the water.

The wooded island dropped out of sight behind them, and another island rose to view. This one was bleak and rocky; over it hovered thousands of sea gulls, filling the air with their harsh cries. The canoe stopped beside a rocky ledge, and the magician said to the boy, "Do you go ashore and gather the gulls' eggs, and I will await you here."

Fearing no evil, Panigwun stepped out on the rocks. Immediately the canoe slipped out into the [61]
deep water. "Oh, gulls," shouted Mishosha in a loud voice, "I have long wished to make you an offering. Take this youth as a gift from me. He will serve as food for you and your children." Then he slapped his canoe upon the side and cried "Chemann Poll." The canoe shot away and was lost to sight, and Panigwun was left alone on the island.

The gulls rose and circled about him in a cloud. Their harsh cries deafened him. For a moment he was terrified; then he drew his knife and called upon his guardian spirit. With one blow he killed the nearest gull and hung it from his belt. "Man is the master of the birds," he cried aloud. "Ye are my servants. Take me upon your wings and carry me back to where I came from."

Immediately the birds settled about him upon the rocks. Panigwun stepped upon them, and [62]
they rose with him in a dense cloud, and carried him swiftly back to Mishosha's island. As he swept along through the sky he looked down and saw the canoe speeding across the lake below him.

When the magician reached the island Panigwun was already there and came to meet him. "You did not wait long enough for me to gather the gulls' eggs," he said.

Mishosha was wonder-struck at finding him safe when he supposed the gulls were already feasting upon him.

"I am so forgetful," he stammered. "I forgot I had left you upon the island. I should have remembered before long, however, and have returned for you." Within himself he thought, "This boy must have a very powerful guardian spirit, but all the same to-morrow he shall not escape me."

The next morning he said to Panigwun, "To-day I am going to take you to an island covered [63]

with precious stones of all kinds. There you may gather all you wish, and this time I will be careful and not forget you."

"Will you not take me to see my little brother to-day?" asked Panigwun.

The magician shot an evil glance at him from under his brows. "Some other day," he answered. "To-day we must go to the treasure island."

Panigwun followed him into the canoe, and again they sped over the waters of the lake, but this time in a different direction. Soon they reached a small island as steep and bare as the back of a fish. Among it's rocks lay a quantity of precious stones of all kinds, diamonds, emeralds and rubies.

"Look, my son!" said the magician. "Here are all the treasures you could wish. Step out and gather them."

Panigwun knew that the magician was planning some evil, but it was useless to disobey him. He landed, and immediately the canoe moved too far away from the shore for him to reach it. [64]

"Rise, oh, king of the fishes," called the magician in a terrible voice. "I have long been wishing to offer up a victim to you. Here is a youth for you. Accept him as my offering." Then he slapped the canoe on the side and disappeared in the direction of the island.

A moment after the waters were disturbed, they broke in waves upon the island, and the head of a gigantic pike appeared. He came on toward Panigwun, his mouth open wide as if to swallow him. The youth did not lose his courage. He called upon his guardian angel, and then flourishing his knife he cried, "Man is the master of the fishes. You are my servant. Come here and take me on your back, and carry me to Mishosha's island."

At this command the pike came closer and floated beside the island. Panigwun stepped upon [65] his back and the fish bore him away. So swiftly they went that they out-sped the canoe. When Mishosha reached the beach the youth was already there waiting to help him out. The magician looked at him with surprise and terror. "You here!" he muttered. "I am so forgetful; but I would soon have remembered you were on the island and have returned for you."

"I thought I would save you the trouble," answered Panigwun mockingly.

The next morning the magician again called Panigwun to go with him in his canoe. "And this time I will not forget you," he promised.

Panigwun gave him a look of scorn but said nothing.

On and on the canoe bore them over the surface of the lake further than they had ever gone before. At last they came to an island upon which stood one stark pine, and far up near the top of it was a nest. "Look, my son, in that nest the eagles have their eggs. Do you climb up and get [66] them for me."

Still in silence Panigwun landed and began to climb the tree, but before he had more than reached the first branches the pine shot up to enormous height. Panigwun felt himself being carried further and further from the earth and toward the sky. From far below he heard the magician's voice: "Rise, oh, eagles, and take the victim I have brought you. Ye are the king of the birds and it is proper you should receive offerings." Then, striking his canoe upon its side he shot rapidly away over the lake.

Two enormous eagles rose and circled about Panigwun; their wings beat the air with a sound like thunder and they shrieked fiercely. For a moment the boy closed his eyes, dizzy with the height from the ground and the noise; then gathering his courage and commending himself to his [67] guardian spirit, he drew his knife and flourished it.

"The eagle is the king of birds," he cried, "but man is the king of the eagles. I am the master and you are the servants. Take me upon your wings and carry me to the magician's island."

For a moment the eagles hesitated. Then they drew together so that their wings crossed. Panigwun stepped upon them, and away they soared, so fast that the wind sang past his ears, and they landed at the island before the canoe had come in sight.

When the magician found that Panigwun had returned to the island his face grew pale, and his heart quaked within him. "This boy will prove too much for me," he thought. "His guardian spirit is very powerful. But my magic shall still conquer him."

The next morning he said to Panigwun, "To-day I have planned a little hunting expedition. We [68] will go together, and when you land I will accompany you, that there may be no danger of my forgetting you." Panigwun looked at him with a scorn he did not try to hide. "Then you will not take me to see my little brother to-day?"

"No," answered the magician harshly, and he turned away in the direction of the canoe. The boy followed him, and away they sped together toward the hunting grounds that Mishosha had chosen.

They landed and drew up the canoe and started off together. The magician kept looking up toward the sky and muttering to himself. They went on and on until many miles lay behind them, and at nightfall they reached a lodge in the midst of a wilderness. "It is here we spend the night,"

said the magician.

They made a fire and cooked their supper, and after they had eaten they took off their moccasins and leggings and laid them near the fire. Then they rolled them in their blankets and [69] lay down for the night. The magician waited until he was sure from Panigwun's breathing that he was asleep. Then he arose very quietly and crept over to where Panigwun had left his moccasins and leggings. He took one of each and threw them in the fire, and then by his magic he caused the weather to turn cold, and a deep snow to cover the ground. Having done this he rolled himself in his blanket again and fell into a deep sleep. All night the snow fell and the wind howled across the plains, heaping the snow in deep drifts.

When Panigwun awoke the next morning Mishosha was already up, and was tying on his leggings. "Make haste," he said to the boy, "for it is morning and we have far to travel."

The boy arose and looked for his moccasins and leggings, but he could find only one of each where the night before he had left two. The magician watched him with a malicious look. At [70] length he said, "Are you looking for your other legging and moccasin? I fear you will not find them. I smelled something burning in the night, and this is the month when fire draws things into itself."

Then Panigwun knew that the magician had burned them. He said nothing, but sat down and drew his hood over his head and communed with his guardian spirit. After a time he arose and took a charred piece of wood, and blackened his foot and leg with it for as far up as the legging would have covered him. Then he told the magician he was ready.

Outside the cold was bitter. A keen wind drove the sleet into their faces so that they were almost blinded. They stumbled on through the drifts, and every now and then Mishosha looked around expecting to see Panigwun overcome with the cold. But his guardian had heard him and [71] the black upon his leg was as warm as though it were his moccasin and legging that he wore.

Toward the end of the day the magician in despair led the way back to the canoe. "This boy's guardian spirit is too powerful," he said to himself. "Nevertheless I will still find some way to destroy him."

When they reached the island the elder girl could not hide her joy at seeing Panigwun had returned. Mishosha looked from one to the other suspiciously, but said nothing. He had begun to fear Panigwun as well as to hate him.

The next morning it was Panigwun's turn. He came early to the magician's lodge. "Grandfather," he said, looking him boldly in the face, "every day I have gone with you without question. Now the time has come when you must redeem your promise and take me to see my little brother."

The magician dared not refuse, so the two entered the canoe and sped away toward the [72] mainland. When they landed, Panigwun went up to the lodge in advance of the magician. He approached it noiselessly and looked in. The little boy was seated there busily re-feathering one of his father's arrows. The crackling of a twig made him look up, and there was the face of his brother looking in. He sprang up with a loud cry of joy, scattering the arrows around him. The magician was still far behind, and in a few hurried words Panigwun told the little brother of a plan by which he hoped they might escape from the power of Mishosha. They then went down to meet the magician.

"Here is my brother," said Panigwun; "and now we will take him back to the island with us."

Mishosha cast a glance of hate at the two, but he dared not refuse. They went back to the canoe together, but the magician was slower than the two boys. They reached the beach first and [73] sprang into the canoe. Panigwun slapped it upon the side and cried "Chemann Poll." Immediately they shot away in the direction of the island, leaving Mishosha behind them.

Panigwun was very proud of his exploit.

As he drew the canoe upon the shore the girl who had aided him before appeared beside him.

"What have you done, and where is Mishosha?" she asked. She did not deign to glance at the younger brother, who on his part gazed at her with admiration.

Panigwun told her how he had tricked the magician, and had escaped from him in the magic canoe. Instead of being pleased the girl was filled with terror.

"You cannot escape from him as easily as that," she cried. "The canoe will not allow itself to be tied, and his power over it is so great that at any moment he can cause it to return to him wherever he may be."

When Panigwun heard that he sat down by the canoe and laid his hand upon it. "I will hold it," [74] he said. "Then let Mishosha call as he will; it shall not slip away."

The girl shook her head doubtfully, but she went away to the lodge and returned with food, that Panigwun might not go hungry while guarding the canoe. All evening he sat there and on into the night, with the little brother, who would not leave him, by his side.

Presently the little brother fell asleep, and after a while, in spite of himself Panigwun began to nod. His hold upon the canoe loosened, and at last his head sunk upon his breast, and he too

slept heavily.

When he awoke it was morning and the magician stood beside him looking at him with an evil glance. Panigwun sprang to his feet. “So you are here, grandfather!” he cried. “This island makes one forgetful. I had forgotten that we had left you behind us, but to-day I would have [75] remembered and would have returned for you.”

The magician said nothing, but motioned him to take his brother up to the lodge.

Panigwun thought, “After all, I need not fear this magician so much. It is my turn now, and we will see what I can do.”

With this idea he said one morning, “Grandfather, I enjoyed our last hunting expedition so much that I would like to take another.”

The magician looked at him suspiciously, but he could not refuse to go. They stepped into the canoe, and soon they were speeding over the waters of the lake toward a distant hunting ground.

When they landed, Panigwun took the lead. He led the way back from the water on and on, over plains and through unbroken forests. At night he stopped and said, “Here we will build a shelter, and in the morning we will return.”

Soon they had woven together some boughs and saplings, and had made a fire, and after they [76] had eaten they rolled themselves in their blankets and lay down, but this time Panigwun took the precaution of keeping on his moccasins and leggings. In the middle of the night he arose, and bent over Mishosha to make sure that he was asleep. When he was certain of this he took both of the magician’s leggings and moccasins and threw them in the fire. He called upon his guardian spirit to send a deep snow, and then he lay down and went to sleep.

The magician was awakened the next morning by the piercing cold; he shivered in his blanket, and the teeth chattered in his head. He arose and looked for his moccasins and leggings. They were not where he had left them, and as he sought for them in vain a terrible fear came upon him. He looked at the boy beseechingly.

“Are you looking for your leggings and moccasins, grandfather,” asked Panigwun. “You know [77] this is the month when fire attracts. I very much fear they have been drawn into it and burned.”

The magician made no answer but his legs failed under him.

Panigwun opened the door. “Come, grandfather,” he said. “It is time for us to start.”

He stepped out into the cold and Mishosha followed him, dragging his feet heavily. If it had been cold before, it was ten times more so now. The wind cut like a knife, and the sleet was like whips across their faces. Panigwun strode along bravely, and Mishosha stumbled after him, shuddering in the wind. Twice he stumbled in the snow, but he struggled up again, and still followed. But at last he could go no further. The cold seemed to strike from his feet up through all his limbs. His arms stiffened to branches; his gray hair turned to blowing boughs. Panigwun [78] hearing no longer any sound behind him turned and looked. The magician had disappeared; in his place the boy saw only a stark gray sycamore tree, its branches rattling and moaning in the wind.

So ended the life of Mishosha, the magician of the lake. But Panigwun returned to the island where his brother and the two girls were awaiting him. Great was their rejoicing when they heard the magician was dead, and for many years they all lived there happily together.

In time the two brothers married the girls, and then it was not long before the voices of children sounded in their lodges. The magic canoe still remained and often it sped to and fro across the waters, bearing the brothers or their families, and still obedient to the magic words, CHEMANN POLL.

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[79]

HAAMDAANEE AND THE WISE GAZELLE

(*From Zanzibar Tales*)

THERE was once upon a time a man named Haamdaanee, who was very poor. He had no clothes but rags, and nothing to eat but the food that was given him in charity.

One day when he was searching about in the dust heap for stray grains of millet, he found a small piece of money. It seemed a fortune to the poor man, and he carefully tied it up in one corner of his rags that he might not lose it.

For a long time he could not decide what to buy with it, but one day when he was again [80] scratching in the dust heap, a man came by with a cage full of gazelles which he wished to sell.

"Merchant," called Haamdaanee, "how much do you ask for your gazelles?"

"They are different prices," answered the merchant. "Some are very large and fine, and for those I ask a good price, but one is a weakling, and it I would sell for almost nothing."

Some men were passing by and they began to laugh. "Have you come into a fortune, Haamdaanee," they cried out, "and are you trying to spend it." Then they said to the merchant, "Do not waste your time on that man. He is so poor that he has to scratch about in the dust heaps to find enough to keep him alive."

Haamdaanee untied the corner of his rags and held out the piece of money. "Here, merchant," [81] he said, "take this and give me one of your gazelles."

The men were very much surprised to see the money. Then they said, "You are very foolish, Haamdaanee. You get a piece of money nobody knows how nor where, and then instead of buying for yourself a good meal you spend it for a gazelle which will also need food."

Haamdaanee, however, paid no attention to their jeers. He took the gazelle, and the merchant took his money, glad to have sold an animal that was so weak and small it seemed as though it would die at any rate.

Haamdaanee carried the little animal home with him to the hovel where he lived, and made a bed for it in one corner, but there was little he could give it to eat. If there had not been enough for one there was still less for two. However, he was not sorry he had bought it. It was company for him and he loved it as though it were his daughter. [82]

One day when Haamdaanee was preparing to go out to the dust heap, the gazelle said to him, "Master, why do you not open the door and let me run out in the forest to find food for myself? If you will do this I will return to you in the evening, and you will only have had one to feed instead of two."

Haamdaanee was wonder-struck at hearing the gazelle speaking. "How is this?" he cried. "You can talk, and yet you are only a little animal I bought with a piece of money from the dust heap."

"That is true," said the gazelle, "but I am not an ordinary animal. I am very wise. Let me out every day so that I may run about, and I may find some way of helping your fortunes. I will always come back to you, for you bought me and you are my master."

The little gazelle spoke so sweetly that Haamdaanee opened the door as it wished, and [83] immediately it ran away and into the deep forest, and was lost to sight. Then Haamdaanee was very sad. He thought, "That was a foolish thing to do. I will never see my gazelle again, and it was such a pretty, gentle little thing."

However, when he returned to his hovel that evening he found the little animal already there. "Master," it said, "I feasted well in the forest to-day, but I saw and heard nothing that would help your fortunes. But courage! To-morrow I will go out again, and who knows what may happen."

So the next morning Haamdaanee again opened the door for the gazelle, and after this he let it out every day, and it remained away until evening, when it came running home again.

But one day when the gazelle went into the forest the food it liked was very scarce, and it [84] wandered on further than it had ever gone before. After a while it began to dig up roots with its sharp little hoofs. Presently it struck something hard, and when it turned it out from the earth it proved to be an enormous diamond.

The gazelle was delighted. It rolled the diamond up in leaves and took it in its mouth to carry it home to Haamdaanee. But then it began to think. "What could my master do with a diamond like this? No one would ever believe I had found it in the forest; if he showed it to people they would certainly think he had stolen it, and he would be beaten or taken before the judges. No, I must do something better than that with the stone."

The wise little animal thought for a while, and then with the diamond still in its mouth, it bounded away through the forest.

It ran on and on for three days and nights without stopping, until it came to a city where a [85] great king lived. This king had a daughter who was so beautiful that the fame of her had spread everywhere; even Haamdaanee and his gazelle had heard of her.

The little animal went straight into the city and through the streets to the palace, and up the steps and into the room where the king was sitting with all his councilors about him. There it bent its fore knees and touched its forehead to the ground three times in token of respect.

“What is this animal, and where does it come from?” asked the king.

No one could tell him anything about it, but the gazelle itself answered.

“Oh, great king, I am a messenger from my master the Prince Daaraaee,” it said, “and I have come from far away, a three days and three nights’ journey through the forest.”

“And what is the message your master sends?” asked the king.

“He wishes you to give him your beautiful daughter for a wife, and he sends you a small gift. It is but a poor thing, and scarce worth the sending, but it was as much as I could carry.” [86]

The gazelle then unwrapped the leaves from the diamond and presented it to the king. All were wonder-struck when they saw the size and brightness of the diamond. It was worth a kingdom.

“Your master must be very rich and powerful,” said the king. “Has he many more jewels like this?”

“That is nothing to what he has in his treasure house,” answered the gazelle.

“And he wishes the hand of my daughter?”

“Yes, your majesty.”

The king was delighted at the idea of having such a rich man for a son-in-law, and promised that Prince Daaraaee should have the hand of the princess.

The gazelle then made ready to leave, but first the king fed it with rice and milk, and hung a golden collar about its neck. [87]

“In ten days’ time I will return with my master. Be ready to receive him and his escort at that time,” said the gazelle, and then it bounded away and was lost to sight in the forest.

Now all this time Haamdaanee had been mourning his gazelle as lost. Five days had passed without its returning. The sixth day he was sitting very mournfully on the dust heap when he felt something brush against him. He looked around, and what was his joy to see his little gazelle beside him. He stroked and caressed it, and then he saw the golden collar around its neck.

“What means this golden collar? And where have you been,” asked Haamdaanee.

“I have been far away at the palace of a king,” exclaimed the gazelle. “It was he who gave me this collar, and more than that, he promised that you should have his beautiful daughter for a wife.” [88]

At first Haamdaanee could not believe what the gazelle told him, but when he had heard the whole story he was filled with terror. “You told the king I was a great prince,” he said, “and when he sees me in my rags and filth I will be beaten and driven out into the forest to die.”

“Do not be afraid, master,” answered the gazelle. “Only do as I tell you and you will be received with great honor, and have a princess as your wife.”

At last he persuaded Haamdaanee to come with him, and they set out together through the forest. They went on and on until they were within a day’s journey of the king’s palace, and then the gazelle stopped. “Master,” said he, “do you now strip off your rags and hide them. Bathe in the stream, and as you bathe be careful to knock yourself against the stones so that you will show bruises. Then lie down beside the stream, and when I return from the city with an escort do nothing but groan and cry, ‘Oh, those robbers! Those cruel and wicked robbers.’” [89]

Haamdaanee stripped off his rags and stepped into the stream, and while he was still bathing and bruising himself the gazelle bounded away to the palace of the king. It rushed into the room where the king was and fell before him, breathless and apparently exhausted. “Oh, my master! My poor master!” it cried.

The king in great anxiety asked what had happened to the prince.

The gazelle told him that he and his master had come a long way through the forest in safety, and were within a day’s journey of the city when they had been set upon by robbers. The robbers had stolen everything; they had stripped the Prince Daaraaee of all his magnificent clothes and jewels, and had beaten him and left him for dead on the banks of a stream. The Prince’s escort had been carried away captive. “And I alone escaped,” said the gazelle, “for I am so small they did not notice me. But oh, my poor master! If he is not already dead he must soon perish unless help is sent to him.” [90]

The king immediately commanded that a strong escort should set out to help the prince. He himself went with them, and a horse was loaded with magnificent robes for Prince Daaraaee to put on. They started out, and the gazelle ran along to show them the way.

When they reached the banks of the stream there lay Haamdaanee groaning, and bruised black and blue as though he had been beaten. They raised him up and clothed him in the magnificent robes they had brought, but all he would say was, “Oh, those robbers! Those cruel, wicked robbers!” [91]

They put him on a great black horse and took him back to the palace of the king, and when so

dressed and mounted he appeared a very handsome man indeed. The king was delighted with him, and the princess was no less so, and soon the marriage was celebrated with great feasting and rejoicing.

For awhile Haamdaanee lived with his wife at the palace of the king, and he was so happy, and everything was so fine, that he could hardly believe in his good fortune. But after a time the princess began to ask her husband when they were to return to his own country. She longed to see his magnificent palace and all the treasures it contained.

Haamdaanee took the gazelle aside and said to it, “What are we to do now? I am surely ruined. The princess wishes to see the palace I have told her of, and I have no place to take her but the [92] wretched hovel that will not even shelter us from the weather.”

“Do not be afraid, master,” answered the gazelle. “I will manage everything for you. Only let me go, and do you tell the princess you have sent me home to prepare for your reception. I will get a palace for you, and when I have it I will return and let you know.”

Haamdaanee did as the gazelle bade him. The princess was told that the little animal was to set out immediately and would put all in order at the palace, so she was willing to wait a while longer before seeing her husband’s treasures.

The gazelle at once started out on its journeyings. It ran on and on for several days, and then it came to another city even handsomer than that of the king, but when it entered the streets everything was silent and deserted. There was not a soul to be seen. The little animal went [93] through one street after another and at last it came to a palace, and that too was silent and deserted. It knocked with its hard hoof, and after a long time the door opened a crack and an old, old woman looked out. As soon as she saw the gazelle she seemed frightened to death.

“How have you come here?” she cried. “Do you not know that this city belongs to a terrible snake with three heads, and that he eats every living thing? He has eaten all the people of the city except myself and he only left me alive that I might cook his meals and sweep his house. If he finds you here he will surely kill you.”

“I am too tired to go farther,” said the gazelle, “and I am so small that I can easily hide in a corner where the snake will not find me. Do but let me in to rest for a while. The snake need never know it.”

For a time the old woman refused but the gazelle talked so sweetly that after a time she [94] consented and allowed the little animal to slip through the crack of the door and into the house.

When it was inside it began to look about it. “This place would just do for my master if I could but get rid of the snake,” it thought. Presently it saw a bright sword that hung on the wall. “What sword is that?” it asked of the old woman.

“It belongs to the snake,” she answered, “and it is so sharp that it will cut anything at one stroke.”

“That is the sword for me,” said the gazelle, and it took it down from the wall in spite of all the old woman could say.

And now a great rushing noise was heard outside, and the old woman began to quake and tremble. “That is the snake,” she cried, “and when he finds you here he will surely kill us both.”

“Do not be afraid,” said the gazelle. “I will tell you what to say and do, and who knows but [95] what we may rid ourselves of him for good and all.”

Now the snake was at the door and it began to sniff about. “What is this I smell?” it cried. “Some living thing has entered the city.”

“Nonsense,” answered the old woman. “A bird flying over the house dropped a piece of meat down the chimney, and I am cooking it for your dinner.”

Then the snake said, “Open the door that I may come in.”

“I cannot do that or the meat will burn,” answered the old woman. “Come in through the window.”

Then the snake stuck one of its heads in through the window. The gazelle was ready, and the moment the head appeared it cut it off with the sword, and the sword was so very sharp and keen that the snake did not feel the blow. “How dark it is in the house,” it said. “I can see nothing,” [96] and it stuck its other head in. Quick as a flash the gazelle cut off that head too. “Oh! I think a hair fell on my neck,” said the snake, and it stuck its third head in through the window. Then the gazelle cut off that head too, and the snake was dead.

The old woman rejoiced to know she was now free from the snake, and she could not make enough of the little animal that had killed him.

“I must go and get my master,” said the gazelle, “for now that I have killed the snake, this city and all that is in it belongs to him; and if anyone asks you must say, This is the palace of Prince Daardaaee.”

When Haamdaanee heard from the gazelle all that he had done, and how the palace and the

treasures of the snake now belonged to him, he did not know what to do with himself for joy.

He and the princess soon set out together, and with them a number of people from the city, to [97] whom Haamdaanee promised houses and wealth when they should reach his city.

The gazelle ran along beside them pointing out the way, and when they reached the palace it was more magnificent than anything the princess had dreamed of.

So they lived there very happily, and the little gazelle had soft cushions to lie on, and all the milk and rice that it could eat, so it did not have to run off into the forest any more, but could stay in the palace and take its ease.

THE TWO SISTERS [98]

(*From the Hindoo Folk Lore*)

THERE was once a rajah who had two daughters who were as beautiful as two stars, and who loved each other so dearly that they could not bear to be apart even for an hour. The ranee who was their mother died, and in time the rajah married again, and brought home a new ranee to the palace.

This new wife was very cruel to the two girls. She did not give them enough to eat, they had only rags to wear, and sometimes they were beaten. The rajah was so in love with the new ranee [99] that he took no notice of the two girls, nor of how unhappy they were.

One day the younger princess, whose name was Balna, said to her sister, “Why should we be so unhappy here? Our father no longer loves us, and we are so ill-treated that it would be better to die in the jungle than to live in this way. Let us run away.”

The elder sister agreed with her, so early one morning they ran away from the palace, and into the great jungle that lay over beyond it. All day they wandered on and on, and that night they climbed up into a tree that they might be safe from wild beasts.

The next day they journeyed on again, but they had not gone far when they came to a magnificent palace there in the midst of the wilderness. The younger sister wished to knock, but the elder was afraid. “This palace can only belong to a rakshas,” she said, “and if he sees us he will surely kill us and eat us.”

“As well that,” answered Balna, “as for us to die of hunger and exhaustion.” So in spite of all [100] her sister could say she knocked at the door. There was no answer, and after she had knocked several times she opened the door and led the way in.

They looked about them and were amazed at the magnificence of everything they saw. Their father’s palace was as nothing compared to it. They went into one room after another, and everywhere were treasures of gold and silver and precious stones. While they were looking they heard a terrible noise at the door, and they were so frightened that they ran up to the roof of the house. The roof was flat, and from it they could look down into the inner courtyard of the house, where there were trees and walks, and also a well. The noise the girls had heard was made by a rakshas and his wife, to whom this palace belonged, and who were now coming home. Soon the [101] sisters could hear them moving about in the rooms below and quarreling together. Then a door opened and they came out into the court. When the sisters saw them they almost died with terror, they were so terrible-looking.

As soon as they were in the court the rakshas began to run about from one side to the other and to sniff the air. “Someone is here,” he cried; “I smell human flesh and blood.”

“I should think you would smell human flesh and blood,” cried his wife. “You have just killed and eaten a hundred thousand people. It would be strange if you smelled anything else. But I am thirsty. Come here, you lazy bones, and draw up some water for me.”

“Draw for yourself,” answered he. “But let me have a drink first.”

“No, no! I shall drink first,” cried his wife. They both ran to the well, and there they began [102] quarreling again as to who should draw the water.

The two girls on top of the house had been lying as quiet as though they were dead, but now the younger one, who was very clever, said, “Sister, I am going down to see whether I can destroy these rakshas. If I do not they will surely come upstairs and find us, and when they do that they will kill us and eat us.”

The elder sister begged and implored her not to try to do any such thing, but Balna would not listen to her. She hurried downstairs and stole out into the court.

The rakshas were still leaning far over the side of the well, and were so busy quarreling that they never noticed her. The clever girl stole up behind them and caught each one by a heel and sent them headforemost into the well so that they were drowned. Then she called to her sister to come down, for the rakshas were dead and they were safe. The elder sister was so glad that she hardly knew what to do. She came down into the court and she could not praise her sister enough for being so very clever as to get rid of the rakshas! Then they hunted about and found plenty of food to eat, and beautiful clothes to put on, for there were many beautiful dresses of silver and gold among the treasures of the palace.

THERE WERE MANY BEAUTIFUL DRESSES AMONG THE TREASURES OF THE PALACE

[103]

After this time the two sisters lived there together very happily. Every morning Balna drove the flocks and herds out to pasture, but the elder girl stayed at home to set the house in order and cook the meals. Balna cautioned her never to open the door to anyone while she was away. “There may be robbers in this wood who would kill you for the sake of the treasures that are here,” she said, “or they might carry you away with them because of your beauty.”

The elder girl promised her she would not open the door to anyone, and so Balna felt quite safe in leaving her every day. [104]

Now a young prince lived not far from this jungle, and very often he came to hunt in it. One day the hunt was fast and furious, and he and his attendants rode farther than they had ever gone before. Suddenly they saw, gleaming through the trees, a beautiful palace.

“It is very strange,” said the prince, “that anyone should have built a palace here in the depths of the jungle. Let us knock and see who lives in it.”

His attendants had never seen the palace before, either, and they warned him that it might belong to a rakshas, and it might be dangerous to knock; but the prince would not heed them and began to knock loudly upon the door.

The girl within was frightened at the noise and the voices outside (for this was the very palace where the sisters were living). She kept very quiet and hoped whoever was outside would go away. [105]

“Open the door, you who are inside,” cried the prince. “If you do not I will open it myself with my sword.”

The girl was more frightened than ever, but as she found he was determined to enter, she hastily slipped some rags over her magnificent clothes and blacked her face and hands so that she might look ugly. Then she went to open the door, but she was in such a hurry that she forgot to blacken one of her ears.

When she appeared the prince was surprised at her looks; it seemed strange that anyone so black and ragged should be living in such a magnificent palace. Then he saw that one of her ears was white, and he was more surprised than ever.

However he only said to her, “I have been hunting and I am very hot and thirsty. Will you not give me some water?”

The girl shook her head and motioned to him to go away. She would have closed the door, but the prince put his sword in it so that she could not. “I am thirsty and I must have the water,” he [106]

said.

The girl ran away to get it but when she brought it to him instead of drinking it he threw it in her face. Then the black all washed off, and she stood there, more beautiful than anyone the prince had ever seen before. “Who are you, and how do you happen to be living in this jungle all alone?” he asked. But the girl would not answer. She only shook her head again and wept, for she thought to herself, “If they mean any harm to me and I tell them I have a sister they will wait here until she returns, and she will suffer too.”

When the prince found she would answer nothing he mounted her on his horse and carried her away with him, for she was so very beautiful that he determined to make her his wife. [107]

Now the girl had around her neck a string of pink pearls, and she managed to break the string without being seen, and to drop the pearls one at a time as they rode along. For she thought, “When my sister comes home and finds me gone she will hunt for me, and if she sees the pearls she will know in which direction I have gone and will follow.”

So they rode on and after a time they reached the palace where the prince’s parents lived. When they saw what a beautiful girl their son brought home with him they were amazed, and because of her great beauty they were willing for the prince to take her for a wife.

The girl, too, was willing, for the prince was both handsome and kind, so they were married, and loved each other tenderly. The girl now would have been quite happy if she had not [108] remembered Balna and grieved for her. Often when she was alone she began to weep for her, and always when the prince came in he would ask her why she was crying, but she would not tell him. She was afraid if she so did he would be very angry that she had not told him before, and so she made some excuse. Always she thought to herself, “The next time I will tell him,” but always she was afraid. Her courage failed her.

Now when Balna returned to the palace and found her sister gone she was in despair. She sought for her everywhere, calling her name. Then she began to hunt about in the jungle for signs of robbers who might have been there while she was away, and she found one of the pink pearls that she knew belonged to her sister’s necklace. She went a little further and found another, and then another, and still another. So she went on through the jungle, following the [109] way her sister had gone, and picking up the pearls as she went.

That night she came to a stream, and lying beside it was the body of an old woman. The body was so dried by the sun that nothing of it was left except skin and bones. Balna took off the skin and washed it carefully in the brook, and then drew it on over her head and arms as if it had been a glove. When she had done that she looked exactly like an old woman with wrinkled face and arms.

The next day she came to the edge of the jungle, and she saw before her houses and a magnificent palace with gardens about it. She now took a staff in her hand and began to hobble along as though she were a very old woman indeed.

The pearls led her almost to the palace door, but there they seemed to end, and she could see no more, and she did not know where to go next, nor what had become of her sister. [110]

She sat down on the step of a house opposite to the palace, where a gardener and his wife lived.

The gardener’s wife was a very charitable woman, and when presently she came to the door and saw the old woman sitting there as though she were too exhausted to go further, she spoke to her kindly and gave her something to eat. She never imagined what a beautiful young princess was inside of that wrinkled old skin.

Balna thanked her gratefully, and after she had eaten, she sat on the step all day, watching everyone that went past and listening to all they said. She hoped in this way to get some news of her sister, but she heard nothing.

That night the gardener’s wife gave her a place to sleep, and after that Balna lived with her [111] and the woman was very kind to her. All day the princess appeared to be an old woman, but at night she went to a tank in the palace gardens, and took off the old skin and bathed herself in the water. After she had bathed she sat on the edge of the tank for awhile, and amused herself by arranging her hair, putting in it one of the blossoms of a beautiful pink lotus that grew there, and about her neck she hung the necklace of pink pearls which she had strung again.

Now it happened that these pink lotus plants were great favorites with the rajah. He often went to the tank to look at them, and he was much annoyed when he found someone was coming there every night and breaking off a blossom each time. He had another and younger son, beside the one who had found the girl in the jungle, and when this young prince found how annoyed the [112] rajah was over the loss of his lotuses he said he would watch in the garden all night and see who the thief was.

So that night he climbed up in a tree that grew beside the tank and hid himself among the leaves. He sat there for a long time and all was still. Then when the moon rose he was surprised to see an old, old woman hobble down to the tank and seat herself upon the edge of it. But he was more amazed when this old woman stripped off her skin as though it were a glove, and appeared as the most beautiful young girl he had ever seen. She sat there dabbling her feet in the water,

and presently she broke off a pink lotus and arranged it in her hair, and drew from her bosom a necklace of pearls which she hung about her neck. She sat there for some time, and then she threw away her lotus flower and drew on the old skin and hobbled away in the direction of the gardener's house.

The young prince followed without her having seen him, and waited until she entered the door and closed it behind her. Then he returned to the palace. [113]

The next morning he went to his father the rajah, and said to him, "I have found who it is who steals your lotus blossoms. It is the old woman who lives with the gardener's wife, and I wish to marry her."

"Marry that ugly old woman!" cried the rajah. "You must be mad."

"Unless I marry her I will never marry anyone," answered the prince.

The rajah and ranee were very much distressed, and for a long time they refused their consent, but the young prince grew so pale and ill that at last they could refuse no longer, for he was their favorite son. The old woman was brought to the palace, and was married to the handsome prince.

After they were left alone together the prince said to his bride, "Now that we are married I hope you will take off that old skin and wear it no longer. Then my father and mother will see you as you are." [114]

But Balna answered, "I do not know what you mean. Do you think anyone can take off her skin and become young again at will. As you married me so I am." For she thought if I remain as I now appear the prince will soon tire of me and allow me to go out in search of my sister, but if he sees me as I am he will never allow me to depart.

The prince, however, laughed within himself at her words, for he had seen for himself how beautiful she really was, but he said no more about it.

After this every night when her husband was asleep Balna arose and took off her skin to wash it.

The prince awoke one time when she was just slipping the skin on again, but he said nothing about it, but the next night instead of going to sleep he only closed his eyes and lay very still. After a time, when she felt sure he was asleep Balna got up and drew off her skin and laid it aside and went to wash herself. Then her husband took the skin and threw it in the fire, and lay down again and closed his eyes. [115]

Presently Balna returned and began to hunt for the skin, but she could not find it any place. After she had hunted a long time the prince opened his eyes as though he had just awakened. "Are you looking for that old skin?" he asked. "It fell into the fire and I fear it is burned." So Balna was obliged to remain as she was, a young and lovely princess.

The next morning when the rajah and ranee found what a beautiful girl their son had married under the guise of an old woman, nothing could equal their joy. They no longer wondered that the young prince would have no other for his wife.

But Balna was very sad, she could do nothing but weep and weep. Then the prince too was grieved for her sadness, and asked her why it was. She told him how she had lived in the jungle all alone with her sister, and how the sister had been carried away and she knew not where she was. "It was in search of her," she said, "that I came to your city and I will never be happy until I find her." [116]

The prince said, "I myself can tell you nothing of her, but my older brother married a princess who also lived in the jungle. Let us go to her, and ask her if she can tell us anything of your sister."

He took Balna to the apartments where his brother's wife lived, to introduce her. But the moment the two princesses saw each other they cried out with joy and ran into each other's arms. Great was the surprise of everyone, and their surprise was greater still when they found these two were sisters who had lost each other. [117]

After this they sent into the jungle and brought all the rakshas' treasure to the palace, and the two brothers and their wives lived together ever after in the greatest happiness.

THE FEATHER OF THE ZHAR BIRD [118]

(*From the Cossack*)

THERE were once a man and his wife who had one son named Tremsin, and they were all poor together, as poor as could be.

One day the man said to Tremsin, "Listen, my son. We have but enough meal left in the house for thy mother and myself, and we can shelter thee here no longer. Take the gray steed that stands in the stall and ride out into the world to seek thy fortune, and my blessing shall go with

thee."

So Tremsin took the gray steed from the stall and mounted it, and rode out into the green [119]
world, seeking his fortune, and his father's blessing went with him.

He rode along and rode along, and afterwhile he came to the wide steppes. He heard a rushing of wings overhead, and a light shone about him, and when he looked up he saw a great bird crossing the heavens. It was pure white and shone like silver, and it flew over him as swift as the wind.

"Now in all the green earth never did I see such a bird before," said Tremsin. "I wonder what it may be."

"Master," said the gray steed, "that is the Zhar bird. Presently we will find one of its feathers lying beside our road; but whatever you do, master, do not pick it up, for if you do, evil as well as good will come upon you."

Tremsin made no answer, but he rode along and rode along, and presently he saw something bright lying beside the road. He came up to it and it was a feather. It was as white as silver, and [120]
so bright that no words can tell how it shone.

"Good or ill, that feather I must have," said Tremsin; so in spite of the good steed's warning he picked it up and laid it in his bosom.

After awhile they came to a great city and in this city lived a nobleman. He was a very rich nobleman, and very powerful.

Tremsin rode to his house and asked if he might take service with him.

The nobleman looked at him up and down and saw that he was a good stout lad. "Why not?" said he. "I have need of servants to curry my horses, for I have more than fifty in my stalls."

So Tremsin was set to work in the stables, and the nobleman's own favorite steed was given him to take care of. Every day Tremsin curried it and rubbed it down, and after he had rubbed it its coat shone like glass. There never was anything like it. The nobleman was very much pleased, [121]
and made such a favorite of Tremsin that all his fellow servants grew jealous. They rubbed and curried their steeds, but they could not make them shine as Tremsin did. Then they set a little stable boy to watch Tremsin and see what he did to make the horse's coat so bright.

The stable boy hid in the manger, and after awhile Tremsin came in and began to clean the horse. He rubbed it and curried it, but he did that no better than the other grooms. Lastly he looked about him, and seeing nobody, he drew from his breast the feather of the Zhar bird and stroked the horse with it. Immediately the steed shone like silver, so that all the stall was filled with light. Then he hid the feather in his bosom again, and led the horse out for the nobleman to ride him.

The little stable boy climbed out of the manger, and ran and told the other servants what he [122]
had seen, and as soon as they heard about the feather they knew it must be a feather of the Zhar bird. Then they were more envious than ever, and they laid a plot to rid themselves of Tremsin.

They went to the nobleman, and said to him, "Tremsin has a feather of the Zhar bird, and it is so bright that there never was anything like it. Moreover, he boasts that if he chose he could go out and catch the Zhar bird as easily as not, and bring it to you for a present."

The nobleman sent for Tremsin, and said him, "Your fellow servants tell me you have boasted thus and so. Now go you out and get the Zhar bird for me, for I can neither eat nor sleep until I have it."

It was in vain Tremsin swore and protested that never had he said such a thing. He must go and get the Zhar bird for the nobleman, or have his head cut off from his shoulders. [123]

Tremsin went out to the stall where the gray steed stood and wept bitterly. "Yours was a wise warning, my good steed," he said. "Good came to me from the Zhar bird's feather, but now evil has come of it, and such evil that I must lose my head for it."

"How is that, my master?" asked the steed.

Then Tremsin told him all that the nobleman had said, and that as he could by no means bring the Zhar bird to his master he must surely die.

"There is no need to grieve over such a task as that," said the steed. "That is an easy trick. Do you get a strong net and ride me out to the steppe where we first saw the bird. There I will stretch myself out as though I were dead, and you must hide yourself beside me. Presently the Zhar bird will come and light upon me. Do not stir nor touch it until it hops upon my head and is [124]
about to peck my eyes. Then throw the net over it and you will have it safe."

Tremsin did as the gray steed bade him. He bought a great strong net and then he rode out to the place he had first seen the Zhar bird. There on the lonely steppes the steed laid himself out as though he were dead, and Tremsin hid beside him.

Presently there was a great rushing of wings overhead, and a white light shone and here came the Zhar bird.

He flew down and lighted on the gray steed's flank but Tremsin did not move. He lighted on the shoulder, but Tremsin never stirred. Lastly he went to the gray steed's head and stooped to peck his eyes. Then, quick as a flash, Tremsin threw the net over the bird, and there he had it safe, struggle as it might.

If Tremsin had been a favorite before it was nothing to the way it was now. The other servants were so jealous that they could hardly bear it. They got together and laid another plot to rid themselves of him. They went to the nobleman and told him: "Tremsin boasts that it was nothing to bring you the Zhar bird as a gift; that if he wished he could bring you the thrice-lovely Nastasia of the sea for a bride just as easily as not." [125]

Now the thrice-lovely Nastasia was the most beautiful woman in the world, so that nobody could equal her, and after the nobleman had heard what they had to say he sent for Tremsin to come to him.

"Tremsin," he said, "I hear that you have boasted that if you wish you can bring me the thrice-lovely Nastasia of the sea for a bride. Go now and bring her to me, for if you do not, as surely as my sword hangs by my side, your head shall leave your shoulders."

It was in vain that Tremsin begged and protested, the nobleman would not listen to him and he went out to the gray steed's stall and wept bitterly. [126]

"Why are you so sad, my master?" asked the gray steed.

"I am sad because of the evil the Zhar bird's feather has brought upon me. The nobleman has bidden me bring him the thrice-lovely Nastasia for a bride, and as I cannot do it I must die."

"Do not be troubled over that task," said the gray steed. "There are harder things than that in the world, and if you do as I say all may yet be well."

The steed then told Tremsin to go into the town and get for himself a snow white tent, and all manner of silken scarfs and gold and silver ornaments. He was to purchase beside a golden pitcher of rare wine and a sleeping potion.

"When you have all these things," said the steed, "take them down to the seashore and spread the tent, and arrange in it all the things you have bought as though you were a merchant. Put the sleeping potion in the golden pitcher of wine, and do you lie down beside the tent as though you were asleep, and whatever you do, do not stir nor open your eyes until I neigh thrice." [127]

Tremsin did all that the steed bade him; he bought the tent and the wares, the golden pitcher of wine and the sleeping potion, and carried them down to the seashore. He arranged them as a merchant would his wares. He put the sleeping potion in the wine, and then he lay down and pretended to be asleep.

After a while the thrice-lovely Nastasia came sailing past in her rose-red boat. She saw the shining white tent and landed to see what was in it. When she came to the door of it she saw all the silken scarfs and the gold and silver ornaments, and lying by the tent apparently fast asleep was a handsome youth, with a gray steed standing beside him. [128]

SHE LIFTED IT IN HER HANDS AND TASTED

"Merchant, merchant, waken and show me your wares," said the thrice-lovely Nastasia; but Tremsin did not stir.

"Up, merchant, for I have come to purchase of you."

Tremsin kept his eyes closed and only breathed the deeper.

Then Nastasia began to go about through the tent and look at the things. She slipped the bracelets on her arms, the rings upon her fingers, she wrapped the silken scarfs about her, and presently she found the golden pitcher of wine. She lifted it in her hands and tasted it. Then she drank deep of it and presently there was none left. Almost immediately she sank down in a deep sleep.

Then the gray steed neighed three times. "Up, up, my master," he cried. "Yonder lies the thrice-lovely Nastasia. Take her up in your arms and mount upon my back, and we will carry her to the house of the nobleman before she wakens." [129]

Then Tremsin lifted her in his arms and mounted his steed, and away they went, swift as the wind, so that Nastasia's hair flew out behind them like a cloak.

After a while they came to the palace of the nobleman, and when he saw that Tremsin had

brought him the thrice-lovely Nastasia for a bride he could not do enough for him. There was nothing Tremsin could ask of his master that he might not have had.

But the thrice-lovely Nastasia sat in her chamber and wept and wept. “Never will I marry any man,” she cried, “until he can bring me my shining necklace of pearls that I left at the bottom of the sea.”

Then the nobleman called Tremsin to him again. “Tremsin,” he said, “you must still do something more for me. You have brought me the thrice-lovely Nastasia of the sea, but you left [130] her necklace of shining pearls behind. Go and get it for me, or by the sword that hangs at my side, you shall surely die.”

Tremsin went out to the stall of the gray steed and wept bitterly. “Surely the evil that comes to me will never end. I caught the Zhar bird in a net, the thrice-lovely Nastasia I brought my master for a bride and now I must bring the necklace of pearls from the bottom of the sea or I will lose my head from my shoulders.”

“Master, do not let that grieve you,” said the gray steed. “Do as I bid you and you may get the necklace. Go down to the seashore and hide yourself behind the rocks close to where the tent was spread. Presently you will see some crabs crawl up out of the water. Do not stir nor touch them until one comes larger than the rest and wearing a golden crown upon his head. He is the [131] king of them all. Throw your cap over him. Hold it tight and do not let him go until he promises to bring you the pearl necklace of the thrice-lovely Nastasia from the bottom of the sea.”

Tremsin was quick to do as the steed bade him. He went down to the seashore and hid behind some rocks. There he lay quiet; he hardly breathed.

Presently the crabs began to crawl up out of the water. They came one after another. Tremsin had never seen so many. Last of all came a crab larger than any of the rest, and on his head he wore a golden crown. Tremsin waited until this one came close by the rocks, and then, quick as a flash he threw his cap over it, and held it tight.

The crab struggled but it could not get free.

“Let me go, Tremsin,” it cried, “and I will bring you such treasures that you will be a rich man forever.”

“I will not let you go,” said Tremsin, “until you promise to bring me the pearl necklace of the [132] thrice-lovely Nastasia from the bottom of the sea.”

Well, the crab did not want to promise, but there was nothing else for it. He had to say he would do it, and then Tremsin lifted his cap and let him go.

The crab sidled off and disappeared in the water and he was gone three hours. When he came back he held the necklace in his claws.

Tremsin took the necklace and thanked him, and hurried away to the palace of the nobleman.

When his master saw that he had brought the pearl necklace he could not do enough to show his gratitude.

But the thrice-lovely Nastasia sat in her chamber, and would do nothing but weep and weep.

“I will never marry any man,” she said, “until I can ride to the church on my own fierce wild [133] charger of the sea.”

Well, there was nothing else for it; the nobleman sent for Tremsin again. “This one more thing you must do for me,” he said. “You must bring me the thrice-lovely Nastasia’s wild fierce charger from the sea. Bring me that and I will make you rich for all your life, but fail and your head shall surely be parted from your shoulders.”

Out went Tremsin to the gray steed’s stall.

“This is the last,” he said. “If I can do thus and so I will be a rich man for life, but if I cannot I must surely die.”

“Master,” said the gray steed, “this is the hardest task that has been set you yet. Whether we can bring that fierce, wild charger from the sea I do not know. We can but try, but there is great danger in it.”

Then the gray steed bade Tremsin go to the town and buy twenty hides, twenty poods of tar [134] and twenty poods of horse-hair. “Load them upon my back,” he said, “and drive me down to the seashore.”

Tremsin went to the town and bought the twenty hides; he bought the twenty poods of tar and the twenty poods of horse-hair. He loaded them on the gray horse and drove him down to the sea.

“Master,” said the gray steed, “do now exactly as I bid you, for if you do not I will surely perish. First of all, lay one of the hides upon me and bind it so it will not possibly come off. Over this spread a pood of tar, and fasten upon it another hide. Then another pood of tar and another hide, and so on until all have been used. Then I will plunge into the ocean, and as soon as the fierce strong charger of the thrice-lovely Nastasia sees me he will come at me and try to tear me

to pieces, but if all goes well the hides will protect me. I will swim to the shore and he will follow me, and as soon as he comes out from the water do you be standing ready and strike him upon [135] the head with the twenty poods of horse-hair. Immediately he will become so gentle that you may easily mount and ride him, but if you fail in any one of these things I will be torn to pieces, and you with me."

Tremsin promised to obey the gray steed in everything. He fastened the hides upon the horse's back with the tar, just as he had been directed to do, and when it was all finished the gray steed plunged into the sea. Tremsin stood at the edge of the shore holding the twenty poods of horse-hair ready in his hands.

Presently all the surface of the sea became disturbed. It was churned into foam; great waves arose. There was a sound of neighing, and Tremsin knew the gray steed and the fierce wild charger of Nastasia were fighting terribly. The wild charger would soon have torn the gray steed to pieces, but he could not get at him on account of the hides. [136]

Presently the horse of Tremsin swam to the shore, and it was so exhausted it could hardly drag itself from the water. The fierce wild charger was close after it, still biting and tearing, and it had torn all the hides from the gray steed but one. But Tremsin was ready. He swung the twenty poods of horse-hair on high and struck the charger with it.

Immediately the charger became perfectly gentle and quiet. It stood trembling, and the sweat poured from its sides like water. Tremsin mounted on its back and rode away to the house of the nobleman, and it was so gentle that he had no need of either bit or bridle.

When the nobleman saw him coming on the charger he was so delighted that he called him brother, and said that the half of all he had should be his.

Now the thrice-lovely Nastasia could find no excuse for putting off her marriage with the [137] nobleman. He had restored to her her pearl necklace; her fierce wild charger had been brought to her from the sea. One last request she made, however, and then she would marry him.

"Have filled, I pray you," she said, "three large vats. Let the first be filled with cold milk, the second with warm milk, and the third with milk that is boiling hot."

The nobleman could refuse her nothing, so he had the vats prepared as she wished, the first with cold milk, the second with warm, the third with milk that was boiling.

When all was ready the thrice-lovely Nastasia stepped into the first vat, and when she came out she had changed to an old, old woman. She stepped into the second vat, and she became a blooming young girl. She stepped into the third vat, and when she came out from that she was the most beautiful woman that ever was seen. She shone like the moon, and all the people could [138] look at no one else.

When Tremsin saw that, he too stepped into the first vat, and came out an old man. He stepped into the second vat and became young again. He stepped into the third vat and when he came out from that he was the handsomest youth in all the world. There never was anything like it, he was so handsome.

But the nobleman was filled with envy and jealousy, and he too wished to become the handsomest man in all the world. However, he was not willing to step into the first vat, for he did not wish to become an old man; he saw no reason for stepping into the second vat, for he was already young. He sprang straight into the third vat, and immediately the boiling milk scalded him to death, and he never came out again.

But Tremsin married the thrice-lovely Nastasia of the sea, and they were the handsomest [139] couple that ever were seen, so that people have not done talking of them even yet.

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[140]

THE BEAUTIFUL MARIA DI LEGNO

(*From the Roman Tales*)

THERE was once a merchant who was so rich that no king could be richer. He and his wife had one daughter named Maria di Legno, and she was as dear to them as the apple of the eye. Now about the time when Maria was old enough to think of getting married, the merchant's wife fell ill, and feeling herself about to die she called her husband to her.

"My dear husband," she said, "I feel that I am near to death and it troubles me greatly to know [141] that Maria is about to lose a mother's care. She is so beautiful and will be such an heiress that she will have many suitors. Promise me that she shall marry no one but the man whose finger fits this ring." She then took from her neck a little chain to which a ring was fastened, and laid it in her husband's hand.

Her husband could refuse her nothing. He gave her his word that it should be as she wished, and very soon afterward his wife died.

It was not long before the suitors began to come from far and near to ask for the hand of Maria di Legno in marriage. Some of them were very rich and powerful, and the merchant would have been very glad to have one of them for a son-in-law, but no man among them could wear the ring. For one it was too small, for another too large, and so they were all obliged to go away again with [142] "no" for the answer. It seemed as though the beautiful Maria would never be married at this rate, and the merchant began to repent him of his promise to his dead wife.

At last came a suitor richer and handsomer than any of the others. He said he was a prince, and he brought with him a long train of attendants, and gifts of great magnificence. The merchant took such a fancy to him that he felt that this was the man whom he would choose out of all the world for his daughter to marry.

Maria, however, was very unhappy, for she could feel nothing but fear and dislike for the stranger.

The prince was very courteous to every one, and smiling and anxious to please; that was at first. But when he was told that before he could have Maria for a wife he must try on a certain ring and see if it fitted him, and that all depended upon that, he became very angry. [143]

"This is a silly thing to ask of me," he said. "Is it not enough that I am rich and young and that I please you? I am not a child that I should play such a silly game as that."

He was so angry that it seemed at first as though he would ride away without even looking at the ring. However, after he had had a day to think it over he appeared as smiling and cheerful as ever, and seemed quite willing to submit to the test.

"After all, it was her mother's last wish," said he; "and besides that, I shall be very glad to prove to you beyond a doubt that I am the one out of all the world who ought to marry the beautiful Maria, for I am sure the ring will fit me."

Overjoyed, the merchant sent for the casket in which the ring was kept, but when he opened the lid what was his dismay to find that the ring was gone. And now he did not know what to do. [144] He had promised his dead wife that Maria should not marry anyone who could not wear the ring, and now if it was lost it seemed she would never be able to marry anyone at all.

But when the prince found the merchant was reasoning in this way he flew into a fine rage. "What are you thinking of!" he cried. "First you tell me you will give me your daughter for a wife if I can wear a certain ring, and then when I am willing to stand the test, you tell me the ring can not be found. Is this a trick you are playing upon me? If it is it shall cost you dear."

The merchant tried to excuse himself, but the stranger would listen to nothing.

"Because you are so careless as to lose the ring, is that any reason your daughter should remain unmarried all her life?" he asked.

"Set me three tasks to perform, no matter how difficult. If I fail in any one of them I will ride [145] away with no ill-feeling, and leave her to some more fortunate suitor; but if I perform them all to her satisfaction then I shall have her for a bride."

This seemed to the merchant only a fair and just proposal, and as he was very anxious for his daughter to marry the prince, he agreed to it. But when Maria heard all this she was in despair. She had depended upon the ring to protect her, for she did not believe it would fit the stranger, but now that it was gone she feared her father would force her into the marriage in spite of herself.

In her grief and dismay she bethought her of her godmother who was an old fairy and who lived in a forest over beyond the town. This fairy was very wise, and Maria knew that if anyone could help her in her trouble she could. So that evening she wrapped herself in a dark cloak so that no one should know her, and stole out of the palace and away to where the fairy lived. [146]

She found her godmother at home, and after Maria bid her good evening, and presented to her some little cream cakes that she had brought with her as a gift, she began to tell her story. She told the fairy all about her suitor, and how she feared and detested him, and how, unless she

could think of some task that he would be unable to perform, she would certainly be obliged to marry him.

The fairy listened attentively, and after Maria had ended, she sat silent for quite a while, thinking. At last she began, “Maria di Legno, this is a very difficult matter. You do well to fear this stranger, for he is a very wicked and a very powerful magician. He is indeed far more powerful than I, so that I can do nothing against him, and I fear that you will be obliged to marry him. Still, everything that I can do to help you I will, and you must follow my advice exactly. To- [147]
morrow this evil one will come to inquire what is the first task that you wish him to perform. Try to appear smiling and cheerful, and ask him to bring you as a gift a dress woven of the stars of heaven. This will be a very difficult thing for him to get, and if he fails to bring it to you he can no longer insist on your marrying him.”

Maria was more frightened than ever when she heard that her suitor was a wicked magician, and she promised to follow in every respect the advice that had been given her. Then she drew her hood over her head and made her way home again, and so well had she managed that no one there had any idea she had been away at all.

The next day when the suitor came to visit her he was delighted to find her cheerful and smiling as though she were no longer averse to him.

“Have you thought of what my first task shall be?” he asked. [148]

“Yes,” said Maria. “I wish you to bring me a dress woven of the stars of heaven.”

As soon as the magician heard that, his brow grew black, and he gave her a suspicious look. “Someone must have told you to ask for that,” he said. “You never would have thought of it yourself.”

But he had agreed to do whatever she might ask of him, and he could not very well make any objections to this. He asked, however, to be allowed three days in which to procure the dress, and to this the merchant agreed.

For three days the stranger disappeared, and no one knew what had become of him, but when at the end of that time, he reappeared, he brought the dress with him. It was made entirely of the stars of heaven as Maria had demanded, and was so beautiful and shining that it was a joy to the [149]
eyes to see it.

Maria was dismayed to find he had so easily performed this first task, but she dissembled and tried to appear delighted with the gift; but she took the first opportunity she could find to steal away to the forest to visit her godmother. She told the fairy that her suitor had been able to perform the first task, and bring her the dress of stars, and when the fairy heard this she looked very grave.

“This is a bad business,” said she. “Still there are two more tasks that you are to set him, and for the next one tell him he must bring you a dress woven entirely of moonbeams. This will be even more difficult for him to procure than the other, and it may be that he will fail to get it.”

Maria promised to do as the fairy advised her, and then stole back to her home again.

The next day the suitor came to visit her again, and he looked as happy as though the marriage [150]
day were already set.

“What is the next task that I am to perform?” he asked. “You see however difficult the thing is I am not only willing but able to perform it.”

“I would like,” said Maria di Legno, “a dress woven entirely of moonbeams.”

As soon as the magician heard that his look changed, and he cast upon her a terrible glance.

“Someone has told you to ask for that,” he cried. “However, you shall have it, but you must give me three days in which to procure it, as you did before.”

Maria would have refused this if she dared, but her father was very willing to allow it. For three days the magician disappeared, but at the end of that time he came again, and now it was a dress of woven moonbeams that he brought with him. If the other dress was beautiful this was [151]
ten times more so. The eyes could hardly bear to look at it, it was so bright.

Maria tried to pretend she was delighted, but as soon as she could she stole away to see her fairy godmother once more, and to tell her how the second trial had come out.

The fairy listened and shook her head. “My poor child, I fear this marriage must be. Still there is one more task you may set him, and this time tell him to bring you a dress woven entirely of sunbeams. This will be far more difficult for him to procure than either of the others, but if he should succeed in doing it there is no help for it, you will be obliged to marry him.”

As soon as Maria heard this she burst into tears, but her godmother comforted her. “Listen,” said she, “even though I cannot preserve you from this marriage, I may be able to save you in the end. As soon as the wedding is over the magician will take you away in a coach to carry you to his [152]
own country. Upon his head he will wear a velvet cap, and in this cap a long feather. Look well at the feather, for slipped over it is the magic ring. It is he who stole it from the casket, for he knew it would not fit him, and he feared to stand the test. After you are married to him, however, he

will no longer be afraid to let you see he has it. You must manage in some way to get this ring from him, for if you succeed in escaping finally you will have need of it. And now listen further to what you must do." The fairy then told Maria that she would make a hollow wooden figure of an old woman for her. This she would hide in a certain spot in the forest near to which the magician's coach must pass. Just before they reached this place, Maria must make some excuse to leave the coach, and must hide herself in the wooden figure. She might then safely walk wherever she wished to go, for even if the magician met her he would certainly never guess that [153] the figure of that ugly old woman contained his bride.

Maria thanked the fairy with tears of gratitude, and hastened home, and this time, too, nobody guessed that she had been away.

Soon the magician came to ask her what she would set him as a third task.

"I wish you to bring me another dress," said Maria, "and this time it is to be made entirely of sunbeams."

When the magician heard this the blood rushed to his face, and his eyes became like hot coals.

"You are not the one who thought of this," he cried. "You shall have it, but if I did but know who was back of this wish of yours he should suffer for it, whoever he is."

Maria was left trembling with fear, and for three days the magician was not seen by anyone. At [154] the end of that time he reappeared, and this time it was the dress of sunbeams that he had brought back with him. If the others had been beautiful this was far beyond them, and it was so bright that the pages who carried it could hardly bear the light of it in their eyes.

And now Maria could make no further delay, she must marry the prince whether or no. A magnificent wedding was prepared for, and although Maria was very sad she looked so beautiful that the magician could hardly control his joy at the thought that he was to have her for a wife.

Immediately after they were married they entered a coach drawn by six coal-black horses and drove away toward the forest, for that was the direction in which lay the magician's country.

They rode along, and rode along, but all the while the bride kept looking out of the window instead of at her bridegroom.

"What are you looking at?" he asked at last, quite out of patience with her. [155]

"I am looking at the beautiful flowers along the way. Do stop and gather some for me, and I will make a wreath for my hair, and another for your cap."

The magician was very anxious to please her, so he alighted immediately and gave his cap into the hands of Maria di Legno, and began to gather flowers for her along the way. She made a wreath for her hair and another for his cap, but before she handed it back to him she managed, without its being noticed, to slip the ring from the feather and hide it in her pocket.

Then they rode on again, and by the time they were well in the forest it was growing dark. Hundreds of fireflies flickered about among the trees, and Maria exclaimed how bright they were. Finally one passed so much larger and brighter than any of the others that it was like a star. "Look! look!" cried Maria. "How beautiful that is. My dear husband, I do beg and entreat of [156] you to catch that one for me if you can."

Again the prince, anxious to please her, stopped the coach, and alighting, ran away among the trees in pursuit of the firefly.

No sooner was he out of sight than Maria, too, sprang to the ground, and hastened to the spot where the fairy had told her she would find the wooden figure. She quickly discovered it behind some bushes, and opened the little hinged door in its back. The moment this was opened a soft light shone through the forest, for the fairy had put Maria's three beautiful dresses inside the figure, and they shone so that everything around was lighted up. The figure was hollowed out in such a way that there was room inside it for Maria and the dresses too.

Maria stepped inside and closed the door and immediately the forest grew dark again. Then [157] she arranged a shawl about the figure so that the door would not show, took a staff in her hand and hobbled away through the forest, for the figure was made in such a way that it would move almost as easily as a real body.

All this time the magician had been pursuing the firefly. It led him this way and that but always away from the coach. It did not fly fast, and several times he thought he had it, but it always slipped through his fingers. The fact was the firefly was really the fairy who had taken this shape in order to lure him away through the forest and give Maria a chance to escape.

Suddenly a soft light shone through the forest and then died away. By that the fairy knew that Maria had found the figure and had stepped inside and closed the door. Then the firefly [158] disappeared altogether, leaving the magician there alone in the darkness.

He made his way back to the coach in a very bad humor. "I could not catch the firefly," said he in a gruff voice; "I only succeeded in bruising myself against the trees." There was no answer. "Do you not hear?" cried he angrily. "I tell you I am black and blue with bruises, and all because you were silly enough to want a firefly." Still there was no answer, and the magician looked inside the coach. No one was there. Then he understood that he had been tricked, and he was in

a fine rage. He ran about through the forest like a wild thing, peering and searching for his lost bride, and it would have been an ill thing for her if he had found her then. At last he came upon an old woman hobbling along with a staff in her hand, and a shawl about her shoulders.

"Tell me, old woman," he cried, "have you seen a beautiful young girl anywhere in the forest? [159]
A beautiful young girl dressed as a bride?"

"I have seen no one but you," mumbled the old crone. "Not a living soul but you," and she hobbled on still mumbling to herself.

The magician did not waste another glance upon her, for he never dreamed the beautiful young Maria was hidden inside that ugly old figure, but she was almost dead with fear lest he should guess it. He was filled with rage and despair, and rushing back to the coach he threw himself into it and was driven away like mad, and that was the last of him as far as Maria was concerned.

All that night Maria hobbled on, but toward morning she was so tired that she lay down under a tree and went to sleep. She had no fear, for robbers would never disturb one who looked as old [160]
and poor as she, and as for wild animals she was protected from them by the wooden figure in which she lay.

She slept then quietly for quite a while, but in the early morning she was awakened by the barking of dogs, and the sound of a horn. The prince of that country had come into the forest to hunt, and he and all his retinue were riding in her direction at full speed.

She struggled to her feet, but she was hardly up before the dogs burst through the bushes and threw her to the ground again. And now came the horses and riders; the young prince had almost ridden over Maria before he saw her and could stop his horse. However he managed to draw rein before she was touched, and then he said to his attendants, "Look at this poor old woman. Either the dogs have hurt her or else she has fainted from fear." And indeed Maria was so frightened [161]
that she could neither move nor speak.

The prince was very tender-hearted. He caused his attendants to lift her up and put her on the saddle in front of him. "There, there, mother," said he; "I believe you are more frightened than hurt. Tell me where you live and I will take you home, for you do not seem able to walk."

"Alas! I have no home to go to," answered Maria in a sorrowful voice.

"So old, and homeless, too," cried the prince. "If that is the case I will even carry you back with me to the palace, for you cannot be left here to die. There must be some work that you can do there in the kitchen or scullery, and you will at least be sure of food and shelter."

Maria was only too thankful to be taken with him, for she did not dare to brave her father's anger by returning to his house, and there seemed no other place for her to go. The prince still [162]
kept her on his horse in front of him, and rode back with her to the palace, and there she was handed over to the servants. They were ill-pleased enough to see her, too.

"Why is an old crone like this brought here," they muttered among themselves. "She is too old to work, and yet we will have to share what little we have with her."

"Never mind," said the steward. "It is the prince's pleasure that she should remain here, and we will find something for her to do. If nothing better she can help the scullery maid with the pots and pans."

So the beautiful Maria di Legno became the servant of servants, and cleaned pots and pans, and was scolded and sent upon errands. Sometimes the maids even struck her, but this they soon learned not to do, for it hurt their hands. "You are a very strange old woman," they would say. "In [163]
spite of your age your flesh is so hard that bone itself could not be harder."

Now after Maria had been at the palace for a few months the time of the carnival came round. The carnival was to be more magnificent this year than ever before, for the parents of the prince were anxious for him to choose a bride, and it might be that his choice would fall upon someone among the noble guests. Queens and princesses and ladies of rank came from far and near, and such magnificent clothes were hardly ever seen before. The prince was courteous to them all, but he did not seem to distinguish anyone above the others.

For the last three days of this carnival anyone was allowed to appear at it, even the palace servants if they chose. They did choose, and so when the first of these three days arrived there was a great stir and bustling and running to and fro in the kitchen. No one had any thought for [164]
the old woman who helped the scullery wench, and so no one noticed when she stole away by herself to the miserable loft where she slept. She took with her a jug of hot water, and after she had fastened the door and made sure she was alone she opened the figure and stepped out. First she washed herself and arranged her beautiful hair. Then she drew from the figure the dress of stars, and after she had put it on she was the most beautiful creature that was ever seen.

The ball was at its height when she appeared, and many beautiful ladies were there in silks and jewels, but Maria far outshone them all. Everyone stared and whispered, but she was at once so beautiful and so stately that no one dared to approach or question her. Only the prince felt privileged, by his high rank to speak to her and ask her hand for the dance.

When she answered him her voice was so soft, and her glance so modest, that the prince's [165]

heart went out to her, and he could think of no one else. When they danced together everyone said that such a handsome couple had never been seen before.

Before the ball ended Maria found an opportunity to slip away unseen. Hastening to her room she took off her beautiful dress and packed it away inside the figure. Then entering into it herself she closed it up and lay down to sleep.

The next day there was no talk all through the palace except about the beautiful stranger who had appeared at the ball the night before. Some thought she must be a fairy, and others that she was some great queen who had managed to arrive there unannounced; all were anxious to know whether she would reappear at the ball that evening.

The prince was not the least anxious person in the palace. He thought of his beautiful partner [166]
all day, and longed so to see her that he could neither eat nor rest.

That night the ball was again at its height before Maria di Legno arrived. She was clothed this time in her dress of moonbeams, and was so beautiful that when she entered there was a general sigh of wonder.

The prince who had been watching the door with impatience hurried to her side immediately and claimed her hand for the dance. That evening he tried in every way to find out who she was, but always she put him off with a smile and a word, and that night she managed to slip away, unperceived as before.

The last night of the carnival arrived, and with it appeared the beautiful Maria di Legno. This time she wore her dress made of sunlight, and was beautiful and bright beyond all words, so that the prince was beside himself with admiration. Again he begged her to tell him who she was and [167]
whence she came, but she would not. One thing however gave the prince some hope that she did not mean to forsake him entirely when the carnival should be over. She drew from her bosom a ring, and begged him to try it on, telling him that no one, so far, had ever been able to wear it. The prince slipped it on, and it fitted his finger exactly; it could not have fitted better if it had been made for him. Then the eyes of the beautiful stranger shone with joy, but she took the ring again and hid it in the bosom of her dress.

Maria meant to slip away unperceived this night as she had the two nights before, but the prince had determined that this should not be. He had told the palace guards to be on the watch, and not to let her escape without following her. He himself scarcely left her for a moment. However, toward the end of the evening he was obliged to turn away to acknowledge the greeting of some nobleman, and when he looked around again she was gone. She had slipped [168]
away the moment he had turned his head, and had hastened into a long gallery that seemed to be deserted, but looking behind she saw that the guards were following her. She hurried on but soon she found they did not mean to lose sight of her, and now she was almost in despair.

About her neck she wore a necklace of pearls which her father had given her, and as a last hope she broke the cord that held them and scattered them on the floor. When the guards saw the pearls rolling this way and that beneath their feet they could not resist stooping to pick them up and while they were doing this Maria managed to escape them and reach her room in safety. She quickly hid her shining dress and shut herself in the figure and then threw herself down on her hard and narrow bed to sleep. The next morning when the sleepy servants were busy with [169]
their work there was the old woman scrubbing pots and pans in the scullery as usual, and no one could possibly have dreamed that she was the beauty of the night before.

As for the young prince, when he found the beautiful stranger had disappeared and left no trace behind her he was so filled with grief and disappointment that he fell desperately ill. Doctors came from far and near to attend him, but they could do nothing for him. He remained sunk in melancholy, and at last the queen mother began to fear that unless some remedy was found he would die from sorrow.

All this was talked about in the kitchen, and when Maria heard how the prince was pining away for love of the beautiful stranger she made up her mind that it was time for her to make herself known. Therefore one day when the other servants were not looking she made a little cake, and in it she hid the magic ring that the prince had tried upon his finger that last night of [170]
the carnival. Then she caused word to be carried to the queen mother's ears that it was said by an old woman in the kitchen that she could cure the prince if they would only let her try.

At first the queen mother paid no attention to this talk but as day after day passed and her son grew no better, in despair she sent for the old woman to come to her.

Maria put the little cake upon a golden plate, and carrying it in her hand went to attend the queen.

She found her majesty seated in a room with all her attendants around her, and as soon as she entered the queen began: "Old woman, it has been brought to my ears that you have said you can cure the prince. Is this true?"

"Yes, your majesty," answered Maria. "It certainly is true that I said it, and it is also true that I [171]
and I alone can do it."

"That is a brave boast for you to make," said the queen. "And what would you advise us to do for him?"

“Here is a cake which I have made myself,” said Maria, “and in it is something which will surely cure him. That is, it will cure him if he eats the whole of the cake. If however even the smallest portion is thrown away all its virtue will be lost, and it will do him harm rather than good.” This she said because she was afraid that if a part of the cake were thrown away the ring might be in it.

When the attendants heard the old woman say all this so gravely they began to laugh, for it sounded very silly. The queen mother however rebuked them and bade them be silent. “These old women,” she said, “often know remedies that are unknown to the doctors. There may really be some virtue in this cake that will restore our son if he will but eat it.” [172]

She then bade the old woman leave the cake and presently she carried it in to the prince with her own hands.

She found him stretched on a couch before the window, gazing out at the sky with a melancholy air. She sat down by his side and asked him how he did, and then she showed him the little cake she had brought with her, and told him how the old woman had declared that if he would but eat it he would certainly be cured.

The prince heard her listlessly, and when she had ended he answered in a weak voice, “There is only one thing that can cure me, and that is to find some trace of the beautiful stranger, and indeed unless I can hope to see her again sometime, I do not care to live.”

“Do but try the cake, however,” said his mother persuasively. “See it is very small and light. I will break off a piece for you.” [173]

So saying she broke a piece from the cake to give to him, but what was her surprise to see there in the piece a golden ring.

“This is certainly a very strange thing,” she cried. “Here is a ring in the cake.”

“A ring!” the prince repeated. He raised himself on his elbow to look, and no sooner had he taken it in his hand than he started up with a loud cry of joy. “Where did you get the cake?” he cried. “Who brought it to you?” for he at once recognized the ring as the one the beautiful stranger had had.

“It was brought me by an old woman who works in the kitchen; Maria di Legno they call her.”

“Let her be brought here at once,” cried the prince.

An attendant was sent to summon Maria and while he waited the prince strode up and down the room holding the ring in his hand and unable to control his impatience. [174]

Maria had been expecting this summons, and she had managed meanwhile to arrange her hair, and dress herself in her sunlight dress, and hide in the figure again; and so it was as the homely old woman that she appeared before the prince once more.

“Tell me, old woman,” he cried, “was it you who put this ring in the cake?”

“It was,” answered Maria.

“And do you know to whom it belongs?”

“I do.”

“Then tell me instantly where she is,” cried the prince, filled with hope.

“I am she,” answered Maria.

When the prince heard this he thought the old woman must be mad, but Maria opened the door and stepped out from the figure in all her brightness and beauty. Then the heart of the prince seemed like to break with joy. He fell upon one knee and took Maria by the hand. “At last you have come,” cried he. “And now you shall never leave me again, for you and you only out of all the world shall be my bride.” [175]

To this Maria gladly assented, for she had loved him from the first moment when he had found her in the wood.

She told her story, and after the king and queen found who she was they were very willing to have her for their daughter-in-law. She and the prince were married with great magnificence, and lived happily ever after, and the wooden figure they kept to show to their children and their children’s children.

THE EVIL ONE WHO MARRIED THREE SISTERS
(*From the Italian*)

[176]

ONCE upon a time the Evil One made up his mind that he would like to get married, so he changed himself into a handsome young man; he mounted a coal-black steed; and away he rode to the city to find a wife for himself.

In this city lived a merchant who had three daughters, and they were so beautiful that each one was said to be handsomer than the others.

EACH ONE WAS SAID TO BE HANDSOMER THAN THE OTHERS

[177]

The Evil One soon made acquaintance with the merchant, and in a short time proposed for the hand of his eldest daughter.

The girl was delighted at the idea of having him for a husband, for she thought him the handsomest man she had ever seen. The father gave his consent, and the marriage was celebrated with great feasting and rejoicing.

Afterward the Evil One and his bride entered a coach and drove away together. They went on and on until they had left the city and had driven through a lonely forest, and as soon as they had passed that they came to a most magnificent house which the Evil One had raised up for himself.

The coach drew up before the door and he helped his bride to alight. “This is my home,” said he, “and as long as you are my true and obedient wife all the treasures it contains are yours.”

[178]

The girl was overcome with joy at the sight of his magnificent possessions, and when he led her in and through one handsome room after another she could hardly control her pride and delight. Afterward he showed her through the gardens, and the flowers were so many and various that she had never seen the like before.

The Evil One and his bride now lived very happily together for a month, but at the end of that time he told the girl that he was obliged to go away on a journey and that he would not return for three days. During that time she must amuse herself as best she could. She might go all over the house and examine the treasures that were in it, and he gave her a great bunch of keys which were the keys of the different rooms. One door alone she must not open, and that was the Red door at the end of the passage. If she opened this, even so much as a crack, great misfortune would follow.

[179]

He then kissed his bride and bade her farewell, but before leaving he gave her a bunch of flowers, and begged her to wear it while he was away.

After he had gone the girl fastened the flowers in the bosom of her dress, and then she began to open the different doors in the house and to go through the rooms, for many of them she had never seen before. She was amazed at the treasures she found in them, and began to think her husband must be the richest man in all the world.

She amused herself very well for two days, and during that time the flowers upon her bosom remained as fresh as when her husband had first given them to her.

But by the time the third day came the girl had seen everything there was in the house except what lay behind the Red door. As she had nothing to do except wonder about that she grew more and more curious. “It must be some treasure more magnificent than all the rest,” she said to herself, “and which my husband intends to surprise me with. It would surely do no harm if I just took one peep at it.” [180]

She put the key in the door and turned it. Immediately, and in spite of all she could do to hold it, the door swung wide open, and she saw at her feet a pit filled with fire. She sprang back, but before she could close the door a flame leaped up and scorched the flowers upon her bosom so that they hung black and dead.

Frightened out of her senses the girl managed to shut the door and lock it. The first thing she did was to take off the flowers and hide them, and then she went out to the garden to gather a fresh bunch before her husband’s return. She hunted everywhere, but nowhere could she find flowers such as he had given her.

While she was still searching she heard him riding up to the door and she was obliged to go out to meet him.

As soon as the Evil One saw her he asked, “Have you opened the Red door?” [181]

“No,” answered the girl, and she trembled so that she could hardly stand.

“Then where are the flowers I gave you?”

“They withered because they had no water, and so I threw them away.”

“That is false,” cried the Evil One; “you have disobeyed me, and you shall be punished as you deserve.” And with that he caught hold of the girl and threw her into the pit.

Then he mounted his black charger and rode away to the merchant’s house.

The merchant was delighted to see him and began to enquire about his daughter.

The Evil One put on a very mournful look. “My dear wife is dead,” he said, “and I am so lonely that I can scarcely bear it. Give me, I beg of you, your second daughter for a wife, that she may take her sister’s place in my house and comfort me.”

The merchant was very much grieved to hear of his daughter’s death, but he felt pity for the Evil One, and as his second daughter was willing he gave her to him as a wife. [182]

As soon as they were married they got into a coach and drove away together.

When they reached the house of the Evil One the new bride was as much delighted with it as her sister had been. They went inside and she could not admire enough all the magnificence she saw.

She and her husband lived together very happily for a month, and at the end of that time he told her he was obliged to go on a long journey, and he would not be able to return for three days. However, he told her she might amuse herself while he was away by going over the house. He gave her the keys of all the rooms, and said she might go into any of them; only the Red door at the end of the long passage she must not open on any account.

The girl promised, and then after bidding her good-by the Evil One rode away, but to her, too, before leaving, he gave a bunch of flowers, and begged her to wear it until he returned. [183]

After he had gone the girl began to go through the house, and when she saw all the treasures that were in it she could hardly restrain her joy. She examined the furniture and statues and the ornaments of gold and silver.

At the end of two days she had opened every door in the house except the Red door. She began to wonder what was behind it, and though she tried to occupy herself with other things she grew more and more curious. At last she could restrain her curiosity no longer.

“I will only open the door a crack,” she thought, “and will just peep in, and my husband need never know it.”

She put the key in the lock and turned it, and immediately the door swung wide open. The girl could not hold it. [184]

Below her lay a pit of fire, and in it was her sister, and before she could step back or move, a flame leaped up and burned the flowers on her bosom to a crisp.

The girl was frightened to death, for now she knew the man she had married was the Evil One himself.

She managed to shut the door at last, and the first thing she did was to throw the flowers away. Then she went out in the garden to gather a fresh bunch. She hunted everywhere, but no place could she find any in the least like those that had been burned.

While she was still hunting her husband came home; she was afraid to have him find her in the

garden, and so she went out to meet him.

The first thing he asked her was, “Where are the flowers I gave you to wear?”

“They fell from my bosom while I was out walking, and I have not been able to find them.” [185]

“That is not true,” cried the Evil One in a terrible voice. “You have opened the Red door and the flowers are burned.”

“No,” cried the girl half fainting with terror. But with no more words the Evil One caught hold of her and threw her down into the pit with her sister.

He locked the door upon them and mounted his coal-black charger and rode back to the merchant’s house.

As soon as the merchant saw him from the window he came out to meet him. “Has any misfortune happened to my dear daughter?” he cried.

The Evil One began to lament. “Alas, she is dead,” he said, “and I am left so lonely that it seems as though I could not bear it.”

In the end the merchant gave the Evil One his third daughter for a wife, though it broke his [186] heart to part with her, for she was his youngest daughter and dearer to him than either of the others.

The Evil One married her, and they got in the coach and drove away together.

When the new bride saw the magnificent house he lived in, she was no less pleased with it than her sisters had been.

For a month she and her husband lived there very happily, and then he told her he was obliged to go away on a long journey, and would be gone three days. He gave her the keys of the house, and told her she might go into any of the rooms she chose. Only the Red door at the end of the long passage she must not open on any account.

The new bride promised, and her husband gave her a bunch of flowers, which he begged her to wear while he was gone. Then he rode away.

The girl watched him until he was out of sight, and then the very first thing she did was to put [187] the flowers in a glass of water, that she might keep them fresh until he came back.

After that she began to amuse herself by going over the house and seeing what it contained.

For two days she was very busy in this way, but at the end of that time she had seen everything, and began to wonder what was behind the Red door.

She stood it as long as she could and then she put the key in the lock and turned it. Immediately the door swung open. What was the girl’s horror to see at her feet a chasm of fire, and in it her two dear sisters whom she had thought were dead.

As soon as they saw her they cried aloud, “Alas, alas! What have you done! You have opened the Red door and now you, too, will be thrown into this pit of fire as we were.”

“No, my dear sisters,” said the girl. “Reach me your hands and I will help you out, and then we [188] will find some way to escape from the power of this Evil One.”

The sisters reached her their hands and she managed to pull them out, first one and then the other. After they had kissed each other and wept together the youngest sister hid the others away in her closet among her clothes. And none too soon, for already she heard her husband at the door.

She made haste to pin the flowers he had given her upon the bosom of her dress, and then she went out to meet him.

The first thing the Evil One said was, “Did you open the Red door?”

“No, I did not open it,” answered the girl.

The Evil One looked, and she had the flowers upon her bosom, and they were as fresh as when he had given them to her. Then he believed her, and he could not do enough to show how delighted he was with her. He showered gifts upon her, and there was nothing she might not [189] have had for the asking.

So they lived for awhile, apparently in great peace, and the young wife kept her sisters hidden, so that the Evil One suspected nothing. One day she said to her husband, “I would like to send a present to my father, so that he may know how prosperous I am, but I have no chest suitable to send it in.”

The Evil One immediately said he would have one made, and she told him the shape and size she wished it. It was to be of heavy wood, bound round with iron, and such and such a size. When it was finished it was big enough for a person to get in it and to have room to lie there.

When the chest was brought home the young wife had it taken to her room, and after she had locked the door she bade her eldest sister climb into the chest and then she closed the lid and

fastened it.

Then she called her husband. “Carry this to my father’s house,” she said, “and whatever you [190]
do, do not open the lid nor look in it. I will be watching you from my window, and if you attempt to do that I shall surely see you.”

The Evil One took the chest and started off with it, but he had a great deal of curiosity, and he wondered what his wife was sending to her father to make the chest so heavy. He waited, however, until he was well out of sight of the house, and then he put down the chest and prepared to open it.

The girl inside called out, “I see what you are doing! I see what you are doing!”

The Evil One thought it was his wife at home, who was calling after him. “My wife certainly has a keen sight,” he thought to himself; but he picked up the chest again and went on with it.

When he reached the merchant’s house he did not knock nor wait to see anyone. He opened the door and threw the chest inside. “Merchant, here is a present my wife sent you,” he called [191]
out. Then he shut the door and went on home.

You may imagine the joy of the good merchant when he opened the chest and found his eldest daughter inside it alive and well.

Not long after the wife said to her husband, “I would like to send another present to my father.”

The Evil One was willing, for he could refuse her nothing, so she had another chest made exactly like the first, and in this she put her second sister.

When all was ready she called her husband and bade him take the chest and carry it to her father. “And whatever you do, be sure you do not open it on the way,” she said. “I shall be watching from my window, and if you do I shall certainly see you.”

The Evil One took up the chest and started off with it. This time he waited until he was in the [192]
middle of the wood before he attempted to open it. No sooner had he put it down, however, and laid his hand on the lid than the girl inside called out:

“I see what you are doing! I see what you are doing!”

“My wife certainly can see farther than anyone in the world,” thought the Evil One. Then he took up the chest and went on again.

When he reached the merchant’s house he threw the chest inside the door. “Merchant, your daughter sends you this present,” he called out, and home he went again.

Now, some time after this the wife would send a third present to her father, and the Evil One was willing, so she had a third chest made exactly like the other two. She said to her husband, “Very soon the chest will be ready, and then I will call you. Carry it carefully, and do not open it on the way, for I will be out on my balcony this time and will see you if you do.” [193]

As soon as the girl was alone she made a figure and dressed it in her clothes and set it out on the balcony. She put a quantity of the Evil One’s treasure into the chest, and got in herself and called to her husband.

He came in and there stood the chest all ready for him, with the lid closed. He picked it up and it was heavier than either of the others, so heavy that the sweat ran down his face.

He started off with it, and when he was a little way from the house he looked back. There was the figure sitting on the balcony, and the Evil One thought it was his wife. “Yes, there she is watching me,” he said, “and her eyes are so keen that if I do but sit down to rest my back she will see me.”

He went on with the chest, and this time he made no attempt to open it. He threw the chest inside the merchant’s door and called out, “Merchant, here is another present your daughter [194]
sends you;” and then he went on home again.

When the merchant opened the chest and found his third daughter in it he was beside himself with joy. The three sisters embraced each other tenderly, and the youngest divided the treasure equally, so that each one had enough to give her a rich dowry.

But the Evil One went on home, and by the time he reached there he was very hungry. He called to his wife to come and give him his supper, but there was no answer. He called her again, and then in a rage he went out onto the balcony where the figure was sitting. “Will you come when I call you or will you not?” he cried.

Still the figure made no answer. The Evil One laid his hand on its shoulder and gave it a shake, and as soon as he did that it all fell to pieces, and he saw the trick that had been played upon him. Raging he rushed about everywhere, but he could find only his wife’s empty jewel boxes. [195]

“She has left me,” he cried, “and taken my treasures with her.”

He leaped upon his charger and rode away like the wind, determined to demand his wife of the merchant, but when he drew near the house he saw all three of the sisters sitting out on the

balcony together. As soon as he appeared they began to mock at him and taunt him.

The thought of three wives at once was too much for the Evil One. In his rage and disappointment he suddenly burst and disappeared in fire and smoke, and since that time he has never been seen again.

THE FAITHFUL DOG

[196]

(*From the Japanese*)

THERE were once a man and his wife who were so poor that they scarcely knew from one time to another whether they would have enough to eat.

One day the man found a starving dog near the house and brought it home with him. “Look!” said he to his wife. “Here is one even more unfortunate than ourselves. See whether you cannot find something in the house for it to eat, for unless you do it will surely die.”

The woman hunted about and found a handful of rice, which she cooked and gave to the dog. [197] After it had eaten it grew stronger, and began to play about and show such pretty tricks that the poor couple were delighted with it.

After this it lived with them in the house and they became very fond of it. What little they had they shared with it, and it grew strong and glossy.

One day the poor couple went out to walk in the garden, and the dog, as usual, followed close to them. When they came to a certain corner, however, it left them and began to scratch at the ground and bark.

“Look!” cried the woman. “Something must certainly be buried there. I wonder what it can be?”

The man called the dog, but it would not leave the corner, and only looked at him and barked again.

“Something must indeed be there,” said the man to his wife. “I will run to our neighbor’s house [198] and borrow a spade, and dig down until I find what it is.”

OVERCOME WITH JOY AT THE SIGHT OF SUCH A TREASURE

So saying he hurried away to the neighbor’s, and asked him to lend him a spade.

“What do you wish to do with it?” asked the neighbor, who was a very inquisitive man.

“I wish to dig in a corner of my garden, for I think my dog has found something there.”

The neighbor lent him the spade, and himself went over to the garden to see whether the good man would find anything.

When the dog saw his master return and make ready to dig, he stood aside, wagging his tail with joy.

The man had not dug far when his spade struck something hard, and this, when it was uncovered, proved to be a chest of gold. The good couple were overcome with joy at the sight of such a treasure. They almost lost their senses, and even [199] embraced the dog in their delight.

So happy were they that they did not notice that the neighbor had turned green with envy. “That is a valuable dog,” he said to them at last. “What will you sell him for?”

“Sell him!” cried the good man. “There is not enough gold in all the world to buy him. The only good fortune that has ever come to us has come through him.”

“Then at least lend him to me,” said the neighbor. “Surely you would not keep all the good fortune to yourselves. It may be that he will find a chest of gold for me in my garden.”

The good people were willing to do this, so the envious neighbor fastened a piece of rope about

the dog's neck and led him home with him, and he and his wife took the dog out in the garden and walked up and down and around with him just as the good couple had done. They were [200] obliged to keep the rope about the dog's neck and drag him along, for they had so often before this thrown hard words and harder stones at him that he would not go with them willingly. But though he was obliged to follow because of the rope he would not bark nor even sniff about, and at last the envious neighbor grew so angry that he killed the dog and buried it under a plane tree in the garden.

The good man waited and waited for the neighbor to bring back the dog, but as he did not do so he went over after a few days to ask for it.

Then the envious neighbor told him he had killed it and buried it under the plane tree.

The good man was filled with grief when he heard that his dog was dead. Sadly he returned to his wife and told her what had happened, and they sat down and wept together as though indeed it had been a child that had died.

But that night the man had a wonderful dream, and his wife also dreamed, and the dreams [201] were exactly the same. In the dreams the dog appeared to them, and said, "Go; ask the neighbor to give you the plane tree beneath which I am buried and make of it a mortar and pestle, and whatever you grind with them shall be changed to gold."

When the good couple awoke they began each one to tell the other of the dream, and they were filled with wonder to find that their dreams were both the same. "This is very wonderful," said the man, "and I am sure they must be true dreams, or the dog would not have appeared to us both."

So as soon as he arose he went over to the neighbor's and begged and entreated him to give him the plane tree. The envious man refused, but after a time he agreed to sell it to the good man for ten pieces of gold.

The man paid him, and then cut down the plane tree and dragged it home, and made of it a [202] mortar and pestle.

As soon as this was done he put a handful of rice in the mortar and began to grind it, and under the pestle all the rice was changed to gold. Now the good people were rich indeed. They could grind out gold at any time until their arms grew tired. They bought fine clothes, and good things to eat and everything their hearts could desire.

It was not long before the news of all this came to the ears of the envious neighbor. He went over to the house of the good man and began to rage and storm at him. "This is a pretty way to treat me!" he cried. "You come to me and beg for my plane tree and because of my good heart I cannot refuse you, and you only pay me ten pieces of gold for what is worth more than a thousand. At least lend the mortar and pestle to me for a day, that I may grind out some money, too."

The good man was willing to do this, so he lent the mortar and pestle to the envious neighbor [203] who carried them away with him.

As soon as he reached home he put a handful of rice into the mortar and began to grind it, but when he and his wife looked, it had all turned into ill-smelling filth. The envious man was beside himself with rage, and taking an ax he chopped the mortar and pestle into pieces, and threw them into the fire.

The good man waited and waited in vain for his neighbor to return the mortar, and at last went over to ask for it.

"I have burned it," said the envious man. "It only filled the house with filth, and at any rate it was made of my plane tree and I had a right to do with it as I wished."

The good man returned to his wife very sorrowful, for lost now was all further hope of riches. But that night the couple again dreamed. In their dreams the dog appeared to them and told [204] them the man must go to the neighbor and ask him for the ashes of the mortar and pestle. "Take a handful of these ashes, and fling them over any tree," said the dog, "and even although it is dead, and has been dead many years, it will burst into bloom."

The next morning the man arose in haste, and went over to the neighbor's house, and begged him to give him the ashes of the mortar and pestle.

"There they are," said the envious man contemptuously. "You may gather them up if you choose, and much good may they do you."

The good man gathered them up very carefully, and carried them home. To test them he took up a handful and flung it over a withered branch in his garden. Immediately the branch burst forth into bloom; the whole garden was filled with the perfume of the flowers.

The man then put the ashes in a bag and started out with them; he went about through the [205] country throwing handfuls of ashes over dead trees and bringing them to life, and in this way he earned a great deal of money.

At last the prince of the country heard of all this, and sent for the man to come to the palace, and began to question him. "Is it true," he asked, "that you can bring dead trees to life and make

them blossom, as I have heard?”

“That is indeed no more than the truth,” answered the man.

“It is a thing I should greatly like to see,” said the prince. “I have in my garden a tree that has lately died, from what cause I do not know. If you can do as you say and cause it to break forth into blossom I will reward you well, but if you fail, you shall be punished as a boaster and a cheat.”

[206] The man was then taken into a magnificent garden, and the prince and his suite went with him to witness the spectacle. The man was shown the tree, and the branches were indeed as dry and lifeless as though they had been of stone. The man climbed up it, and when he had gone as high as he could he opened his bag and took out a handful of ashes and scattered them around. Almost immediately small buds appeared on the branches; they grew and swelled and then burst forth into rosy bloom. So heavy were the clusters of blossoms that the man in the tree was quite hidden by them.

The prince was filled with admiration, and so much pleased that he gave the man a bag of gold, and praised him beyond measure.

[207] Now when the neighbor heard of the fresh good fortune that had befallen the other, he was more envious than ever. He sent word to the prince that he, too, could cause dead trees to blossom, and at that the prince bade the envious neighbor come to the palace. He hoped to see again as fine a sight as the good man had shown him.

The prince and all his suite as before accompanied the envious man to a garden where there was another dead tree. The envious man had his bag of ashes with him, and he climbed up among the branches and settled himself in a crotch. The prince and his attendants stood below, all looking up at him with open eyes and mouths.

The envious man took out a double handful and scattered them around. They blew down into the eyes and mouths of the prince and his suite, blinding them and choking them, but the tree remained as dead and bare as ever.

[208] The prince was so angry that, as soon as he had recovered from the ashes, he had the envious man taken away and punished. But he sent for the good man and raised him to riches and honor, so that he and his wife lived happy forever after.

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[209]

KEMPION
(*From the Scotch Ballads*)

ANGUS MAC PHERSON had one daughter, and she was so beautiful that it made the heart ache to look at her. Her hair was of red gold; her eyes were as blue as the sky and she was as slim and fair as a reed, and because of her beauty she was always called the Fair Ellen.

[210] Angus Mac Pherson loved Fair Ellen as he did the apple of his eye, but all the same her mother had only been dead a year when he was for marrying again and bringing a stepmother into the house.

The new wife was handsome too, with eyes as black as sloes, and hair like a cloud at night, but the moment she saw Fair Ellen she knew the girl was the more beautiful, and she hated her with a bitter black hate for her beauty’s sake.

Well, they lived along, and Fair Ellen served her stepmother well. She served her with foot and she served her with hand. Everything that she could do for her she did, but the stepmother hated her worse and worse, and a powerful wicked witch was she.

Now it chanced that Angus Mac Pherson had to go on a far journey, and he would be away a long time. He said good-by to his wife and his daughter and then he started out, and no one was

left in the house but those two alone.

After he had been gone a little while the stepmother said, “Come, Fair Ellen, we are both sad and down-hearted. Let us go out and walk upon the cliffs where the wind blows and the sun shines.” [211]

Fair Ellen was ready enough to go, so they set out together.

They walked along and they walked along until they came to Estmere Crag, and always as they walked the stepmother’s lips moved as though she were talking to herself, but no word did she utter.

“What is that you say?” asked Fair Ellen.

“’Tis a rhyme I learned when I was young,” said the stepmother. “I was but minding myself of it.”

After awhile they reached the top of the crag, and the sea was far, far below them. Then the stepmother turned to Fair Ellen.

“Blue of eyes and fair of speech,” she cried; “you have crossed my path, and none may do that and have good come of it. You have crossed my path with your beauty, but with your beauty you shall cross it no longer.” [212]

Fair Ellen stood and looked at her, and her heart grew cold within her, and she could stir neither hand nor foot.

The stepmother raised her hand and touched her. “A loathly worm you shall be,” she cried. “You shall dwell under Estmere Crag and the salt sea shall be your home, and bonowed[1] shall ye never be, till Kempion, the king’s own son, shall come to the crag and thrice kiss thee.”

Then the witch turned and walked down the crag, and back to her own home.

But the Fair Ellen was changed in her shape so that even her own father would have feared her. Her shape grew long, her breath was fire, and she became a scaly dragon. Down over Estmere Crag she swung, and deep in a cavern she hid herself, and the smoke rose from the cavern and everyone was afraid. [213]

Now it was not long that she had been there when word came to the king’s palace that such a beast was in the land, and that all the country was wasted because of her. But none dared to go out against her because she was so terrible.

But Kempion, the king’s own son, was as brave a prince as ever lived. Handsome he was, too, and straight and tall.

Now when he heard of the great beast his heart rose within him, and he swore that he would go out to slay it, and Segramore, his brother, said that he would go with him.

They built themselves a bonny boat, for they could best come to the beast’s lair by sea, and they two set out together; they two and no other, for everyone else was afraid to go with them.

They sailed out and on and around, and so they came within sight of Estmere Crag, and there lay the great worm stretched in and out among the rocks. It was a gruesome sight, and with every breath it breathed, the crag was lit up as if by fire. [214]

Kempion and his brother had scarce come within a mile of the land when the beast saw them, and raised itself. It opened its mouth and fire and flame poured forth. It swung its head to and fro and the sea was lashed into foam.

“Keep further out,” cried Kempion to his brother. “Keep further out, for this beast has sure gone mad at the sight of us; a little more and it will set fire to all the land.”

Then Segramore kept the boat off, and Kempion bent his arbalest bow and aimed an arrow at the head of the beast. He bent his bow, but the arrow stayed, for when he saw the eyes of the beast they were the eyes of a sorrowing maid, and they seemed to pierce to his very soul.

Nevertheless he kept his bow still bent and he called to it across the water, “Now, by my soul, unless you swear to me that you will quit my land, with this same shaft will I shoot you dead.” [215]

Then the worm made answer,

“Out of my rocks I will not rise
Nor leave the land for fear of thee
Till over Estmere Crag ye come
And on my mouth three times kiss me.”

Then Kempion was like one distraught. He threw down his bow and bade his brother row back to the land. “I will go over the crag to you, beast,” he cried, “though I go to my death at the same time.”

Segramore begged and pleaded with him, but he would not listen. As soon as they came to the shore he leaped from the boat and all unarmed set out for Estmere Crag.

Up and up he climbed, and it was a dizzy height. Far, far below was the blue sea, and half way up from it the cavern where the beast made its lair. Kempion could see it there now, twisted among the rocks. [216]

Out swung the great beast and around it came, the fiercest beast that ever was seen. The hair rose on Kempion's head and he shut his eyes, for it was near him now. It came close and the fire was all about him, but it did not burn him. Then he kissed it.

He kissed it and the mouth was cold.

Out it swung and again it came.

"Out of my lair I will not rise,
I will not leave for fear of thee,
Oh, Kempion, you dear king's son,
Till on the mouth you thrice kiss me."

Then Kempion kissed the beast again and its lips were warm. The third time he kissed it, and its mouth was the mouth of a woman.

Then Kempion looked, and before him stood the most beautiful maid he had ever seen. Slim as a reed she was, and very fair, for her eyes were as blue as the sky, and her hair as bright as gold, and it fell all about her, and down to her knees like a mantle. [217]

Then Kempion took his cloak and wrapped it about her. "You are my own true love," he said, "and other maid I will marry none, for never have I seen such beauty and gentleness before."

So he carried her up from Estmere Crag, and home to the palace of the king.

There, all was sorrow and mourning, for they thought that Kempion was surely dead. But when they saw him come into the hall, and saw the beautiful bride he had brought with him, all their sorrow was turned into rejoicing.

When they had heard how the young prince had broken the enchantment that had held Fair Ellen the old king turned to her. "Tell me, oh, my daughter," he said, "was it mermaid in the sea, or was it werewolf in the wood, or some wicked man or wicked woman that wrought this cruel spell on thee?" [218]

"It was not werewolf in the wood, it was not mermaid in the sea, but it was my wicked stepmother that wrought this cruel spell on me."

Then said the king, "Punished shall she surely be; she shall be taken to the top of Estmere Crag, and thrown over into the sea, for such wickedness shall pollute my land no longer. But you, Fair Ellen, shall be the bride of my own dear son Kempion, and the half of all I have shall be yours and his forever."

FOOTNOTE:

[1] Bonowed—ransomed or rescued.

BUTTERCUP [219]

(*From the Norse*)

THERE was once a poor woman who I had one son, a little boy so fat and round, and with such bright yellow hair that he was called Buttercup. The house where they lived was upon the edge of a lonely forest, and upon the other side of this forest lived a wicked old witch.

One day when the woman was baking she heard Sharptooth, her dog, begin to bark. "Run, Buttercup, and see who is coming," she said.

Buttercup ran and looked out. "Oh, Mother, it is an old witch with her head under one arm and a bag under the other." [220]

“Come, quick,” cried the mother, “and hide yourself in the dough trough so that she may not see you.”

Buttercup jumped into the dough trough and his mother shut the lid, so that no one would have known he was there.

Then in a moment there was a knock at the door, and the old witch opened it and looked in. She had put her head on where it belonged now, and she looked almost like any old woman.

“Good-day, daughter,” said she.

“Good-day, mother,” answered the woman.

“May I come in and rest my bones a bit?”

The woman did not want her to come in, but neither did she like to say no. “Come in, in heaven’s name.”

The old witch entered and sat down on the settle, and then she began to look and peer about [221] the room.

“Have you no children?” she asked.

“Yes, I have one son.”

“And how do you call him?”

“I call him Buttercup.”

“Is he at home?”

“No; his father takes him out with him when he goes hunting.”

The old witch looked greatly disappointed. “I am sorry Buttercup is not at home, for I have a sweet little knife—a beautiful silver knife, and it is so sharp that it will cut through anything. If he were only here I would give it to him.”

When Buttercup in the dough trough heard this he opened the lid and looked out. “Peep! peep! here I am!” he cried.

“That is a lucky thing,” said she, and she looked well satisfied. “But the knife is at the bottom of my bag and I am so old and stiff that you will have to crawl in yourself and get it.” [222]

Buttercup was willing, so into the bag he crawled. Then the old witch closed it and flung it over her shoulder, and away she went so fast that the good mother could neither stop her nor follow her.

The old witch went on and on through the forest, but after a while she began to feel very tired.

“How far is it to Snoring?” she asked of Buttercup in the bag.

“A good two miles,” answered Buttercup.

“Two miles! That is a long way. I’ll just lie down and sleep a bit, and do you keep as still as a mouse in the bag, or it will be the worse for you.”

She tied the mouth of the bag up tight, and then she fell fast asleep, and snored till the leaves shook overhead.

When he heard that, Buttercup took from his pocket a little dull old knife that his father had [223] given him, and managed to cut a slit in the sack and crawl out. Then he found a gnarly stump of a fir tree and put that in the bag in his place and ran away home to his mother, and all this while the old witch never stirred.

After a time, however, she began to stretch her bones and look about her. “Eh! Eh!” she sighed, “that was a good sleep I had, but now we’ll be journeying on again.”

She slung the bag on her back, but the sharp points of the root kept sticking into her at every step. “That boy looked plump and soft enough,” she muttered to herself, “but now he seems all elbows and knees.” Then she cried to the stump, “Hey! there, you inside the bag, do not stick your bones into me like that. Do you think I am a pin cushion?”

The stump made no answer for it could not, and besides it had not heard, and the old witch [224] hobbled on muttering and grumbling to herself.

When she reached her house her ugly, stupid witch daughter was watching for her from the window. “Have you brought home anything to eat?” she called.

“Yes, I have brought home a fine plump boy,” said the witch, and she threw the bag down on the floor and began rubbing her bruises. “I’m half dead with carrying him, too.”

“Let me see,” cried the daughter, and she untied the mouth of the sack and looked in. “A boy!” she cried. “This is no boy, but only an old stump of a fir tree.”

“Stupid you are, and stupid you will be,” cried the witch. “I tell you it is a boy and a good fat boy at that.”

“I tell you it is not,” said the girl.

“I tell you it is.” The old witch took up the sack and looked into it, and there, sure enough, was only an old stump that she had broken her back carrying home. Then she was in a fine rage. “How he got away I don’t know, but never mind! I’ll have him yet whether or no.” [225]

So the next morning while the good woman on the other side of the forest was making her beds she heard Sharptooth begin to bark.

“Run, Buttercup, and see who is coming,” she called.

“Mother, it is the same old woman who was here yesterday.”

“Quick! Jump into the clock case, and do not dare to so much as stir a finger until she has gone.”

Buttercup ran and hid himself in the clock case, and presently there was a knock at the door and the old witch looked into the room.

“Good morning, daughter.”

“Good morning, mother.”

“May I come in and rest my poor old bones for a minute?” [226]

“Come in, in heaven’s name.”

The old witch came in and sat down as near the dough trough as she dared.

“Daughter, I have journeyed far and I would be glad of a bit of bread to eat even if it is only the crust.”

Well, she might have that and welcome, so the good woman went to the dough trough to get a piece, for that was where she kept it. No sooner had she opened the lid than the old witch was close behind her, looking over her shoulder, and she was disappointed enough when she found that no Buttercup was there.

However, she sat down again with the piece of bread in her hand and began to munch and mumble it, though she had no liking for such dry food as that.

“Is your little boy Buttercup at home to-day?” she asked.

“No. He has gone with his father to catch some trout for dinner.” [227]

“That is a pity,” said the old witch, “for I brought a present for him in my bag. I brought him a silver fork, and it is such a dear little, pretty little fork that every bite it carries to your mouth tastes better than what the king himself has to eat.”

When Buttercup heard that he could no longer keep still in the clock case. He must have that pretty little fork. “Peep! peep!” he cried, “here I am in the clock case.” And he opened the door and jumped out.

“That is well,” said the old witch, “but I am too old and stiff to bend over and you must crawl into the sack yourself to get the fork.”

Before his mother could stop him Buttercup was in the sack, and the old woman had closed the mouth of it, had swung it over her shoulder and was out of the house and off. There was no use in running after her; she went so fast. [228]

After while she was well in the forest, and then she did not hurry so.

“How far is it to Snoring now, you in the bag?” she asked.

“Oh, a mile and a half at least.”

“That is a long way for old bones,” said the witch. “I’ll just sit down and rest a bit; but mind you, no tricks to-day, for I shall stay wide awake this time.”

So she sat down by the road with her back against a tree. Then first she yawned, and next she nodded, and then she was asleep and snoring so that the very rocks around were shaken.

When Buttercup heard that, he whipped out his little knife and cut a slit in the sack and crawled out. Then he put a great heavy stone in the sack and ran away home as fast as his legs would carry him.

After while the old witch began to stretch and yawn. “Well, it’s time to be journeying on if we would reach Snoring by daylight,” she said, and she did not know she had been asleep at all. She picked up the bag, and whew! but it was heavy. “This boy is fat enough to break a body’s back,” said she. “He ought to make good eating.” But at every step the stone bounced against her ribs till she was black and blue. “Hi! there, you inside the sack, can’t you keep a little quieter?” she asked. But the stone made no answer, for it could not. [229]

After a time the old witch reached her house, and her fat ugly daughter came running to meet her.

“Did you catch the same boy?” asked the girl.

“The very same, and fatter than ever,” answered the witch, and she threw the bag down on the floor, bump!

“Oh, let me see him.” And the witch girl put her hand on the bag.

“Let it alone!” screamed the witch mother. “If you go goggling at him again you’ll turn him into [230] a stick or a stone or something, as you did before. Put on a kettle of water, and as soon as it is hot I’ll empty him into it.”

The witch girl did as she was told, and every time she went past the sack she gave it a poke with her foot. “The boy may be fat,” she said, “but he’s tough enough to break a body’s teeth in the eating.”

When the water began to boil she called her mother, and the old witch picked up the sack intending to empty Buttercup into the pot, but instead the great stone rolled into it, ker-splash! and the boiling water flew all about. It flew on the old witch and burned her so that she stamped about the kitchen gnashing her teeth with rage. The fat daughter was so frightened she ran out and hid in the stable until all was quiet again. “Never mind!” said the old witch. “I’ll have the boy [231] to-morrow for sure.” So the next day she took up the bag and started off for the third time through the forest.

The good mother was scrubbing her pans when Sharptooth began to bark outside. “Run, Buttercup, and see who is coming now.”

“Mother, it is the same old witch who has been here twice before.”

“Quick, quick! Hide in the cellar way, and try not to breathe until she has gone.”

Buttercup ran and hid himself in the cellar way, and he was scarcely there before there was a knock at the door and the old witch pushed it open and looked in.

“May I come in and rest a bit?”

“Come in, in heaven’s name.”

The old witch stepped in and looked all about her.

“I would like to know what time it is.”

“Well, look for yourself; there stands the clock.”

The old witch went close to it and took the chance to peep inside the case, but no little boy was [232] there. Then she sat down near the door.

“Is your little boy Buttercup at home to-day?”

The mother said, “No, he has gone to the mill with his father.”

“That is a pity,” said the old witch, “for I have a pretty little spoon in my bag that I meant to give to him, and it is such a smart little spoon that if you do but stir your porridge with it, it changes it into something so delicious that the princess herself would be glad to eat it.”

When Buttercup in the cellar way heard that he wanted the spoon so badly that he could stay hidden no longer. “Peep! peep! Here I am,” said he.

“I am glad of that,” said the witch, “for I had no wish to take the spoon home again; but you will have to crawl into the sack yourself to get it, for I am too old and stiff.” [233]

In a moment Buttercup was in the sack, and in another moment the old witch had swung it over her back and was making off as fast as her legs would carry her. This time she neither stayed nor stopped, but went straight on home, and flung the sack on the floor with Buttercup in it.

“Did you get him this time?” asked the girl.

“Yes, I did,” said the old witch, “and there he is, as plump as any young chicken. Now I’ll be off to ask the guests, and do you put him in the pot and make a nice stew of him.”

As soon as she had gone the witch girl opened the sack and told Buttercup to come out. “Now put your head on the block, Buttercup,” she said, “so that I may chop it off.”

“But I do not know how,” said Buttercup.

[234]

“THEN SHOW ME HOW, AND I WILL HOLD THE AX FOR YOU”

“Stupid! It is easy enough; anyone would know how to do that.”

“Then show me how, and I will hold the ax for you.”

The stupid witch girl put her head on the block, and as soon as she did that, Buttercup cut it off. He put the head on the pillow of the bed and drew the coverlid up about it and then it looked exactly as though the witch girl were lying there asleep, but the body of her he popped into the pot of boiling water. Then he climbed up on the roof and took the fir tree stump and the stone with him.

And now home came the old witch again and all her troll friends with her, and they were an ugly looking set all together.

They went stamping into the house and the old witch began to bawl for her daughter, but there was no answer. She looked about her and spied the head there on the pillow with the covers drawn up about it. “So there you are!” cried the old witch. “Well, if you are too lazy to get up and [235] eat your dinner, you will have to be content with what we leave.” Then she picked up a big spoon and tasted the broth.

“Good, by my troth,
Is Buttercup broth,”

said she, and smacked her lips.

“Good, by my troth,
Is witch daughter broth,”

sang Buttercup out on the roof.

“Who was that?” asked the witch.

“Oh, it was only a bird singing outside,” said her husband, and he took the spoon himself and tasted the broth.

“Good, by my troth,
Is Buttercup broth,”

said he.

[236]

“Good, by my troth,
Is witch daughter broth,”

sang Buttercup on the roof.

“There certainly is someone outside there mocking at us,” said the old witch, and she ran out to see.

As soon as she came out Buttercup threw the stump down on her and killed her, and that was the end of her.

The witch’s husband waited for a time, and when she did not come back he went to call her, but as soon as he stepped outside Buttercup rolled the big stone down on him, and that was an end of him.

The friends who had come to share the broth waited and waited for the witch and her husband to come back, but after a time, as they did not, the guests grew impatient and came out to look for them. When they saw the two lying there dead they never stopped for the broth, but ran away as fast as they could go, and for all I know they may be running still. [237]

But Buttercup climbed down from the roof, and hunted round in the house until he found where the witch kept her money chest all full of gold and silver money. Then he filled the sack with as much as he could carry, and started home again. When he reached there you may guess whether or not his mother was glad to see him. Then there was no more poverty for them, for the money in the sack was enough to make them rich for all their lives.

THE SUN AND THE MOON [238]

(*From Turkish Legends*)

ONCE upon a time the Sun made up his mind that he would like to get married. Far and near he journeyed, all over the round world and looked upon many fair maidens and princesses, but not one was beautiful enough to be his bride.

As he came home after his wanderings, he looked up at a window of the palace, and there sat his sister, the beautiful Helen, looking out. Her face, like the Sun’s, was ruddy; her hair like his was as shining as gold. There was no one in all the world to compare with her in beauty. [239]

“Come down and greet me, beautiful Helen,” he cried, “for you and you only are worthy to be my bride.”

But when the fair Helen heard this she was horrified. “Such a thing must not be,” said she. “A brother may not marry his sister, for that would be an offense to heaven.”

The Sun, however, would not listen to her; he was determined to make her his bride, and to this end he summoned the best workmen from all over the world, some to make magnificent robes, some to prepare a feast, and gold and silver smiths and dealers in precious stones.

The beautiful Helen, however, wept and wept with grief.

Now there was in the palace of the Sun an old nurse who had nursed both him and his sister, and when she saw how, day after day, the beautiful Helen was melting away with grief, she said [240] to her: “Why should you be so sad? You know how I love you, and that I have much knowledge of magic. If you asked me perhaps I might help you.”

“Oh, my dear nurse, do but save me from this marriage and you can ask of me nothing that I will not give you.”

“Leave it to me; leave it to me,” said the old woman. “Are you not my nursling?”

So the next time the Sun came to see his sister the old woman changed her into a little cake, and hid her under the ashes as if to bake.

In came the Sun and looked about him. “Good nurse, I am tired and hungry,” said he. “Have you nothing here for me to eat?”

“There is bread and wine yonder on the shelf.”

“Nay, I know of something that suits me better than that,” said the Sun, and he uncovered the [241] white cake that lay among the ashes and made as though to eat it.

“Oh, my brother, spare me!” cried the cake.

“What!” cried the Sun, pretending to be very much surprised. “Can it be that this is not a cake at all, but the beautiful Helen, who has taken this form?”

Then Helen was obliged to take her own form again, and so beautiful did she appear with the silvery ashes powdering her golden hair that the Sun was more determined upon the marriage

than ever.

After he had gone, Helen began to reproach the nurse because her magic had been of so little avail.

"Do not grieve to death because of that," said the old woman, "for I have better magic than that in my head. The next time the Sun comes to visit you we will be in the garden and I will change you into a blade of grass, and among all the other blades he will be sure not to find you." [242]

So the next day the old woman and her nursling were sitting out in the garden, and presently they knew, by the golden glow in the sky, that the Sun was coming to look for his sister. Then the old nurse changed her into a blade of grass, and no one could have told her from all the other blades in the garden.

Out came the Sun to where the old nurse sat, and looked about him. "I had thought to find the beautiful Helen here," said he.

"She was here a moment ago," answered the nurse, "and had you come then, you might have seen her."

"How green the grass is all about," said the Sun. "Since she is not here I will have a nibble of it."

He then changed himself into a lamb and began to nibble about. Presently he came to the tuft of grass where Helen was. Seeing that his teeth were about to close upon her she cried out in a [243] woeful voice, "Alas, my brother, I have never harmed you; do not bite me, I beg of you."

"Then do not try to escape me by any such tricks of magic," answered the Sun. Thereupon he took back his natural shape, and the beautiful Helen was obliged to take her own shape, too.

After he had gone away she began to weep and lament. "If you can do no better than this with your magic the marriage will surely go on."

"Wait until to-morrow," answered the nurse. "Then I will turn you into a reed that grows beside the river. I am sure he will never think of looking for you there."

So the next day at about the time when the Sun would be coming, the old nurse changed Helen into a reed beside the river, but she herself sat in the garden that the Sun might suspect nothing.

[244]

"HA!" CRIED THE SUN. "IS IT YOU, FAIR ONE?"

After a while the Sun came out to look for his sister, but he found no one but the old nurse sitting there all by herself. "No matter," said the Sun; "I have a notion of making music for a while. I will go down to the river and cut a reed to make a pipe for myself."

When the old nurse heard that she turned pale, but she did not dare to say anything. The Sun went down to the river and she followed him. He went straight to the reed that was the beautiful Helen, and drew his knife and set it at the root. Then the reed cried aloud in a doleful voice: "Alas, my brother, I have done you no harm. Do not slay me."

“Ha!” cried the Sun, “is it you, fair one? Now you see that all the magic in the world cannot hide you from me, and to-morrow you shall be my bride.”

After he had gone, the beautiful Helen turned to her nurse. “Now I see that magic can indeed [245] avail me nothing,” she said, “and only heaven itself can save me.”

The next day was to be the wedding, and when the beautiful Helen was dressed in her bridal clothes she was as pale as ashes, but so beautiful that the heart ached to look at her.

The Sun took her by the hand and led her into the church, and all the candles were lighted and the priests and guests were there.

Then the beautiful Helen called upon heaven to save her. Three times she called, and at the third time all the lights went out, and a great wind swept through the church. The priests were terrified and the guests did not know which way to fly. As for the Sun he cried aloud with rage and disappointment, for he felt that his beautiful bride was gone from his side. She had been carried up and away to where he could never find her. Then she was changed into the moon, and [246] ever since, still and calm and bright she sails up the sky at night after the Sun has gone to rest and holds the earth and sea under her gentle rule.

Sometimes she rises while he is still sinking toward the west. Red and angry he grows as he sees her rising above the horizon in her shining beauty, but he cannot reach her, for the whole heaven is between them.

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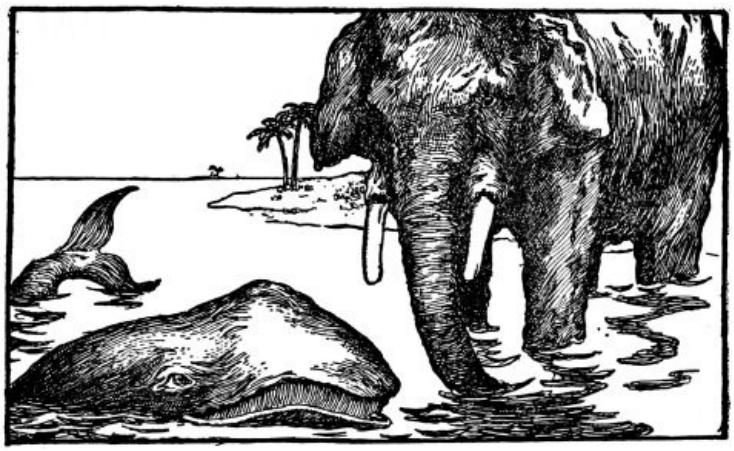
[247]



HOW THE ELEPHANT AND THE WHALE WERE TRICKED

(*From Louisiana Creole Tales*)

ONE time the rabbit and the ground hog went out to walk together. The rabbit wore his blue coat with brass buttons, for it was a fine day, and cocked his hat gayly over one eye, but the ground hog was content with his old fur overcoat, and galoshes to keep his feet dry.

They walked along until at last they came to the seashore, and there they saw the elephant [248] standing and talking to the whale. “Look!” said the ground hog; “that is a wonderful sight, for I reckon those are the two biggest animals in all the world.”

“Let’s go close and hear what they’re talking about,” said the rabbit.

“No, no,” answered the ground hog. “They might not like it, and if I’m going to be impolite I’d rather be impolite to animals that are more my own size.”

However, the rabbit was determined to know what two such big beasts talked to each other about, so he stole up close to them unnoticed, and hid back of a clump of grass to listen.

“Of all the beasts that walk the earth not one is as great as I am,” boasted the elephant. “The ground trembles at my tread; the trees shake and the other animals are afraid and hide lest I should be angry with them.”

“True, brother,” answered the whale. “On the other hand, there is not a fish in the sea that [249] compares to me in size. I swallow hundreds at one gulp, and when I lash the waters with my tail it is like a storm.”

“And that is true, too,” answered the elephant. “Brother, how would it be if we proclaimed ourselves kings of the earth and sea, and made all of the other fish and animals our subjects?”

“That would be a fine scheme,” the whale agreed, “and then we would make them pay us tribute.”

The elephant was pleased with that idea, too. “Good! good!” he trumpeted. “That is what we

will do."

So the two beasts talked together, each one praising himself and the other, and saying how great they were.

The rabbit listened until he could bear it no longer, and then he stole back to the ground hog, his whiskers trembling with rage.

"Well, what were they talking about?" asked the ground hog. [250]

"All their talk was of how great and powerful they were," answered the rabbit, "and they say they will declare themselves kings and make us pay tribute. But I will show them a thing or two before that."

"What will you show them?" asked the other.

"I have thought of a trick to play upon them, and it is a trick that will make them feel so silly they will forget all about making kings of themselves."

The ground hog begged and entreated the rabbit not to think of such a thing. The whale and the elephant were too big and powerful for a little rabbit to try to play a trick upon them, and if he did, they would surely punish him. But the rabbit would not listen to him, and at last the ground hog rose and buttoned up his overcoat. "Well, I'm not going to get *myself* into trouble," [251] he said. "I'm going home, I am, to look through the closets and get some tribute ready for them." So home he ambled, and did not mind one bit when the rabbit called after him that he was a coward.

But the rabbit made haste to the house of a neighbor to borrow a coil of rope he knew of, for that was the first thing he needed for his trick.

He got the rope and came back and hid in some bushes by the roadside. Presently he saw the elephant come swinging up the road. He had finished his talk with the whale and was now on his way home. He looked very pleased with himself, and was smiling and idly breaking off the little trees with his trunk as he came.

The rabbit sprang out of the bushes with the coil of rope over his arm, and ran toward the elephant, shouting at the top of his lungs, "Help, help!"

The elephant stopped and looked at him with surprise. "What is the matter, Rabbit?" he asked. [252]

"My cow! My cow has fallen into the quicksands down by the sea, and no one can get her out. Oh, dear good kind Master Elephant, if you would but help me! You are so great and strong and wonderful that it would be nothing at all for you to pull her out."

The elephant was very much pleased with these compliments to his strength. "Yes, I will help you," he said good-naturedly. "I am indeed very great and powerful. Come! Show me where she is."

"No need of that," answered the sly rabbit. "Do you stand here and hold this end of the rope, and I will run and tie the other end around her horns. When all is ready I will beat a drum. As soon as you hear that begin to pull and you will have her out in a twinkling."

The elephant agreed to do this; he took hold of the end of the rope and stood there, waiting [253] and thinking how strong he was, and how the animals were obliged to come to him when they needed help.

Meanwhile the rabbit ran down to the seashore with the other end of the rope. The whale was still there resting on the sand-bar, and thinking how great and powerful *he* was.

"Help! help!" cried the rabbit as soon as he was near enough for the whale to hear him.

The great creature turned, and looked at him lazily. "What is the matter, Rabbit?" he asked.

"Oh, dear good Master Whale, I am in great trouble. My cow is stuck in a marsh and no one on land is powerful enough to pull her out. But you are so strong and wonderful that it would mean nothing to you to get her out for me."

The whale was pleased at these words, but he said, "I am quite willing to help you, but I do not [254] see how I can do so. I cannot leave the sea nor travel on dry land."

"No need of that," answered the rabbit. "I have tied the other end of this rope around her horns. If you will but take hold of this end you can pull her out in a twinkling."

The good-natured whale was very ready to do this. "I must not pull too hard," he said, "for so great is my strength that I might not only jerk her out of the marsh but all the way into the sea so that she would be drowned."

"Yes, you must be careful about that," answered the rabbit, and then he ran up into the bushes where he had hidden a drum and beat it loudly.

As soon as the elephant heard the drum he began to pull on the rope. At first he did not pull hard, for he thought it was an easy task he had on hand. But the whale, holding the other end, [255] started to swim out to sea, and the elephant found himself pulled down toward the shore. He was

very much surprised, but he tightened his hold and began to use his strength.

And now it was the turn of the whale to be dragged toward the shore. “This will never do,” he thought to himself, and he beat the waters, and swam with all his might, and the elephant began to lose ground.

So the two creatures strove together. First one was dragged along and then the other. They thought they had never known of such a strong cow before. But the rabbit up in the bushes laughed and laughed until he thought his sides would split. He rolled upon the ground and the tears ran down his furry cheeks, and still, the more the huge beasts strove and grunted, the harder he laughed.

At last the great elephant put forth all his strength. He dug his feet into the solid ground and [256]
braced himself. The whale in the sea had nothing to brace itself against, and so at last it was pulled up on the shore. Then the elephant turned to see what sort of a cow it was that weighed so much, and there it was no cow at all, but his friend, the whale, who lay there gasping and panting on the beach.

The elephant ran down to him, and the first thing he did was to push the whale back into the water again. Then they began to talk and explain to each other how it all happened. When they found what a trick the rabbit put upon them they were furiously angry, and consulted as to how they could best punish him.

“I,” said the whale, “shall send word to all the fish in streams and rivers, and tell them he must not be allowed to drink one drop of water.”

“And I,” said the elephant, “will send word to all the creatures on the earth that he shall not be [257]
allowed to eat so much as one blade of grass.”

And now the rabbit was in a bad way, indeed. If he went to the river to get a drink the fish and lobsters gathered in a crowd and drove him away. If he tried to eat, some animal or other was there to prevent him. It seemed as though he must soon die of hunger and thirst. His trick was like to cost him dear.

He was hopping along a path very sadly one day, with his ears drooping and all the spirit gone out of him, when he came across a dead deer that had been torn by the dogs. The rabbit stopped and scratched his ear and thought a bit. Then he set to work and very neatly stripped off the deerskin and drew it over his own body. Then he set out for the main road, limping and uttering cries of pain as he went.

Presently whom should he see but the elephant swinging along the road toward him. [258]

The rabbit cried out still louder, and made out as though he could scarcely drag himself along for his wounds.

“What has happened to you, friend Deer? And who has wounded you in this way?” asked the elephant.

“Oh, that Rabbit! That Rabbit! And I was only doing as you told me.”

“The Rabbit?”

“Yes; oh, indeed good Master Elephant, he is very terrible. He came to eat in the woods where I was and I tried to drive him away, because you had told us all to do that, but as soon as I spoke to him, he threw me down and beat me and almost tore me to pieces, as you see.”

“That is strange,” said the elephant. “I did not know he was as strong as that.”

“Oh, yes; he is small, but he knows much magic. No one could stand against him, not even you. [259]
And he is very angry. He says he is going to tear you to pieces too, and the whale, and he only left me alive so that I might come and tell you.”

“But he could not kill *me*!” cried the elephant.

“His magic is very strong. I am afraid, now that he is angry, that he will kill all the animals in the world, and keep it for himself.”

Now the elephant really began to be afraid. “Oh, well, it was only a joke that the whale and I played on him. Go back and tell him so. Tell him it was only a joke, and that I am not angry with him now. Then tell him he may eat wherever he pleases, for I would not want to annoy such a little animal as he is.”

So the rabbit, still speaking like the deer, said he would, and, moaning and limping, he turned and crawled back the way he had come. But when he was safely out of sight, he fell down in the [260]
dust of the road and laughed and laughed till he was sick with laughing.

CHERRY

(*From the English*)

[261]

THERE was once a poor laborer who had so many children that he was hardly able to buy food and clothing for them. For this reason, as soon as they grew old enough, they went out into the world to shift for themselves. One after another they left their home, until at last only the youngest one, Cherry by name, was left. She was the prettiest of all the children. Her hair was as black as jet, her cheeks as red as roses, and her eyes so merry and sparkling that it made one [262] smile even to look at her.

Every few weeks one or another of the children who were out at service came back to visit their parents, and they looked so much better fed, and so much better clothed than they ever had looked while they were at home that Cherry began to long to go out in the world to seek her fortune, too.

“Just see,” she said to her mother; “all my sisters have new dresses and bright ribbons, while I have nothing but the old patched frocks they have outgrown. Let me go out to service to earn something for myself.”

“No, no,” answered her mother. “You are our youngest, and your father would never be willing to have you go, and you would find it very different out there in the world from here, where everyone loves you and cares for you.”

[263] However, Cherry’s heart was set upon going out to seek her fortune, and when she found her parents would never give their consent, she determined to go without it. She tied up the few clothes she had in a big handkerchief, put on the shoes that had in them the fewest holes, and off she stole one fine morning without saying good-by to anyone but the old cat that was asleep upon the step.

As long as she was within sight of the house she hurried as fast as she could, for she was afraid her father or mother might see her and call her back, but when the road dipped down over a hill she walked more slowly, and took time to catch her breath and shift her bundle from one hand to the other.

At first the way she followed was well known to her, but after she had traveled on for several hours she found herself in a part of the country she had never seen before. It was bleak and desolate with great rocks, and not a house in sight, and Cherry began to feel very lonely. She [264] longed to see her dear home again, with the smoke rising from the chimney and her mother’s face at the window, and at last she grew so homesick that she sat down on a rock and began to sob aloud.

She had been sitting there and weeping for some time when she felt a hand upon her shoulder. She looked up and saw a tall and handsome gentleman standing beside her. He was richly dressed and looked like a foreigner, and there were many rings upon his fingers. It seemed so strange to see him standing there close to her, when a little time before there had been no one in sight, that Cherry forgot to sob while she stared at him. He was smiling at her in a friendly way, and his eyes sparkled and twinkled so brightly that there never was anything like it.

[265] “What are you doing in such a lonely place as this, my child?” said he. “And why are you weeping so bitterly?”

“I am here because I started out to take service with someone,” answered Cherry; “and I am weeping because it is so lonely, and I wish I were at home again;” and she began to sob.

“Listen, Cherry,” said the gentleman, once more laying his hand on her shoulder. “I am looking for a kind, bright girl to take charge of my little boy. The wages are good, and if you like, you shall come with me and be his nurse.”

This seemed a great piece of good luck to Cherry, for she was sure from the gentleman’s looks that he must be very rich as well as kind. She quickly wiped her eyes and told him she was more than willing to go with him.

As soon as the stranger heard this he

smiled again, and bidding her follow him he turned aside into a little path among the rocks that Cherry had not noticed before. At first this path was both rough and thorny, but the further they went the broader and smoother it grew, and always it led down hill. After a while instead of thorns, flowering bushes bordered the path, and later still, trees loaded with such fruit as Cherry had never seen before. It shone like jewels, and smelled so delicious that she longed to stop and taste it, but that her master would not allow. There was no sunlight now, but neither were any clouds to be seen overhead. A soft, pale light shone over everything, making the landscape seem like something seen in a dream. [266]

The gentleman hurried her along, and when he saw she was growing tired he took her hand in his and immediately all her weariness disappeared, and her feet felt so light it seemed as though she could run to the ends of the earth.

After they had gone a long, long way they came to a gate overhung with an arch of flowering vines. The garden within was filled with fruit trees even more wonderful than those along the road, and through them she could see a beautiful house that shone like silver. [267]

HE WAS RICHLY DRESSED AND LOOKED LIKE A FOREIGNER

The gentleman opened the gate, and immediately a little boy came running down the path toward them. The child was very small, but his face looked so strange and wise and old that Cherry was almost afraid of him.

The gentleman stooped and kissed him and said, “This is my son,” and then they all three went up the path together.

When they came near the house the door opened and a little, strange looking old woman looked out. She was gnarled and withered and gray, and looked as though she might be a hundred.

“Aunt Prudence, this is the nurse I have brought home to look after the boy for us,” said the gentleman. [268]

The old woman scowled, and her eyes seemed to bore into Cherry like gimlets. “She’ll peep and pry, and see what shouldn’t be seen. Why couldn’t you have been satisfied with one like ourselves for a nurse?” grumbled the old woman.

“It’s best as it is,” answered the gentleman in a low voice. “Many a one has sent her child to rest in a cradle there above, and they’ve been all the better for it.”

Cherry did not know what he was talking about, but if she had been afraid of the child she was even more afraid of the old woman.

And indeed in the next few days Aunt Prudence made the girl’s life very unhappy. The gentleman gave Cherry full charge of the child, and seemed very contented with her, but the old woman grumbled and scolded, and found fault with everything she did. [269]

It was Cherry’s duty to bathe the child every morning, and after she had washed him she was obliged to anoint his eyes with a certain ointment that was kept in a silver box. “And be very careful,” said her master, sternly, “that you never touch the least particle of it to your own eyes, for if you do, misfortune will certainly come upon you.”

Cherry promised that she would not, but she felt very curious about this ointment. She was sure it must have some very wonderful properties, for always after she had rubbed the child’s eyes with it they looked stranger and brighter than ever, and she was sure he saw things that she could not see. Sometimes he would seem to join in games invisible to her, and sometimes he would suddenly leave her and run down a path to meet someone, though as far as she could see not a living soul was there. But if Cherry asked him any questions he would become quite silent, and look at her sideways in a strange way. [270]

There were doors in the house that Cherry was forbidden to open, and she used to wonder and wonder what was behind them. Once she saw her master come out from one of the rooms beyond, but he shut the door quickly behind him, and she caught no glimpse of what was within.

However, she was very comfortable there—well-fed, well-clothed and well-paid, and she would

have been quite happy if it had not been for Aunt Prudence. Instead of growing kinder to her as time went on, the old woman grew crosser and crosser. She was always scolding, and her tongue was so sharp that she often made Cherry weep bitterly, and wish she was at home again, or any place but there. Once when she was sobbing to herself in the garden, her master came to her. "Cherry," he said, "I see that you and Aunt Prudence can never live in peace together, and I am [271] going to send her away for a while, but if I do, you must promise to do nothing that might displease me."

Cherry promised, and after that the old woman disappeared, and the girl did not know what had become of her.

Cherry was now very happy. Her master was never cross with her, and the child was very obedient, and if he did not ever laugh, neither did he ever weep. She helped her master in the garden very often, and when she had done very well he would sometimes kiss her and call her a good child and then she was happier than ever.

But one time he went away for a few days, and Cherry seemed quite alone in the house except for the child, for the other servants she had never seen. The little boy went out to play in the garden, and suddenly Cherry began to feel so curious as to what was back of the forbidden doors that it seemed as though she would die if she did not look. She tried to think of other things, and [272] to remember how displeased her master would be if she opened the doors, but at last she could bear it no longer. She would just see what was behind one of them, and then she would look no further. But first she made sure that the little boy was still at play in the garden. He was sitting on the edge of a fountain, looking down into it, and suddenly he waved his hand and called out as though to something in the water.

Then Cherry opened the door and slipped through.

She found herself in a long hall entirely of marble. The floor, the ceilings and walls all were of blocks of marble, black and white, and ranged up and down it were many marble statues. Some were the figures of beautiful women, some were of princes with crowns upon their heads or of young men magnificently dressed. She went slowly down the hall, staring and wondering, and at [273] the very end she came upon Aunt Prudence, but it was an Aunt Prudence turned into marble, and scowling at her with marble, unseeing eyes. When she saw that, Cherry knew that she was in fairyland, and that her master had by his magic powers turned the old woman into this shape to quiet her scolding tongue.

She was terrified, for she was afraid that, as her master was a fairy, he would know that she had disobeyed him, and she went out quickly and closed the door behind her. However, when the gentleman came home that evening he was as kind and pleasant as ever, so she made sure that he knew nothing of what she had done.

But there was one thing Cherry was even more curious about than she had been about the doors, and that was about the ointment she rubbed upon the child's eyes. Every day, more and more, she longed to rub her own eyes with it and try whether she, too, would not see invisible [274] things. But beside her fear of disobeying her master the child's eyes were always upon her while she had the box open, and as soon as she had rubbed his eyes and closed it she was obliged to give it to him, and she never could tell what he did with it or where he put it.

One morning, however, just after she had rubbed his eyes, and before she had washed her hands, she made out she had dropped the box by accident, and when she stooped to pick it up she managed to rub one eye with a finger that had a little ointment upon it. The child did not see what she had done, but when Cherry looked about her what a wonderful change had come over the garden. Where all had seemed lonely and silent before, were crowds of little people playing around or going seriously about their business. They swung in the flower bells, they climbed the blades of grass. They spun ropes of cobweb, or sat in groups among the roots of trees, talking [275] together and nodding their wise little heads. But when she looked down into the fountain she saw the strangest sight of all, for there was her master, dressed just as he had been when he said good-by to her that morning, but now he was no longer than her hand, and riding a fish that he drove round and round in the water with a tiny whip. Cherry looked and looked, but her master never looked up nor noticed her. He played round with the fishes for quite a while and then suddenly disappeared. A moment after, the gate clicked, and when Cherry looked up there he was coming in, as tall as ever, and with not a hair of him wet.

He was often away after this and on one of these times Cherry determined to look into the marble room again.

She made sure that the child was outside and playing around with the other fairies, and then [276] she stole to the forbidden door and softly opened it a crack. As soon as she did this, she heard a sound of pleasant music. She peeped in and what a wonderful sight she saw! The stone ladies and gentlemen had all come to life, and were dancing there to the music. They moved and smiled and bowed to each other, and at the head of the dance was her master with the loveliest lady of them all as his partner. While Cherry looked, the dance came to an end and he led the lady to a seat, but before she sat down he kissed her.

When Cherry saw that, she closed the door and ran away to her room, and there she began to sob and cry; she was so jealous over what she had seen that it seemed as though her heart would burst.

That afternoon her master came again as kind and smiling as ever, but Cherry would hardly look at him or answer anything he said. Presently he asked her to come out into the garden and [277] help him with the flowers, and this she did, though she was still very moody.

They worked there for quite a while, and then when they had finished everything there was to be done, her master said, “You are a good child, Cherry,” and kissed her.

Cherry pushed him away and began to sob again. “Why do you kiss me?” she cried. “You don’t care for anybody but your beautiful lady. If you want to kiss anybody, go kiss her.”

When her master heard that, his face changed, and he looked at her so angrily that Cherry was frightened. “So you have been prying!” he cried, “and Aunt Prudence was right when she warned me not to trust you. Now that you have seen what you have seen, you can stay here no longer.”

“Oh, do not send me away,” Cherry begged of him. “Let me stay and I promise that I will never disobey you again.”

“I am sorry, Cherry,” her master answered, and he no longer looked angry, “but after this, they [278] would not let me keep you.” With that he raised his hand and gave her a sharp box on the ears, and she lost all consciousness.

When she came to herself she was sitting on the doorstep of her own home and her mother was shaking her by the shoulder and calling her.

Cherry started up and looked about her. “Where—where is he?” she cried. “How did I come here, and what has become of my master?”

Her mother did not know what she was talking about, and when after a little, Cherry began and told her all her story, she thought the child was dreaming or had lost her wits. But when later on she found that the girl’s pockets were full of fairy gold, enough to make them rich for years, she was obliged to believe that the story was true, wonderful as it was. [279]

But for a long time after she came home, Cherry used to trudge away to the lonely heath every now and then, and sit there hoping her master would come for her. But he never did, and never again did she find a place where the wages were in gold and paid as freely as they had been in fairyland.

DIAMONDS AND ROSES AND PEARLS [280]

(*From the French Tales*)

A WIDOW had two daughters of whom the elder was exactly like herself, with thick brown skin, hair as coarse as horse-hair and a loose, hanging mouth. She was as cross-tempered as she was ugly, but because she resembled her mother, the widow loved her dearly, and declared her the most beautiful creature in the world.

The younger sister was very different. Her skin was like peaches and cream, her hair was [281] golden, and her eyes as blue as the sky. She was as sweet-tempered as the other was ill-natured, but her mother hated her so, that she could hardly bear the sight of her, and had nothing for her but blows and hard words.

While the mother and the elder sister feasted upon dainties the Fair One had only scraps to eat, and not enough of those, and all the hard tasks of the household were laid upon her shoulders. In spite of all this ill treatment, however, she grew in beauty every day like a flower. Her figure remained round and soft, and after she had finished scouring the pots and pans she would wash her hands and they would be as white as a lily. Seeing this, the mother and sister were ready to die with envy. They washed their hands with perfumed water, and dried them on silken napkins, but they still remained as rough and horny as toads.

One day the mother bade the younger sister go to a spring that was some distance away in a [282] forest, and bring water for her sister to bathe in. She gave her an earthen pitcher that was so heavy the young girl could hardly carry it. “And do not spill any of the water by the way or you shall be punished,” cried the mother.

The young girl hurried away, glad to be out of the house and away from the scolding tongues, even though it were but for a little while. She would have liked to linger by the way to listen to the birds, and to gather some of the flowers that bloomed on every side, but she knew that if she were late in returning, she would be beaten for it.

When she reached the fountain she quickly filled her pitcher, but she was so sad that, as she stooped above the water, the tears ran down her cheeks and fell into it like raindrops.

“Poor child, you are very sad, but remember you are not the only unfortunate one upon this [283] earth,” said a hoarse, cracked voice behind her.

Turning quickly, the Fair One saw, seated upon a rock close by, an old woman so bent, so

SHE LIFTED THE HEAVY PITCHER FOR HER TO DRINK

wrinkled, and so hideously ugly that the young girl was frightened by her looks. However, she tried to hide her fear and spoke to the crone civilly. She was then about to go on her way, but the old woman stopped her. “My daughter,” she said, “I am thirsty, but my old bones are too stiff for me to stoop to drink from the fountain. Will you not give me some water from your pitcher?”

“Willingly, mother,” answered the girl in a sweet voice, and approaching the old woman she lifted the heavy pitcher for her to drink. She held it carefully until the stranger had quenched her thirst, and then returned to the fountain to refill it.

“Daughter, you have obliged one who is not only able but willing to reward you,” [284] said the old woman. “Your sweet temper is a dower greater than any I can give you, but this you shall have beside. When you speak, roses and pearls shall drop from your lips, and your tears shall be changed to diamonds as they fall.”

The girl thought the old woman must be out of her wits, for it was quite impossible that such a thing as that should happen to anyone, and bidding her good-day as quickly as she could, she hurried away with her brimming pitcher.

When she reached home her mother met her at the door with scowls and reproaches.

“Lazy wretch,” she cried, lifting her hand, “you have been gone twice as long as was necessary. You have been loitering and amusing yourself by the way,” and she seemed about to beat her.

“Pardon me, I beg of you,” cried the young girl. “Indeed I hurried all I could, but I feared to spill the water by the way.”

The mother’s hand dropped, and she stared down at the floor with open mouth and starting [285] eyes; for every word the girl spoke, a rose or a pearl fell from her lips and showered upon the floor of the house.

The mother gave a cry of greed and stooped to gather up the pearls. The flowers she allowed to remain where they were.

“What is it? What has happened?” cried the ugly sister, pressing forward.

“Silence!” cried the mother, speaking angrily to the ugly one for the first time in her life. “Her words are worth more than yours.” Then she stood up again. “Speak! Speak!” she cried to the younger sister, and as she did not immediately do this, the mother struck her to make her be quicker in her speech.

Frightened and bewildered, the young girl burst into tears, but, as the tear drops fell from her eyes, they were changed by the fairy spell, and reached the floor as glittering diamonds, that [286] rolled about this way and that.

“It is magic!” cried the mother, delighted. “Tell me, my daughter, how has this happened? Whom did you meet while you were away?”

“I met no one,” answered her daughter, “but an old woman by the fountain, who asked me for a drink of water. I gave it to her, and then she told me that roses and pearls should fall from my lips when I spoke, and my tears be changed to diamonds, but I did not believe her, for who could believe such a thing as that?”

“It was a fairy,” cried the mother. Then she turned to the elder daughter, her eyes glistening with greed. “Quick!” she cried. “Take the silver pitcher, for it is the best we have in the house, and take also some of those cream cakes that have just been baked. Go to the fountain and look for the old woman, and when you see her offer her the cream cakes and draw for her a drink [287] from the fountain. If she gave your sister such a gift in return for a drink from the earthen pitcher, how much more will she not do for you when you serve her from silver?”

The elder girl, who was very lazy, began to grumble. It was far to the fountain; the pitcher was heavy; why should she go when all they had to do was to gather up the diamonds and pearls that her sister scattered about.

The mother, however, would not listen to her. She put the cream cakes in her pocket, the pitcher in her hand, and pushed her gently from the door, bidding her hurry or the old woman might have disappeared.

The lazy girl went lagging down the road, swinging her pitcher as she went, and now and then stopping to pick up stones and throw them at the birds that sang on either hand. It took her twice as long as it had taken her sister to get to the fountain. When at last she reached it, there was no one there. [288]

"At least I shall not have to draw any water," said the girl. Then she sat down in the shade and began to eat the cream cakes. She was munching and munching when she saw a tall and beautiful lady coming toward her through the forest. The stranger was as tall and stately as a queen, and was magnificently dressed, and, like a queen, she wore a golden crown upon her head. She was really a powerful fairy, and it was she who, in the shape of an old woman, had talked with her younger sister beside the fountain. She had now resumed her own shape, and the lazy one never guessed that this bright stranger and the old woman she had come to seek, were one and the same.

The fairy came near, and looked down at the girl with a frown, for the lazy one neither moved nor spoke, but only stared up at her with her mouth full of cream cake.

"I see you have a pitcher," said the fairy, "and as I am very thirsty, will you not draw some water in it for me to drink?" [289]

The lazy girl took time to swallow the last piece of cream cake, and then she answered rudely, "I am not your servant. If you want water, draw it for yourself."

Then as it seemed there was no chance of the old woman's returning, she rose and shook the crumbs from her skirt and prepared to go.

"Wait!" said the fairy sharply as she was turning away. "The words that fall from your lips are like evil things, and as evil things shall they appear. For every word you utter a spider or adder shall fall from your lips until you have learned to speak in a proper and gentle manner."

Having so spoken, the fairy vanished, floating away through the forest like a rosy cloud. The girl shrugged her shoulders and started homeward with her empty pitcher.

Even before she reached the house, the mother came running to meet her and embraced her tenderly. "Did you see the old woman? And did she lay her spell upon you? Speak, my beautiful one, and let me gather up the treasures that fall from your lips." [290]

The daughter pushed her away crossly. "Be quiet," she said. "I saw no old woman, and all I got for my pains is a——"

The mother started back with a shriek of dismay; for every word her daughter had spoken, a spider or an adder had fallen from her lips.

"What is this!" she cried, wringing her hands. "What evil spell has been laid upon my precious beauty?"

"I do not know," answered the frightened girl. Then as she saw more spiders fall from her lips she began to bawl aloud in her wrath and terror.

"It is all the fault of your sister, the hussy!" cried the mother. "Not another night shall she spend in the house to bring fresh misfortunes on us." [291]

She ran back home and began to beat the girl. Then she thrust her from the door.

"Go, go!" she cried, "and never let me see your face again."

Frightened and weeping, the poor girl ran away into the forest, and as she went, the diamonds she shed marked the way she had gone. They lay among the grasses sparkling like dewdrops, and lucky were those who next came by that way; a whole fortune lay there at their feet.

The Fair One wandered on and on through the forest until she was completely lost and did not know which way to turn. It began to grow dark, and she was terrified at the thought that soon the wild beasts would begin to leave their lairs. She met no one, and there seemed nothing for her to do but climb a tree and prepare to spend the night in the forest, when suddenly she heard a sound of voices and the trampling of horses. Presently the riders came breaking through the bushes. They were magnificently dressed, and at their head rode one, handsomer and more magnificent than them all. It was the young prince of that country, who was returning late from a hunt, with his attendants. [292]

When he saw the young girl he reined in his steed and gazed at her with wonder. Never before had he seen such beauty; it seemed to shine around her like a soft light.

"Who are you and whence come you, O Fair One?" he asked.

"I am a poor girl who has neither home nor shelter," she answered him, and as she spoke, roses and pearls fell from her lips.

The prince was overcome with admiration. "Never have I seen beauty to compare with yours," he cried. "Come back with me to the palace, I pray of you, for unless you consent to be my bride I [293]

vow that I will never marry."

Blushing, the Fair One allowed him to place her on the horse before him, for it seemed to her she had never seen anyone, at once so handsome and so kind, before. So he carried her home with him to the palace, and when they saw her the old king and queen were amazed at her beauty and sweetness. But when they saw the treasure that fell from her lips whenever she spoke, they gladly gave permission for her marriage with their son.

To celebrate it, a magnificent feast was prepared, and people were invited to come to it from far and near. The Fair One, who was very kind and forgiving, begged that her mother and sister might be invited, too. The prince could refuse her nothing, and so the invitation was sent.

No sooner was it received than there was a great commotion and excitement at the house of [294] the cruel mother. She and the sister bought fine dresses and jewels and feathers that only served to set off their ill looks. Last of all, they stepped into a coach drawn by four black horses and drove away to the palace. There everything was mirth and rejoicing, and the widow and her daughter bowed and smirked with the best of them. But when they entered the grand hall where the king and queen sat, and saw that the prince's bride was no other than the younger sister, and that she, too, sat upon a throne with a crown upon her head, they were so filled with envy and spite that they burst.

But the prince married the Fair One and they lived happy ever after, beloved by the king and queen and all their people.

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[295]

THE THREE COWS
(*From the Irish*)

THERE was once a poor widow who had one son named Barney, and some said he was as sharp a lad as one would care to meet, and some said he was not much better than a simpleton.

One day his mother said to him, "My son, bad luck is close after us these days. There is no food in the house, and soon the landlord will be coming for our rent. Take our white cow (for she is the poorest of the three), and drive her over to the fair, and sell her to the one who will give the best [296] price for her."

Barney was more than willing to do this, for it was better fun to go to the fair than to work. He brushed his clothes and cocked his hat, and off he started in a fine humor, driving the white cow before him.

The sun was not yet high and the dew lay thick on the hedgerows; birds sang on either side of the road, and Barney whistled to himself for very joy of life.

After a while he came to a stile, and sitting on the top of the stile was a little man scarce two feet high; he was dressed all in green and a red cap was lying beside him.

"Good morning to you, Barney," said the little man.

Barney answered him politely as his mother had taught him, but he wondered how under the bright sun the stranger happened to know that his name was Barney. [297]

"And how much do you think you'll get for the white cow at the fair?"

Then Barney wondered still more that the little man should know his business as well as his name. "My mother told me to get the best price I could," he answered.

"The best price may be neither gold nor silver. Wait a bit and I'll show you a thing or two worth seeing."

The little man reached down into a deep pocket in his coat, and drew out a tiny harp and a tiny stool. These he set upon the top step of the stile in the sunlight. Then he reached down in his

pocket again and drew out a cockchafer. The cockchafer was dressed in a tiny long-tailed coat and breeches, and the moment the little man set him on the stile, he drew the stool up in front of the harp and began to try the strings and tune them up.

When Barney saw this he was so pleased that he let out a whoop of joy. [298]

"Wait a bit, for the story is not yet half told," said the little man in green. He then drew out a mouse dressed as a gentleman of quality, and a bumblebee in a flowered silk skirt and overdress. The cockchafer began to play a tune, the mouse bowed to the bumblebee, she courtesied to him and the brindled cow he was driving before him, and at sound of the gay music, Barney threw back his head and laughed and laughed; his feet began to jig it, the hat bounced on his head, and the very cow herself jumped about and waved her tail gayly.

After Barney had danced and laughed himself weak, the tune came to an end; the dancers stopped to rest, and Barney and the cow, too, stood still.

"Well, and what do you think of that?" asked the little man.

"I think it's a better sight than any I'll be after seeing at the fair." [299]

"Listen now," the little man went on. "It's needing a good cow I am. The truth is that those who live under the hill have sent me out to buy one, and if you like, I will give you the little harp and the musician for your white cow."

Barney looked, and wished and scratched his head. "It's not the sort of price my mother thought I'd be after getting," he said.

"It's a price that will be worth more than gold and silver to you in the end," said the little man.

Well, the end of it was that Barney gave him the cow and received in exchange the harp, the stool, and the little cockchafer. He took out his handkerchief and wrapped them up in it very carefully, and when he looked about again the little man and Whitey had disappeared entirely. [300] There was no sign of them anywhere.

"And that's a curious thing, too," said Barney to himself, and then he set out for home.

When he came within sight of the house, his mother was at the window watching for him, and she came out to meet him.

"I see you sold the cow," she said. "And how much did you get for it?"

"Come inside and I'll show you."

They went into the house and Barney dusted off the table; then he untied his handkerchief and put the harp, the stool, and the little musician upon it. The cockchafer made a bow to Barney's mother; then he seated himself and began to play, and if Barney had laughed before he roared with pleasure now. The old woman, too, began to laugh and that was what she had not done for many a year before. She laughed till the tears ran down her face, and then she dropped into a [301] chair and laughed some more.

But, when at last the tune came to an end, the old woman wiped her eyes and began to come to herself. Then she remembered the cupboard was still bare, and the rent still due the landlord in spite of all the gay doings.

"You worthless lout!" she cried to her son. "Is that what you sold the cow for? How do you expect us to fill our stomachs and pay the landlord with such nonsense as that?"

Barney had no answer to make, for he did not know.

Well, the money must be had, and the next morning, Barney's mother sent him off to the fair again, and this time it was the brindled cow he was driving before him and it was a much finer and larger cow than old Whitey had been.

When he came near the stile he kept looking and looking to see whether the little man in green [302] was there, but it was not until the lad came quite close to it that he saw him. There sat the small one on the top step in the sunlight, with his red cap lying beside him.

"And how did your mother like the price you got for old Whitey?" asked the small man.

"Little enough; and the thanks are owing to you for the scolding I got."

"Never mind! She'll be thankful enough some day for the price I paid you. Is the brindled cow for sale, too?"

"Not to you," answered Barney.

"Ah, Barney, Barney! I'm after thinking you must be the simpleton some folk call you. There's no one can pay you such a good price as I offer. If you had but this gay gentleman of a mouse to dance to the music your mother would be fit to split her sides with laughter; and you may have [303] him for your own in exchange for that cow."

No, Barney would not listen to such a thing, but the little man coaxed and wheedled, until at last Barney gave him the cow, and took the little mouse in exchange for it.

When he reached home, his mother was on the lookout for him.

“How much money did you get for the cow?” she asked.

Barney made no answer to this, but he untied his handkerchief, and let the little mouse step out on the table. It had a cocked hat under its arm, and with its claws on its hip, he made a grand bow to the old woman. She could do nothing but stare and grin with admiration. Then Barney put the cockchafer and the harp on the table too, and as soon as it had tuned up, it began to play, and the tune was so gay that the very heart danced in the bosom. The mouse began to dance and [304] twirl and jig up and down, and Barney and his mother stood and laughed until they almost split their sides.

But after the tune was all played out, the old woman came to herself again; an angry soul was she. She fell to crying just as hard as she had laughed before, for the white cow was gone, and the brindled cow was gone, and the landlord no nearer to being paid than he had been two days before.

But the money they must have, and there was nothing for it but that Barney must set off the next day for the fair with the red cow, and she was the finest of the three.

He trudged along, driving it before him, and after a while he came to the stile, and there was the little man in green seated on it.

“Good-day to you, Barney,” said he.

Barney answered never a word.

“That’s a fine cow you have there.” [305]

Barney trudged along as though he had not heard him, and never so much as turned his head.

“Nay, but wait a bit, friend Barney,” went on the little man. “We have made two bargains, and now we ought to make the third, for there’s luck in odd numbers—or so people say.”

Barney would have walked on if he could, but when the little man said, “Wait a bit,” it seemed as though he were rooted to the ground, and he could not stir a step, however he tried.

Then the small one began to beg and plead with him to let him have the cow in exchange for the bumblebee, and for a long time Barney said no. At last, however, he could refuse no longer; the trade was made, and no sooner had the lad agreed and taken the bumblebee in his handkerchief, than—pouff! whisk! the small man and the cow both disappeared like the breath [306] from a window-pane.

Barney stared and wondered, and then he turned home again, but the nearer he came to the house the slower he walked, for he had some notion as to what his mother would have to say about the bargain he had made.

Well, things turned out just about as he had thought they would. When he first put the bumblebee and the others on the kitchen table, when the cockchafer began to play and the others to dance, his mother laughed and laughed as she had never laughed before in all her life. But when they stopped and she had come to herself again, she was so angry she was not content with scolding. She caught up a broom, and if Barney had not run out and hidden in the cow byre he would have had a clubbing that would have dusted his coat for him.

However, what was done was done, and what they were to do now to get food and money was [307] more than either of them could say. However, the next morning, Barney had a grand scheme in his head.

“Listen, mother; I have a scheme that may bring us in a few pennies,” he said. “I will take the cockchafer, the mouse and the bumblebee with me to the fair to-day. When we are there the cockchafer shall play the harp and the mouse and the bumblebee shall dance, and it may be that the people will be so pleased with their tricks that they will give me some pennies.”

There seemed nothing better to do than this, so the widow gave her consent, and off Barney set, and if his heart was light his stomach was lighter for he had had nothing to put in it that morning.

He trudged along and trudged along, and after a time he came to the stile, and there was the little green man sitting on it just as he had sat before.

“Good-day, Barney,” said he. [308]

“Good-day, and bad luck to you,” answered Barney. “It was an ill trick you played upon me when you took from me our three cows, and gave me only such nonsense as I carry here in my pocket.”

“Barney,” said the little man, and he spoke solemnly, “never again in all your life will you make as good a bargain as you made with me. I tell you now for a truth that the price I paid you shall be the making of you.”

“And how will that be?” asked Barney.

“That is what I came here to tell you,” said the little man. “It is no doubt well-known to you

that the king of Erin has a daughter."

"It is that," answered Barney.

"But it may not also be known to you that this princess is so beautiful that there never was anything like it seen in all the world before, and that she is also as sad as she is beautiful. It is [309] feared, indeed, that unless something happens to cheer her she will grieve her life away. Therefore, the king, her father, has promised that whoever can make her laugh three times shall have her for his wife."

"But what have I to do with all that?" asked Barney.

"You have this to do with it, that you may be the lad to raise the laugh and to have her for a wife, and it is with the cockchafer, the mouse and the bumblebee that you shall do it."

"And that's the truth!" cried Barney slapping his leg, "for sure there's never a soul in all the world that could see those creatures at their tricks and keep a sober face on him."

The little man then told him exactly how he was to proceed and act, and Barney listened till he [310] had made an end of all he had to say, and then pouff! he vanished, and Barney saw him no more.

He now turned his face away from the fair and toward where the palace lay, and off he set, one foot before the other, as fast as he could go.

After a long journey he came to the place he wished to go, and a very grand fine palace it was when he reached it. But in front of it there was a strange sight, and one that Barney had no liking for; for there in front of the door were twelve tall stakes, and upon eleven of these stakes were eleven heads, but upon the twelfth stake there was no head.

However, Barney did not stay there long looking at it, for he had other business on hand than that.

He marched up to the palace door and rapped upon it loudly with his stick. In a moment it opened and there stood a man, all in gold lace, looking out at him. "What do you want here?" he [311] asked.

"I have come to see the princess and to make her laugh," answered Barney as bold as brass.

"You have a hard task before you," said the man. "However, I am not the one to say you nay, and I will go and tell the king you are here."

He went away and then presently he came back again and the king was with him.

The king looked Barney up and down and then he said, "You are a fine stout lad, but I misdoubt me you are not the one to make the princess laugh. However, you may try it if you like, but first you must know the conditions. You must make her laugh three times before you can have her for a wife, and if you fail your head will be cut off and set upon a stake, for so the princess has made me promise it shall be." The king further told him that eleven stout lads had already [312] lost their heads,—"and there they are to prove it," he said, and he pointed to the stakes before the palace door.

Barney looked, and saw again that the twelfth had nothing on it, and he liked the looks of it even less than before, for it seemed to him it would fit his head exactly.

However, he was not one to turn back. "Your majesty, I will try it whether or no."

"Very well," said the king; "and when will you try?"

"Now," said Barney; "in a moment."

He then took out the cockchafer, the mouse and the bumblebee and tied them all together with a long string, one in front of the other, and set them on the floor and took the end of the string in his hand.

When the king saw that, he began to laugh, and the man in gold lace began to laugh. They laughed and laughed until the tears ran down their cheeks and they had to wipe them away.

"After all," said the king, "you may be the one to win the princess for a wife." With that they [313] set off down a long hall, the king first, and the man in gold lace next, and, last of all, Barney with the three little creatures following.

At the end of this hall was a grand fine room with a grand fine throne in it, and upon this throne sat the princess, and she was looking very sad. All her ladies that stood around looked sad too, for that was the polite thing for them to do when she was sorrowful.

When the princess saw the king she frowned; and when she saw the man in gold lace she scowled. But when she saw Barney in all his tags and rags holding one end of the string, and the three little creatures hopping along behind him, first she smiled and then she grinned, and then she threw back her head and let out such a laugh you could have heard it a mile away.

"That's one!" cried Barney. [314]

Then he untied the little creatures and called for a table and set them upon it, and he drew out the harp and stool and gave it to the cockchafer. It seated itself and tuned the harp, while the

princess and all her ladies stared and stared. Then it began to play and the mouse and the bumblebee began to dance; you'd have thought they'd had wings to their feet.

At that the princess let out a laugh that was twice as loud as the other.

"Thank you, princess," said Barney, "that's two."

At that the princess stopped laughing and looked as glum as the grave. The cockchafer played, the others danced, faster and faster, but not a third laugh could they get out of the princess, and it seemed as though Barney were to lose his head after all. But the little mouse saw as well as Barney what was like to happen, and all of a sudden he whirled around and brought his tail, [315] whack! across the bumblebee's mouth. That set the bumblebee to coughing. It coughed and coughed as though it would cough its head off. Then the princess began to laugh for the third time. The more it coughed the more she laughed till it seemed as though she might die of laughing.

"That makes the third time," cried Barney, "and now I think you'll own I've fairly won the princess."

Well, no one could deny that, so he was taken to another grand room in the palace and there he was washed and combed and dressed in fine clothes, and when that was done, he looked so brave and straight and handsome that the princess was glad enough to have him for a husband.

They were married the next day, and a coach and four were sent to bring the old mother to the wedding. When she came and saw her own son, Barney, dressed in that way and holding a royal [316] princess by the hand, she could hardly believe her eyes, and almost died of joy as the princess had of laughing. A great feast was made, and the little man in green was there, too, and feasted with the best of them, but nobody saw him for he had his red cap on his head, and that made him invisible.

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 29, "whinning" changed to "whining" (fox whining to itself)

Page 156, "shown" changed to "shone" (they shone so that)

Page 157, "shown" changed to "shone" (light shone through)

Page 209, repeated word "and" removed from text. Original read (the sky and and she was)

Page 280, "horsehair" changed to "horse-hair" to match rest of usage (coarse as horse-hair and)

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