

Brothers GRIMM

5 tales

THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE

THERE was once a fisherman who lived with his wife in a ditch, close by the sea-side. The fisherman used to go out all day a-fishing; and one day, as he sat on the shore with his rod, looking at the shining water and watching his line, all on a sudden his float was dragged away deep under the sea: and in drawing it up he pulled a great fish out of the water. The fish said to him, 'Pray let me live: I am not a real fish; I am an enchanted prince, put me in the water again, and let me go.' 'Oh!' said the man, 'you need not make so many words about the matter; I wish to have nothing to do with a fish that can talk; so swim away as soon as you please.' Then he put him back into the water, and the fish darted straight down to the bottom, and left a long streak of blood behind him.

When the fisherman went home to his wife in the ditch, he told her how he had caught a great fish, and how it had told him it was an enchanted prince, and that on hearing it speak he had let it go again. 'Did you no ask it for any thing?' said the wife. 'No,' said the man, 'what should I ask for?' 'Ah!' said the wife, 'we live very wretchedly here in this nasty stinking ditch; do go back, and tell the fish we want a little cottage.'

The fisherman did not much like the business: however, he went to the sea, and when he came there the water looked all yellow and green. And he stood at the water's edge, and said,

'O man of the sea!

Come listen to me,

For Alice my wife,

The plague of my life,

Has sent me to beg a boon of thee!

Then the fish came swimming to him, and said, 'Well, what does she want?' 'Ah!' answered the fisherman, 'my wife says that when I had caught you, I ought to have asked you for something before I let you go again; she does not like living any longer in the ditch, and wants a little cottage.' 'Go home, then,' said the fish, 'she is in the cottage already.' So the man went home, and saw his wife standing at the door of a cottage. 'Come in, come in,' said she; 'is not this much better than

the ditch?' And there was a parlour, and a bed-chamber, and a kitchen; and behind the cottage there was a little garden with all sorts of flowers and fruits, and a court-yard full of ducks and chickens. 'Ah!' said the fisherman, 'how happily we shall live!' 'We will try to do so at least,' said his wife.

Every thing went right for a week or two, and then Dame Alice said, 'Husband, there is not room enough in this cottage, the court-yard and garden are a great deal too small; I should like to have a large stone castle to live in; so go to the fish again, and tell him to give us a castle.' 'Wife,' said the fisherman, 'I don't like to go to him again, for perhaps he will be angry; we ought to be content with the cottage.' 'Nonsense!' said the wife; 'he will do it very willingly; go along, and try.'

The fisherman went; but his heart was very heavy: and when he came to the sea, it looked blue and gloomy, though it was quite calm, and he went close to it, and said,

'O man of the sea!

Come listen to me,

For Alice my wife,

The plague of my life,

Hath sent me to beg a boon of thee!

'Well, what does she want now?' said the fish. 'Ah!' said the man very sorrowfully, 'my wife wants to live in a stone castle.' 'Go home then,' said the fish, 'she is standing at the door of it already.' So away went the fisherman, and found his wife standing before a great castle. 'See,' said she, 'is not this grand?' With that they went into the castle together, and found a great many servants there, and the rooms all richly furnished and full of golden chairs and tables; and behind the castle was a garden, and a wood half a mile long, full of sheep, and goats, and hares, and deer; and in the court-yard were stables and cow-houses. 'Well,' said the man, 'now will we live contented and happy in this beautiful castle for the rest of our lives.' 'Perhaps we may,' said the wife; 'but let us consider and sleep upon it before we make up our minds:' so they went to bed.

The next morning, when Dame Alice awoke, it was broad day-light, and she jogged the fisherman with her elbow, and said, 'Get up, husband, and bestir yourself, for we must be king of all the land.' 'Wife, wife,' said the man, 'why should we wish to be king? I will not

be king.' 'Then I will,' said Alice. 'But, wife,' answered the fisherman, 'how can you be king? the fish cannot make you a king.' 'Husband,' said she, 'say no more about it, but go and try; I will be king!' So the man went away, quite sorrowful to think that his wife should want to be king. The sea looked a dark grey colour, and was covered with foam as he cried out,

'O man of the sea!

Come listen to me,

For Alice my wife,

The plague of my life,

Hath sent me to beg a boon of thee!

'Well, what would she have now?' said the fish. 'Alas!' said the man, 'my wife wants to be king.' 'Go home.' said the fish; 'she is king already.'

Then the fisherman went home; and as he came close to the palace, he saw a troop of soldiers, and heard the sound of drums and trumpets; and when he entered in, he saw his wife sitting on a high throne of gold and diamonds, with a golden crown upon her head; and on each side of her stood six beautiful maidens, each a head taller than the other. 'Well, wife,' said the fisherman, 'are you king?' 'Yes,' said she, 'I am king.' And when he had looked at her for a long time, he said; 'Ah, wife! what a fine thing it is to be king! now we shall never have any thing more to wish for.' 'I don't know how that may be,' said she; 'never is a long time. I am king, 'tis true, but I begin to be tired of it, and I think I should like to be emperor.' 'Alas, wife!' why should you wish to be emperor?' said the fisherman. 'Husband,' said she 'go to the fish; I say I will be emperor.' 'Ah, wife!' replied the fisherman, 'the fish cannot make an emperor, and I should not like to ask for such a thing.' 'I am king,' said Alice, 'and you are my slave, so go directly!' So the fisherman was obliged to go; and he muttered as he went along, 'This will come to no good, it is too much to ask, the fish will be tired at last, and then we shall repent of what we have done.' He soon arrived at the sea, and the water was quite black and muddy, and a mighty whirlwind blew over it; but he went to the shore, and said,

'O man of the sea!

Come listen to me,

For Alice my wife,

The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a boon of thee!

'What would she have now!' said the fish. 'Ah!' said the fisherman, 'she wants to be emperor.' 'Go home,' said the fish; 'she is emperor already.'

So he went home again; and as he came near he saw his wife sitting on a very lofty throne made of solid gold, with a great crown on her head full two yards high, and on each side of her stood her guards and attendants in a row, each one smaller than the other, from the tallest giant down to a little dwarf no bigger than my finger. And before her stood princes, and dukes, and earls: and the fisherman went up to her and said, 'Wife, are you emperor?' 'Yes,' said she, 'I am emperor.' 'Ah!' said the man as he gazed upon her, 'what a fine thing it is to be emperor!' 'Husband,' said she, 'why should we stay at being emperor; I will be pope next.' 'O wife, wife!' said he, 'how can you be pope? there is but one pope at a time in Christendom.' 'Husband,' said she, 'I will be pope this very day.' 'But,' replied the husband; 'the fish cannot make you pope.' 'What nonsense!' said she, 'if he can make an emperor, he can make a pope, go and try him.' So the fisherman went. But when he came to the shore the wind was raging, and the sea was tossed up and down like boiling water, and the ships were in the greatest distress and danced upon the waves most fearfully; in the middle of the sky there was a little blue, but towards the south it was all red as if a dreadful storm was rising. At this the fisherman was terribly frightened, and trembled, so that his knees knocked together: but he went to the shore and said,

'O man of the sea!
Come listen to me,
For Alice my wife,
The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a boon of thee!

'What does she want now?' said the fish. 'Ah!' said the fisherman, 'my wife wants to be pope.' 'Go home,' said the fish, 'she is pope already.'

Then the fisherman went home, and found his wife sitting on a throne that was two miles high; and she had three great crowns on her head, and around stood all the pomp and power of the Church; and on each side were two rows of burning lights, of all sizes, the greatest as large as the highest and biggest tower in the world, and the least no larger

than a small rushlight. 'Wife,' said the fisherman as he looked at all this grandeur, 'Are you pope?' 'Yes,' said she, 'I am pope.' 'Well, wife,' replied he, 'it is a grand thing to be pope; and now you must be content, for you can be nothing greater.' 'I will consider of that,' said the wife. Then they went to bed: but Dame Alice could not sleep all night for thinking what she should be next. At last morning came, and the sun rose. 'Ha!' thought she as she looked at it through the window, 'cannot I prevent the sun rising?' At this she was very angry, and she wakened her husband, and said, 'Husband, go to the fish and tell him I want to be lord of the sun and moon.' The fisherman was half asleep, but the thought frightened him so much, that he started and fell out of bed. 'Alas, wife!' said he, 'cannot you be content to be pope?' 'No,' said she, 'I am very uneasy, and cannot bear to see the sun and moon rise without my leave. Go to the fish directly.'

Then the man went trembling for fear; and as he was going down to the shore a dreadful storm arose, so that the trees and the rocks shook; and the heavens became black, and the lightning played, and the thunder rolled; and you might have seen in the sea great black waves like mountains with a white crown of foam upon them; and the fisherman said,

'O man of the sea!

Come listen to me,

For Alice my wife,

The plague of my life,

Hath sent me to beg a boon of thee!

'What does she want now?' said the fish. 'Ah!' said he, 'she wants to be lord of the sun and moon.' 'Go home,' said the fish, 'to your ditch again!' And there they live to this very day.

TOM THUMB

THERE was once a poor woodman sitting by the fire in his cottage, and his wife sat by his side spinning. 'How lonely it is,' said he, 'for you and me to sit here by ourselves without any children to play about and amuse us, while other people seem so happy and merry with their children!' 'What you say is very true,' said the wife, sighing and turning round her wheel, 'how happy should I be if I had but one child! and if it were ever so small, nay, if it were no bigger than my thumb, I should be very happy, and love it dearly.' Now it came to pass that this good woman's wish was fulfilled just as she desired; for, some time afterwards, she had a little boy who was quite healthy and strong, but not much bigger than my thumb. So they said, 'Well, we cannot say we have not got what we wished for, and, little as he is, we all love him dearly;' and they called him Tom Thumb.

They gave him plenty of food, yet he never grew bigger, but remained just the same size as when he was born; still his eyes were sharp and sparkling, and he soon showed himself to be a clever little fellow, who always knew well what he was about. One day, as the woodman was getting ready to go into the wood to cut fuel, he said, 'I wish I had some one to bring the cart after me, for I want to make haste.' 'O father!' cried Tom, 'I will take care of that; the cart shall be in the wood by the time you want it.' Then the woodman laughed, and said, 'How can that be? you cannot reach up to the horse's bridle.' 'Never mind that, father,' said Tom : 'if my mother will only harness the horse, I will get into his ear and tell him which way to go.' 'Well,' said the father, 'we will try for once.'

When the time came, the mother harnessed the horse to the cart, and put Tom into his ear; and as he sat there, the little man told the beast how to go, crying out, 'Go on,' and 'Stop,' as he wanted; so the horse went on just as if the woodman had driven it himself into the wood. It happened that, as the horse was going a little too fast, and Tom was calling out 'Gently! Gently!' two strangers came up. 'What an odd thing that is!' said one, 'there is a cart going along, and I hear a carter talking to the horse, but can see no one.' 'That is strange,' said the other; 'let us follow the cart and see where it goes.' So they went on into the wood, till at last they came to the place where the woodman was. Then Tom Thumb, seeing his father, cried out, 'See, father, here I am, with the cart, all right and safe; now take me down.' So his father

took hold of the horse with one hand, and with the other took his son out of the ear; then he put him down upon a straw, where he sat as merry as you please. The two strangers were all this time looking on, and did not know what to say for wonder. At last one took the other aside and said, 'That little urchin will make our fortune if we can get him and carry him about from town to town as a show: we must buy him.' So they went to the woodman and asked him what he would take for the little man: 'He will be better off,' said they, 'with us than with you.' 'I won't sell him at all,' said the father, 'my own flesh and blood is dearer to me than all the silver and gold in the world.' But Tom, hearing of the bargain they wanted to make, crept up his father's coat to his shoulder, and whispered in his ear, 'Take the money, father, and let them have me, I'll soon come back to you.'

So the woodman at last agreed to sell Tom to the strangers for a large piece of gold. 'Where do you like to sit?' said one of them. 'Oh! put me on the rim of your hat, that will be a nice gallery for me; I can walk about there, and see the country as we go along.' So they did as he wished; and when Tom had taken leave of his father, they took him away with them. They journeyed on till it began to be dusky, and then the little man said, 'Let me get down, I'm tired.' So the man took off his hat and set him down on a clod of earth in a ploughed field by the side of the road. But Tom ran about amongst the furrows, and at last slipt into an old mouse-hole. 'Good night, masters,' said he, 'I'm off! mind and look sharp after me the next time.' They ran directly to the place, and poked the ends of their sticks into the mouse-hole, but all in vain; Tom only crawled farther and farther in, and at last it became quite dark, so that they were obliged to go their way without their prize, as sulky as you please.

When Tom found they were gone, he came out of his hiding-place. 'What dangerous walking it is,' said he, 'in this ploughed field! If I were to fall from one of these great clods, I should certainly break my neck.' At last, by good luck, he found a large empty snail-shell. 'This is lucky,' said he, 'I can sleep here very well,' and in he crept. Just as he was falling asleep he heard two men passing, and one said to the other, 'How shall we manage to steal that rich parson's silver and gold?' 'I'll tell you,' cried Tom. 'What noise was that?' said the thief, frightened, 'I am sure I heard some one speak.' They stood still listening, and Tom said, 'Take me with you, and I'll soon show you how to get the parson's money.' 'But where are you?' said they. 'Look about on the ground,' answered he, 'and listen where the sound comes from.' At last the thieves found him out, and lifted him up in their

hands. 'You little urchin!' said they, 'what can you do for us?' 'Why I can get between the iron window-bars of the parson's house, and throw you out whatever you want.' 'That's a good thought,' said the thieves, 'come along, we shall see what you can do.'

When they came to the parson's house, Tom slipt through the window-bars into the room, and then called out as loud as he could bawl, 'Will you have all that is here?' At this the thieves were frightened, and said, 'Softly, softly! Speak low, that you may not awaken any body. But Tom pretended not to understand them, and bawled out again, 'How much will you have? Shall I throw it all out?' Now the cook lay in the next room, and hearing a noise she raised herself in her bed and listened. Meantime the thieves were frightened, and ran off to a little distance; but at last they plucked up courage, and said, 'The little urchin is only trying to make fools of us.' So they came back and whispered softly to him, saying, 'Now let us have no more of your jokes, but throw out some of the money.' Then Tom called out as loud as he could, 'Very well: hold your hands, here it comes.' The cook heard this quite plain, so she sprang out of bed and ran to open the door. The thieves ran off as if a wolf was at their tails; and the maid, having groped about and found nothing, went away for a light. By the time she returned, Tom had slipt off into the barn; and when the cook had looked about and searched every hole and corner, and found nobody; she went to bed, thinking she must have been dreaming with her eyes open. The little man crawled about in the hay-loft, and at last found a glorious place to finish his night's rest in; so he laid himself down, meaning to sleep till day-light, and then find his way home to his father and mother. But, alas! how cruelly was he disappointed! what crosses and sorrows happen in this world! The cook got up early before day-break to feed the cows: she went straight to the hay-loft, and carried away a large bundle of hay with the little man in the middle of it fast asleep. He still, however, slept on, and did not awake till he found himself in the mouth of the cow, who had taken him up with a mouthful of hay: 'Good lack-a-day!' said he, 'how did I manage to tumble into the mill?' But he soon found out where he really was, and was obliged to have all his wits about him in order that he might not get between the cow's teeth, and so be crushed to death. At last down he went into her stomach. 'It is rather dark here,' said he; 'they forgot to build windows in this room to let the sun in: a candle would be no bad thing.'

Though he made the best of his bad luck, he did not like his quarters at all; and the worst of it was, that more and more hay was always

coming down, and the space in which he was became smaller and smaller. At last he cried out as loud as he could, 'Don't bring me any more hay! Don't bring me any more hay!' The maid happened to be just then milking the cow, and hearing some one speak and seeing nobody, and yet being quite sure it was the same voice that she had heard in the night, she was so frightened that she fell off her stool and upset the milk-pail. She ran off as fast as she could to her master the parson, and said, 'Sir, sir, the cow is talking!' But the parson said, 'Woman, thou art surely mad!' However, he went with her into the cow-house to see what was the matter. Scarcely had they set their foot on the threshold, when Tom called out, 'Don't bring me any more hay!' Then the parson himself was frightened; and thinking the cow was surely bewitched, ordered that she should be killed directly. So the cow was killed, and the stomach, in which Tom lay, was thrown out upon a dunghill.

Tom soon set himself to work to get out, which was not a very easy task; but at last, just as he had made room to get his head out, a new misfortune befell him: a hungry wolf sprang out, and swallowed the whole stomach with Tom in it at a single gulp, and ran away. Tom, however, was not disheartened; and, thinking the wolf would not dislike having some chat with him as he was going along, he called out, 'My good friend, I can show you a famous treat.' 'Where's that?' said the wolf. 'In such and such a house,' said Tom, describing his father's house, 'you can crawl through the drain into the kitchen and there you will find cakes, ham, beef, and every thing your heart can desire.' The wolf did not want to be asked twice; so that very night he went to the house and crawled through the drain into the kitchen, and ate and drank there to his heart's content. As soon as he was satisfied, he wanted to get away, but he had eaten so much that he could not get out the same way that he came in. This was just what Tom had reckoned upon; and he now began to set up a great shout, making all the noise he could. 'Will you be quiet?' said the wolf: 'you'll awaken every body in the house.' 'What's that to me?' said the little man: 'you have had your frolic, now I've a mind to be merry myself;' and he began again singing and shouting as loud as he could.

The woodman and his wife, being awakened by the noise, peeped through a crack in the door; but when they saw that the wolf was there, you may well suppose that they were terribly frightened; and the woodman ran for his axe, and gave his wife a scythe. – 'Now do you stay behind,' said the woodman; 'and when I have knocked him on the head, do you rip up his belly for him with the scythe.' Tom heard all

this, and said, 'Father, father! I am here, the wolf has swallowed me:' and his father said, 'Heaven be praised! we have found our dear child again;' and he told his wife not to use the scythe, for fear she should hurt him. Then he aimed a great blow, and struck the wolf on the head, and killed him on the spot; and when he was dead they cut open his body and set Tommy free. 'Ah!' said the father, 'what fears we have had for you!' 'Yes, father,' answered he, 'I have travelled all over the world, since we parted, in one way or other; and now I am very glad to get fresh air again.' 'Why, where have you been?' said his father. 'I have been in a mouse-hole, in a snail-shell, down a cow's throat, and in the wolf's belly; and yet here I am again safe and sound.' 'Well,' said they 'we will not sell you again for all the riches in the world.' So they hugged and kissed their dear little son, and gave him plenty to eat and drink, and fetched new clothes for him, for his old ones were quite spoiled on his journey.

THE GRATEFUL BEASTS

A CERTAIN man, who had lost almost all his money, resolved to set off with the little that was left him, and travel into the wide world. Then the first place he came to was a village, where the young people were running about crying and shouting. 'What is the matter?' asked he. 'See here,' answered they, 'we have got a mouse that we make dance to please us. Do look at him: what a droll sight it is! how he jumps about!' But the man pitied the poor little thing, and said, 'Let the mouse go, and I will give you money.' So he gave them some, and took the mouse and let him run; and he soon jumped into a hole that was close by, and was out of their reach.

Then he travelled on and came to another village, and there the children had got an ass that they made stand on its hind legs and tumble, at which they laughed and shouted, and gave the poor beast no rest. So the good man gave them also some money to let the poor ass alone.

At the next village he came to, the young people had got a bear that had been taught to dance, and they were plaguing the poor thing sadly. Then he gave them too some money to let the beast go, and the bear was very glad to get on his four feet, and seemed quite happy.

But the man had now given away all the money he had in the world, and had not a shilling in his pocket. Then said he to himself, 'The king has heaps of gold in his treasury that he never uses; I cannot die of hunger, I hope I shall be forgiven if I borrow a little, and when I get rich again I will repay it all.'

Then he managed to get into the treasury, and took a very little money; but as he came out the king's guards saw him; so they said he was a thief, and took him to the Judge, and he was sentenced to be thrown into the water in a box. The lid of the box was full of holes to let in air, and a jug of water and a loaf of bread were given him.

Whilst he was swimming along in the water very sorrowfully, he heard something nibbling and biting at the lock; and all of a sudden it fell off, the lid flew open, and there stood his old friend the little mouse, who had done him this service. And then came the ass and the bear, and pulled the box ashore; and all helped him because he had been kind to them.

But now they did not know what to do next, and began to consult together; when on a sudden a wave threw on the shore a beautiful white stone that looked like an egg. Then the bear said, 'That's a lucky thing: this is the wonderful stone, and whoever has it may have every thing else that he wishes.' So the man went and picked up the stone, and wished for a palace and a garden, and a stud of horses; and his wish was fulfilled as soon as he had made it. And there he lived in his castle and garden, with fine stables and horses; and all was so grand and beautiful, that he never could wonder and gaze at it enough.

After some time, some merchants passed by that way. 'See,' said they, 'what a princely palace! The last time we were here, it was nothing but a desert waste.' They were very curious to know how all this had happened; so they went in and asked the master of the palace how it had been so quickly raised. 'I have done nothing myself,' answered he, 'it is the wonderful stone that did all.' - 'What a strange stone that must be!' said they: then he invited them in and showed it to them. They asked him whether he would sell it, and offered him all their goods for it; and the goods seemed so fine and costly, that he quite forgot that the stone would bring him in a moment a thousand better and richer things, and he agreed to make the bargain.

Scarcely was the stone, however, out of his hands before all his riches were gone, and he found himself sitting in his box in the water, with his jug of water and loaf of bread by his side: The grateful beasts, the mouse, the ass, and the bear, came directly to help him; but the mouse found she could not nibble off the lock this time, for it was a great deal stronger than before. Then the bear said, 'We must find the wonderful stone again, or all our endeavours will be fruitless.'

The merchants, meantime, had taken up their abode in the palace; so away went the three friends, and when they came near, the bear said, 'Mouse, go in and look through the key-hole and see where the stone is kept: you are small, nobody will see you.' The mouse did as she was told, but, soon came back and said, 'Bad news! I have looked in, and the stone hangs under the looking-glass by a red silk string, and on each side of it sits a great cat with fiery eyes to watch it.'

Then the others took council together and said, 'Go back again, and wait till the master of the palace is in bed asleep, then nip his nose and pull his hair.' Away went the mouse, and did as they directed her; and the master jumped up very angry, and rubbed his nose, and cried, 'Those rascally cats are good for nothing at all, they let the mice eat

my very nose and pull the hair off my head.' Then he hunted them out of the room; and so the mouse had the best of the game.

Next night as soon as the master was asleep, the mouse crept in again; and nibbled at the red silken string to which the stone hung, till down it dropped, and she rolled it along to the door; but when it got there, the poor little mouse was quite tired; so she said to the ass, 'Put in your foot, and lift it over the threshold.' This was soon done: and they took up the stone, and set off for the water side. Then the ass said, 'How shall we reach the box?' But the bear answered, 'That is easily managed; I can swim very well, and do you, donkey, put your fore feet over my shoulders; - mind and hold fast, and take the stone in your mouth: as for you, mouse, you can sit in my ear.'

It was all settled thus, and away they swam. After a time, the bear began to brag and boast: 'We are brave fellows, are not we, ass?' said he; 'what do you think?' But the ass held his tongue, and said not a word. 'Why don't you answer me?' said the bear, 'you must be an ill-mannered brute not to speak when you're spoken to.' When the ass heard this, he could hold no longer; so he opened his mouth, and dropped the wonderful stone. 'I could not speak,' said he; 'did not you know I had the stone in my mouth? now 'tis lost, and that's your fault.' 'Do but hold your tongue and be quiet,' said the bear; 'and let us think what's to be done.'

Then a council was held : and at last they called together all the frogs, their wives and families, relations and friends, and said: 'A great enemy is coming to eat you all up; but never mind, bring us up plenty of stones, and we'll build a strong wall to guard you. The frogs hearing this were dreadfully frightened, and set to work, bringing up all the stones they could find. At last came a large fat frog pulling along the wonderful stone by the silken string: and when the bear saw it, he jumped for joy, and said, 'Now we have found what we wanted.' So he released the old frog from his load, and told him to tell his friends they might go about their business as soon as they pleased.

Then the three friends swam off again for the box; and the lid flew open, and they found that they were but just in time, for the bread was all eaten, and the jug almost empty. But as soon as the good man had the stone in his hand, he wished himself safe and sound in his palace again; and in a moment there he was, with his garden and his stables and his horses; and his three faithful friends dwelt with him, and they all spent their time happily and merrily as long as they lived.

SNOW-DROP

IT was in the middle of winter, when the broad flakes of snow were falling around, that a certain queen sat working at a window, the frame of which was made of fine black ebony; and as she was looking out upon the snow, she pricked her finger, and three drops of blood fell upon it. Then she gazed thoughtfully upon the red drops which sprinkled the white snow, and said, 'Would that my little daughter may be as white as that snow, as red as the blood, and as black as the ebony window-frame!' And so the little girl grew up: her skin was as white as snow, her cheeks as rosy as the blood, and her hair as black as ebony; and she was called Snow-drop.

But this queen died; and the king soon married another wife, who was very beautiful, but so proud that she could not bear to think that any one could surpass her. She had a magical looking-glass, to which she used to go and gaze upon herself in it, and say,

'Tell me, glass, tell me true!

Of all the ladies in the land,

Who is the fairest? tell me who?'

And the glass answered,

'Thou, queen, art fairest in the land.'

But Snow-drop grew more and more beautiful; and when she was seven years old, she was as bright as the day, and fairer than the queen herself. Then the glass one day answered the queen, when she went to consult it as usual,

'Thou, queen, may'st fair and beauteous be,

But Snow-drop is lovelier far than thee!'

When she heard this, she turned pale with rage and envy; and called to one of her servants and said, 'Take Snow-drop away into the wide wood, that I may never see her more.' Then the servant led her away; but his heart melted when she begged him to spare her life, and he said, 'I will not hurt thee, thou pretty child.' So he left her by herself; and though he thought it most likely that the wild beasts would tear

her in pieces, he felt as if a great weight were taken off his heart when he had made up his mind not to kill her, but leave her to her fate.

Then poor Snow-drop wandered along through the wood in great fear; and the wild beasts roared about her, but none did her any harm. In the evening she came to a little cottage, and went in there to rest herself, for her little feet would carry her no farther. Every thing was spruce and neat in the cottage: on the table was spread a white cloth, and there were seven little plates with seven little loaves, and seven little glasses with wine in them; and knives and forks laid in order; and by the wall stood seven little beds. Then, as she was very hungry, she picked a little piece off each loaf, and drank a very little wine out of each glass; and after that she thought she would lie down and rest. So she tried all the little beds; and one was too long, and another was too short, till at last the seventh suited her; and there she laid herself down, and went to sleep.

Presently in came the masters of the cottage, who were seven little dwarfs that lived among the mountains, and dug and searched for gold. They lighted up their seven lamps, and saw directly that all was not right. The first said, 'Who has been sitting on my stool?' The second, 'Who has been eating off my plate?' The third, 'Who has been picking my bread?' The fourth, 'Who has been meddling with my spoon?' The fifth, 'Who has been handling my fork?' The sixth, 'Who has been cutting with my knife?' The seventh, 'Who has been drinking my wine?' Then the first looked round and said, 'Who has been lying on my bed?' And the rest came running to him, and every one cried out that somebody had been upon his bed. But the seventh saw Snow-drop, and called all his brethren to come and see her; and they cried out with wonder and astonishment, and brought their lamps to look at her, and said, 'Good heavens! what a lovely child she is!' And they were delighted to see her, and took care not to wake her; and the seventh dwarf slept an hour with each of the other dwarfs in turn, till the night was gone.

In the morning, Snow-drop told them all her story; and they pitied her, and said if she would keep all things in order, and cook and wash, and knit and spin for them, she might stay where she was, and they would take good care of her. Then they went out all day long to their work, seeking for gold and silver in the mountains; and Snow-drop remained at home: and they warned her, and said, 'The queen will soon find out where you are, so take care and let no one in.'

But the queen, now that she thought Snow-drop was dead, believed that she was certainly the handsomest lady in the land; and she went to her glass and said,

'Tell me, glass, tell me true!
Of all the ladies in the land,
Who is fairest? tell me who?'

And the glass answered,

'Thou, queen, art the fairest in all this land;
But over the hills, in the greenwood shade,
Where the seven dwarfs their dwelling have made,
There Snow-drop is hiding her head, and she
Is lovelier far, O queen! than thee.'

Then the queen was very much alarmed; for she knew that the glass always spoke the truth, and was sure that the servant had betrayed her. And she could not bear to think that any one lived who was more beautiful than she was; so she disguised herself as an old pedlar, and went her way over the hills to the place where the dwarfs dwelt. Then she knocked at the door, and cried 'Fine wares to sell!' Snow-drop looked out at the window, and said, 'Good-day, good-woman; what have you to sell?' 'Good wares, fine wares,' said she; 'laces and bobbins of all colours.' 'I will let the old lady in; she seems to be a very good sort of body,' thought Snow-drop; so she ran down, and unbolted the door. 'Bless me!' said the old woman, 'how badly your stays are laced! Let me lace them up with one of my nice new laces.' Snow-drop did not dream of any mischief; so she stood up before the old woman; but she set to work so nimbly, and pulled the lace so tight, that Snowdrop lost her breath, and fell down as if she were dead.

'There's an end of all thy beauty,' said the spiteful queen, and went away home.

In the evening the seven dwarfs returned; and I need not say how grieved they were to see their faithful Snow-drop stretched upon the ground motionless, as if she were quite dead. However, they lifted her up, and when they found what was the matter, they cut the lace; and in a little time she began to breathe, and soon came to life again. Then they said, 'The old woman was the queen herself; take care another time, and let no one in when we are away.'

When the queen got home, she went straight to her glass, and spoke to it as usual; but to her great surprise it still said,

'Thou, queen, art the fairest in all this land;
But over the hills, in the greenwood shade,
Where the seven dwarfs their dwelling have made,
There Snow-drop is hiding her head; and she
Is lovelier far, O queen! than thee.'

Then the blood ran cold in her heart with spite and malice to see that Snow-drop still lived; and she dressed herself up again in a disguise, but very different from the one she wore before, and took with her a poisoned comb. When she reached the dwarfs' cottage, she knocked at the door, and cried 'Fine wares to sell!' But Snow-drop said, 'I dare not let any one in.' Then the queen said, 'Only look at my beautiful combs;' and gave her the poisoned one. And it looked so pretty that she took it up and put it into her hair to try it; but the moment it touched her head the poison was so powerful that she fell down senseless. 'There you may lie,' said the queen, and went her way. But by good luck the dwarfs returned very early that evening; and when they saw Snow-drop lying on the ground, they thought what had happened, and soon found the poisoned comb. And when they took it away, she recovered, and told them all that had passed; and they warned her once more not to open the door to any one.

Meantime the queen went home to her glass, and trembled with rage when she received exactly the same answer as before; and she said, 'Snow-drop shall die, if it costs me my life.' So she went secretly into a chamber, and prepared a poisoned apple: the outside looked very rosy and tempting, but whoever tasted it was sure to die. Then she dressed herself up as a peasant's wife, and travelled over the hills to the dwarfs' cottage, and knocked at the door; but Snow-drop put her head out of the window and said, 'I dare not let any one in, for the dwarfs have told me not.' 'Do as you please,' said the old woman, 'but at any rate take this pretty apple; I will make you a present of it.' 'No,' said Snow-drop, 'I dare not take it.' 'You silly girl!' answered the other, 'what are you afraid of? do you think it is poisoned? Come! do you eat one part, and I will eat the other.' Now the apple was so prepared that one side was good, though the other side was poisoned. Then Snow-drop was very much tempted to taste, for the apple looked exceedingly nice; and when she saw the old woman eat, she could refrain no longer. But she had scarcely put the piece into her mouth, when she

fell down dead upon the ground. 'This time nothing will save thee,' said the queen; and she went home to her glass, and at last it said

'Thou, queen, art the fairest of all the fair.'

And then her envious heart was glad, and as happy as such a heart could be.

When evening came, and the dwarfs returned home, they found Snow-drop lying on the ground: no breath passed her lips, and they were afraid that she was quite dead. They lifted her up, and combed her hair, and washed her face with wine and water; but all was in vain, for the little girl seemed quite dead. So they laid her down upon a bier, and all seven watched and bewailed her three whole days; and then they proposed to bury her: but her cheeks were still rosy, and her face looked just as it did while she was alive; so they said, 'We will never bury her in the cold ground.' And they made a coffin of glass, so that they might still look at her, and wrote her name upon it, in golden letters, and that she was a king's daughter. And the coffin was placed upon the hill, and one of the dwarfs always sat by it and watched. And the birds of the air came too, and bemoaned Snow-drop: first of all came an owl, and then a raven, but at last came a dove.

And thus Snow-drop lay for a long long time, and still only looked as though she were asleep; for she was even now as white as snow, and as red as blood, and as black as ebony. At last a prince came and called at the dwarfs' house; and he saw Snow-drop, and read what was written in golden letters. Then he offered the dwarfs money, and earnestly prayed them to let him take her away; but they said, 'We will not part with her for all the gold in the world.' At last however they had pity on him, and gave him the coffin: but the moment he lifted it up to carry it home with him, the piece of apple fell from between her lips, and Snow-drop awoke, and said, 'Where am I?' And the prince answered, 'Thou art safe with me.' Then he told her all that had happened, and said, 'I love you better than all the world: come with me to my father's palace, and you shall be my wife.' And Snow-drop consented, and went home with the prince; and every thing was prepared with great pomp and splendour for their wedding.

To the feast was invited, among the rest, Snow-drop's old enemy the queen; and as she was dressing herself in fine rich clothes, she looked in the glass, and said,

'Tell me, glass, tell me true!

Of all the ladies in the land.

Who is fairest? tell me who?'

And the glass answered,

'Thou, lady, art loveliest here, I ween;

But lovelier far is the new-made queen.'

When she heard this, she started with rage; but her envy and curiosity were so great, that she could not help setting out to see the bride. And when she arrived, and saw that it was no other than Snow-drop, who, as she thought, had been dead a long while, she choked with passion, and fell ill and died; but Snow-drop and the prince lived and reigned happily over that land many many years.

THE WATER OF LIFE

LONG before you and I were born there reigned, in a country a great way off, a king who had three sons. This king once fell very ill, so ill that nobody thought he would live. His sons were very much grieved at their father's sickness; and as they walked weeping in the garden of the palace, an old man met them and asked what they ailed. They told him their father was so ill that they were afraid nothing could save him. 'I know what would,' said the old man; 'it is the Water of Life. If he could have a draught of it he would be well again, but it is very hard to get.' Then the eldest son said, 'I will soon find it,' and went to the sick king, and begged that he might go in search of the Water of Life, as it was the only thing that could save him. 'No,' said the king; 'I had rather die than place you in such great danger as you must meet with in your journey.' But he begged so hard that the king let him go; and the prince thought to himself, 'If I bring my father this water I shall be his dearest son, and he will make me heir to his kingdom.'

Then he set out, and when he had gone on his way some time he came to a deep valley overhung with rocks and woods; and as he looked around there stood above him on one of the rocks a little dwarf, who called out to him and said, 'Prince, whither hastest thou so fast?' 'What is that to you, little ugly one?' said the prince sneeringly, and rode on his way. But the little dwarf fell into a great rage at his behaviour, and laid a spell of ill luck upon him, so that, as he rode on, the mountain pass seemed to become narrower and narrower, and at last the way, was so straitened that he could not go a step forward, and when he thought to have turned his horse round and gone back the way he came, the passage he found had closed behind also, and shut him quite up; he next tried to get off his horse and make his way on foot, but this he was unable to do, and so there he was forced to abide spell-bound.

Meantime the king his father was lingering on in daily hope of his return, till at last the second son said, 'Father, I will go in search of this Water;' for he thought to himself, 'My brother is surely dead, and the kingdom will fall to me if I have good luck in my journey.' The king was at first very unwilling to let him go, but at last yielded to his wish. So he set out and followed the same road which his brother had taken, and met the same dwarf; who stopped him at the same spot, and said as before, 'Prince, whither hastest thou so fast?' 'Mind your own affairs, busy body!' answered the prince scornfully, and rode off. But

the dwarf put the same enchantment upon him, and when he came like the other to the narrow pass in the mountains he could neither move forward nor backward. Thus it is with proud silly people, who think themselves too wise to take advice.

When the second prince had thus stayed away a long while, the youngest said he would go and search for the Water of Life, and trusted he should soon be able to make his father well again. The dwarf met him too at the same spot, and said, 'Prince, whither hastest thou so fast?' and the prince said, 'I go in search of the Water of Life, because my father is ill and like to die: - can you help me?' 'Do you know where it is to be found?' asked the dwarf. 'No,' said the prince. 'Then as you have spoken to me kindly and sought for advice, I will tell you how and where to go. The Water you seek springs from a well in an enchanted castle, and that you may be able to go in safety I will give you an iron wand and two little loaves of bread; strike the iron door of the castle three times with the wand, and it will open: two hungry lions will be lying down inside gaping for their prey; but if you throw them the bread they will let you pass; then hasten on to the well and take some of the Water of Life before the clock strikes twelve, for if you tarry longer the door will shut upon you for ever.'

Then the prince thanked the dwarf for his friendly aid, and took the wand and the bread and went travelling on and on over sea and land, till he came to his journey's end, and found every thing to be as the dwarf had told him. The door flew open at the third stroke of the wand, and when the lions were quieted he went on through the castle, and came at length to a beautiful hall; around it he saw several knights sitting in a trance; then he pulled off their rings and put them on his own fingers. In another room he saw on a table a sword, and a loaf of bread, which he also took. Farther on he came to a room where a beautiful young lady sat upon a couch, who welcomed him joyfully, and said, if he would set her free from the spell that bound her, the kingdom should be his if he would come back in a year and marry her; then she told him that the well that held the Water of Life was in the palace gardens, and bade him make haste and draw what he wanted before the clock struck twelve. Then he went on, and as he walked through beautiful gardens he came to a delightful shady spot in which stood a couch; and he thought to himself, as he felt tired, that he would rest himself for a while and gaze on the lovely scenes around him. So he laid himself down, and sleep fell upon him unawares and he did not wake up till the clock was striking a quarter to twelve; then he sprung from the couch dreadfully frightened, ran to the well, filled

a cup that was standing by him full of Water, and hastened to get away in time. Just as he was going out of the iron door it struck twelve, and the door fell so quickly upon him that it tore away a piece of his heel.

When he found himself safe he was overjoyed to think that he had got the Water of Life; and as he was going on his way homewards, he passed by the little dwarf, who when he saw the sword and the loaf said, 'You have made a noble prize; with the sword you can at a blow slay whole armies, and the bread will never fail.' Then the prince thought to himself, 'I cannot go home to my father without my brothers;' so he said, 'Dear dwarf, cannot you tell me where my two brothers are, who set out in search of the Water of Life before me and never came back?' 'I have shut them up by a charm between two mountains,' said the dwarf, 'because they were proud and ill behaved, and scorned to ask advice' The prince begged so hard for his brothers that the dwarf at last set them free, though unwillingly, saying, 'Beware of them, for they have bad hearts.' Their brother, however, was greatly rejoiced to see them, and told them all that had happened to him, how he had found the Water of Life, and had taken a cup full of it, and how he had set a beautiful princess free from a spell that bound her; and how she had engaged to wait a whole year, and then to marry him and give him the kingdom. Then they all three rode on together, and on their way home came to a country that was laid waste by war and a dreadful famine, so that it was feared all must die for want. But the prince gave the king of the land the bread, and all his kingdom ate of it. And he slew the enemy's army with the wonderful sword, and left the kingdom in peace and plenty. In the same manner he befriended two other countries that they passed through on their way.

When they came to the sea, they got into a ship, and during their voyage the two eldest said to themselves, 'Our brother has got the Water which we could not find, therefore our father will forsake us, and give him the kingdom which is our right;' so they were full of envy and revenge, and agreed together how they could ruin him. They waited till he was fast asleep, and then poured the Water of Life out of the cup and took it for themselves, giving him bitter sea-water instead. And when they came to their journey's end, the youngest son brought his cup to the sick king, that he might drink and be healed. Scarcely, however, had he tasted the bitter sea-water when he became worse even than he was before, and then both the elder sons came in and blamed the youngest for what he had done, and said that he wanted to

poison their father, but that they had found the Water of Life and had brought it with them. He no sooner began to drink of what they brought him, than he felt his sickness leave him, and was as strong and well as in his young days; then they went to their brother and laughed at him, and said, 'Well, brother, you found the Water of Life, did you? you have had the trouble and we shall have the reward; pray, with all your cleverness why did not you manage to keep your eyes open? Next year one of us will take away your beautiful princess, if you do not take care; you had better say nothing about this to our father, for he does not believe a word you say, and if you tell tales, you shall lose your life into the bargain, but be quiet and we will let you off.'

The old king was still very angry with his youngest son and thought he really meant to have taken away his life; so he called his court together and asked what should be done, and it was settled that he should be put to death. The prince knew nothing of what was going on, till one day when the king's chief huntsman went a-hunting with him, and they were alone in the wood together, the huntsman looked so sorrowful that the prince said, 'My friend, what is the matter with you?' 'I cannot and dare not tell you,' said he. But the prince begged hard and said, 'Only say what it is, and do not think I shall be angry, for I will forgive you.' 'Alas!' said the huntsman, 'the king has ordered me to shoot you.' The prince started at this, and said, 'Let me live, and I will change dresses with you; you shall take my royal coat to show to my father, and do you give me your shabby one.' 'With all my heart,' said the huntsman; 'I am sure I shall be glad to save you, for I could not have shot you.' Then he took the prince's coat, and gave him the shabby one, and went away through the wood.

Some time after, three grand embassies came to the old king's court, with rich gifts of gold and precious stones for his youngest son, which were sent from the three kings to whom he had lent his sword and loaf of bread, to rid them of their enemy, and feed their people. This touched the old king's heart, and he thought his son might still be guiltless, and said to his court, 'Oh! that my son were still alive! how it grieves me that I had him killed!' 'He still lives,' said the huntsman; 'and I rejoice that I had pity on him, and saved him, for when the time came, I could not shoot him, but let him go in peace and brought home his royal coat.' At this the king was overwhelmed with joy, and made it known throughout all his kingdom, that if his son would come back to his court, he would forgive him.

Meanwhile the princess was eagerly waiting the return of her deliverer, and had a road made leading up to her palace all of shining gold; and told her courtiers that whoever came on horseback and rode straight up to the gate upon it, was her true lover, and that they must let him in; but whoever rode on one side of it, they must be sure was not the right one, and must send him away at once.

The time soon came, when the eldest thought he would make haste to go to the princess, and say that he was the one who had set her free, and that he should have her for his wife, and the kingdom with her. As he came before the palace and saw the golden road, he stopt to look at it, and thought to himself, 'It is a pity to ride upon this beautiful road;' so he turned aside and rode on the right of it. But when he came to the gate, the guards said to him, he was not what he said he was, and must go about his business. The second prince set out soon afterwards on the same errand; and when he came to the golden road, and his horse had set one foot upon it, he stopt to look at it, and thought it very beautiful, and said to himself, 'What a pity it is that any thing should tread here!' then he too turned aside and rode on the left of it. But when he came to the gate the guards said he was not the true prince, and that he too must go away.

Now when the full year was come, the third brother left the wood, where he had laid for fear of his father's anger, and set out in search of his betrothed bride. So he journeyed on, thinking of her all the way, and rode so quickly that he did not even see the golden road, but went with his horse straight over it; and as he came to the gate, it flew open, and the princess welcomed him with joy, and said he was her deliverer and should now be her husband and lord of the kingdom, and the marriage was soon kept with great feasting. When it was over, the princess told him she had heard of his father having forgiven him, and of his wish to have him home again: so he went to visit him, and told him every thing, how his brothers had cheated and robbed him, and yet that he had borne all these wrongs for the love of his father. Then the old king was very angry, and wanted to punish his wicked sons; but they made their escape, and got into a ship and sailed away over the wide sea, and were never heard of any more.



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