

БРАТЯ ГРИММ

SNOWDROP &
OTHER TALES

Grimm Jacob

Snowdrop & Other Tales

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Snowdrop

IT was the middle of winter, and the snowflakes were falling from the sky like feathers. Now, a Queen sat sewing at a window framed in black ebony, and as she sewed she looked out upon the snow. Suddenly she pricked her finger and three drops of blood fell on to the snow. And the red looked so lovely on the white that she thought to herself: 'If only I had a child as white as snow and as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window frame!' Soon after, she had a daughter, whose hair was black as ebony, while her cheeks were red as blood, and her skin as white as snow; so she was called Snowdrop. But when the child was born the Queen died. A year after the King took another wife. She was a handsome woman, but proud and overbearing, and could not endure that any one should surpass her in beauty. She had a magic looking-glass, and when she stood before it and looked at herself she used to say:

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?'

then the Glass answered,

'Queen, thou'rt fairest of them all.'

Then she was content, for she knew that the Looking-glass spoke the truth.

But Snowdrop grew up and became more and more beautiful, so that when she was seven years old she was as beautiful as the day, and far surpassed the Queen. Once, when she asked her Glass,

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?'

it answered —

'Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,
But Snowdrop is fairer a thousandfold.'

Then the Queen was horror-struck, and turned green and yellow with jealousy. From the hour that she saw Snowdrop her heart sank, and she hated the little girl.

The pride and envy of her heart grew like a weed, so that she had no rest day nor night. At last she called a Huntsman, and said: 'Take the child out into the wood; I will not set eyes on her again; you must kill her and bring me her lungs and liver as tokens.'

The Huntsman obeyed, and took Snowdrop out into the forest, but when he drew his hunting-knife and was preparing to plunge it into her innocent heart, she began to cry:

'Alas! dear Huntsman, spare my life, and I will run away into the wild forest and never come back again.'

And because of her beauty the Huntsman had pity on her and said, 'Well, run away, poor child.' Wild beasts will soon devour you, he thought, but still he felt as though a weight were lifted from his heart because he had not been obliged to kill her. And as just at that moment a young fawn came

leaping by, he pierced it and took the lungs and liver as tokens to the Queen. The Cook was ordered to serve them up in pickle, and the wicked Queen ate them thinking that they were Snowdrop's.

Now the poor child was alone in the great wood, with no living soul near, and she was so frightened that she knew not what to do. Then she began to run, and ran over the sharp stones and through the brambles, while the animals passed her by without harming her. She ran as far as her feet could carry her till it was nearly evening, when she saw a little house and went in to rest. Inside, everything was small, but as neat and clean as could be. A small table covered with a white cloth stood ready with seven small plates, and by every plate was a spoon, knife, fork, and cup. Seven little beds were ranged against the walls, covered with snow-white coverlets. As Snowdrop was very hungry and thirsty she ate a little bread and vegetable from each plate, and drank a little wine from each cup, for she did not want to eat up the whole of one portion. Then, being very tired, she lay down in one of the beds. She tried them all but none suited her; one was too short, another too long, all except the seventh, which was just right. She remained in it, said her prayers, and fell asleep.

When it was quite dark the masters of the house came in. They were seven Dwarfs, who used to dig in the mountains for ore. They kindled their lights, and as soon as they could see they noticed that some one had been there, for everything was not in the order in which they had left it.

The first said, 'Who has been sitting in my chair?'

The second said, 'Who has been eating off my plate?'

The third said, 'Who has been nibbling my bread?'

The fourth said, 'Who has been eating my vegetables?'

The fifth said, 'Who has been using my fork?'

The sixth said, 'Who has been cutting with my knife?'

The seventh said, 'Who has been drinking out of my cup?'

Then the first looked and saw a slight impression on his bed, and said, 'Who has been treading on my bed?' The others came running up and said, 'And mine, and mine.' But the seventh, when he looked into his bed, saw Snowdrop, who lay there asleep. He called the others, who came up and cried out with astonishment, as they held their lights and gazed at Snowdrop. 'Heavens! what a beautiful child,' they said, and they were so delighted that they did not wake her up but left her asleep in bed. And the seventh Dwarf slept with his comrades, an hour with each all through the night.

When morning came Snowdrop woke up, and when she saw the seven Dwarfs she was frightened.

But they were very kind and asked her name.

'I am called Snowdrop,' she answered.

'How did you get into our house?' they asked.

Then she told them how her stepmother had wished to get rid of her, how the Huntsman had spared her life, and how she had run all day till she had found the house.

Then the Dwarfs said, 'Will you look after our household, cook, make the beds, wash, sew and knit, and keep everything neat and clean? If so you shall stay with us and want for nothing.'

'Yes,' said Snowdrop, 'with all my heart'; and she stayed with them and kept the house in order.

In the morning they went to the mountain and searched for copper and gold, and in the evening they came back and then their meal had to be ready. All day the maiden was alone, and the good Dwarfs warned her and said, 'Beware of your stepmother, who will soon learn that you are here. Don't let any one in.'

But the Queen, having, as she imagined, eaten Snowdrop's liver and lungs, and feeling certain that she was the fairest of all, stepped in front of her Glass, and asked —

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?'

the Glass answered as usual —

‘Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,
But Snowdrop over the fells,
Who with the seven Dwarfs dwells,
Is fairer still a thousandfold.’

She was dismayed, for she knew that the Glass told no lies, and she saw that the Hunter had deceived her and that Snowdrop still lived. Accordingly she began to wonder afresh how she might compass her death; for as long as she was not the fairest in the land her jealous heart left her no rest. At last she thought of a plan. She dyed her face and dressed up like an old Pedlar, so that she was quite unrecognisable. In this guise she crossed over the seven mountains to the home of the seven Dwarfs and called out, ‘Wares for sale.’

Snowdrop peeped out of the window and said, ‘Good-day, mother, what have you got to sell?’

‘Good wares, fine wares,’ she answered, ‘laces of every colour’; and she held out one which was made of gay plaited silk.

‘I may let the honest woman in,’ thought Snowdrop, and she unbolted the door and bought the pretty lace.

‘Child,’ said the Old Woman, ‘what a sight you are, I will lace you properly for once.’

Snowdrop made no objection, and placed herself before the Old Woman to let her lace her with the new lace. But the Old Woman laced so quickly and tightly that she took away Snowdrop’s breath and she fell down as though dead.

‘Now I am the fairest,’ she said to herself, and hurried away.

Not long after the seven Dwarfs came home, and were horror-struck when they saw their dear little Snowdrop lying on the floor without stirring, like one dead. When they saw she was laced too tight they cut the lace, whereupon she began to breathe and soon came back to life again. When the Dwarfs heard what had happened, they said that the old Pedlar was no other than the wicked Queen. ‘Take care not to let any one in when we are not here,’ they said.

Now the wicked Queen, as soon as she got home, went to the Glass and asked —

‘Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?’

and it answered as usual —

‘Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,
But Snowdrop over the fells,
Who with the seven Dwarfs dwells,
Is fairer still a thousandfold.’

When she heard it all her blood flew to her heart, so enraged was she, for she knew that Snowdrop had come back to life again. Then she thought to herself, ‘I must plan something which will put an end to her.’ By means of witchcraft, in which she was skilled, she made a poisoned comb. Next she disguised herself and took the form of a different Old Woman. She crossed the mountains and came to the home of the seven Dwarfs, and knocked at the door calling out, ‘Good wares to sell.’

Snowdrop looked out of the window and said, ‘Go away, I must not let any one in.’

‘At least you may look,’ answered the Old Woman, and she took the poisoned comb and held it up.

The child was so pleased with it that she let herself be beguiled, and opened the door.

When she had made a bargain the Old Woman said, 'Now I will comb your hair properly for once.'

Poor Snowdrop, suspecting no evil, let the Old Woman have her way, but scarcely was the poisoned comb fixed in her hair than the poison took effect, and the maiden fell down unconscious.

'You paragon of beauty,' said the wicked woman, 'now it is all over with you,' and she went away.

Happily it was near the time when the seven Dwarfs came home. When they saw Snowdrop lying on the ground as though dead, they immediately suspected her stepmother, and searched till they found the poisoned comb. No sooner had they removed it than Snowdrop came to herself again and related what had happened. They warned her again to be on her guard, and to open the door to no one.

When she got home the Queen stood before her Glass and said —

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?'

and it answered as usual —

'Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,
But Snowdrop over the fells,
Who with the seven Dwarfs dwells,
Is fairer still a thousandfold.'

When she heard the Glass speak these words she trembled and quivered with rage. 'Snowdrop shall die,' she said, 'even if it cost me my own life.' Thereupon she went into a secret room, which no one ever entered but herself, and made a poisonous apple. Outwardly it was beautiful to look upon, with rosy cheeks, and every one who saw it longed for it, but whoever ate of it was certain to die. When the apple was ready she dyed her face and dressed herself like an old Peasant Woman and so crossed the seven hills to the Dwarfs' home. There she knocked.

Snowdrop put her head out of the window and said, 'I must not let any one in, the seven Dwarfs have forbidden me.'

'It is all the same to me,' said the Peasant Woman. 'I shall soon get rid of my apples. There, I will give you one.'

'No; I must not take anything.'

'Are you afraid of poison?' said the woman. 'See, I will cut the apple in half: you eat the red side and I will keep the other.'

Now the apple was so cunningly painted that the red half alone was poisoned. Snowdrop longed for the apple, and when she saw the Peasant Woman eating she could hold out no longer, stretched out her hand and took the poisoned half. Scarcely had she put a bit into her mouth than she fell dead to the ground.

The Queen looked with a fiendish glance, and laughed aloud and said, 'White as snow, red as blood, and black as ebony, this time the Dwarfs cannot wake you up again.' And when she got home and asked the Looking-glass —

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?'

it answered at last —

'Queen, thou'rt fairest of them all.'

Then her jealous heart was at rest, as much at rest as a jealous heart can be. The Dwarfs, when they came at evening, found Snowdrop lying on the ground and not a breath escaped her lips, and she was quite dead. They lifted her up and looked to see whether any poison was to be found, unlaced her dress, combed her hair, washed her with wine and water, but it was no use; their dear child was dead. They laid her on a bier, and all seven sat down and bewailed her and lamented over her for three whole days. Then they prepared to bury her, but she looked so fresh and living, and still had such beautiful rosy cheeks, that they said, 'We cannot bury her in the dark earth.' And so they had a transparent glass coffin made, so that she could be seen from every side, laid her inside and wrote on it in letters of gold her name and how she was a King's daughter. Then they set the coffin out on the mountain, and one of them always stayed by and watched it. And the birds came too and mourned for Snowdrop, first an owl, then a raven, and lastly a dove.

Now Snowdrop lay a long, long time in her coffin, looking as though she were asleep. It happened that a Prince was wandering in the wood, and came to the home of the seven Dwarfs to pass the night. He saw the coffin on the mountain and lovely Snowdrop inside, and read what was written in golden letters. Then he said to the Dwarfs, 'Let me have the coffin; I will give you whatever you like for it.'

But they said, 'We will not give it up for all the gold of the world.'

Then he said, 'Then give it to me as a gift, for I cannot live without Snowdrop to gaze upon; and I will honour and reverence it as my dearest treasure.'

When he had said these words the good Dwarfs pitied him and gave him the coffin.

The Prince bade his servants carry it on their shoulders. Now it happened that they stumbled over some brushwood, and the shock dislodged the piece of apple from Snowdrop's throat. In a short time she opened her eyes, lifted the lid of the coffin, sat up and came back to life again completely.

'O Heaven! where am I?' she asked.

The Prince, full of joy, said, 'You are with me,' and he related what had happened, and then said, 'I love you better than all the world; come with me to my father's castle and be my wife.'

Snowdrop agreed and went with him, and their wedding was celebrated with great magnificence. Snowdrop's wicked stepmother was invited to the feast; and when she had put on her fine clothes she stepped to her Glass and asked —

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?'

The Glass answered —

'Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,
The young Queen fairer a thousandfold.'

Then the wicked woman uttered a curse, and was so terribly frightened that she didn't know what to do. Yet she had no rest: she felt obliged to go and see the young Queen. And when she came in she recognised Snowdrop, and stood stock still with fear and terror. But iron slippers were heated over the fire, and were soon brought in with tongs and put before her. And she had to step into the red-hot shoes and dance till she fell down dead.

The Pink

THERE was once a Queen, who had not been blessed with children. As she walked in her garden, she prayed every morning that a son or daughter might be given to her. Then one day an Angel came, and said to her: 'Be content: you shall have a son, and he shall be endowed with the power of wishing, so that whatsoever he wishes for shall be granted to him.' She hurried to the King, and told him the joyful news; and when the time came a son was born to them, and they were filled with delight.

Every morning the Queen used to take her little son into the gardens, where the wild animals were kept, to bathe him in a clear, sparkling fountain. It happened one day, when the child was a little older, that as she sat with him on her lap she fell asleep.

The old Cook, who knew that the child had the power of wishing, came by and stole it; he also killed a Chicken, and dropped some of its blood on the Queen's garments. Then he took the child away to a secret place, where he placed it out to be nursed. Then he ran back to the King, and accused the Queen of having allowed her child to be carried off by a wild animal.

When the King saw the blood on the Queen's garments he believed the story, and was overwhelmed with anger. He caused a high tower to be built, into which neither the sun nor the moon could penetrate. Then he ordered his wife to be shut up in it, and the door walled up. She was to stay there for seven years, without eating or drinking, so as gradually to pine away. But two Angels from heaven, in the shape of white doves, came to her, bringing food twice a day till the seven years were ended.

Meanwhile the Cook thought, 'If the child really has the power of wishing, and I stay here, I might easily fall into disgrace.' So he left the palace, and went to the boy, who was then old enough to talk, and said to him, 'Wish for a beautiful castle, with a garden, and everything belonging to it.' Hardly had the words passed the boy's lips than all that he had asked for was there.

After a time the Cook said, 'It is not good for you to be so much alone; wish for a beautiful Maiden to be your companion.'

The Prince uttered the wish, and immediately a Maiden stood before them, more beautiful than any painter could paint. So they grew very fond of each other, and played together, while the old Cook went out hunting like any grand gentleman. But the idea came to him one day that the Prince might wish to go to his father some time, and he would thereby be placed in a very awkward position. So he took the Maiden aside, and said to her, 'To-night, when the boy is asleep, go and drive this knife into his heart. Then bring me his heart and his tongue. If you fail to do it, you will lose your own life.'

Then he went away; but when the next day came the Maiden had not yet obeyed his command, and she said, 'Why should I shed his innocent blood, when he has never done harm to any creature in his life?'

The Cook again said, 'If you do not obey me, you will lose your own life.'

When he had gone away, she ordered a young hind to be brought and killed; then she cut out its heart and its tongue, and put them on a dish. When she saw the old man coming she said to the boy, 'Get into bed, and cover yourself right over.'

The old scoundrel came in and said, 'Where are the tongue and the heart of the boy?'

The Maiden gave him the dish; but the Prince threw off the coverings, and said, 'You old sinner, why did you want to kill me? Now hear your sentence. You shall be turned into a black Poodle, with a gold chain round your neck, and you shall be made to eat live coals, so that flames of fire may come out of your mouth.'

As he said the words, the old man was changed into a black Poodle, with a gold chain round his neck; and the scullions brought live coals, which he had to eat till the flames poured out of his mouth.

The Prince stayed on at the castle for a time, thinking of his mother, and wondering if she were still alive. At last he said to the Maiden, 'I am going into my own country. If you like you can go with me; I will take you.'

She answered: 'Alas! it is so far off, and what should I do in a strange country where I know no one?'

As she did not wish to go, and yet they could not bear to be parted, he changed her into a beautiful Pink, which he took with him.

Then he set out on his journey, and the Poodle was made to run alongside till the Prince reached his own country.

Arrived there, he went straight to the tower where his mother was imprisoned, and as the tower was so high he wished for a ladder to reach the top. Then he climbed up, looked in, and cried, 'Dearest mother, lady Queen, are you still alive?'

She, thinking it was the Angels who brought her food come back, said, 'I have just eaten; I do not want anything more.'

Then he said, 'I am your own dear son whom the wild animals were supposed to have devoured; but I am still alive, and I shall soon come and rescue you.'

Then he got down and went to his father. He had himself announced as a strange Huntsman, anxious to take service with the King, who said, 'Yes; if he was skilled in game preserving, and could procure plenty of venison, he would engage him. But there had never before been any game in the whole district.'

The Huntsman promised to procure as much game as the King could possibly require for the royal table.

Then he called the whole Hunt together, and ordered them all to come into the forest with him. He caused a great circle to be enclosed, with only one outlet; then he took his place in the middle, and began to wish as hard as he could. Immediately over two hundred head of game came running into the enclosure; these the Huntsmen had to shoot, and then they were piled on to sixty country wagons, and driven home to the King. So for once he was able to load his board with game, after having had none for many years.

The King was much pleased, and commanded his whole court to a banquet on the following day. When they were all assembled, he said to the Huntsman, 'You shall sit by me as you are so clever.'

He answered, 'My lord and King, may it please your Majesty, I am only a poor Huntsman!'

The King, however, insisted, and said, 'I command you to sit by me.'

As he sat there, his thoughts wandered to his dear mother, and he wished one of the courtiers would speak of her. Hardly had he wished it than the Lord High Marshal said —

'Your Majesty, we are all rejoicing here, how fares it with Her Majesty the Queen? Is she still alive in the tower, or has she perished?'

But the King answered, 'She allowed my beloved son to be devoured by wild animals, and I do not wish to hear anything about her.'

Then the Huntsman stood up and said —

'Gracious father, she is still alive, and I am her son. He was not devoured by wild animals; he was taken away by the scoundrel of a Cook. He stole me while my mother was asleep, and sprinkled her garments with the blood of a chicken.' Then he brought up the black Poodle with the golden chain, and said, 'This is the villain.'

He ordered some live coals to be brought, which he made the dog eat in the sight of all the people till the flames poured out of his mouth. Then he asked the King if he would like to see the Cook in his true shape, and wished him back, and there he stood in his white apron, with his knife at his side.

The King was furious when he saw him, and ordered him to be thrown into the deepest dungeon. Then the Huntsman said further —

‘My father would you like to see the Maiden who so tenderly saved my life when she was ordered to kill me, although by so doing she might have lost her own life?’

The King answered, ‘Yes, I will gladly see her.’

Then his son said, ‘Gracious father, I will show her to you first in the guise of a beautiful flower.’

He put his hand into his pocket, and brought out the Pink. It was a finer one than the King had ever seen before. Then his son said, ‘Now, I will show her to you in her true form.’

The moment his wish was uttered, she stood before them in all her beauty, which was greater than any artist could paint.

The King sent ladies and gentlemen-in-waiting to the tower to bring the Queen back to his royal table. But when they reached the tower they found that she would no longer eat or drink, and she said, ‘The merciful God, who has preserved my life so long, will soon release me now.’

Three days after she died. At her burial the two white Doves which had brought her food during her captivity, followed and hovered over her grave.

The old King caused the wicked Cook to be torn into four quarters; but his own heart was filled with grief and remorse, and he died soon after.

His son married the beautiful Maiden he had brought home with him as a Flower, and, for all I know, they may be living still.

Briar Rose

A LONG time ago there lived a King and Queen, who said every day, 'If only we had a child'; but for a long time they had none.

It fell out once, as the Queen was bathing, that a frog crept out of the water on to the land, and said to her: 'Your wish shall be fulfilled; before a year has passed you shall bring a daughter into the world.'

The frog's words came true. The Queen had a little girl who was so beautiful that the King could not contain himself for joy, and prepared a great feast. He invited not only his relations, friends, and acquaintances, but the fairies, in order that they might be favourably and kindly disposed towards the child. There were thirteen of them in the kingdom, but as the King had only twelve golden plates for them to eat from, one of the fairies had to stay at home.

The feast was held with all splendour, and when it came to an end the fairies all presented the child with a magic gift. One gave her virtue, another beauty, a third riches, and so on, with everything in the world that she could wish for.

When eleven of the fairies had said their say, the thirteenth suddenly appeared. She wanted to revenge herself for not having been invited. Without greeting any one, or even glancing at the company, she called out in a loud voice: 'The Princess shall prick herself with a distaff in her fifteenth year and shall fall down dead'; and without another word she turned and left the hall.

Every one was terror-struck, but the twelfth fairy, whose wish was still unspoken, stepped forward. She could not cancel the curse, but could only soften it, so she said: 'It shall not be death, but a deep sleep lasting a hundred years, into which your daughter shall fall.'

The King was so anxious to guard his dear child from the misfortune, that he sent out a command that all the distaffs in the whole kingdom should be burned.

As time went on all the promises of the fairies came true. The Princess grew up so beautiful, modest, kind, and clever that every one who saw her could not but love her. Now it happened that on the very day when she was fifteen years old the King and Queen were away from home, and the Princess was left quite alone in the castle. She wandered about over the whole place, looking at rooms and halls as she pleased, and at last she came to an old tower. She ascended a narrow, winding staircase and reached a little door. A rusty key was sticking in the lock, and when she turned it the door flew open. In a little room sat an old woman with a spindle, spinning her flax busily.

'Good day, Granny,' said the Princess; 'what are you doing?'

'I am spinning,' said the old woman, and nodded her head.

'What is the thing that whirls round so merrily?' asked the Princess; and she took the spindle and tried to spin too.

But she had scarcely touched it before the curse was fulfilled, and she pricked her finger with the spindle. The instant she felt the prick she fell upon the bed which was standing near, and lay still in a deep sleep which spread over the whole castle.

The King and Queen, who had just come home and had stepped into the hall, went to sleep, and all their courtiers with them. The horses went to sleep in the stable, the dogs in the yard, the doves on the roof, the flies on the wall; yes, even the fire flickering on the hearth grew still and went to sleep, and the roast meat stopped crackling; the cook, who was pulling the scullion's hair because he had made some mistake, let him go and went to sleep. The wind dropped, and on the trees in front of the castle not a leaf stirred.

But round the castle a hedge of briar roses began to grow up; every year it grew higher, till at last it surrounded the whole castle so that nothing could be seen of it, not even the flags on the roof.

But there was a legend in the land about the lovely sleeping Briar Rose, as the King's daughter was called, and from time to time princes came and tried to force a way through the hedge into the

castle. They found it impossible, for the thorns, as though they had hands, held them fast, and the princes remained caught in them without being able to free themselves, and so died a miserable death.

After many, many years a Prince came again to the country and heard an old man tell of the castle which stood behind the briar hedge, in which a most beautiful maiden called Briar Rose had been asleep for the last hundred years, and with her slept the King, Queen, and all her courtiers. He knew also, from his grandfather, that many princes had already come and sought to pierce through the briar hedge, and had remained caught in it and died a sad death.

Then the young Prince said, 'I am not afraid; I am determined to go and look upon the lovely Briar Rose.'

The good old man did all in his power to dissuade him, but the Prince would not listen to his words.

Now, however, the hundred years were just ended, and the day had come when Briar Rose was to wake up again. When the Prince approached the briar hedge it was in blossom, and was covered with beautiful large flowers which made way for him of their own accord and let him pass unharmed, and then closed up again into a hedge behind him.

In the courtyard he saw the horses and brindled hounds lying asleep, on the roof sat the doves with their heads under their wings: and when he went into the house the flies were asleep on the walls, and near the throne lay the King and Queen; in the kitchen was the cook, with his hand raised as though about to strike the scullion, and the maid sat with the black fowl in her lap which she was about to pluck.

He went on further, and all was so still that he could hear his own breathing. At last he reached the tower, and opened the door into the little room where Briar Rose was asleep. There she lay, looking so beautiful that he could not take his eyes off her; he bent down and gave her a kiss. As he touched her, Briar Rose opened her eyes and looked lovingly at him. Then they went down together; and the King woke up, and the Queen, and all the courtiers, and looked at each other with astonished eyes. The horses in the stable stood up and shook themselves, the hounds leaped about and wagged their tails, the doves on the roof lifted their heads from under their wings, looked round, and flew into the fields; the flies on the walls began to crawl again, the fire in the kitchen roused itself and blazed up and cooked the food, the meat began to crackle, and the cook boxed the scullion's ears so soundly that he screamed aloud, while the maid finished plucking the fowl. Then the wedding of the Prince and Briar Rose was celebrated with all splendour, and they lived happily till they died.

The Jew among the Thorns

THERE was once a rich Man, and he had a Servant who served him well and faithfully. He was first up in the morning, and last to go to bed at night. If there was any hard work to be done which no one else would do, he was always ready to undertake it. He never made any complaint, but was always merry and content.

When his year of service was over, his Master did not give him any wages, thinking: 'This is my wisest plan. I save by it, and he is not likely to run away.'

The Servant said nothing, and served the second year like the first. And when at the end of the second he again received no wages, he still appeared contented, and stayed on. When the third year had passed, the Master bethought himself, and put his hand into his pocket, but he brought it out empty.

At last the Servant said: 'Master, I have served you well and truly for three years; please pay me my wages. I want to go away and look about the world a bit.'

The Miser answered: 'Yes, my good fellow, you have served me honestly, and you shall be liberally rewarded.'

Again he put his hand into his pocket, and counted three farthings, one by one, into the Servant's hand, and said: 'There, you have a farthing for every year; that is better wages than you would get from most masters.'

The good Servant, who knew little about money, put away his fortune, and thought: 'Now my pocket is well filled, I need no longer trouble myself about work.' Then he left and went singing down the hill, and dancing, in the lightness of his heart.

Now it so happened that as he was passing a thicket, that a little Mannikin came out and cried: 'Whither away, my merry fellow? I see your troubles are not too heavy to be borne.'

'Why should I be sad?' answered the Servant. 'I have three years' wages in my pocket.'

'And how much is your treasure?' asked the Mannikin.

'How much? Why, three good farthings.'

'Listen!' said the Mannikin. 'I am a poor needy fellow; give me your three farthings. I can't work any more; but you are young, and can easily earn your bread.'

Now the Servant had a good heart, and he was sorry for the poor little man, so he gave him his three farthings, and said:

'Take them, in the name of heaven! I shall not miss them.'

'Then,' said the Mannikin, 'I see what a good heart you have. I will give you three wishes, one for each farthing; and every wish shall be fulfilled.'

'Aha!' said the Servant, 'you are a wonder-worker I see. Very well, then. First, I wish for a gun which will hit everything I aim at; secondly, for a fiddle which will make every one dance when I play; and, thirdly, if I ask anything of any one, that he shall not be able to refuse my request.'

'You shall have them all,' said the Mannikin, diving into the bushes, where, wonderful to relate, lay the gun and the fiddle ready, just as if they had been ordered beforehand. He gave them to the Servant, and said: 'No one will be able to refuse anything you ask.'

'Heart alive! what more can one desire,' said the Servant to himself, as he went merrily on.

Soon after, he met a Jew with a long goat's beard, who was standing still listening to the song of a bird sitting on the top of a tree. 'Good heavens!' he was saying, 'what a tremendous noise such a tiny creature makes. If only it were mine! If one could but put some salt upon its tail!'

'If that is all,' said the Servant, 'the bird shall soon come down.'

He took aim, and down fell the bird into a quickset hedge.

'Go, you rogue,' he said to the Jew, 'and pick up the bird.'

'Leave out the "rogue," young man. I will get the bird sure enough, as you have killed it for me,' said the Jew.

He lay down on the ground and began to creep into the hedge.

When he had got well among the thorns, a spirit of mischief seized the Servant, and he began to play his fiddle with all his might. The Jew was forced to spring up and begin to dance, and the more the Servant played, the faster he had to dance. The thorns tore his shabby coat, combed his goat's beard, and scratched him all over.

'Merciful Heavens!' cried the Jew. 'Leave off that fiddling! I don't want to dance, my good fellow.'

But the Servant paid no attention to him, but thought: 'You have fleeced plenty of people in your time, my man, and the thorns shan't spare you now!' And he played on and on, so that the Jew had to jump higher and higher, till his coat hung in ribbons about him.

'I cry "enough!"' screamed the Jew. 'I will give you anything you like if you will only stop. Take the purse, it is full of gold.'

'Oh, well, if you are so open-handed,' said the Servant, 'I am quite ready to stop my music, but I must say in praise of your dancing, that it has quite a style of its own.' Then he took the purse and went on his way.

The Jew stood still looking after him till he was a good way off, then he screamed with all his might: 'You miserable fiddler! Just you wait till I find you alone! I will chase you till the soles of your shoes drop off – you rascal!' And he went on pouring out a stream of abuse. Having relieved himself by so doing, he hurried off to the Judge in the nearest town.

'Just look here, your worship,' he said, 'look how I have been attacked, and ill-treated, and robbed on the high road by a wretch. My condition might melt the heart of a stone; my clothes and my body torn and scratched, and my purse with all my poor little savings taken away from me. All my beautiful ducats, each one prettier than the other. Oh dear! Oh dear! For heaven's sake, put the wretch in prison.'

The Judge said: 'Was it a soldier who punished you so with his sword?'

'Heaven preserve us!' cried the Jew, 'he had no sword, but he had a gun on his shoulder and a fiddle round his neck. The villain is easily to be recognised.'

So the Judge sent out men in pursuit of the honest Servant, who had walked on slowly. They soon overtook him, and the purse of gold was found on him. When he was brought before the Judge, he said —

'I never touched the Jew, nor did I take his money away; he offered it to me of his own free will if I would only stop playing, because he could not bear my music.'

'Heaven defend us!' screamed the Jew, 'his lies are as thick as flies on the wall.'

And the Judge did not believe him either, and said:

'That is a very lame excuse; no Jew ever did such a thing.' So he sentenced the honest Servant to the gallows for having committed a robbery upon the king's highway.

When he was being led away, the Jew screamed after him; 'You vagabond, you dog of a fiddler, now you will get your deserts!'

The Servant mounted the ladder to the gallows quite quietly, with the halter round his neck; but at the last rung he turned round and said to the Judge: 'Grant me one favour before I die.'

'Certainly,' said the Judge, 'as long as you don't ask for your life.'

'Not my life,' answered the Servant. 'I only ask to play my fiddle once more.'

The Jew raised a tremendous cry. 'Don't allow it, your worship, for heaven's sake, don't allow it!'

But the Judge said: 'Why should I deny him that short pleasure? His wish is granted, and there's an end of the matter!'

He could not have refused even if he had wished, because of the Mannikin's gift to the Servant.

The Jew screamed, 'Oh dear! Oh dear! Tie me tight, tie me tight!'

The good Servant took his fiddle from his neck, and put it into position, and at the first chord everybody began to wag their heads, the Judge, his Clerk, and all the Officers of Justice, and the rope fell out of the hand of the man about to bind the Jew.

At the second scrape, they all lifted their legs, and the Hangman let go his hold of the honest Servant, to make ready to dance.

At the third scrape they one and all leapt into the air, and began to caper about, the Judge and the Jew at the head, and they all leapt their best.

Soon, every one who had come to the market-place out of curiosity, old and young, fat and lean, were dancing as hard as they could; even the dogs got upon their hind legs, and pranced about with the rest. The longer he played, the higher they jumped, till they knocked their heads together, and made each other cry out.

At last the Judge, quite out of breath, cried: 'I will give you your life, if only you will stop playing.'

The honest Servant allowed himself to be prevailed upon, laid his fiddle aside, and came down the ladder. Then he went up to the Jew, who lay upon the ground gasping, and said to him:

'You rascal, confess where you got the money, or I will begin to play again.'

'I stole it! I stole it!' he screamed; 'but you have honestly earned it.'

The Judge then ordered the Jew to the gallows to be hanged as a thief.

Ashenputtel

THE wife of a rich man fell ill, and when she felt that she was nearing her end, she called her only daughter to her bedside, and said:

‘Dear child, continue devout and good, then God will always help you, and I will look down upon you from heaven, and watch over you.’

Thereupon she closed her eyes, and breathed her last.

The maiden went to her mother’s grave every day and wept, and she continued to be devout and good. When the winter came, the snow spread a white covering on the grave, and when the sun of spring had unveiled it again, the husband took another wife. The new wife brought home with her two daughters, who were fair and beautiful to look upon, but base and black at heart.

Then began a sad time for the unfortunate step-child.

‘Is this stupid goose to sit with us in the parlour?’ they said.

‘Whoever wants to eat bread must earn it; go and sit with the kitchenmaid.’

They took away her pretty clothes, and made her put on an old grey frock, and gave her wooden clogs.

‘Just look at the proud Princess, how well she’s dressed,’ they laughed, as they led her to the kitchen. There, the girl was obliged to do hard work from morning till night, to get up at daybreak, carry water, light the fire, cook, and wash. Not content with that, the sisters inflicted on her every vexation they could think of; they made fun of her, and tossed the peas and lentils among the ashes, so that she had to sit down and pick them out again. In the evening, when she was worn out with work, she had no bed to go to, but had to lie on the hearth among the cinders. And because, on account of that, she always looked dusty and dirty, they called her Ashenputtel.

It happened one day that the Father had a mind to go to the Fair. So he asked both his step-daughters what he should bring home for them.

‘Fine clothes,’ said one.

‘Pearls and jewels,’ said the other.

‘But you, Ashenputtel?’ said he, ‘what will you have?’

‘Father, break off for me the first twig which brushes against your hat on your way home.’

Well, for his two step-daughters he brought beautiful clothes, pearls and jewels, and on his way home, as he was riding through a green copse, a hazel twig grazed against him and knocked his hat off. Then he broke off the branch and took it with him.

When he got home he gave his step-daughters what they had asked for, and to Ashenputtel he gave the twig from the hazel bush.

Ashenputtel thanked him, and went to her mother’s grave and planted the twig upon it; she wept so much that her tears fell and watered it. And it took root and became a fine tree.

Ashenputtel went to the grave three times every day, wept and prayed, and every time a little white bird came and perched upon the tree, and when she uttered a wish, the little bird threw down to her what she had wished for.

Now it happened that the King proclaimed a festival, which was to last three days, and to which all the beautiful maidens in the country were invited, in order that his son might choose a bride.

When the two step-daughters heard that they were also to be present, they were in high spirits, called Ashenputtel, and said:

‘Brush our hair and clean our shoes, and fasten our buckles, for we are going to the feast at the King’s palace.’

Ashenputtel obeyed, but wept, for she also would gladly have gone to the ball with them, and begged her Step-mother to give her leave to go.

‘You, Ashenputtel!’ she said. ‘Why, you are covered with dust and dirt. You go to the festival! Besides you have no clothes or shoes, and yet you want to go to the ball.’

As she, however, went on asking, her Step-mother said:

‘Well, I have thrown a dishful of lentils into the cinders, if you have picked them all out in two hours you shall go with us.’

The girl went through the back door into the garden, and cried, ‘Ye gentle doves, ye turtle doves, and all ye little birds under heaven, come and help me,

‘The good into a dish to throw,
The bad into your crops can go.’

Then two white doves came in by the kitchen window, and were followed by the turtle doves, and finally all the little birds under heaven flocked in, chirping, and settled down among the ashes. And the doves gave a nod with their little heads, peck, peck, peck; and then the rest began also, peck, peck, peck, and collected all the good beans into the dish. Scarcely had an hour passed before they had finished, and all flown out again.

Then the girl brought the dish to her Step-mother, and was delighted to think that now she would be able to go to the feast with them.

But she said, ‘No, Ashenputtel, you have no clothes, and cannot dance; you will only be laughed at.’

But when she began to cry, the Step-mother said:

‘If you can pick out two whole dishes of lentils from the ashes in an hour, you shall go with us.’

And she thought, ‘She will never be able to do that.’

When her Step-mother had thrown the dishes of lentils among the ashes, the girl went out through the back door, and cried, ‘Ye gentle doves, ye turtle doves, and all ye little birds under heaven, come and help me,

‘The good into a dish to throw,
The bad into your crops can go.’

Then two white doves came in by the kitchen window, and were followed by the turtle doves, and all the other little birds under heaven, and in less than an hour the whole had been picked up, and they had all flown away.

Then the girl carried the dish to her Step-mother, and was delighted to think that she would now be able to go to the ball.

But she said, ‘It’s not a bit of good. You can’t go with us, for you’ve got no clothes, and you can’t dance. We should be quite ashamed of you.’

Thereupon she turned her back upon her, and hurried off with her two proud daughters.

As soon as every one had left the house, Ashenputtel went out to her mother’s grave under the hazel-tree, and cried:

‘Shiver and shake, dear little tree,
Gold and silver shower on me.’

Then the bird threw down to her a gold and silver robe, and a pair of slippers embroidered with silk and silver. With all speed she put on the robe and went to the feast. But her step-sisters and their mother did not recognise her, and supposed that she was some foreign Princess, so beautiful did she appear in her golden dress. They never gave a thought to Ashenputtel, but imagined that she was sitting at home in the dirt picking the lentils out of the cinders.

The Prince came up to the stranger, took her by the hand, and danced with her. In fact, he would not dance with any one else, and never left go of her hand. If any one came up to ask her to dance, he said, 'This is my partner.'

She danced until nightfall, and then wanted to go home; but the Prince said, 'I will go with you and escort you.'

For he wanted to see to whom the beautiful maiden belonged. But she slipped out of his way and sprang into the pigeon-house.

Then the Prince waited till her Father came, and told him that the unknown maiden had vanished into the pigeon-house.

The old man thought, 'Could it be Ashenputtel?' And he had an axe brought to him, so that he might break down the pigeon-house, but there was no one inside.

When they went home, there lay Ashenputtel in her dirty clothes among the cinders, and a dismal oil lamp was burning in the chimney corner. For Ashenputtel had quietly jumped down out of the pigeon-house and ran back to the hazel-tree. There she had taken off her beautiful clothes and laid them on the grave, and the bird had taken them away again. Then she had settled herself among the ashes on the hearth in her old grey frock.

On the second day, when the festival was renewed, and her parents and step-sisters had started forth again, Ashenputtel went to the hazel-tree, and said:

'Shiver and shake, dear little tree,
Gold and silver shower on me.'

Then the bird threw down a still more gorgeous robe than on the previous day. And when she appeared at the festival in this robe, every one was astounded by her beauty.

The King's son had waited till she came, and at once took her hand, and she danced with no one but him. When others came forward and invited her to dance, he said, 'This is my partner.'

At nightfall she wished to leave; but the Prince went after her, hoping to see into what house she went, but she sprang out into the garden behind the house. There stood a fine big tree on which the most delicious pears hung. She climbed up among the branches as nimbly as a squirrel, and the Prince could not make out what had become of her.

But he waited till her Father came, and then said to him, 'The unknown maiden has slipped away from me, and I think that she has jumped into the pear-tree.'

The Father thought, 'Can it be Ashenputtel?' And he had the axe brought to cut down the tree, but there was no one on it. When they went home and looked into the kitchen, there lay Ashenputtel among the cinders as usual; for she had jumped down on the other side of the tree, taken back the beautiful clothes to the bird on the hazel-tree, and put on her old grey frock.

On the third day, when her parents and sisters had started, Ashenputtel went again to her mother's grave, and said:

'Shiver and shake, dear little tree,
Gold and silver shower on me.'

Then the bird threw down a dress which was so magnificent that no one had ever seen the like before, and the slippers were entirely of gold. When she appeared at the festival in this attire, they were all speechless with astonishment. The Prince danced only with her, and if any one else asked her to dance, he said, 'This is my partner.'

When night fell and she wanted to leave, the Prince was more desirous than ever to accompany her, but she darted away from him so quickly that he could not keep up with her. But the Prince had used a stratagem, and had caused the steps to be covered with cobbler's wax. The consequence was,

that as the maiden sprang down them, her left slipper remained sticking there. The Prince took it up. It was small and dainty, and entirely made of gold.

The next morning he went with it to Ashenputtel's Father, and said to him, 'No other shall become my wife but she whose foot this golden slipper fits.'

The two sisters were delighted at that, for they both had beautiful feet. The eldest went into the room intending to try on the slipper, and her Mother stood beside her. But her great toe prevented her getting it on, her foot was too long.

Then her Mother handed her a knife, and said, 'Cut off the toe; when you are Queen you won't have to walk any more.'

The girl cut off her toe, forced her foot into the slipper, stifled her pain, and went out to the Prince. Then he took her up on his horse as his Bride, and rode away with her.

However, they had to pass the grave on the way, and there sat the two Doves on the hazel-tree, and cried:

'Prithee, look back, prithee, look back,
There's blood on the track,
The shoe is too small,
At home the true Bride is waiting thy call.'

Then he looked at her foot and saw how the blood was streaming from it. So he turned his horse round and carried the false Bride back to her home, and said that she was not the right one; the second sister must try the shoe.

Then she went into the room, and succeeded in getting her toes into the shoe, but her heel was too big.

Then her Mother handed her a knife, and said, 'Cut a bit off your heel; when you are Queen you won't have to walk any more.'

The maiden cut a bit off her heel, forced her foot into the shoe, stifled her pain, and went out to the Prince.

Then he took her up on his horse as his Bride, and rode off with her.

As they passed the grave, the two Doves were sitting on the hazel-tree, and crying:

'Prithee, look back, prithee, look back,
There's blood on the track,
The shoe is too small,
At home the true Bride is waiting thy call.'

He looked down at her foot and saw that it was streaming with blood, and there were deep red spots on her stockings. Then he turned his horse and brought the false Bride back to her home.

'This is not the right one either,' he said. 'Have you no other daughter?'

'No,' said the man. 'There is only a daughter of my late wife's, a puny, stunted drudge, but she cannot possibly be the Bride.'

The Prince said that she must be sent for.

But the Mother answered, 'Oh no, she is much too dirty; she mustn't be seen on any account.'

He was, however, absolutely determined to have his way, and they were obliged to summon Ashenputtel.

When she had washed her hands and face, she went up and curtsied to the Prince, who handed her the golden slipper.

Then she sat down on a bench, pulled off her wooden clog and put on the slipper, which fitted to a nicety.

And when she stood up and the Prince looked into her face, he recognised the beautiful maiden that he had danced with, and cried: 'This is the true Bride!'

The Step-mother and the two sisters were dismayed and turned white with rage; but he took Ashenputtel on his horse and rode off with her.

As they rode past the hazel-tree the two White Doves cried:

'Prithee, look back, prithee, look back,
No blood's on the track,
The shoe's *not* too small,
You carry the true Bride home to your hall.'

And when they had said this they both came flying down, and settled on Ashenputtel's shoulders, one on the right, and one on the left, and remained perched there.

When the wedding was going to take place, the two false sisters came and wanted to curry favour with her, and take part in her good fortune. As the bridal party was going to the church, the eldest was on the right side, the youngest on the left, and the Doves picked out one of the eyes of each of them.

Afterwards, when they were coming out of the church, the elder was on the left, the younger on the right, and the Doves picked out the other eye of each of them. And so for their wickedness and falseness they were punished with blindness for the rest of their days.

The White Snake

A LONG time ago there lived a King whose wisdom was celebrated far and wide. Nothing was unknown to him, and news of the most secret transactions seemed to reach him through the air.

Now he had one very odd habit. Every day at dinner, when the courtiers had withdrawn, and he was quite alone, a trusted Servant had to bring in another dish. It was always covered, and even the Servant did not know what it contained, nor any one else, for the King never uncovered it till he was alone. This had gone on for a long time, when one day the Servant who carried the dish was overcome by his curiosity, and took the dish to his own room.

When he had carefully locked the door, he took the dish-cover off, and saw a White Snake lying on the dish.

At the sight of it, he could not resist tasting it; so he cut a piece off, and put it into his mouth.

Hardly had he tasted it, however, when he heard a wonderful whispering of delicate voices.

He went to the window and listened, and he noticed that the whispers came from the sparrows outside. They were chattering away, and telling each other all kinds of things that they had heard in the woods and fields. Eating the Snake had given him the power of understanding the language of birds and animals.

Now it happened on this day that the Queen lost her most precious ring, and suspicion fell upon this trusted Servant who went about everywhere.

The King sent for him, and threatened that if it was not found by the next day, he would be sent to prison.

In vain he protested his innocence; he was not believed.

In his grief and anxiety he went down into the courtyard and wondered how he should get out of his difficulty.

A number of Ducks were lying peaceably together by a stream, stroking down their feathers with their bills, while they chattered gaily.

The Servant stood still to listen to them. They were telling each other of their morning's walks and experiences.

Then one of them said somewhat fretfully: 'I have something lying heavy on my stomach. In my haste I swallowed the Queen's ring this morning.'

The Servant quickly seized it by the neck, carried it off into the kitchen, and said to the Cook: 'Here's a fine fat Duck. You had better kill it at once.'

'Yes, indeed,' said the Cook, weighing it in her hand. 'It has spared no pains in stuffing itself; it should have been roasted long ago.'

So she killed it, and cut it open, and there, sure enough, was the Queen's ring.

The Servant had now no difficulty in proving his innocence, and the King, to make up for his injustice, gave the Servant leave to ask any favour he liked, and promised him the highest post about the Court which he might desire.

The Servant, however, declined everything but a horse, and some money to travel with, as he wanted to wander about for a while, to see the world.

His request being granted, he set off on his travels, and one day came to a pond, where he saw three Fishes caught among the reeds, and gasping for breath. Although it is said that fishes are dumb, he understood their complaint at perishing thus miserably. As he had a compassionate heart, he got off his horse and put the three captives back into the water. They wriggled in their joy, stretched up their heads above the water, and cried —

'We will remember that you saved us, and reward you for it.'

He rode on again, and after a time he seemed to hear a voice in the sand at his feet. He listened, and heard an Ant-King complain: 'I wish these human beings and their animals would keep out of our

way. A clumsy horse has just put his hoof down upon a number of my people in the most heartless way.'

He turned his horse into a side path, and the Ant-King cried: 'We will remember and reward you.'

The road now ran through a forest, and he saw a pair of Ravens standing by their nest throwing out their young.

'Away with you, you gallows birds,' they were saying. 'We can't feed you any longer. You are old enough to look after yourselves.'

The poor little nestlings lay on the ground, fluttering and flapping their wings, and crying: 'We, poor helpless children, to feed ourselves, and we can't even fly! We shall die of hunger, there is nothing else for it.'

The good Youth dismounted, killed his horse with his sword, and left the carcase as food for the young Ravens. They hopped along to it, and cried: 'We will remember and reward you.'

Now he had to depend upon his own legs, and after going a long way he came to a large town.

There was much noise and bustle in the streets, where a man on horseback was making a proclamation.

'The King's daughter seeks a husband, but any one who wishes to sue for her hand must accomplish a hard task; and if he does not bring it to a successful issue, he will forfeit his life.'

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