LANG ANDREW

THE VIOLET FAIRY BOOK

Andrew Lang
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Содержание

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PREFACE

The Editor takes this opportunity to repeat what he has often said before, that he is not the author of the stories in the Fairy Books; that he did not invent them 'out of his own head.' He is accustomed to being asked, by ladies, 'Have you written anything else except the Fairy Books?' He is then obliged to explain that he has NOT written the Fairy Books, but, save these, has written almost everything else, except hymns, sermons, and dramatic works.

The stories in this Violet Fairy Book, as in all the others of the series, have been translated out of the popular traditional tales in a number of different languages. These stories are as old as anything that men have invented. They are narrated by naked savage women to naked savage children. They have been inherited by our earliest civilised ancestors, who really believed that beasts and trees and stones can talk if they choose, and behave kindly or unkindly. The stories are full of the oldest ideas of ages when science did not exist, and magic took the place of science. Anybody who has the curiosity to read the 'Legendary Australian Tales,' which Mrs. Langloh Parker has

collected from the lips of the Australian savages, will find that these tales are closely akin to our own. Who were the first authors of them nobody knows – probably the first men and women. Eve may have told these tales to amuse Cain and Abel. As people grew more civilised and had kings and queens, princes and princesses, these exalted persons generally were chosen as heroes and heroines. But originally the characters were just 'a man,' and 'a woman,' and 'a boy,' and 'a girl,' with crowds of beasts, birds, and fishes, all behaving like human beings. When the nobles and other people became rich and educated, they forgot the old stories, but the country people did not, and handed them down, with changes at pleasure, from generation to generation. Then learned men collected and printed the country people's stories, and these we have translated, to amuse children. Their tastes remain like the tastes of their naked ancestors, thousands of years ago, and they seem to like fairy tales better than history, poetry, geography, or arithmetic, just as grown-up people like novels better than anything else.

This is the whole truth of the matter. I have said so before, and I say so again. But nothing will prevent children from thinking that I invented the stories, or some ladies from being of the same opinion. But who really invented the stories nobody knows; it is all so long ago, long before reading and writing were invented. The first of the stories actually written down, were written in Egyptian hieroglyphs, or on Babylonian cakes of clay, three or four thousand years before our time.

Of the stories in this book, Miss Blackley translated 'Dwarf Long Nose,' 'The Wonderful Beggars,' 'The Lute Player,' 'Two in a Sack,' and 'The Fish that swam in the Air.' Mr. W. A. Craigie translated from the Scandinavian, 'Jasper who herded the Hares.' Mrs. Lang did the rest.

Some of the most interesting are from the Roumanion, and three were previously published in the late Dr. Steere's 'Swahili Tales.' By the permission of his representatives these three African stories have here been abridged and simplified for children.

A TALE OF THE TONTLAWALD

Long, long ago there stood in the midst of a country covered with lakes a vast stretch of moorland called the Tontlawald, on which no man ever dared set foot. From time to time a few bold spirits had been drawn by curiosity to its borders, and on their return had reported that they had caught a glimpse of a ruined house in a grove of thick trees, and round about it were a crowd of beings resembling men, swarming over the grass like bees. The men were as dirty and ragged as gipsies, and there were besides a quantity of old women and half-naked children.

One night a peasant who was returning home from a feast wandered a little farther into the Tontlawald, and came back with the same story. A countless number of women and children were gathered round a huge fire, and some were seated on the ground, while others danced strange dances on the smooth grass. One old crone had a broad iron ladle in her hand, with which every now and then she stirred the fire, but the moment she touched the glowing ashes the children rushed away, shrieking like night owls, and it was a long while before they ventured to steal back. And besides all this there had once or twice been seen a little old man with a long beard creeping out of the forest, carrying a sack bigger than himself. The women and children ran by his side, weeping and trying to drag the sack from off his back, but he shook them off, and went on his way. There was also a tale of a

magnificent black cat as large as a foal, but men could not believe all the wonders told by the peasant, and it was difficult to make out what was true and what was false in his story. However, the fact remained that strange things did happen there, and the King of Sweden, to whom this part of the country belonged, more than once gave orders to cut down the haunted wood, but there was no one with courage enough to obey his commands. At length one man, bolder than the rest, struck his axe into a tree, but his blow was followed by a stream of blood and shrieks as of a human creature in pain. The terrified woodcutter fled as fast as his legs would carry him, and after that neither orders nor threats would drive anybody to the enchanted moor.

A few miles from the Tontlawald was a large village, where dwelt a peasant who had recently married a young wife. As not uncommonly happens in such cases, she turned the whole house upside down, and the two quarrelled and fought all day long.

By his first wife the peasant had a daughter called Elsa, a good quiet girl, who only wanted to live in peace, but this her stepmother would not allow. She beat and cuffed the poor child from morning till night, but as the stepmother had the whip-hand of her husband there was no remedy.

For two years Elsa suffered all this ill-treatment, when one day she went out with the other village children to pluck strawberries. Carelessly they wandered on, till at last they reached the edge of the Tontlawald, where the finest strawberries grew, making the grass red with their colour. The children flung themselves down

on the ground, and, after eating as many as they wanted, began to pile up their baskets, when suddenly a cry arose from one of the older boys:

'Run, run as fast as you can! We are in the Tontlawald!'

Quicker than lightning they sprang to their feet, and rushed madly away, all except Elsa, who had strayed farther than the rest, and had found a bed of the finest strawberries right under the trees. Like the others, she heard the boy's cry, but could not make up her mind to leave the strawberries.

'After all, what does it matter?' thought she. 'The dwellers in the Tontlawald cannot be worse than my stepmother'; and looking up she saw a little black dog with a silver bell on its neck come barking towards her, followed by a maiden clad all in silk.

'Be quiet,' said she; then turning to Elsa she added: 'I am so glad you did not run away with the other children. Stay here with me and be my friend, and we will play delightful games together, and every day we will go and gather strawberries. Nobody will dare to beat you if I tell them not. Come, let us go to my mother'; and taking Elsa's hand she led her deeper into the wood, the little black dog jumping up beside them and barking with pleasure.

Oh! what wonders and splendours unfolded themselves before Elsa's astonished eyes! She thought she really must be in Heaven. Fruit trees and bushes loaded with fruit stood before them, while birds gayer than the brightest butterfly sat in their branches and filled the air with their song. And the birds were not shy, but let the girls take them in their hands, and stroke their gold and silver

feathers. In the centre of the garden was the dwelling-house, shining with glass and precious stones, and in the doorway sat a woman in rich garments, who turned to Elsa's companion and asked:

'What sort of a guest are you bringing to me?'

'I found her alone in the wood,' replied her daughter, 'and brought her back with me for a companion. You will let her stay?'

The mother laughed, but said nothing, only she looked Elsa up and down sharply. Then she told the girl to come near, and stroked her cheeks and spoke kindly to her, asking if her parents were alive, and if she really would like to stay with them. Elsa stooped and kissed her hand, then, kneeling down, buried her face in the woman's lap, and sobbed out:

'My mother has lain for many years under the ground. My father is still alive, but I am nothing to him, and my stepmother beats me all the day long. I can do nothing right, so let me, I pray you, stay with you. I will look after the flocks or do any work you tell me; I will obey your lightest word; only do not, I entreat you, send me back to her. She will half kill me for not having come back with the other children.'

And the woman smiled and answered, 'Well, we will see what we can do with you,' and, rising, went into the house.

Then the daughter said to Elsa, 'Fear nothing, my mother will be your friend. I saw by the way she looked that she would grant your request when she had thought over it,' and, telling Elsa to wait, she entered the house to seek her mother. Elsa meanwhile

was tossed about between hope and fear, and felt as if the girl would never come.

At last Elsa saw her crossing the grass with a box in her hand.

'My mother says we may play together to-day, as she wants to make up her mind what to do about you. But I hope you will stay here always, as I can't bear you to go away. Have you ever been on the sea?'

'The sea?' asked Elsa, staring; 'what is that? I've never heard of such a thing!'

'Oh, I'll soon show you,' answered the girl, taking the lid from the box, and at the very bottom lay a scrap of a cloak, a mussel shell, and two fish scales. Two drops of water were glistening on the cloak, and these the girl shook on the ground. In an instant the garden and lawn and everything else had vanished utterly, as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up, and as far as the eye could reach you could see nothing but water, which seemed at last to touch heaven itself. Only under their feet was a tiny dry spot. Then the girl placed the mussel shell on the water and took the fish scales in her hand. The mussel shell grew bigger and bigger, and turned into a pretty little boat, which would have held a dozen children. The girls stepped in, Elsa very cautiously, for which she was much laughed at by her friend, who used the fish scales for a rudder. The waves rocked the girls softly, as if they were lying in a cradle, and they floated on till they met other boats filled with men, singing and making merry.

'We must sing you a song in return,' said the girl, but as Elsa

did not know any songs, she had to sing by herself. Elsa could not understand any of the men's songs, but one word, she noticed, came over and over again, and that was 'Kisika.' Elsa asked what it meant, and the girl replied that it was her name.

It was all so pleasant that they might have stayed there for ever had not a voice cried out to them, 'Children, it is time for you to come home!'

So Kisika took the little box out of her pocket, with the piece of cloth lying in it, and dipped the cloth in the water, and lo! they were standing close to a splendid house in the middle of the garden. Everything round them was dry and firm, and there was no water anywhere. The mussel shell and the fish scales were put back in the box, and the girls went in.

They entered a large hall, where four and twenty richly dressed women were sitting round a table, looking as if they were about to attend a wedding. At the head of the table sat the lady of the house in a golden chair.

Elsa did not know which way to look, for everything that met her eyes was more beautiful than she could have dreamed possible. But she sat down with the rest, and ate some delicious fruit, and thought she must be in heaven. The guests talked softly, but their speech was strange to Elsa, and she understood nothing of what was said. Then the hostess turned round and whispered something to a maid behind her chair, and the maid left the hall, and when she came back she brought a little old man with her, who had a beard longer than himself. He bowed low to the lady

and then stood quietly near the door.

'Do you see this girl?' said the lady of the house, pointing to Elsa. 'I wish to adopt her for my daughter. Make me a copy of her, which we can send to her native village instead of herself.'

The old man looked Elsa all up and down, as if he was taking her measure, bowed again to the lady, and left the hall. After dinner the lady said kindly to Elsa, 'Kisika has begged me to let you stay with her, and you have told her you would like to live here. Is that so?'

At these words Elsa fell on her knees, and kissed the lady's hands and feet in gratitude for her escape from her cruel stepmother; but her hostess raised her from the ground and patted her head, saying, 'All will go well as long as you are a good, obedient child, and I will take care of you and see that you want for nothing till you are grown up and can look after yourself. My waiting-maid, who teaches Kisika all sorts of fine handiwork, shall teach you too.'

Not long after the old man came back with a mould full of clay on his shoulders, and a little covered basket in his left hand. He put down his mould and his basket on the ground, took up a handful of clay, and made a doll as large as life. When it was finished he bored a hole in the doll's breast and put a bit of bread inside; then, drawing a snake out of the basket, forced it to enter the hollow body.

'Now,' he said to the lady, 'all we want is a drop of the maiden's blood.'

When she heard this Elsa grew white with horror, for she thought she was selling her soul to the evil one.

'Do not be afraid!' the lady hastened to say; 'we do not want your blood for any bad purpose, but rather to give you freedom and happiness.'

Then she took a tiny golden needle, pricked Elsa in the arm, and gave the needle to the old man, who stuck it into the heart of the doll. When this was done he placed the figure in the basket, promising that the next day they should all see what a beautiful piece of work he had finished.

When Elsa awoke the next morning in her silken bed, with its soft white pillows, she saw a beautiful dress lying over the back of a chair, ready for her to put on. A maid came in to comb out her long hair, and brought the finest linen for her use; but nothing gave Elsa so much joy as the little pair of embroidered shoes that she held in her hand, for the girl had hitherto been forced to run about barefoot by her cruel stepmother. In her excitement she never gave a thought to the rough clothes she had worn the day before, which had disappeared as if by magic during the night. Who could have taken them? Well, she was to know that by-and-by. But WE can guess that the doll had been dressed in them, which was to go back to the village in her stead. By the time the sun rose the doll had attained her full size, and no one could have told one girl from the other. Elsa started back when she met herself as she looked only yesterday.

'You must not be frightened,' said the lady, when she noticed

her terror; 'this clay figure can do you no harm. It is for your stepmother, that she may beat it instead of you. Let her flog it as hard as she will, it can never feel any pain. And if the wicked woman does not come one day to a better mind your double will be able at last to give her the punishment she deserves.'

From this moment Elsa's life was that of the ordinary happy child, who has been rocked to sleep in her babyhood in a lovely golden cradle. She had no cares or troubles of any sort, and every day her tasks became easier, and the years that had gone before seemed more and more like a bad dream. But the happier she grew the deeper was her wonder at everything around her, and the more firmly she was persuaded that some great unknown power must be at the bottom of it all.

In the courtyard stood a huge granite block about twenty steps from the house, and when meal times came round the old man with the long beard went to the block, drew out a small silver staff, and struck the stone with it three times, so that the sound could be heard a long way off. At the third blow, out sprang a large golden cock, and stood upon the stone. Whenever he crowed and flapped his wings the rock opened and something came out of it. First a long table covered with dishes ready laid for the number of persons who would be seated round it, and this flew into the house all by itself.

When the cock crowed for the second time, a number of chairs appeared, and flew after the table; then wine, apples, and other fruit, all without trouble to anybody. After everybody had had

enough, the old man struck the rock again. The golden cock crowed afresh, and back went dishes, table, chairs, and plates into the middle of the block.

When, however, it came to the turn of the thirteenth dish, which nobody ever wanted to eat, a huge black cat ran up, and stood on the rock close to the cock, while the dish was on his other side.

There they all remained, till they were joined by the old man.

He picked up the dish in one hand, tucked the cat under his arm, told the cock to get on his shoulder, and all four vanished into the rock. And this wonderful stone contained not only food, but clothes and everything you could possibly want in the house.

At first a language was often spoken at meals which was strange to Elsa, but by the help of the lady and her daughter she began slowly to understand it, though it was years before she was able to speak it herself.

One day she asked Kisika why the thirteenth dish came daily to the table and was sent daily away untouched, but Kisika knew no more about it than she did. The girl must, however, have told her mother what Elsa had said, for a few days later she spoke to Elsa seriously:

'Do not worry yourself with useless wondering. You wish to know why we never eat of the thirteenth dish? That, dear child, is the dish of hidden blessings, and we cannot taste of it without bringing our happy life here to an end. And the world would be a great deal better if men, in their greed, did not seek to snatch

every thing for themselves, instead of leaving something as a thankoffering to the giver of the blessings. Greed is man's worst fault.'

The years passed like the wind for Elsa, and she grew into a lovely woman, with a knowledge of many things that she would never have learned in her native village; but Kisika was still the same young girl that she had been on the day of her first meeting with Elsa. Each morning they both worked for an hour at reading and writing, as they had always done, and Elsa was anxious to learn all she could, but Kisika much preferred childish games to anything else. If the humour seized her, she would fling aside her tasks, take her treasure box, and go off to play in the sea, where no harm ever came to her.

'What a pity,' she would often say to Elsa, 'that you have grown so big, you cannot play with me any more.'

Nine years slipped away in this manner, when one day the lady called Elsa into her room. Elsa was surprised at the summons, for it was unusual, and her heart sank, for she feared some evil threatened her. As she crossed the threshold, she saw that the lady's cheeks were flushed, and her eyes full of tears, which she dried hastily, as if she would conceal them from the girl. 'Dearest child,' she began, 'the time has come when we must part.'

'Part?' cried Elsa, burying her head in the lady's lap. 'No, dear lady, that can never be till death parts us. You once opened your arms to me; you cannot thrust me away now.'

'Ah, be quiet, child,' replied the lady; 'you do not know what I

would do to make you happy. Now you are a woman, and I have no right to keep you here. You must return to the world of men, where joy awaits you.'

'Dear lady,' entreated Elsa again. 'Do not, I beseech you, send me from you. I want no other happiness but to live and die beside you. Make me your waiting maid, or set me to any work you choose, but do not cast me forth into the world. It would have been better if you had left me with my stepmother, than first to have brought me to heaven and then send me back to a worse place.'

'Do not talk like that, dear child,' replied the lady; 'you do not know all that must be done to secure your happiness, however much it costs me. But it has to be. You are only a common mortal, who will have to die one day, and you cannot stay here any longer. Though we have the bodies of men, we are not men at all, though it is not easy for you to understand why. Some day or other you will find a husband who has been made expressly for you, and will live happily with him till death separates you. It will be very hard for me to part from you, but it has to be, and you must make up your mind to it.' Then she drew her golden comb gently through Elsa's hair, and bade her go to bed; but little sleep had the poor girl! Life seemed to stretch before her like a dark starless night.

Now let us look back a moment, and see what had been going on in Elsa's native village all these years, and how her double had fared. It is a well-known fact that a bad woman seldom becomes

better as she grows older, and Elsa's stepmother was no exception to the rule; but as the figure that had taken the girl's place could feel no pain, the blows that were showered on her night and day made no difference. If the father ever tried to come to his daughter's help, his wife turned upon him, and things were rather worse than before.

One day the stepmother had given the girl a frightful beating, and then threatened to kill her outright. Mad with rage, she seized the figure by the throat with both hands, when out came a black snake from her mouth and stung the woman's tongue, and she fell dead without a sound. At night, when the husband came home, he found his wife lying dead upon the ground, her body all swollen and disfigured, but the girl was nowhere to be seen. His screams brought the neighbours from their cottages, but they were unable to explain how it had all come about. It was true, they said, that about mid-day they had heard a great noise, but as that was a matter of daily occurrence they did not think much of it. The rest of the day all was still, but no one had seen anything of the daughter. The body of the dead woman was then prepared for burial, and her tired husband went to bed, rejoicing in his heart that he had been delivered from the firebrand who had made his home unpleasant. On the table he saw a slice of bread lying, and, being hungry, he ate it before going to sleep.

In the morning he too was found dead, and as swollen as his wife, for the bread had been placed in the body of the figure by the old man who made it. A few days later he was placed in the

grave beside his wife, but nothing more was ever heard of their daughter.

All night long after her talk with the lady Elsa had wept and wailed her hard fate in being cast out from her home which she loved.

Next morning, when she got up, the lady placed a gold seal ring on her finger, strung a little golden box on a ribbon, and placed it round her neck; then she called the old man, and, forcing back her tears, took leave of Elsa. The girl tried to speak, but before she could sob out her thanks the old man had touched her softly on the head three times with his silver staff. In an instant Elsa knew that she was turning into a bird: wings sprang from beneath her arms; her feet were the feet of eagles, with long claws; her nose curved itself into a sharp beak, and feathers covered her body. Then she soared high in the air, and floated up towards the clouds, as if she had really been hatched an eagle.

For several days she flew steadily south, resting from time to time when her wings grew tired, for hunger she never felt. And so it happened that one day she was flying over a dense forest, and below hounds were barking fiercely, because, not having wings themselves, she was out of their reach. Suddenly a sharp pain quivered through her body, and she fell to the ground, pierced by an arrow.

When Elsa recovered her senses, she found herself lying under a bush in her own proper form. What had befallen her, and how she got there, lay behind her like a bad dream.

As she was wondering what she should do next the king's son came riding by, and, seeing Elsa, sprang from his horse, and took her by the hand, sawing, 'Ah! it was a happy chance that brought me here this morning. Every night, for half a year, have I dreamed, dear lady, that I should one day find you in this wood. And although I have passed through it hundreds of times in vain, I have never given up hope. To-day I was going in search of a large eagle that I had shot, and instead of the eagle I have found – you.' Then he took Elsa on his horse, and rode with her to the town, where the old king received her graciously.

A few days later the wedding took place, and as Elsa was arranging the veil upon her hair fifty carts arrived laden with beautiful things which the lady of the Tontlawald had sent to Elsa. And after the king's death Elsa became queen, and when she was old she told this story. But that was the last that was ever heard of the Tontlawald.

(From Ehstnische Marchen.)

THE FINEST LIAR IN THE WORLD

At the edge of a wood there lived an old man who had only one son, and one day he called the boy to him and said he wanted some corn ground, but the youth must be sure never to enter any mill where the miller was beardless.

The boy took the corn and set out, and before he had gone very far he saw a large mill in front of him, with a beardless man standing in the doorway.

'Good greeting, beardless one!' cried he.

'Good greeting, sonny,' replied the man.

'Could I grind something here?'

'Yes, certainly! I will finish what I am doing and then you can grind as long as you like.'

But suddenly the boy remembered what his father had told him, and bade farewell to the man, and went further down the river, till he came to another mill, not knowing that as soon as his back was turned the beardless man had picked up a bag of corn and run hastily to the same mill before him. When the boy reached the second mill, and saw a second beardless man sitting there, he did not stop, and walked on till he came to a third mill. But this time also the beardless man had been too clever for him, and had arrived first by another road. When it happened a fourth time the boy grew cross, and said to himself, 'It is no good going on; there seems to be a beardless man in every mill'; and he took

his sack from his back, and made up his mind to grind his corn where he was.

The beardless man finished grinding his own corn, and when he had done he said to the boy, who was beginning to grind his, 'Suppose, sonny, we make a cake of what you have there.'

Now the boy had been rather uneasy when he recollected his father's words, but he thought to himself, 'What is done cannot be undone,' and answered, 'Very well, so let it be.'

Then the beardless one got up, threw the flour into the tub, and made a hole in the middle, telling the boy to fetch some water from the river in his two hands, to mix the cake. When the cake was ready for baking they put it on the fire, and covered it with hot ashes, till it was cooked through. Then they leaned it up against the wall, for it was too big to go into a cupboard, and the beardless one said to the boy:

'Look here, sonny: if we share this cake we shall neither of us have enough. Let us see who can tell the biggest lie, and the one who lies the best shall have the whole cake.'

The boy, not knowing what else to do, answered, 'All right; you begin.'

So the beardless one began to lie with all his might, and when he was tired of inventing new lies the boy said to him, 'My good fellow, if THAT is all you can do it is not much! Listen to me, and I will tell you a true story.

'In my youth, when I was an old man, we had a quantity of beehives. Every morning when I got up I counted them over, and

it was quite easy to number the bees, but I never could reckon the hives properly. One day, as I was counting the bees, I discovered that my best bee was missing, and without losing a moment I saddled a cock and went out to look for him. I traced him as far as the shore, and knew that he had crossed the sea, and that I must follow. When I had reached the other side I found a man had harnessed my bee to a plough, and with his help was sowing millet seed.

"'That is my bee!" I shouted. "Where did you get him from?"" "Brother," replied the man, "if he is yours, take him." And he not only gave me back my bee, but a sack of millet seed into the bargain, because he had made use of my bee. Then I put the bag on my shoulders, took the saddle from the cock, and placed it on the back of the bee, which I mounted, leading the cock by a string, so that he should have a rest. As we were flying home over the sea one of the strings that held the bag of millet broke in two, and the sack dropped straight into the ocean. It was quite lost, of course, and there was no use thinking about it, and by the time we were safe back again night had come. I then got down from my bee, and let him loose, that he might get his supper, gave the cock some hay, and went to sleep myself. But when I awoke with the sun what a scene met my eyes! During the night wolves had come and had eaten my bee. And honey lay ankle-deep in the valley and knee-deep on the hills. Then I began to consider how I could best collect some, to take home with me.

'Now it happened that I had with me a small hatchet, and this

I took to the wood, hoping to meet some animal which I could kill, whose skin I might turn into a bag. As I entered the forest I saw two roe-deer hopping on one foot, so I slew them with a single blow, and made three bags from their skins, all of which I filled with honey and placed on the back of the cock. At length I reached home, where I was told that my father had just been born, and that I must go at once to fetch some holy water to sprinkle him with. As I went I turned over in my mind if there was no way for me to get back my millet seed, which had dropped into the sea, and when I arrived at the place with the holy water I saw the seed had fallen on fruitful soil, and was growing before my eyes. And more than that, it was even cut by an invisible hand, and made into a cake.

'So I took the cake as well as the holy water, and was flying back with them over the sea, when there fell a great rain, and the sea was swollen, and swept away my millet cake. Ah, how vexed I was at its loss when I was safe on earth again.

'Suddenly I remembered that my hair was very long. If I stood it touched the ground, although if I was sitting it only reached my ears. I seized a knife and cut off a large lock, which I plaited together, and when night came tied it into a knot, and prepared to use it for a pillow. But what was I to do for a fire? A tinder box I had, but no wood. Then it occurred to me that I had stuck a needle in my clothes, so I took the needle and split it in pieces, and lit it, then laid myself down by the fire and went to sleep. But ill-luck still pursued me. While I was sleeping a spark from

the fire lighted on the hair, which was burnt up in a moment. In despair I threw myself on the ground, and instantly sank in it as far as my waist. I struggled to get out, but only fell in further; so I ran to the house, seized a spade, dug myself out, and took home the holy water. On the way I noticed that the ripe fields were full of reapers, and suddenly the air became so frightfully hot that the men dropped down in a faint. Then I called to them, "Why don't you bring out our mare, which is as tall as two days, and as broad as half a day, and make a shade for yourselves?" My father heard what I said and jumped quickly on the mare, and the reapers worked with a will in the shadow, while I snatched up a wooden pail to bring them some water to drink. When I got to the well everything was frozen hard, so in order to draw some water I had to take off my head and break the ice with it. As I drew near them, carrying the water, the reapers all cried out, "Why, what has become of your head?" I put up my hand and discovered that I really had no head, and that I must have left it in the well. I ran back to look for it, but found that meanwhile a fox which was passing by had pulled my head out of the water, and was tearing at my brains. I stole cautiously up to him, and gave him such a kick that he uttered a loud scream, and let fall a parchment on which was written, "The cake is mine, and the beardless one goes empty-handed.'"

With these words the boy rose, took the cake, and went home, while the beardless one remained behind to swallow his disappointment.

(Volksmarchen der Serben.)

THE STORY OF THREE WONDERFUL BEGGARS

There once lived a merchant whose name was Mark, and whom people called 'Mark the Rich.' He was a very hard-hearted man, for he could not bear poor people, and if he caught sight of a beggar anywhere near his house, he would order the servants to drive him away, or would set the dogs at him.

One day three very poor old men came begging to the door, and just as he was going to let the fierce dogs loose on them, his little daughter, Anastasia, crept close up to him and said:

'Dear daddy, let the poor old men sleep here to-night, do – to please me.'

Her father could not bear to refuse her, and the three beggars were allowed to sleep in a loft, and at night, when everyone in the house was fast asleep, little Anastasia got up, climbed up to the loft, and peeped in.

The three old men stood in the middle of the loft, leaning on their sticks, with their long grey beards flowing down over their hands, and were talking together in low voices.

'What news is there?' asked the eldest.

'In the next village the peasant Ivan has just had his seventh son. What shall we name him, and what fortune shall we give him?' said the second.

The third whispered, 'Call him Vassili, and give him all the property of the hard-hearted man in whose loft we stand, and who wanted to drive us from his door.'

After a little more talk the three made themselves ready and crept softly away.

Anastasia, who had heard every word, ran straight to her father, and told him all.

Mark was very much surprised; he thought, and thought, and in the morning he drove to the next village to try and find out if such a child really had been born. He went first to the priest, and asked him about the children in his parish.

'Yesterday,' said the priest, 'a boy was born in the poorest house in the village. I named the unlucky little thing "Vassili." He is the seventh son, and the eldest is only seven years old, and they hardly have a mouthful amongst them all. Who can be got to stand godfather to such a little beggar boy?'

The merchant's heart beat fast, and his mind was full of bad thoughts about that poor little baby. He would be godfather himself, he said, and he ordered a fine christening feast; so the child was brought and christened, and Mark was very friendly to its father. After the ceremony was over he took Ivan aside and said:

'Look here, my friend, you are a poor man. How can you afford to bring up the boy? Give him to me and I'll make something of him, and I'll give you a present of a thousand crowns. Is that a bargain?'

Ivan scratched his head, and thought, and thought, and then he agreed. Mark counted out the money, wrapped the baby up in a fox skin, laid it in the sledge beside him, and drove back towards home. When he had driven some miles he drew up, carried the child to the edge of a steep precipice and threw it over, muttering, 'There, now try to take my property!'

Very soon after this some foreign merchants travelled along that same road on the way to see Mark and to pay the twelve thousand crowns which they owed him.

As they were passing near the precipice they heard a sound of crying, and on looking over they saw a little green meadow wedged in between two great heaps of snow, and on the meadow lay a baby amongst the flowers.

The merchants picked up the child, wrapped it up carefully, and drove on. When they saw Mark they told him what a strange thing they had found. Mark guessed at once that the child must be his godson, asked to see him, and said:

'That's a nice little fellow; I should like to keep him. If you will make him over to me, I will let you off your debt.'

The merchants were very pleased to make so good a bargain, left the child with Mark, and drove off.

At night Mark took the child, put it in a barrel, fastened the lid tight down, and threw it into the sea. The barrel floated away to a great distance, and at last it floated close up to a monastery. The monks were just spreading out their nets to dry on the shore, when they heard the sound of crying. It seemed to come from

the barrel which was bobbing about near the water's edge. They drew it to land and opened it, and there was a little child! When the abbot heard the news, he decided to bring up the boy, and named him 'Vassili.'

The boy lived on with the monks, and grew up to be a clever, gentle, and handsome young man. No one could read, write, or sing better than he, and he did everything so well that the abbot made him wardrobe keeper.

Now, it happened about this time that the merchant, Mark, came to the monastery in the course of a journey. The monks were very polite to him and showed him their house and church and all they had. When he went into the church the choir was singing, and one voice was so clear and beautiful, that he asked who it belonged to. Then the abbot told him of the wonderful way in which Vassili had come to them, and Mark saw clearly that this must be his godson whom he had twice tried to kill.

He said to the abbot: 'I can't tell you how much I enjoy that young man's singing. If he could only come to me I would make him overseer of all my business. As you say, he is so good and clever. Do spare him to me. I will make his fortune, and will present your monastery with twenty thousand crowns.'

The abbot hesitated a good deal, but he consulted all the other monks, and at last they decided that they ought not to stand in the way of Vassili's good fortune.

Then Mark wrote a letter to his wife and gave it to Vassili to take to her, and this was what was in the letter: 'When the bearer

of this arrives, take him into the soap factory, and when you pass near the great boiler, push him in. If you don't obey my orders I shall be very angry, for this young man is a bad fellow who is sure to ruin us all if he lives.'

Vassili had a good voyage, and on landing set off on foot for Mark's home. On the way he met three beggars, who asked him: 'Where are you going, Vassili?'

'I am going to the house of Mark the Merchant, and have a letter for his wife,' replied Vassili.

'Show us the letter.'

Vassili handed them the letter. They blew on it and gave it back to him, saying: 'Now go and give the letter to Mark's wife. You will not be forsaken.'

Vassili reached the house and gave the letter. When the mistress read it she could hardly believe her eyes and called for her daughter. In the letter was written, quite plainly: 'When you receive this letter, get ready for a wedding, and let the bearer be married next day to my daughter, Anastasia. If you don't obey my orders I shall be very angry.'

Anastasia saw the bearer of the letter and he pleased her very much. They dressed Vassili in fine clothes and next day he was married to Anastasia.

In due time, Mark returned from his travels. His wife, daughter, and son-in-law all went out to meet him. When Mark saw Vassili he flew into a terrible rage with his wife. 'How dared you marry my daughter without my consent?' he asked.

'I only carried out your orders,' said she. 'Here is your letter.'

Mark read it. It certainly was his handwriting, but by no means his wishes.

'Well,' thought he, 'you've escaped me three times, but I think I shall get the better of you now.' And he waited a month and was very kind and pleasant to his daughter and her husband.

At the end of that time he said to Vassili one day, 'I want you to go for me to my friend the Serpent King, in his beautiful country at the world's end. Twelve years ago he built a castle on some land of mine. I want you to ask for the rent for those twelve years and also to find out from him what has become of my twelve ships which sailed for his country three years ago.'

Vassili dared not disobey. He said good-bye to his young wife, who cried bitterly at parting, hung a bag of biscuits over his shoulders, and set out.

I really cannot tell you whether the journey was long or short. As he tramped along he suddenly heard a voice saying: 'Vassili! where are you going?'

Vassili looked about him, and, seeing no one, called out: 'Who spoke to me?'

'I did; this old wide-spreading oak. Tell me where you are going.'

'I am going to the Serpent King to receive twelve years' rent from him.'

'When the time comes, remember me and ask the king: "Rotten to the roots, half dead but still green, stands the old oak.

Is it to stand much longer on the earth?'"

Vassili went on further. He came to a river and got into the ferryboat. The old ferryman asked: 'Are you going far, my friend?'

'I am going to the Serpent King.'

'Then think of me and say to the king: "For thirty years the ferryman has rowed to and fro. Will the tired old man have to row much longer?"'

'Very well,' said Vassili; 'I'll ask him.'

And he walked on. In time he came to a narrow strait of the sea and across it lay a great whale over whose back people walked and drove as if it had been a bridge or a road. As he stepped on it the whale said, 'Do tell me where you are going.'

'I am going to the Serpent King.'

And the whale begged: 'Think of me and say to the king: "The poor whale has been lying three years across the strait, and men and horses have nearly trampled his back into his ribs. Is he to lie there much longer?"'

'I will remember,' said Vassili, and he went on.

He walked, and walked, and walked, till he came to a great green meadow. In the meadow stood a large and splendid castle. Its white marble walls sparkled in the light, the roof was covered with mother o' pearl, which shone like a rainbow, and the sun glowed like fire on the crystal windows. Vassili walked in, and went from one room to another astonished at all the splendour he saw.

When he reached the last room of all, he found a beautiful girl sitting on a bed.

As soon as she saw him she said: 'Oh, Vassili, what brings you to this accursed place?'

Vassili told her why he had come, and all he had seen and heard on the way.

The girl said: 'You have not been sent here to collect rents, but for your own destruction, and that the serpent may devour you.'

She had not time to say more, when the whole castle shook, and a rustling, hissing, groaning sound was heard. The girl quickly pushed Vassili into a chest under the bed, locked it and whispered: 'Listen to what the serpent and I talk about.'

Then she rose up to receive the Serpent King.

The monster rushed into the room, and threw itself panting on the bed, crying: 'I've flown half over the world. I'm tired, VERY tired, and want to sleep – scratch my head.'

The beautiful girl sat down near him, stroking his hideous head, and said in a sweet coaxing voice: 'You know everything in the world. After you left, I had such a wonderful dream. Will you tell me what it means?'

'Out with it then, quick! What was it?'

'I dreamt I was walking on a wide road, and an oak tree said to me: "Ask the king this: Rotten at the roots, half dead, and yet green stands the old oak. Is it to stand much longer on the earth?"'

'It must stand till some one comes and pushes it down with his foot. Then it will fall, and under its roots will be found more gold

and silver than even Mark the Rich has got.'

'Then I dreamt I came to a river, and the old ferryman said to me: "For thirty year's the ferryman has rowed to and fro. Will the tired old man have to row much longer?"'

'That depends on himself. If some one gets into the boat to be ferried across, the old man has only to push the boat off, and go his way without looking back. The man in the boat will then have to take his place.'

'And at last I dreamt that I was walking over a bridge made of a whale's back, and the living bridge spoke to me and said: "Here have I been stretched out these three years, and men and horses have trampled my back down into my ribs. Must I lie here much longer?"'

'He will have to lie there till he has thrown up the twelve ships of Mark the Rich which he swallowed. Then he may plunge back into the sea and heal his back.'

And the Serpent King closed his eyes, turned round on his other side, and began to snore so loud that the windows rattled.

In all haste the lovely girl helped Vassili out of the chest, and showed him part of his way back. He thanked her very politely, and hurried off.

When he reached the strait the whale asked: 'Have you thought of me?'

'Yes, as soon as I am on the other side I will tell you what you want to know.'

When he was on the other side Vassili said to the whale:

'Throw up those twelve ships of Mark's which you swallowed three years ago.'

The great fish heaved itself up and threw up all the twelve ships and their crews. Then he shook himself for joy, and plunged into the sea.

Vassili went on further till he reached the ferry, where the old man asked: 'Did you think of me?'

'Yes, and as soon as you have ferried me across I will tell you what you want to know.'

When they had crossed over, Vassili said: 'Let the next man who comes stay in the boat, but do you step on shore, push the boat off, and you will be free, and the other man must take your place.

Then Vassili went on further still, and soon came to the old oak tree, pushed it with his foot, and it fell over. There, at the roots, was more gold and silver than even Mark the Rich had.

And now the twelve ships which the whale had thrown up came sailing along and anchored close by. On the deck of the first ship stood the three beggars whom Vassili had met formerly, and they said: 'Heaven has blessed you, Vassili.' Then they vanished away and he never saw them again.

The sailors carried all the gold and silver into the ship, and then they set sail for home with Vassili on board.

Mark was more furious than ever. He had his horses harnessed and drove off himself to see the Serpent King and to complain of the way in which he had been betrayed. When he reached the

river he sprang into the ferryboat. The ferryman, however, did not get in but pushed the boat off…

Vassili led a good and happy life with his dear wife, and his kind mother-in-law lived with them. He helped the poor and fed and clothed the hungry and naked and all Mark's riches became his.

For many years Mark has been ferrying people across the river. His face is wrinkled, his hair and beard are snow white, and his eyes are dim; but still he rows on.

(From the Serbian.)

SCHIPPEITARO

It was the custom in old times that as soon as a Japanese boy reached manhood he should leave his home and roam through the land in search of adventures. Sometimes he would meet with a young man bent on the same business as himself, and then they would fight in a friendly manner, merely to prove which was the stronger, but on other occasions the enemy would turn out to be a robber, who had become the terror of the neighbourhood, and then the battle was in deadly earnest.

One day a youth started off from his native village, resolved never to come back till he had done some great deed that would make his name famous. But adventures did not seem very plentiful just then, and he wandered about for a long time without meeting either with fierce giants or distressed damsels. At last he saw in the distance a wild mountain, half covered with a dense forest, and thinking that this promised well at once took the road that led to it. The difficulties he met with – huge rocks to be climbed, deep rivers to be crossed, and thorny tracts to be avoided – only served to make his heart beat quicker, for he was really brave all through, and not merely when he could not help himself, like a great many people. But in spite of all his efforts he could not find his way out of the forest, and he began to think he should have to pass the night there. Once more he strained his eyes to see if there was no place in which he could take shelter,

and this time he caught sight of a small chapel in a little clearing. He hastened quickly towards it, and curling himself up in a warm corner soon fell asleep.

Not a sound was heard through the whole forest for some hours, but at midnight there suddenly arose such a clamour that the young man, tired as he was, started broad awake in an instant. Peeping cautiously between the wooden pillars of the chapel, he saw a troop of hideous cats, dancing furiously, making the night horrible with their yells. The full moon lighted up the weird scene, and the young warrior gazed with astonishment, taking great care to keep still, lest he should be discovered. After some time he thought that in the midst of all their shrieks he could make out the words, 'Do not tell Schippeitaro! Keep it hidden and secret! Do not tell Schippeitaro!' Then, the midnight hour having passed, they all vanished, and the youth was left alone. Exhausted by all that had been going on round him, he flung himself on the ground and slept till the sun rose.

The moment he woke he felt very hungry, and began to think how he could get something to eat. So he got up and walked on, and before he had gone very far was lucky enough to find a little side-path, where he could trace men's footsteps. He followed the track, and by-and-by came on some scattered huts, beyond which lay a village. Delighted at this discovery, he was about to hasten to the village when he heard a woman's voice weeping and lamenting, and calling on the men to take pity on her and help her. The sound of her distress made him forget he was hungry,

and he strode into the hut to find out for himself what was wrong. But the men whom he asked only shook their heads and told him it was not a matter in which he could give any help, for all this sorrow was caused by the Spirit of the Mountain, to whom every year they were bound to furnish a maiden for him to eat.

'To-morrow night,' said they, 'the horrible creature will come for his dinner, and the cries you have heard were uttered by the girl before you, upon whom the lot has fallen.'

And when the young man asked if the girl was carried off straight from her home, they answered no, but that a large cask was set in the forest chapel, and into this she was fastened.

As he listened to this story, the young man was filled with a great longing to rescue the maiden from her dreadful fate. The mention of the chapel set him thinking of the scene of the previous night, and he went over all the details again in his mind. 'Who is Schippeitaro?' he suddenly asked; 'can any of you tell me?'

'Schippeitaro is the great dog that belongs to the overseer of our prince,' said they; 'and he lives not far away.' And they began to laugh at the question, which seemed to them so odd and useless.

The young man did not laugh with them, but instead left the hut and went straight to the owner of the dog, whom he begged to lend him the animal just for one night. Schippeitaro's master was not at all willing to give him in charge to a man of whom he knew nothing, but in the end he consented, and the youth led

the dog away, promising faithfully to return him next day to his master. He next hurried to the hut where the maiden lived, and entreated her parents to shut her up safely in a closet, after which he took Schippeitaro to the cask, and fastened him into it. In the evening he knew that the cask would be placed in the chapel, so he hid himself there and waited.

At midnight, when the full moon appeared above the top of the mountain, the cats again filled the chapel and shrieked and yelled and danced as before. But this time they had in their midst a huge black cat who seemed to be their king, and whom the young man guessed to be the Spirit of the Mountain. The monster looked eagerly about him, and his eyes sparkled with joy when he saw the cask. He bounded high into the air with delight and uttered cries of pleasure; then he drew near and undid the bolts.

But instead of fastening his teeth in the neck of a beautiful maiden, Schippeitaro's teeth were fastened in HIM, and the youth ran up and cut off his head with his sword. The other cats were so astonished at the turn things had taken that they forgot to run away, and the young man and Schippeitaro between them killed several more before they thought of escaping.

At sunrise the brave dog was taken back to his master, and from that time the mountain girls were safe, and every year a feast was held in memory of the young warrior and the dog Schippeitaro.

(Japanische Marchen.)

THE THREE PRINCES AND THEIR BEASTS (LITHUANIAN FAIRY TALE)

Once on a time there were three princes, who had a step-sister. One day they all set out hunting together. When they had gone some way through a thick wood they came on a great grey wolf with three cubs. Just as they were going to shoot, the wolf spoke and said, 'Do not shoot me, and I will give each of you one of my young ones. It will be a faithful friend to you.'

So the princes went on their way, and a little wolf followed each of them.

Soon after they came on a lioness with three cubs. And she too begged them not to shoot her, and she would give each of them a cub. And so it happened with a fox, a hare, a boar, and a bear, till each prince had quite a following of young beasts padding along behind him.

Towards evening they came to a clearing in the wood, where three birches grew at the crossing of three roads. The eldest prince took an arrow, and shot it into the trunk of one of the birch trees. Turning to his brothers he said:

'Let each of us mark one of these trees before we part on different ways. When any one of us comes back to this place, he must walk round the trees of the other two, and if he sees blood

flowing from the mark in the tree he will know that that brother is dead, but if milk flows he will know that his brother is alive.'

So each of the princes did as the eldest brother had said, and when the three birches were marked by their arrows they turned to their step-sister and asked her with which of them she meant to live.

'With the eldest,' she answered. Then the brothers separated from each other, and each of them set out down a different road, followed by their beasts. And the step-sister went with the eldest prince.

After they had gone a little way along the road they came into a forest, and in one of the deepest glades they suddenly found themselves opposite a castle in which there lived a band of robbers. The prince walked up to the door and knocked. The moment it was opened the beasts rushed in, and each seized on a robber, killed him, and dragged the body down to the cellar. Now, one of the robbers was not really killed, only badly wounded, but he lay quite still and pretended to be dead like the others. Then the prince and his step-sister entered the castle and took up their abode in it.

The next morning the prince went out hunting. Before leaving he told his step-sister that she might go into every room in the house except into the cave where the dead robbers lay. But as soon as his back was turned she forgot what he had said, and having wandered through all the other rooms she went down to the cellar and opened the door. As soon as she looked in the

robber who had only pretended to be dead sat up and said to her:

'Don't be afraid. Do what I tell you, and I will be your friend.

If you marry me you will be much happier with me than with your brother. But you must first go into the sitting-room and look in the cupboard. There you will find three bottles. In one of them there is a healing ointment which you must put on my chin to heal the wound; then if I drink the contents of the second bottle it will make me well, and the third bottle will make me stronger than I ever was before. Then, when your brother comes back from the wood with his beasts you must go to him and say, "Brother, you are very strong. If I were to fasten your thumbs behind your back with a stout silk cord, could you wrench yourself free?" And when you see that he cannot do it, call me.'

When the brother came home, the step-sister did as the robber had told her, and fastened her brother's thumbs behind his back. But with one wrench he set himself free, and said to her, 'Sister, that cord is not strong enough for me.'

The next day he went back to the wood with his beasts, and the robber told her that she must take a much stouter cord to bind his thumbs with. But again he freed himself, though not so easily as the first time, and he said to his sister:

'Even that cord is not strong enough.'

The third day, on his return from the wood he consented to have his strength tested for the last time. So she took a very strong cord of silk, which she had prepared by the robber's advice, and this time, though the prince pulled and tugged with all his

might, he could not break the cord. So he called to her and said: 'Sister, this time the cord is so strong I cannot break it. Come and unfasten it for me.'

But instead of coming she called to the robber, who rushed into the room brandishing a knife, with which he prepared to attack the prince.

But the prince spoke and said:

'Have patience for one minute. I would like before I die to blow three blasts on my hunting horn – one in this room, one on the stairs, and one in the courtyard.'

So the robber consented, and the prince blew the horn. At the first blast, the fox, which was asleep in the cage in the courtyard, awoke, and knew that his master needed help. So he awoke the wolf by flicking him across the eyes with his brush. Then they awoke the lion, who sprang against the door of the cage with might and main, so that it fell in splinters on the ground, and the beasts were free. Rushing through the court to their master's aid, the fox gnawed the cord in two that bound the prince's thumbs behind his back, and the lion flung himself on the robber, and when he had killed him and torn him in pieces each of the beasts carried off a bone.

Then the prince turned to the step-sister and said:

'I will not kill you, but I will leave you here to repent.' And he fastened her with a chain to the wall, and put a great bowl in front of her and said, 'I will not see you again till you have filled this bowl with your tears.'

So saying, he called his beasts, and set out on his travels. When he had gone a little way he came to an inn. Everyone in the inn seemed so sad that he asked them what was the matter.

'Ah,' replied they, 'to-day our king's daughter is to die. She is to be handed over to a dreadful nine-headed dragon.'

Then the prince said: 'Why should she die? I am very strong, I will save her.'

And he set out to the sea-shore, where the dragon was to meet the princess. And as he waited with his beasts round him a great procession came along, accompanying the unfortunate princess: and when the shore was reached all the people left her, and returned sadly to their houses. But the prince remained, and soon he saw a movement in the water a long way off. As it came nearer, he knew what it was, for skimming swiftly along the waters came a monster dragon with nine heads. Then the prince took counsel with his beasts, and as the dragon approached the shore the fox drew his brush through the water and blinded the dragon by scattering the salt water in his eyes, while the bear and the lion threw up more water with their paws, so that the monster was bewildered and could see nothing. Then the prince rushed forward with his sword and killed the dragon, and the beasts tore the body in pieces.

Then the princess turned to the prince and thanked him for delivering her from the dragon, and she said to him:

'Step into this carriage with me, and we will drive back to my father's palace.' And she gave him a ring and half of her

handkerchief. But on the way back the coachman and footman spoke to one another and said:

'Why should we drive this stranger back to the palace? Let us kill him, and then we can say to the king that we slew the dragon and saved the princess, and one of us shall marry her.'

So they killed the prince, and left him dead on the roadside. And the faithful beasts came round the dead body and wept, and wondered what they should do. Then suddenly the wolf had an idea, and he started off into the wood, where he found an ox, which he straightway killed. Then he called the fox, and told him to mount guard over the dead ox, and if a bird came past and tried to peck at the flesh he was to catch it and bring it to the lion. Soon after a crow flew past, and began to peck at the dead ox. In a moment the fox had caught it and brought it to the lion. Then the lion said to the crow:

'We will not kill you if you will promise to fly to the town where there are three wells of healing and to bring back water from them in your beak to make this dead man alive.'

So the crow flew away, and she filled her beak at the well of healing, the well of strength, and the well of swiftness, and she flew back to the dead prince and dropped the water from her beak upon his lips, and he was healed, and could sit up and walk.

Then he set out for the town, accompanied by his faithful beasts.

And when they reached the king's palace they found that preparations for a great feast were being made, for the princess

was to marry the coachman.

So the prince walked into the palace, and went straight up to the coachman and said: 'What token have you got that you killed the dragon and won the hand of the princess? I have her token here – this ring and half her handkerchief.'

And when the king saw these tokens he knew that the prince was speaking the truth. So the coachman was bound in chains and thrown into prison, and the prince was married to the princess and rewarded with half the kingdom.

One day, soon after his marriage, the prince was walking through the woods in the evening, followed by his faithful beasts. Darkness came on, and he lost his way, and wandered about among the trees looking for the path that would lead him back to the palace. As he walked he saw the light of a fire, and making his way to it he found an old woman raking sticks and dried leaves together, and burning them in a glade of the wood.

As he was very tired, and the night was very dark, the prince determined not to wander further. So he asked the old woman if he might spend the night beside her fire.

'Of course you may,' she answered. 'But I am afraid of your beasts. Let me hit them with my rod, and then I shall not be afraid of them.'

'Very well,' said the prince, 'I don't mind'; and she stretched out her rod and hit the beasts, and in one moment they were turned into stone, and so was the prince.

Now soon after this the prince's youngest brother came to

the cross-roads with the three birches, where the brothers had parted from each other when they set out on their wanderings. Remembering what they had agreed to do, he walked round the two trees, and when he saw that blood oozed from the cut in the eldest prince's tree he knew that his brother must be dead. So he set out, followed by his beasts, and came to the town over which his brother had ruled, and where the princess he had married lived. And when he came into the town all the people were in great sorrow because their prince had disappeared.

But when they saw his youngest brother, and the beasts following him, they thought it was their own prince, and they rejoiced greatly, and told him how they had sought him everywhere. Then they led him to the king, and he too thought that it was his son-in-law. But the princess knew that he was not her husband, and she begged him to go out into the woods with his beasts, and to look for his brother till he found him.

So the youngest prince set out to look for his brother, and he too lost his way in the wood and night overtook him. Then he came to the clearing among the trees, where the fire was burning and where the old woman was raking sticks and leaves into the flames. And he asked her if he might spend the night beside her fire, as it was too late and too dark to go back to the town.

And she answered: 'Certainly you may. But I am afraid of your beasts. May I give them a stroke with my rod, then I shall not be afraid of them.'

And he said she might, for he did not know that she was a

witch. So she stretched out her rod, and in a moment the beasts and their master were turned into stone.

It happened soon after that the second brother returned from his wanderings and came to the cross-roads where the three birches grew. As he went round the trees he saw that blood poured from the cuts in the bark of two of the trees. Then he wept and said:

'Alas! both my brothers are dead.' And he too set out towards the town in which his brother had ruled, and his faithful beasts followed him. When he entered the town, all the people thought it was their own prince come back to them, and they gathered round him, as they had gathered round his youngest brother, and asked him where he had been and why he had not returned. And they led him to the king's palace, but the princess knew that he was not her husband. So when they were alone together she besought him to go and seek for his brother and bring him home. Calling his beasts round him, he set out and wandered through the woods. And he put his ear down to the earth, to listen if he could hear the sound of his brother's beasts. And it seemed to him as if he heard a faint sound far off, but he did not know from what direction it came. So he blew on his hunting horn and listened again. And again he heard the sound, and this time it seemed to come from the direction of a fire burning in the wood. So he went towards the fire, and there the old woman was raking sticks and leaves into the embers. And he asked her if he might spend the night beside her fire. But she told him she was afraid of his beasts, and

he must first allow her to give each of them a stroke with her rod.

But he answered her:

'Certainly not. I am their master, and no one shall strike them but I myself. Give me the rod'; and he touched the fox with it, and in a moment it was turned into stone. Then he knew that the old woman was a witch, and he turned to her and said:

'Unless you restore my brothers and their beasts back to life at once, my lion will tear you in pieces.'

Then the witch was terrified, and taking a young oak tree she burnt it into white ashes, and sprinkled the ashes on the stones that stood around. And in a moment the two princes stood before their brother, and their beasts stood round them.

Then the three princes set off together to the town. And the king did not know which was his son-in-law, but the princess knew which was her husband, and there were great rejoicings throughout the land.

THE GOAT'S EARS OF THE EMPEROR TROJAN

Once upon a time there lived an emperor whose name was Trojan, and he had ears like a goat. Every morning, when he was shaved, he asked if the man saw anything odd about him, and as each fresh barber always replied that the emperor had goat's ears, he was at once ordered to be put to death.

Now after this state of things had lasted a good while, there was hardly a barber left in the town that could shave the emperor, and it came to be the turn of the Master of the Company of Barbers to go up to the palace. But, unluckily, at the very moment that he should have set out, the master fell suddenly ill, and told one of his apprentices that he must go in his stead.

When the youth was taken to the emperor's bedroom, he was asked why he had come and not his master. The young man replied that the master was ill, and there was no one but himself who could be trusted with the honour. The emperor was satisfied with the answer, and sat down, and let a sheet of fine linen be put round him. Directly the young barber began his work, he, like the rest, remarked the goat's ears of the emperor, but when he had finished and the emperor asked his usual question as to whether the youth had noticed anything odd about him, the young man replied calmly, 'No, nothing at all.' This pleased the emperor so

much that he gave him twelve ducats, and said, 'Henceforth you shall come every day to shave me.'

So when the apprentice returned home, and the master inquired how he had got on with the emperor, the young man answered, 'Oh, very well, and he says I am to shave him every day, and he has given me these twelve ducats'; but he said nothing about the goat's ears of the emperor.

From this time the apprentice went regularly up to the palace, receiving each morning twelve ducats in payment. But after a while, his secret, which he had carefully kept, burnt within him, and he longed to tell it to somebody. His master saw there was something on his mind, and asked what it was. The youth replied that he had been tormenting himself for some months, and should never feel easy until some one shared his secret.

'Well, trust me,' said the master, 'I will keep it to myself; or, if you do not like to do that, confess it to your pastor, or go into some field outside the town and dig a hole, and, after you have dug it, kneel down and whisper your secret three times into the hole. Then put back the earth and come away.'

The apprentice thought that this seemed the best plan, and that very afternoon went to a meadow outside the town, dug a deep hole, then knelt and whispered to it three times over, 'The Emperor Trojan has goat's ears.' And as he said so a great burden seemed to roll off him, and he shovelled the earth carefully back and ran lightly home.

Weeks passed away, and there sprang up in the hole an elder

tree which had three stems, all as straight as poplars. Some shepherds, tending their flocks near by, noticed the tree growing there, and one of them cut down a stem to make flutes of; but, directly he began to play, the flute would do nothing but sing: 'The Emperor Trojan has goat's ears.' Of course, it was not long before the whole town knew of this wonderful flute and what it said; and, at last, the news reached the emperor in his palace. He instantly sent for the apprentice and said to him:

'What have you been saying about me to all my people?'

The culprit tried to defend himself by saying that he had never told anyone what he had noticed; but the emperor, instead of listening, only drew his sword from its sheath, which so frightened the poor fellow that he confessed exactly what he had done, and how he had whispered the truth three times to the earth, and how in that very place an elder tree had sprung up, and flutes had been cut from it, which would only repeat the words he had said. Then the emperor commanded his coach to be made ready, and he took the youth with him, and they drove to the spot, for he wished to see for himself whether the young man's confession was true; but when they reached the place only one stem was left. So the emperor desired his attendants to cut him a flute from the remaining stem, and, when it was ready, he ordered his chamberlain to play on it. But no tune could the chamberlain play, though he was the best flute player about the court – nothing came but the words, 'The Emperor Trojan has goat's ears.' Then the emperor knew that even the earth gave up

its secrets, and he granted the young man his life, but he never allowed him to be his barber any more.

(Volksmarchen der Serben.)

THE NINE PEA-HENS AND THE GOLDEN APPLES

Once upon a time there stood before the palace of an emperor a golden apple tree, which blossomed and bore fruit each night. But every morning the fruit was gone, and the boughs were bare of blossom, without anyone being able to discover who was the thief.

At last the emperor said to his eldest son, 'If only I could prevent those robbers from stealing my fruit, how happy I should be!'

And his son replied, 'I will sit up to-night and watch the tree, and I shall soon see who it is!'

So directly it grew dark the young man went and hid himself near the apple tree to begin his watch, but the apples had scarcely begun to ripen before he fell asleep, and when he awoke at sunrise the apples were gone. He felt very much ashamed of himself, and went with lagging feet to tell his father!

Of course, though the eldest son had failed, the second made sure that he would do better, and set out gaily at nightfall to watch the apple tree. But no sooner had he lain himself down than his eyes grew heavy, and when the sunbeams roused him from his slumbers there was not an apple left on the tree.

Next came the turn of the youngest son, who made himself

a comfortable bed under the apple tree, and prepared himself to sleep. Towards midnight he awoke, and sat up to look at the tree. And behold! the apples were beginning to ripen, and lit up the whole palace with their brightness. At the same moment nine golden pea-hens flew swiftly through the air, and while eight alighted upon the boughs laden with fruit, the ninth fluttered to the ground where the prince lay, and instantly was changed into a beautiful maiden, more beautiful far than any lady in the emperor's court. The prince at once fell in love with her, and they talked together for some time, till the maiden said her sisters had finished plucking the apples, and now they must all go home again. The prince, however, begged her so hard to leave him a little of the fruit that the maiden gave him two apples, one for himself and one for his father. Then she changed herself back into a pea-hen, and the whole nine flew away.

As soon as the sun rose the prince entered the palace, and held out the apple to his father, who was rejoiced to see it, and praised his youngest son heartily for his cleverness. That evening the prince returned to the apple tree, and everything passed as before, and so it happened for several nights. At length the other brothers grew angry at seeing that he never came back without bringing two golden apples with him, and they went to consult an old witch, who promised to spy after him, and discover how he managed to get the apples. So, when the evening came, the old woman hid herself under the tree and waited for the prince. Before long he arrived and laid down on his bed, and was soon

fast asleep. Towards midnight there was a rush of wings, and the eight pea-hens settled on the tree, while the ninth became a maiden, and ran to greet the prince. Then the witch stretched out her hand, and cut off a lock of the maiden's hair, and in an instant the girl sprang up, a pea-hen once more, spread her wings and flew away, while her sisters, who were busily stripping the boughs, flew after her.

When he had recovered from his surprise at the unexpected disappearance of the maiden, the prince exclaimed, 'What can be the matter?' and, looking about him, discovered the old witch hidden under the bed. He dragged her out, and in his fury called his guards, and ordered them to put her to death as fast as possible. But that did no good as far as the pea-hens went. They never came back any more, though the prince returned to the tree every night, and wept his heart out for his lost love. This went on for some time, till the prince could bear it no longer, and made up his mind he would search the world through for her. In vain his father tried to persuade him that his task was hopeless, and that other girls were to be found as beautiful as this one. The prince would listen to nothing, and, accompanied by only one servant, set out on his quest.

After travelling for many days, he arrived at length before a large gate, and through the bars he could see the streets of a town, and even the palace. The prince tried to pass in, but the way was barred by the keeper of the gate, who wanted to know who he was, why he was there, and how he had learnt the way, and he

was not allowed to enter unless the empress herself came and gave him leave. A message was sent to her, and when she stood at the gate the prince thought he had lost his wits, for there was the maiden he had left his home to seek. And she hastened to him, and took his hand, and drew him into the palace. In a few days they were married, and the prince forgot his father and his brothers, and made up his mind that he would live and die in the castle.

One morning the empress told him that she was going to take a walk by herself, and that she would leave the keys of twelve cellars to his care. 'If you wish to enter the first eleven cellars,' said she, 'you can; but beware of even unlocking the door of the twelfth, or it will be the worse for you.'

The prince, who was left alone in the castle, soon got tired of being by himself, and began to look about for something to amuse him.

'What CAN there be in that twelfth cellar,' he thought to himself, 'which I must not see?' And he went downstairs and unlocked the doors, one after the other. When he got to the twelfth he paused, but his curiosity was too much for him, and in another instant the key was turned and the cellar lay open before him. It was empty, save for a large cask, bound with iron hoops, and out of the cask a voice was saying entreatingly, 'For goodness' sake, brother, fetch me some water; I am dying of thirst!'

The prince, who was very tender-hearted, brought some water

at once, and pushed it through a hole in the barrel; and as he did so one of the iron hoops burst.

He was turning away, when a voice cried the second time, 'Brother, for pity's sake fetch me some water; I'm dying of thirst!'

So the prince went back, and brought some more water, and again a hoop sprang.

And for the third time the voice still called for water; and when water was given it the last hoop was rent, the cask fell in pieces, and out flew a dragon, who snatched up the empress just as she was returning from her walk, and carried her off. Some servants who saw what had happened came rushing to the prince, and the poor young man went nearly mad when he heard the result of his own folly, and could only cry out that he would follow the dragon to the ends of the earth, until he got his wife again.

For months and months he wandered about, first in this direction and then in that, without finding any traces of the dragon or his captive. At last he came to a stream, and as he stopped for a moment to look at it he noticed a little fish lying on the bank, beating its tail convulsively, in a vain effort to get back into the water.

'Oh, for pity's sake, my brother,' shrieked the little creature, 'help me, and put me back into the river, and I will repay you some day. Take one of my scales, and when you are in danger twist it in your fingers, and I will come!'

The prince picked up the fish and threw it into the water; then he took off one of its scales, as he had been told, and put it in his

pocket, carefully wrapped in a cloth. Then he went on his way till, some miles further down the road, he found a fox caught in a trap.

'Oh! be a brother to me!' called the fox, 'and free me from this trap, and I will help you when you are in need. Pull out one of my hairs, and when you are in danger twist it in your fingers, and I will come.'

So the prince unfastened the trap, pulled out one of the fox's hairs, and continued his journey. And as he was going over the mountain he passed a wolf entangled in a snare, who begged to be set at liberty.

'Only deliver me from death,' he said, 'and you will never be sorry for it. Take a lock of my fur, and when you need me twist it in your fingers.' And the prince undid the snare and let the wolf go.

For a long time he walked on, without having any more adventures, till at length he met a man travelling on the same road.

'Oh, brother!' asked the prince, 'tell me, if you can, where the dragon-emperor lives?'

The man told him where he would find the palace, and how long it would take him to get there, and the prince thanked him, and followed his directions, till that same evening he reached the town where the dragon-emperor lived. When he entered the palace, to his great joy he found his wife sitting alone in a vast hall, and they began hastily to invent plans for her escape.

There was no time to waste, as the dragon might return directly, so they took two horses out of the stable, and rode away at lightning speed. Hardly were they out of sight of the palace than the dragon came home and found that his prisoner had flown. He sent at once for his talking horse, and said to him:

'Give me your advice; what shall I do – have my supper as usual, or set out in pursuit of them?'

'Eat your supper with a free mind first,' answered the horse, 'and follow them afterwards.'

So the dragon ate till it was past mid-day, and when he could eat no more he mounted his horse and set out after the fugitives. In a short time he had come up with them, and as he snatched the empress out of her saddle he said to the prince:

'This time I will forgive you, because you brought me the water when I was in the cask; but beware how you return here, or you will pay for it with your life.'

Half mad with grief, the prince rode sadly on a little further, hardly knowing what he was doing. Then he could bear it no longer and turned back to the palace, in spite of the dragon's threats. Again the empress was sitting alone, and once more they began to think of a scheme by which they could escape the dragon's power.

'Ask the dragon when he comes home,' said the prince, 'where he got that wonderful horse from, and then you can tell me, and I will try to find another like it.'

Then, fearing to meet his enemy, he stole out of the castle.

Soon after the dragon came home, and the empress sat down near him, and began to coax and flatter him into a good humour, and at last she said:

'But tell me about that wonderful horse you were riding yesterday. There cannot be another like it in the whole world. Where did you get it from?'

And he answered:

'The way I got it is a way which no one else can take. On the top of a high mountain dwells an old woman, who has in her stables twelve horses, each one more beautiful than the other. And in one corner is a thin, wretched-looking animal whom no one would glance at a second time, but he is in reality the best of the lot. He is twin brother to my own horse, and can fly as high as the clouds themselves. But no one can ever get this horse without first serving the old woman for three whole days. And besides the horses she has a foal and its mother, and the man who serves her must look after them for three whole days, and if he does not let them run away he will in the end get the choice of any horse as a present from the old woman. But if he fails to keep the foal and its mother safe on any one of the three nights his head will pay.'

The next day the prince watched till the dragon left the house, and then he crept in to the empress, who told him all she had learnt from her gaoler. The prince at once determined to seek the old woman on the top of the mountain, and lost no time in setting out. It was a long and steep climb, but at last he found her, and with a low bow he began:

'Good greeting to you, little mother!'

'Good greeting to you, my son! What are you doing here?'

'I wish to become your servant,' answered he.

'So you shall,' said the old woman. 'If you can take care of my mare for three days I will give you a horse for wages, but if you let her stray you will lose your head'; and as she spoke she led him into a courtyard surrounded with palings, and on every post a man's head was stuck. One post only was empty, and as they passed it cried out:

'Woman, give me the head I am waiting for!'

The old woman made no answer, but turned to the prince and said:

'Look! all those men took service with me, on the same conditions as you, but not one was able to guard the mare!'

But the prince did not waver, and declared he would abide by his words.

When evening came he led the mare out of the stable and mounted her, and the colt ran behind. He managed to keep his seat for a long time, in spite of all her efforts to throw him, but at length he grew so weary that he fell fast asleep, and when he woke he found himself sitting on a log, with the halter in his hands. He jumped up in terror, but the mare was nowhere to be seen, and he started with a beating heart in search of her. He had gone some way without a single trace to guide him, when he came to a little river. The sight of the water brought back to his mind the fish whom he had saved from death, and he hastily drew the scale

from his pocket. It had hardly touched his fingers when the fish appeared in the stream beside him.

'What is it, my brother?' asked the fish anxiously.

'The old woman's mare strayed last night, and I don't know where to look for her.'

'Oh, I can tell you that: she has changed herself into a big fish, and her foal into a little one. But strike the water with the halter and say, "Come here, O mare of the mountain witch!" and she will come.'

The prince did as he was bid, and the mare and her foal stood before him. Then he put the halter round her neck, and rode her home, the foal always trotting behind them. The old woman was at the door to receive them, and gave the prince some food while she led the mare back to the stable.

'You should have gone among the fishes,' cried the old woman, striking the animal with a stick.

'I did go among the fishes,' replied the mare; 'but they are no friends of mine, for they betrayed me at once.'

'Well, go among the foxes this time,' said she, and returned to the house, not knowing that the prince had overheard her.

So when it began to grow dark the prince mounted the mare for the second time and rode into the meadows, and the foal trotted behind its mother. Again he managed to stick on till midnight: then a sleep overtook him that he could not battle against, and when he woke up he found himself, as before, sitting on the log, with the halter in his hands. He gave a shriek of

dismay, and sprang up in search of the wanderers. As he went he suddenly remembered the words that the old woman had said to the mare, and he drew out the fox hair and twisted it in his fingers.

'What is it, my brother?' asked the fox, who instantly appeared before him.

'The old witch's mare has run away from me, and I do not know where to look for her.'

'She is with us,' replied the fox, 'and has changed herself into a big fox, and her foal into a little one, but strike the ground with a halter and say, "Come here, O mare of the mountain witch!"'

The prince did so, and in a moment the fox became a mare and stood before him, with the little foal at her heels. He mounted and rode back, and the old woman placed food on the table, and led the mare back to the stable.

'You should have gone to the foxes, as I told you,' said she, striking the mare with a stick.

'I did go to the foxes,' replied the mare, 'but they are no friends of mine and betrayed me.'

'Well, this time you had better go to the wolves,' said she, not knowing that the prince had heard all she had been saying.

The third night the prince mounted the mare and rode her out to the meadows, with the foal trotting after. He tried hard to keep awake, but it was of no use, and in the morning there he was again on the log, grasping the halter. He started to his feet, and then stopped, for he remembered what the old woman had said,

and pulled out the wolf's grey lock.

'What is it, my brother?' asked the wolf as it stood before him.

'The old witch's mare has run away from me,' replied the prince, 'and I don't know where to find her.'

'Oh, she is with us,' answered the wolf, 'and she has changed herself into a she-wolf, and the foal into a cub; but strike the earth here with the halter, and cry, "Come to me, O mare of the mountain witch."'

The prince did as he was bid, and as the hair touched his fingers the wolf changed back into a mare, with the foal beside her. And when he had mounted and ridden her home the old woman was on the steps to receive them, and she set some food before the prince, but led the mare back to her stable.

'You should have gone among the wolves,' said she, striking her with a stick.

'So I did,' replied the mare, 'but they are no friends of mine and betrayed me.'

The old woman made no answer, and left the stable, but the prince was at the door waiting for her.

'I have served you well,' said he, 'and now for my reward.'

'What I promised that will I perform,' answered she. 'Choose one of these twelve horses; you can have which you like.'

'Give me, instead, that half-starved creature in the corner,' asked the prince. 'I prefer him to all those beautiful animals.'

'You can't really mean what you say?' replied the woman.

'Yes, I do,' said the prince, and the old woman was forced

to let him have his way. So he took leave of her, and put the halter round his horse's neck and led him into the forest, where he rubbed him down till his skin was shining like gold. Then he mounted, and they flew straight through the air to the dragon's palace. The empress had been looking for him night and day, and stole out to meet him, and he swung her on to his saddle, and the horse flew off again.

Not long after the dragon came home, and when he found the empress was missing he said to his horse, 'What shall we do? Shall we eat and drink, or shall we follow the runaways?' and the horse replied, 'Whether you eat or don't eat, drink or don't drink, follow them or stay at home, matters nothing now, for you can never, never catch them.'

But the dragon made no reply to the horse's words, but sprang on his back and set off in chase of the fugitives. And when they saw him coming they were frightened, and urged the prince's horse faster and faster, till he said, 'Fear nothing; no harm can happen to us,' and their hearts grew calm, for they trusted his wisdom.

Soon the dragon's horse was heard panting behind, and he cried out, 'Oh, my brother, do not go so fast! I shall sink to the earth if I try to keep up with you.'

And the prince's horse answered, 'Why do you serve a monster like that? Kick him off, and let him break in pieces on the ground, and come and join us.'

And the dragon's horse plunged and reared, and the dragon fell

on a rock, which broke him in pieces. Then the empress mounted his horse, and rode back with her husband to her kingdom, over which they ruled for many years.

(Volksmarchen der Serben.)

THE LUTE PLAYER

Once upon a time there was a king and queen who lived happily and comfortably together. They were very fond of each other and had nothing to worry them, but at last the king grew restless. He longed to go out into the world, to try his strength in battle against some enemy and to win all kinds of honour and glory.

So he called his army together and gave orders to start for a distant country where a heathen king ruled who ill-treated or tormented everyone he could lay his hands on. The king then gave his parting orders and wise advice to his ministers, took a tender leave of his wife, and set off with his army across the seas.

I cannot say whether the voyage was short or long; but at last he reached the country of the heathen king and marched on, defeating all who came in his way. But this did not last long, for in time he came to a mountain pass, where a large army was waiting for him, who put his soldiers to flight, and took the king himself prisoner.

He was carried off to the prison where the heathen king kept his captives, and now our poor friend had a very bad time indeed. All night long the prisoners were chained up, and in the morning they were yoked together like oxen and had to plough the land till it grew dark.

This state of things went on for three years before the king

found any means of sending news of himself to his dear queen, but at last he contrived to send this letter: 'Sell all our castles and palaces, and put all our treasures in pawn and come and deliver me out of this horrible prison.'

The queen received the letter, read it, and wept bitterly as she said to herself, 'How can I deliver my dearest husband? If I go myself and the heathen king sees me he will just take me to be one of his wives. If I were to send one of the ministers! – but I hardly know if I can depend on them.'

She thought, and thought, and at last an idea came into her head.

She cut off all her beautiful long brown hair and dressed herself in boy's clothes. Then she took her lute and, without saying anything to anyone, she went forth into the wide world.

She travelled through many lands and saw many cities, and went through many hardships before she got to the town where the heathen king lived. When she got there she walked all round the palace and at the back she saw the prison. Then she went into the great court in front of the palace, and taking her lute in her hand, she began to play so beautifully that one felt as though one could never hear enough.

After she had played for some time she began to sing, and her voice was sweeter than the lark's:

'I come from my own country far
Into this foreign land,

Of all I own I take alone
My sweet lute in my hand.

'Oh! who will thank me for my song,
Reward my simple lay?
Like lover's sighs it still shall rise
To greet thee day by day.

'I sing of blooming flowers
Made sweet by sun and rain;
Of all the bliss of love's first kiss,
And parting's cruel pain.

'Of the sad captive's longing
Within his prison wall,
Of hearts that sigh when none are nigh
To answer to their call.

'My song begs for your pity,
And gifts from out your store,
And as I play my gentle lay
I linger near your door.

'And if you hear my singing
Within your palace, sire,
Oh! give, I pray, this happy day,
To me my heart's desire.'

No sooner had the heathen king heard this touching song sung

by such a lovely voice, than he had the singer brought before him.

'Welcome, O lute player,' said he. 'Where do you come from?'

'My country, sire, is far away across many seas. For years I have been wandering about the world and gaining my living by my music.'

'Stay here then a few days, and when you wish to leave I will give you what you ask for in your song – your heart's desire.'

So the lute player stayed on in the palace and sang and played almost all day long to the king, who could never tire of listening and almost forgot to eat or drink or to torment people.

He cared for nothing but the music, and nodded his head as he declared, 'That's something like playing and singing. It makes me feel as if some gentle hand had lifted every care and sorrow from me.'

After three days the lute player came to take leave of the king.

'Well,' said the king, 'what do you desire as your reward?'

'Sire, give me one of your prisoners. You have so many in your prison, and I should be glad of a companion on my journeys. When I hear his happy voice as I travel along I shall think of you and thank you.'

'Come along then,' said the king, 'choose whom you will.' And he took the lute player through the prison himself.

The queen walked about amongst the prisoners, and at length she picked out her husband and took him with her on her journey. They were long on their way, but he never found out who she was, and she led him nearer and nearer to his own country.

When they reached the frontier the prisoner said:

'Let me go now, kind lad; I am no common prisoner, but the king of this country. Let me go free and ask what you will as your reward.'

'Do not speak of reward,' answered the lute player. 'Go in peace.'

'Then come with me, dear boy, and be my guest.'

'When the proper time comes I shall be at your palace,' was the reply, and so they parted.

The queen took a short way home, got there before the king and changed her dress.

An hour later all the people in the palace were running to and fro and crying out: 'Our king has come back! Our king has returned to us.'

The king greeted every one very kindly, but he would not so much as look at the queen.

Then he called all his council and ministers together and said to them:

'See what sort of a wife I have. Here she is falling on my neck, but when I was pining in prison and sent her word of it she did nothing to help me.'

And his council answered with one voice, 'Sire, when news was brought from you the queen disappeared and no one knew where she went. She only returned to-day.'

Then the king was very angry and cried, 'Judge my faithless wife!

Never would you have seen your king again, if a young lute player had not delivered him. I shall remember him with love and gratitude as long as I live.'

Whilst the king was sitting with his council, the queen found time to disguise herself. She took her lute, and slipping into the court in front of the palace she sang, clear and sweet:

'I sing the captive's longing
Within his prison wall,
Of hearts that sigh when none are nigh
To answer to their call.

'My song begs for your pity,
And gifts from out your store,
And as I play my gentle lay
I linger near your door.

'And if you hear my singing
Within your palace, sire,
Oh! give, I pray, this happy day,
To me my heart's desire.'

As soon as the king heard this song he ran out to meet the lute player, took him by the hand and led him into the palace.

'Here,' he cried, 'is the boy who released me from my prison. And now, my true friend, I will indeed give you your heart's desire.'

'I am sure you will not be less generous than the heathen king

was, sire. I ask of you what I asked and obtained from him. But this time I don't mean to give up what I get. I want YOU – yourself!'

And as she spoke she threw off her long cloak and everyone saw it was the queen.

Who can tell how happy the king was? In the joy of his heart he gave a great feast to the whole world, and the whole world came and rejoiced with him for a whole week.

I was there too, and ate and drank many good things. I sha'n't forget that feast as long as I live.

(From the Russian.)

THE GRATEFUL PRINCE

Once upon a time the king of the Goldland lost himself in a forest, and try as he would he could not find the way out. As he was wandering down one path which had looked at first more hopeful than the rest he saw a man coming towards him.

'What are you doing here, friend?' asked the stranger; 'darkness is falling fast, and soon the wild beasts will come from their lairs to seek for food.'

'I have lost myself,' answered the king, 'and am trying to get home.'

'Then promise me that you will give me the first thing that comes out of your house, and I will show you the way,' said the stranger.

The king did not answer directly, but after awhile he spoke: 'Why should I give away my BEST sporting dog. I can surely find my way out of the forest as well as this man.'

So the stranger left him, but the king followed path after path for three whole days, with no better success than before. He was almost in despair, when the stranger suddenly appeared, blocking up his way.

'Promise you will give me the first thing that comes out of your house to meet you?'

But still the king was stiff-necked and would promise nothing.

For some days longer he wandered up and down the forest,

trying first one path, then another, but his courage at last gave way, and he sank wearily on the ground under a tree, feeling sure his last hour had come. Then for the third time the stranger stood before the king, and said:

'Why are you such a fool? What can a dog be to you, that you should give your life for him like this? Just promise me the reward I want, and I will guide you out of the forest.'

'Well, my life is worth more than a thousand dogs,' answered the king, 'the welfare of my kingdom depends on me. I accept your terms, so take me to my palace.' Scarcely had he uttered the words than he found himself at the edge of the wood, with the palace in the dim distance. He made all the haste he could, and just as he reached the great gates out came the nurse with the royal baby, who stretched out his arms to his father. The king shrank back, and ordered the nurse to take the baby away at once.

Then his great boarhound bounded up to him, but his caresses were only answered by a violent push.

When the king's anger was spent, and he was able to think what was best to be done, he exchanged his baby, a beautiful boy, for the daughter of a peasant, and the prince lived roughly as the son of poor people, while the little girl slept in a golden cradle, under silken sheets. At the end of a year, the stranger arrived to claim his property, and took away the little girl, believing her to be the true child of the king. The king was so delighted with the success of his plan that he ordered a great feast to be got ready, and gave splendid presents to the foster parents of his son, so

that he might lack nothing. But he did not dare to bring back the baby, lest the trick should be found out. The peasants were quite contented with this arrangement, which gave them food and money in abundance.

By-and-by the boy grew big and tall, and seemed to lead a happy life in the house of his foster parents. But a shadow hung over him which really poisoned most of his pleasure, and that was the thought of the poor innocent girl who had suffered in his stead, for his foster father had told him in secret, that he was the king's son. And the prince determined that when he grew old enough he would travel all over the world, and never rest till he had set her free. To become king at the cost of a maiden's life was too heavy a price to pay. So one day he put on the dress of a farm servant, threw a sack of peas on his back, and marched straight into the forest where eighteen years before his father had lost himself. After he had walked some way he began to cry loudly: 'Oh, how unlucky I am! Where can I be? Is there no one to show me the way out of the wood?'

Then appeared a strange man with a long grey beard, with a leather bag hanging from his girdle. He nodded cheerfully to the prince, and said: 'I know this place well, and can lead you out of it, if you will promise me a good reward.'

'What can a beggar such as I promise you?' answered the prince. 'I have nothing to give you save my life; even the coat on my back belongs to my master, whom I serve for my keep and my clothes.'

The stranger looked at the sack of peas, and said, 'But you must possess something; you are carrying this sack, which seems to be very heavy.'

'It is full of peas,' was the reply. 'My old aunt died last night, without leaving money enough to buy peas to give the watchers, as is the custom throughout the country. I have borrowed these peas from my master, and thought to take a short cut across the forest; but I have lost myself, as you see.'

'Then you are an orphan?' asked the stranger. 'Why should you not enter my service? I want a sharp fellow in the house, and you please me.'

'Why not, indeed, if we can strike a bargain?' said the other. 'I was born a peasant, and strange bread is always bitter, so it is the same to me whom I serve! What wages will you give me?'

'Every day fresh food, meat twice a week, butter and vegetables, your summer and winter clothes, and a portion of land for your own use.'

'I shall be satisfied with that,' said the youth. 'Somebody else will have to bury my aunt. I will go with you!'

Now this bargain seemed to please the old fellow so much that he spun round like a top, and sang so loud that the whole wood rang with his voice. Then he set out with his companion, and chattered so fast that he never noticed that his new servant kept dropping peas out of the sack. At night they slept under a fig tree, and when the sun rose started on their way. About noon they came to a large stone, and here the old fellow stopped, looked

carefully round, gave a sharp whistle, and stamped three times on the ground with his left foot. Suddenly there appeared under the stone a secret door, which led to what looked like the mouth of a cave. The old fellow seized the youth by the arm, and said roughly, 'Follow me!'

Thick darkness surrounded them, yet it seemed to the prince as if their path led into still deeper depths. After a long while he thought he saw a glimmer of light, but the light was neither that of the sun nor of the moon. He looked eagerly at it, but found it was only a kind of pale cloud, which was all the light this strange underworld could boast. Earth and water, trees and plants, birds and beasts, each was different from those he had seen before; but what most struck terror into his heart was the absolute stillness that reigned everywhere. Not a rustle or a sound could be heard. Here and there he noticed a bird sitting on a branch, with head erect and swelling throat, but his ear caught nothing. The dogs opened their mouths as if to bark, the toiling oxen seemed about to bellow, but neither bark nor bellow reached the prince. The water flowed noiselessly over the pebbles, the wind bowed the tops of the trees, flies and chafers darted about, without breaking the silence. The old greybeard uttered no word, and when his companion tried to ask him the meaning of it all he felt that his voice died in his throat.

How long this fearful stillness lasted I do not know, but the prince gradually felt his heart turning to ice, his hair stood up like bristles, and a cold chill was creeping down his spine, when

at last – oh, ecstasy! – a faint noise broke on his straining ears, and this life of shadows suddenly became real. It sounded as if a troop of horses were ploughing their way over a moor.

Then the greybeard opened his mouth, and said: 'The kettle is boiling; we are expected at home.'

They walked on a little further, till the prince thought he heard the grinding of a saw-mill, as if dozens of saws were working together, but his guide observed, 'The grandmother is sleeping soundly; listen how she snores.'

When they had climbed a hill which lay before them the prince saw in the distance the house of his master, but it was so surrounded with buildings of all kinds that the place looked more like a village or even a small town. They reached it at last, and found an empty kennel standing in front of the gate. 'Creep inside this,' said the master, 'and wait while I go in and see my grandmother. Like all very old people, she is very obstinate, and cannot bear fresh faces about her.'

The prince crept tremblingly into the kennel, and began to regret the daring which had brought him into this scrape.

By-and-by the master came back, and called him from his hiding-place. Something had put out his temper, for with a frown he said, 'Watch carefully our ways in the house, and beware of making any mistake, or it will go ill with you. Keep your eyes and ears open, and your mouth shut, obey without questions. Be grateful if you will, but never speak unless you are spoken to.'

When the prince stepped over the threshold he caught sight

of a maiden of wonderful beauty, with brown eyes and fair curly hair. 'Well!' the young man said to himself, 'if the old fellow has many daughters like that I should not mind being his son-in-law. This one is just what I admire'; and he watched her lay the table, bring in the food, and take her seat by the fire as if she had never noticed that a strange man was present. Then she took out a needle and thread, and began to darn her stockings. The master sat at table alone, and invited neither his new servant nor the maid to eat with him. Neither was the old grandmother anywhere to be seen. His appetite was tremendous: he soon cleared all the dishes, and ate enough to satisfy a dozen men. When at last he could eat no more he said to the girl, 'Now you can pick up the pieces, and take what is left in the iron pot for your own dinner, but give the bones to the dog.'

The prince did not at all like the idea of dining off scraps, which he helped the girl to pick up, but, after all, he found that there was plenty to eat, and that the food was very good. During the meal he stole many glances at the maiden, and would even have spoken to her, but she gave him no encouragement. Every time he opened his mouth for the purpose she looked at him sternly, as if to say, 'Silence,' so he could only let his eyes speak for him. Besides, the master was stretched on a bench by the oven after his huge meal, and would have heard everything.

After supper that night, the old man said to the prince, 'For two days you may rest from the fatigues of the journey, and look about the house. But the day after to-morrow you must come

with me, and I will point out the work you have to do. The maid will show you where you are to sleep.'

The prince thought, from this, he had leave to speak, but his master turned on him with a face of thunder and exclaimed:

'You dog of a servant! If you disobey the laws of the house you will soon find yourself a head shorter! Hold your tongue, and leave me in peace.'

The girl made a sign to him to follow her, and, throwing open a door, nodded to him to go in. He would have lingered a moment, for he thought she looked sad, but dared not do so, for fear of the old man's anger.

'It is impossible that she can be his daughter!' he said to himself, 'for she has a kind heart. I am quite sure she must be the same girl who was brought here instead of me, so I am bound to risk my head in this mad adventure.' He got into bed, but it was long before he fell asleep, and even then his dreams gave him no rest. He seemed to be surrounded by dangers, and it was only the power of the maiden who helped him through it all.

When he woke his first thoughts were for the girl, whom he found hard at work. He drew water from the well and carried it to the house for her, kindled the fire under the iron pot, and, in fact, did everything that came into his head that could be of any use to her. In the afternoon he went out, in order to learn something of his new home, and wondered greatly not to come across the old grandmother. In his rambles he came to the farmyard, where a beautiful white horse had a stall to itself; in another was a black

cow with two white-faced calves, while the clucking of geese, ducks, and hens reached him from a distance.

Breakfast, dinner, and supper were as savoury as before, and the prince would have been quite content with his quarters had it not been for the difficulty of keeping silence in the presence of the maiden. On the evening of the second day he went, as he had been told, to receive his orders for the following morning.

'I am going to set you something very easy to do to-morrow,' said the old man when his servant entered. 'Take this scythe and cut as much grass as the white horse will want for its day's feed, and clean out its stall. If I come back and find the manger empty it will go ill with you. So beware!'

The prince left the room, rejoicing in his heart, and saying to himself, 'Well, I shall soon get through that! If I have never yet handled either the plough or the scythe, at least I have often watched the country people work them, and know how easy it is.'

He was just going to open his door, when the maiden glided softly past and whispered in his ear: 'What task has he set you?'

'For to-morrow,' answered the prince, 'it is really nothing at all! Just to cut hay for the horse, and to clean out his stall!'

'Oh, luckless being!' sighed the girl; 'how will you ever get through with it. The white horse, who is our master's grandmother, is always hungry: it takes twenty men always mowing to keep it in food for one day, and another twenty to clean out its stall. How, then, do you expect to do it all by yourself? But listen to me, and do what I tell you. It is your only

chance. When you have filled the manger as full as it will hold you must weave a strong plait of the rushes which grow among the meadow hay, and cut a thick peg of stout wood, and be sure that the horse sees what you are doing. Then it will ask you what it is for, and you will say, 'With this plait I intend to bind up your mouth so that you cannot eat any more, and with this peg I am going to keep you still in one spot, so that you cannot scatter your corn and water all over the place!' After these words the maiden went away as softly as she had come.

Early the next morning he set to work. His scythe danced through the grass much more easily than he had hoped, and soon he had enough to fill the manger. He put it in the crib, and returned with a second supply, when to his horror he found the crib empty.

Then he knew that without the maiden's advice he would certainly have been lost, and began to put it into practice. He took out the rushes which had somehow got mixed up with the hay, and plaited them quickly.

'My son, what are you doing?' asked the horse wonderingly.

'Oh, nothing!' replied he. 'Just weaving a chin strap to bind your jaws together, in case you might wish to eat any more!'

The white horse sighed deeply when it heard this, and made up its mind to be content with what it had eaten.

The youth next began to clean out the stall, and the horse knew it had found a master; and by mid-day there was still fodder in the manger, and the place was as clean as a new pin. He had barely

finished when in walked the old man, who stood astonished at the door.

'Is it really you who have been clever enough to do that?' he asked. 'Or has some one else given you a hint?'

'Oh, I have had no help,' replied the prince, 'except what my poor weak head could give me.'

The old man frowned, and went away, and the prince rejoiced that everything had turned out so well.

In the evening his master said, 'To-morrow I have no special task to set you, but as the girl has a great deal to do in the house you must milk the black cow for her. But take care you milk her dry, or it may be the worse for you.'

'Well,' thought the prince as he went away, 'unless there is some trick behind, this does not sound very hard. I have never milked a cow before, but I have good strong fingers.'

He was very sleepy, and was just going toward his room, when the maiden came to him and asked: 'What is your task to-morrow?'

'I am to help you,' he answered, 'and have nothing to do all day, except to milk the black cow dry.'

'Oh, you are unlucky,' cried she. 'If you were to try from morning till night you couldn't do it. There is only one way of escaping the danger, and that is, when you go to milk her, take with you a pan of burning coals and a pair of tongs. Place the pan on the floor of the stall, and the tongs on the fire, and blow with all your might, till the coals burn brightly. The black cow will ask

you what is the meaning of all this, and you must answer what I will whisper to you.' And she stood on tip-toe and whispered something in his ear, and then went away.

The dawn had scarcely reddened the sky when the prince jumped out of bed, and, with the pan of coals in one hand and the milk pail in the other, went straight to the cow's stall, and began to do exactly as the maiden had told him the evening before.

The black cow watched him with surprise for some time, and then said: 'What are you doing, sonny?'

'Oh, nothing,' answered he; 'I am only heating a pair of tongs in case you may not feel inclined to give as much milk as I want.'

The cow sighed deeply, and looked at the milkman with fear, but he took no notice, and milked briskly into the pail, till the cow ran dry.

Just at that moment the old man entered the stable, and sat down to milk the cow himself, but not a drop of milk could he get. 'Have you really managed it all yourself, or did somebody help you?'

'I have nobody to help me,' answered the prince, 'but my own poor head.' The old man got up from his seat and went away.

That night, when the prince went to his master to hear what his next day's work was to be, the old man said: 'I have a little hay-stack out in the meadow which must be brought in to dry. To-morrow you will have to stack it all in the shed, and, as you value your life, be careful not to leave the smallest strand behind.' The prince was overjoyed to hear he had nothing worse to do.

'To carry a little hay-rick requires no great skill,' thought he, 'and it will give me no trouble, for the horse will have to draw it in. I am certainly not going to spare the old grandmother.'

By-and-by the maiden stole up to ask what task he had for the next day.

The young man laughed, and said: 'It appears that I have got to learn all kinds of farmer's work. To-morrow I have to carry a hay-rick, and leave not a stalk in the meadow, and that is my whole day's work!'

'Oh, you unlucky creature!' cried she; 'and how do you think you are to do it. If you had all the men in the world to help you, you could not clear off this one little hay-rick in a week. The instant you have thrown down the hay at the top, it will take root again from below. But listen to what I say. You must steal out at daybreak to-morrow and bring out the white horse and some good strong ropes. Then get on the hay-stack, put the ropes round it, and harness the horse to the ropes. When you are ready, climb up the hay-stack and begin to count one, two, three.

The horse will ask you what you are counting, and you must be sure to answer what I whisper to you.'

So the maiden whispered something in his ear, and left the room. And the prince knew nothing better to do than to get into bed.

He slept soundly, and it was still almost dark when he got up and proceeded to carry out the instructions given him by the girl. First he chose some stout ropes, and then he led the horse out

of the stable and rode it to the hay-stack, which was made up of fifty cartloads, so that it could hardly be called 'a little one.' The prince did all that the maiden had told him, and when at last he was seated on top of the rick, and had counted up to twenty, he heard the horse ask in amazement: 'What are you counting up there, my son?'

'Oh, nothing,' said he, 'I was just amusing myself with counting the packs of wolves in the forest, but there are really so many of them that I don't think I should ever be done.'

The word 'wolf' was hardly out of his mouth than the white horse was off like the wind, so that in the twinkling of an eye it had reached the shed, dragging the hay-stack behind it. The master was dumb with surprise as he came in after breakfast and found his man's day's work quite done.

'Was it really you who were so clever?' asked he. 'Or did some one give you good advice?'

'Oh, I have only myself to take counsel with,' said the prince, and the old man went away, shaking his head.

Late in the evening the prince went to his master to learn what he was to do next day.

'To-morrow,' said the old man, 'you must bring the white-headed calf to the meadow, and, as you value your life, take care it does not escape from you.'

The prince answered nothing, but thought, 'Well, most peasants of nineteen have got a whole herd to look after, so surely I can manage one.' And he went towards his room, where the

maiden met him.

'To morrow I have got an idiot's work,' said he; 'nothing but to take the white-headed calf to the meadow.'

'Oh, you unlucky being!' sighed she. 'Do you know that this calf is so swift that in a single day he can run three times round the world? Take heed to what I tell you. Bind one end of this silk thread to the left fore-leg of the calf, and the other end to the little toe of your left foot, so that the calf will never be able to leave your side, whether you walk, stand, or lie.' After this the prince went to bed and slept soundly.

The next morning he did exactly what the maiden had told him, and led the calf with the silken thread to the meadow, where it stuck to his side like a faithful dog.

By sunset, it was back again in its stall, and then came the master and said, with a frown, 'Were you really so clever yourself, or did somebody tell you what to do?'

'Oh, I have only my own poor head,' answered the prince, and the old man went away growling, 'I don't believe a word of it! I am sure you have found some clever friend!'

In the evening he called the prince and said: 'To-morrow I have no work for you, but when I wake you must come before my bed, and give me your hand in greeting.'

The young man wondered at this strange freak, and went laughing in search of the maiden.

'Ah, it is no laughing matter,' sighed she. 'He means to eat you, and there is only one way in which I can help you. You must

heat an iron shovel red hot, and hold it out to him instead of your hand.'

So next morning he wakened very early, and had heated the shovel before the old man was awake. At length he heard him calling, 'You lazy fellow, where are you? Come and wish me good morning.'

But when the prince entered with the red-hot shovel his master only said, 'I am very ill to-day, and too weak even to touch your hand. You must return this evening, when I may be better.'

The prince loitered about all day, and in the evening went back to the old man's room. He was received in the most; friendly manner, and, to his surprise, his master exclaimed, 'I am very well satisfied with you. Come to me at dawn and bring the maiden with you. I know you have long loved each other, and I wish to make you man and wife.'

The young man nearly jumped into the air for joy, but, remembering the rules of the house, he managed to keep still. When he told the maiden, he saw to his astonishment that she had become as white as a sheet, and she was quite dumb.

'The old man has found out who was your counsellor,' she said when she could speak, 'and he means to destroy us both.' We must escape somehow, or else we shall be lost. Take an axe, and cut off the head of the calf with one blow. With a second, split its head in two, and in its brain you will see a bright red ball. Bring that to me. Meanwhile, I will do what is needful here.

And the prince thought to himself, 'Better kill the calf than be

killed ourselves. If we can once escape, we will go back home. The peas which I strewed about must have sprouted, so that we shall not miss the way.'

Then he went into the stall, and with one blow of the axe killed the calf, and with the second split its brain. In an instant the place was filled with light, as the red ball fell from the brain of the calf. The prince picked it up, and, wrapping it round with a thick cloth, hid it in his bosom. Mercifully, the cow slept through it all, or by her cries she would have awakened the master.

He looked round, and at the door stood the maiden, holding a little bundle in her arms.

'Where is the ball?' she asked.

'Here,' answered he.

'We must lose no time in escaping,' she went on, and uncovered a tiny bit of the shining ball, to light them on their way.

As the prince had expected the peas had taken root, and grown into a little hedge, so that they were sure they would not lose the path. As they fled, the girl told him that she had overheard a conversation between the old man and his grandmother, saying that she was a king's daughter, whom the old fellow had obtained by cunning from her parents. The prince, who knew all about the affair, was silent, though he was glad from his heart that it had fallen to his lot to set her free. So they went on till the day began to dawn.

The old man slept very late that morning, and rubbed his eyes till he was properly awake. Then he remembered that very soon

the couple were to present themselves before him. After waiting and waiting till quite a long time had passed, he said to himself, with a grin, 'Well, they are not in much hurry to be married,' and waited again.

At last he grew a little uneasy, and cried loudly, 'Man and maid! what has become of you?'

After repeating this many times, he became quite frightened, but, call as he would, neither man nor maid appeared. At last he jumped angrily out of bed to go in search of the culprits, but only found an empty house, and beds that had never been slept in.

Then he went straight to the stable, where the sight of the dead calf told him all. Swearing loudly, he opened the door of the third stall quickly, and cried to his goblin servants to go and chase the fugitives. 'Bring them to me, however you may find them, for have them I must!' he said. So spake the old man, and the servants fled like the wind.

The runaways were crossing a great plain, when the maiden stopped. 'Something has happened!' she said. 'The ball moves in my hand, and I'm sure we are being followed!' and behind them they saw a black cloud flying before the wind. Then the maiden turned the ball thrice in her hand, and cried,

> 'Listen to me, my ball, my ball.
> Be quick and change me into a brook,
> And my lover into a little fish.'

And in an instant there was a brook with a fish swimming

in it. The goblins arrived just after, but, seeing nobody, waited for a little, then hurried home, leaving the brook and the fish undisturbed. When they were quite out of sight, the brook and the fish returned to their usual shapes and proceeded on their journey.

When the goblins, tired and with empty hands, returned, their master inquired what they had seen, and if nothing strange had befallen them.

'Nothing,' said they; 'the plain was quite empty, save for a brook and a fish swimming in it.'

'Idiots!' roared the master; 'of course it was they!' And dashing open the door of the fifth stall, he told the goblins inside that they must go and drink up the brook, and catch the fish. And the goblins jumped up, and flew like the wind.

The young pair had almost reached the edge of the wood, when the maiden stopped again. 'Something has happened,' said she. 'The ball is moving in my hand,' and looking round she beheld a cloud flying towards them, large and blacker than the first, and striped with red. 'Those are our pursuers,' cried she, and turning the ball three times in her hand she spoke to it thus:

'Listen to me, my ball, my ball.
Be quick and change us both.
Me into a wild rose bush,
And him into a rose on my stem.'

And in the twinkling of an eye it was done. Only just in time

too, for the goblins were close at hand, and looked round eagerly for the stream and the fish. But neither stream nor fish was to be seen; nothing but a rose bush. So they went sorrowing home, and when they were out of sight the rose bush and rose returned to their proper shapes and walked all the faster for the little rest they had had.

'Well, did you find them?' asked the old man when his goblins came back.

'No,' replied the leader of the goblins, 'we found neither brook nor fish in the desert.'

'And did you find nothing else at all?'

'Oh, nothing but a rose tree on the edge of a wood, with a rose hanging on it.'

'Idiots!' cried he. 'Why, that was they.' And he threw open the door of the seventh stall, where his mightiest goblins were locked in. 'Bring them to me, however you find them, dead or alive!' thundered he, 'for I will have them! Tear up the rose tree and the roots too, and don't leave anything behind, however strange it may be!'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.