

Hans Christian Andersen

Wonderful Stories for Children



Ганс Андерсен

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OLÉ LUCKOIÈ, (SHUT-EYE.)

There is nobody in all this world who knows so many tales as Olé Luckoiè! He can tell tales! In an evening, when a child sits so nicely at the table, or on its little stool, Olé Luckoiè comes. He comes so quietly into the house, for he walks without shoes; he opens the door without making any noise, and then he flirts sweet milk into the children's eyes; but so gently, so very gently, that they cannot keep their eyes open, and, therefore, they never see him; he steals softly behind them and blows gently on their necks, and thus their heads become heavy. Oh yes! But then it does them no harm; for Olé Luckoiè means nothing but kindness to the children, he only wants to amuse them; and the best thing that can be done is for somebody to carry them to bed, where they may lie still and listen to the tales that he will tell them.

Now when the children are asleep, Olé Luckoiè sits down on the bed; he is very well dressed; his coat is of silk, but it is not possible to tell what color it is, because it shines green, and red, and blue, just as if one color ran into another. He holds an umbrella under each arm; one of them is covered all over the inside with pictures, and this he sets over the good child, and it dreams all night long the most beautiful histories. The other umbrella has nothing at all within it; this he sets over the heads of naughty children, and they sleep so heavily, that next morning when they wake they have not dreamed the least in the world.

Now we will hear how Olé Luckoiè came every evening for a whole week to a little boy, whose name was Yalmar, and what he told him. There are seven stories, because there are seven days in a week.

MONDAY

"Just listen!" said Olé Luckoiè, in the evening, when they had put Yalmar in bed; "now I shall make things fine!" – and with that all the plants in the flower-pots grew up into great trees which stretched out their long branches along the ceiling and the walls, till the whole room looked like the most beautiful summer-house; and all the branches were full of flowers, and every flower was more beautiful than a rose, and was so sweet, that if anybody smelt at it, it was sweeter than raspberry jam! The fruit on the trees shone like gold, and great big bunches of raisins hung down – never had any thing been seen like it! – but all at once there began such a dismal lamentation in the table-drawer where Yalmar kept his school-books.

"What is that?" said Olé Luckoiè, and went to the table and opened the drawer. It was the slate that was in great trouble; for there was an addition sum on it that was added up wrong, and the slate-pencil was hopping and jumping about in its string, like a little dog that wanted to help the sum, but it could not! And besides this, Yalmar's copy-book was crying out sadly! All the way down each page stood a row of great letters, each with a little one by its side; these were the copy; and then there stood other letters, which fancied that they looked like the copy; and these Yalmar had written; but they were some one way and some another, just as if they were tumbling over the pencil-lines on which they ought to have stood.

"Look, you should hold yourselves up – thus!" said the copy; "thus, all in a line, with a brisk air!"

"Oh! we would so gladly, if we could," said Yalmar's writing; "but we cannot, we are so miserable!"

"Then we will make you!" said Olé Luckoiè gruffly.

"Oh, no!" cried the poor little crooked letters; but for all that they straightened themselves, till it was quite a pleasure to see them.

"Now, then, cannot we tell a story?" said Olé Luckoïè; "now I can exercise them! One, two! One, two!" And so, like a drill-sergeant, he put them all through their exercise, and they stood as straight and as well-shaped as any copy. After that Olé Luckoïè went his way; and Yalmar, when he looked at the letters next morning, found them tumbling about just as miserably as at first.

TUESDAY

No sooner was Yalmar in bed than Olé Luckoïè came with his little wand, and touched all the furniture in the room; and, in a minute, every thing began to chatter; and they chattered all together, and about nothing but themselves. Every thing talked except the old door-mat, which lay silent, and was vexed that they should be all so full of vanity as to talk of nothing but themselves, and think only about themselves, and never have one thought for it which lay so modestly in a corner and let itself be trodden upon.

There hung over the chest of drawers a great picture in a gilt frame; it was a landscape; one could see tall, old trees, flowers in the grass, and a great river, which ran through great woods, past many castles out into the wild sea.

Olé Luckoïè touched the picture with his wand; and with that the birds in the picture began to sing, the tree-branches began to wave, and the clouds regularly to move, – one could see them moving along over the landscape!

Olé Luckoïè now lifted little Yalmar up into the picture; he put his little legs right into it, just as if into tall grass, and there he stood. The sun shone down through the tree-branches upon him. He ran down to the river, and got into a little boat which lay there. It was painted red and white, the sails shone like silk, and six swans, each with a circlet of gold round its neck and a beaming blue star upon its head, drew the little boat past the green-wood, – where he heard the trees talking about robbers, and witches, and flowers, and the pretty little fairies, and all that the summer birds had told them of.

The loveliest fishes, with scales like silver and gold, swam after the boat, and leaped up in the water; and birds, some red and some blue, small and great, flew, in two long rows, behind; gnats danced about, and cockchafers said hum, hum! They all came following Yalmar, and you may think what a deal they had to tell him.

It was a regular voyage! Now the woods were so thick and so dark – now they were like the most beautiful garden, with sunshine and flowers; and in the midst of them there stood great castles of glass and of marble. Upon the balconies of these castles stood princesses, and every one of them were the little girls whom Yalmar knew very well, and with whom he had played. They all reached out their hands to him, and held out the most delicious sticks of barley-sugar which any confectioner could make; and Yalmar bit off a piece from every stick of barley-sugar as he sailed past, and Yalmar's piece was always a very large piece! Before every castle stood little princes as sentinels; they stood with their golden swords drawn, and showered down almonds and raisins. They were perfect princes!

Yalmar soon sailed through the wood, then through a great hall, or into the midst of a city; and at last he came to that in which his nurse lived, she who had nursed him when he was a very little child, and had been so very fond of him. And there he saw her, and she nodded and waved her hand to him, and sang the pretty little verse which she herself had made about Yalmar —

Full many a time I thee have missed,
My Yalmar, my delight!
I, who thy cherry-mouth have kissed,
Thy rosy cheeks, thy forehead white!
I saw thy earliest infant mirth —

I now must say farewell!
May our dear Lord bless thee on earth,
Then take thee to his heaven to dwell!

And all the birds sang, too, the flowers danced upon their stems, and the old trees nodded like as Olé Luckoiè did while he told his tales.

WEDNESDAY

How the rain did pour down! Yalmar could hear it in his sleep! and when Olé Luckoiè opened the casement, the water stood up to the very window-sill. There was a regular sea outside; but the most splendid ship lay close up to the house.

"If thou wilt sail with me, little Yalmar," said Olé Luckoiè, "thou canst reach foreign countries in the night, and be here again by to-morrow morning!"

And with this Yalmar stood in his Sunday clothes in the ship, and immediately the weather became fine, and they sailed through the streets, tacked about round the church, and then came out into a great, desolate lake. They sailed so far, that at last they could see no more land, and then they saw a flock of storks, which were coming from home, on their way to the warm countries; one stork after another flew on, and they had already flown such a long, long way. One of the storks was so very much tired that it seemed as if his wings could not support him any longer; he was the very last of all the flock, and got farther and farther behind them; and, at last, he sank lower and lower, with his outspread wings: he still flapped his wings, now and then, but that did not help him; now his feet touched the cordage of the ship; now he glided down the sail, and, bounce! down he came on the deck.

A sailor-boy then took him up, and set him in the hencoop among hens, and ducks, and turkeys. The poor stork stood quite confounded among them all.

"Here's a thing!" said all the hens.

And the turkey-cock blew himself up as much as ever he could, and asked the stork who he was; and the ducks they went on jostling one against the other, saying, "Do thou ask! do thou ask!"

The stork told them all about the warm Africa, about the pyramids, and about the simoom, which sped like a horse over the desert: but the ducks understood not a word about what he said, and so they whispered one to the other, "We are all agreed, he is silly!"

"Yes, to be sure, he is silly," said the turkey-cock aloud. The poor stork stood quite still, and thought about Africa.

"What a pair of beautiful thin legs you have got!" said the turkey-cock; "what is the price by the yard?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed all the ducks; but the stork pretended that he did not hear.

"I cannot help laughing," said the turkey-cock, "it was so very witty; or, perhaps, it was too low for him! – ha! ha! he can't take in many ideas! Let us only be interesting to ourselves!" And with that they began to gobble, and the ducks chattered, "Gik, gak! gik, gak!" It was amazing to see how entertaining they were to themselves.

Yalmar, however, went up to the hencoop, opened the door, and called to the stork, which hopped out to him on the deck. It had now rested itself; and it seemed as if it nodded to Yalmar to thank him. With this it spread out its wings and flew away to its warm countries; but the hens clucked, the ducks chattered, and the turkey-cocks grew quite red in the head.

"To-morrow we shall have you for dinner!" said Yalmar; and so he awoke, and was lying in his little bed.

It was, however, a wonderful voyage that Olé Luckoiè had taken him that night.

THURSDAY

"Dost thou know what?" said Olé Luckoiè. "Now do not be afraid, and thou shalt see a little mouse!" and with that he held out his hand with the pretty little creature in it.

"It is come to invite thee to a wedding," said he. "There are two little mice who are going to be married to-night; they live down under the floor of thy mother's store-closet; it will be such a nice opportunity for thee."

"But how can I get through the little mouse-hole in the floor?" asked Yalmar.

"Leave that to me," said Olé Luckoiè; "I shall make thee little enough!" And with that he touched Yalmar with his wand, and immediately he grew less and less, until at last he was no bigger than my finger.

"Now thou canst borrow the tin soldier's clothes," said Olé Luckoiè; "I think they would fit thee, and it looks so proper to have uniform on when people go into company."

"Yes, to be sure!" said Yalmar; and in a moment he was dressed up like the most beautiful new tin soldier.

"Will you be so good as to seat yourself in your mother's thimble," said the little mouse; "and then I shall have the honor of driving you!"

"Goodness!" said Yalmar; "will the young lady herself take the trouble?" and with that they drove to the mouse's wedding.

First of all, after going under the floor, they came into a long passage, which was so low that they could hardly drive in the thimble, and the whole passage was illuminated with touchwood.

"Does it not smell delicious?" said the mouse as they drove along; "the whole passage has been rubbed with bacon-sward; nothing can be more delicious!"

They now came into the wedding-hall. On the right hand stood the little she-mice, and they all whispered and tittered as if they were making fun of one another; on the left hand all the he-mice, and stroked their mustachios with their paws. In the middle of the floor were to be seen the bridal pair, who stood in a hollow cheese-paring; and they kept kissing one another before everybody, for they were desperately in love, and were going to be married directly.

And all this time there kept coming in more and more strangers, till one mouse was ready to trample another to death; and the bridal pair had placed themselves in a doorway, so that people could neither go in nor come out. The whole room, like the passage, had been smeared with sward of bacon; that was all the entertainment: but as a dessert a pea was produced, on which a little mouse of family had bitten the name of the bridal pair, – that is to say, the first letters of their name; that was something quite out of the common way.

All the mice said that it was a charming wedding, and that the conversation had been so good!

Yalmar drove home again; he had really been in very grand society, but he must have been regularly squeezed together to make himself small enough for a tin soldier's uniform.

FRIDAY

"It is incredible how many elderly people there are who would be so glad of me," said Olé Luckoiè, "especially those who have done any thing wrong. 'Good little Olé,' say they to me, 'we cannot close our eyes; and so we lie all night long awake, and see all our bad deeds, which sit, like ugly little imps, on the bed's head, and squirt hot water on us. Wilt thou only just come and drive them away, that we may have a good sleep!' and with that they heave such deep sighs – 'we would so gladly pay thee; good-night, Olé!' Silver pennies lie for me in the window," said Olé Luckoiè, "but I do not give sleep for money!"

"Now what shall we have to-night?" inquired Yalmar.

"I do not know whether thou hast any desire to go again to-night to a wedding," said Olé Luckoiè; "but it is of a different kind to that of last night. Thy sister's great doll, which is dressed like a gentleman, and is called Herman, is going to be married to the doll Bertha; besides, it is the doll's birthday, and therefore there will be a great many presents made."

"Yes, I know," said Yalmar; "always, whenever the dolls have new clothes, my sister entreats that they have a birthday or a wedding; that has happened certainly a hundred times!"

"Yes, but to-night it is the hundred and first wedding, and when a hundred and one is done then all is over! Therefore it will be incomparably grand. Only look!"

Yalmar looked at the table; there stood the little doll's house with lights in the windows, and all the tin soldiers presented arms outside. The bridal couple sat upon the floor, and leaned against the table-legs, and looked very pensive, and there might be reason for it. But Olé Luckoiè, dressed in the grandmother's black petticoat, married them, and when they were married, all the furniture in the room joined in the following song, which was written in pencil, and which was sung to the tune of the drum: —

Our song like a wind comes flitting
Into the room where the bride-folks are sitting;
They are partly of wood, as is befitting:
Their skin is the skin of a glove well fitting!
Hurrah, hurrah! for sitting and fitting!
Thus sing we aloud as the wind comes flitting!

And now the presents were brought, but they had forbidden any kind of eatables, for their love was sufficient for them.

"Shall we stay in the country, or shall we travel into foreign parts?" asked the bridegroom; and with that they begged the advice of the breeze, which had travelled a great deal, and of the old hen, which had had five broods of chickens. The breeze told them about the beautiful, warm countries where the bunches of grapes hung so large and so heavy; where the air was so mild, and the mountains had colors of which one could have no idea "in this country."

"But there they have not our green cabbage!" said the hen. "I lived for one summer with all my chickens in the country; there was a dry, dusty ditch in which we could go and scuttle, and we had admittance to a garden where there was green cabbage! O, how green it was! I cannot fancy any thing more beautiful!"

"But one cabbage-stalk looks just like another," said the breeze; "and then there is such wretched weather here."

"Yes, but one gets used to it," said the hen.

"But it is cold – it freezes!"

"That is good for the cabbage!" said the hen. "Besides, we also have it warm. Had not we four years ago a summer which lasted five weeks, and it was so hot that people did not know how to bear it? And then we have not all the poisonous creatures which they have there! and we are far from robbers. He is a good-for-nothing fellow who does not think our country the most beautiful in the world! and he does not deserve to be here!" and with that the hen cried. – "And I also have travelled," continued she; "I have gone in a boat above twelve miles; there is no pleasure in travelling."

"The hen is a sensible body!" said the doll Bertha; "I would rather not travel to the mountains, for it is only going up to come down again. No! we will go down into the ditch, and walk in the cabbage-garden."

And so they did.

SATURDAY

"Shall I have any stories?" said little Yalmar, as soon as Olé Luckoiè had put him to sleep.

"In the evening we have no time for any," said Olé, and spread out his most beautiful umbrella above his head. "Look now at this Chinese scene!" and with that the whole inside of the umbrella looked like a great china saucer, with blue trees and pointed bridges, on which stood little Chinese, who stood and nodded with their heads. "We shall have all the world dressed up beautifully this morning," said Olé, "for it is really a holiday; it is Sunday. I shall go up into the church towers to see whether the little church-elves polish the bells, because they sound so sweetly. I shall go out into the market, and see whether the wind blows the dust, and grass, and leaves, and what is the hardest work there. I shall have all the stars down to polish them; I shall put them into my apron, but first of all I must have them all numbered, and the holes where they fit up there numbered also; else we shall never put them into their proper places again, and then they will not be firm, and we shall have so many falling stars, one dropping down after another!"

"Hear, you Mr. Luckoiè, there!" said an old portrait that hung on the wall of the room where Yalmar slept: "I am Yalmar's grandfather. We are obliged to you for telling the boy pretty stories, but you must not go and confuse his ideas. The stars cannot be taken down and polished! The stars are globes like our earth, and they want nothing doing at them!"

"Thou shalt have thanks, thou old grandfather," said Olé Luckoiè; "thanks thou shalt have! Thou art, to be sure, the head of the family; thou art the old head of the family; but for all that, I am older than thou! I am an old heathen; the Greeks and the Romans called me the god of dreams. I go into great folks' houses, and I shall go there still. I know how to manage both with young and old. But now thou mayst take thy turn." And with this Olé Luckoiè went away, and took his umbrella with him.

"Now, one cannot tell what he means!" said the old Portrait.

And Yalmar awoke.

SUNDAY

"Good-evening!" said Olé Luckoiè, and Yalmar nodded; but he jumped up and turned the grandfather's portrait to the wall, that it might not chatter as it had done the night before.

"Now thou shalt tell me a story," said Yalmar, "about the five peas that live in one pea-pod, and about Hanebeen who cured Honebeen; and about the darning-needle, that was so fine that it fancied itself a sewing-needle."

"One might do a deal of good by so doing," said Olé Luckoiè; "but, dost thou know, I would rather show thee something. I will show thee my brother; he also is called Olé Luckoiè. He never comes more than once to anybody, – and when he comes he takes the person away with him on his horse, and tells him a great and wonderful history. But he only knows two, one of them is the most incomparably beautiful story, so beautiful that nobody in the world can imagine it; and the other is so dismal and sad – oh, it is impossible to describe how sad!"

Having said this, Olé Luckoiè lifted little Yalmar up to the window and said, "There thou mayst see my brother, the other Olé Luckoiè! They call him Death! Dost thou see, he does not look horrible as they have painted him in picture-books, like a skeleton; no, his coat is embroidered with silver; he wears a handsome Hussar uniform! A cloak of black velvet flies behind, over his horse. See how he gallops!"

Yalmar looked, and saw how the other Olé Luckoiè rode along, and took both young and old people with him on his horse. Some he set before him, and some he set behind; but his first question always was, "How does it stand in your character-book?"

Everybody said, "Good!"

"Yes! let me see myself," said he; and they were obliged to show him their books: and all those in whose books were written, "Very good!" or "Remarkably good!" he placed before him on his horse; and they listened to the beautiful story that he could tell. But they in whose books was written, "Not very good," or "Only middling," they had to sit behind and listen to the dismal tale. These wept bitterly, and would have been glad to have got away, that they might have amended their characters; but it was then too late.

"Death is, after all, the most beautiful Olé Luckoiè," said Yalmar; "I shall not be afraid of him."

"Thou need not fear him," said Olé Luckoiè, "if thou only take care and have a good character-book."

"There is instruction in that," mumbled the old grandfather's portrait; "that is better: one sees his meaning!" and he was pleased.

See, this is the story about Olé Luckoiè. This night, perhaps, he may tell thee some others.

THE DAISY

Now thou shalt hear! – Out in the country, close by the high road, there stood a pleasure-house, – thou hast, no doubt, seen it thyself. In the front is a little garden full of flowers, and this is fenced in with painted palisades. Close beside these, in a hollow, there grew, all among the loveliest green grass, a little tuft of daisies. The sun shone upon it just as warmly and as sweetly as upon the large and rich splendid flowers within the garden, and, therefore, it grew hour by hour. One morning it opened its little shining white flower-leaves, which looked just like rays of light all round the little yellow sun in the inside. It never once thought that nobody saw it down there in the grass, and that it was a poor, despised flower! No, nothing of the kind! It was so very happy; turned itself round towards the warm sun, looked up, and listened to the lark which sang in the blue air.

The little daisy was as happy as if it had been some great holiday, and yet it was only a Monday. All the children were in school, and while they sat upon the benches learning their lessons, it also sat upon its little green stalk, and learned from the warm sun and from every thing around it, how good God is. And it seemed to it quite right that the little lark sang so intelligibly and so beautifully every thing which it felt in stillness; and it looked up with a sort of reverence to the happy bird, which could sing and fly, but it was not at all vexed because it could not do the same.

"I see it and hear it," thought the daisy; "the sun shines upon me, and the winds kiss me! O, what a many gifts I enjoy!"

Inside the garden paling there were such a great many stiff, grand flowers; and all the less fragrance they had the more they seemed to swell themselves out. The pionies blew themselves out that they might be bigger than the roses; but it is not size which does every thing. The tulips had the most splendid colors, and they knew it too, and held themselves so upright on purpose that people should see them all the better. They never paid the least attention to the little daisy outside, but it looked at them all the more, and thought, "How rich they are, and how beautiful! Yes, to be sure, the charming bird up there must fly down and pay them a visit. Thank God! that I am so near that I can see all the glory!" And while she was thinking these thoughts – "Quirrevit!" down came the lark flying, – but not down to the pionies and the tulips: no! but down into the grass to the poor little daisy; which was so astonished by pure joy, that it did not know what it should think.

The little bird danced round about, and sang, "Nay, but the grass is in flower! and see, what a sweet little blossom, with a golden heart and a silver jerkin on!" – for the yellow middle of the daisy looked as if it were of gold, and the little leaves round about were shining and silver white.

So happy as the little daisy was it is quite impossible to describe! The bird kissed it with its beak, sang before it, and then flew up again into the blue air. It required a whole quarter of an hour before the daisy could come to itself again. Half bashfully, and yet with inward delight, it looked into the garden to the other flowers; they had actually seen the honor and the felicity which she had enjoyed; they could certainly understand, she thought, what a happiness it was. But the tulips stood yet just as stiffly as before, and their faces were so peaked and so red! – for they were quite vexed. The pionies were quite thick-headed, too! it was a good thing that they could not talk, or else the daisy would have been regularly scolded. The poor little flower, however, could see very plainly that they were not in a good humor, and that really distressed her. At that very moment there came a girl into the garden with a great knife in her hand, which was very sharp and shining, and she went all among the tulips, and she cut off first one and then another.

"Ah!" sighed the little daisy, "that was very horrible; now all is over with them!"

So the girl went away with the tulips. The daisy was glad that it grew in the grass, and was a little mean flower; it felt full of gratitude, and when the sun set, it folded its leaves, slept, and dreamed the whole night long about the sun and the little bird.

Next morning, the flower again, full of joy, spread out all its white leaves, like small arms, towards the air and the light; it recognised the bird's voice; but the song of the bird was very sorrowful. Yes, the poor little bird had good reason for being sad! it had been taken prisoner, and now sat in a cage close by the open window of the pleasure-house. It sang about flying wherever it would in freedom and bliss; it sang about the young green corn in the fields, and about the charming journeys which it used to make up in the blue air upon its hovering wings. The poor bird was heavy at heart, and was captive in a cage.

The little daisy wished so sincerely that it could be of any service; but it was difficult to tell how. In sympathizing with the lark, the daisy quite forgot how beautiful was every thing around it – how warmly the sun shone, and how beautifully white were its own flower-leaves. Ah! it could think of nothing but of the captive bird, for which it was not able to do any thing.

Just then came two little boys out of the garden; one of them had a knife in his hand, large and sharp, like that which the girl had, and with which she cut off the tulips. They went straight up to the little daisy, which could not think what they wanted.

"Here we can get a beautiful grass turf for the lark," said one of the boys; and began deeply to cut out a square around the daisy-root, so that it was just in the middle of the turf.

"Break off the flower!" said the other boy; and the daisy trembled for very fear of being broken off, and thus losing its life; when it would so gladly live and go with the turf into the cage of the captive lark.

"Nay, let it be where it is!" said the other boy; "it makes it look so pretty!"

And so it was left there, and was taken into the cage to the lark.

But the poor bird made loud lamentations over its lost freedom, and struck the wires of the cage with its wings. The little daisy could not speak, could not say one consoling word, however gladly it would have done so. Thus passed the forenoon.

"There is no water here," said the captive lark; "they are all gone out, and have forgotten to give me a drop to drink! my throat is dry and burning! it is fire and ice within me, and the air is so heavy! Ah! I shall die away from the warm sunshine, from the fresh green leaves, from all the glorious things which God has created!" and with that it bored its little beak down into the cool turf to refresh itself a little. At that moment it caught sight of the daisy, nodded to it, kissed it with its beak, and said, "Thou also must wither here, thou poor little flower! Thou and the little plot of grass, which they have given me for the whole world which I had out there! Every little blade of grass may be to me a green tree, every one of thy little white leaves a fragrant flower! Ah! you only tell me how much I have lost!"

"Ah! who can comfort him!" thought the daisy, but could not move a leaf; and yet the fragrance which was given forth from its delicate petals was much sweeter than is usual in such flowers. The bird remarked this, and when, overcome by the agony of thirst and misery, it tore up every green blade of grass, it touched not the little flower.

Evening came, and yet no one brought a single drop of water to the poor bird. It stretched out its beautiful wings, fluttered them convulsively, and its song was a melancholy wailing; its little head bowed down towards the flower, and its heart broke from thirst and longing. The little flower knew this not; before the evening was ended, it had folded its petals together and slept upon the earth, overcome with sickness and sorrow.

Not until the next morning came the boys, and when they saw that the bird was dead they wept, wept many tears, and dug for it a handsome grave, which they adorned with leaves of flowers. The corpse of the bird was laid in a beautiful red box. It was to be buried royally, the poor bird! which, when full of life and singing its glorious song, they forgot, and let it pine in a cage, and suffer thirst – and now they did him honor, and shed many tears over him!

But the sod of grass with the daisy, that they threw out into the dust of the highway; no one thought about it, though it had felt more than any of them for the little bird, and would so gladly have comforted it.

THE NAUGHTY BOY

There was once upon a time an old poet, such a really good old poet! One evening, he sat at home – it was dreadful weather out of doors – the rain poured down; but the old poet sat so comfortably, and in such a good humor, beside his stove, where the fire was burning brightly, and his apples were merrily roasting.

"There will not be a dry thread on the poor souls who are out in this weather!" said he; for he was such a good old poet.

"O let me in! I am freezing, and I am so wet!" cried the voice of a little child outside. It cried and knocked at the door, while the rain kept pouring down, and the wind rattled at all the windows.

"Poor little soul!" said the old poet, and got up to open the door. There stood a little boy; he had not any clothes on, and the rain ran off from his long yellow hair. He shook with the cold; if he had not been taken in, he would most surely have died of that bad weather.

"Thou poor little soul!" said the kind old poet, and took him by the hand; "come in, and I will warm thee! and thou shalt have some wine, and a nice roasted apple, for thou art a pretty little boy!"

And so he was. His eyes were like two bright stars, and, although the water ran down from his yellow hair, yet it curled so beautifully. He looked just like a little angel; but he was pale with the cold, and his little body trembled all over. In his hand he carried a pretty little bow; but it was quite spoiled with the rain, and all the colors of his beautiful little arrows ran one into another with the wet.

The good old poet seated himself by the stove, and took the little boy upon his knee; he wrung the rain out of his hair, warmed his little hands in his, and made some sweet wine warm for him; by this means the rosy color came back into his cheeks, he jumped down upon the floor, and danced round and round the old poet.

"Thou art a merry lad," said the poet; "what is thy name?"

"They call me Love," replied the boy; "dost thou not know me? There lies my bow; I shoot with it, thou mayst believe! See, now, the weather clears up; the moon shines!"

"But thy bow is spoiled," said the old poet.

"That would be sad!" said the little boy, and took it up to see if it were. "Oh, it is quite dry," said he; "it is not hurt at all! The string is quite firm: now I will try it!"

And with that he strung it, laid an arrow upon it, took his aim, and shot the good old poet right through the heart!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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