

2017/2018 Storytelling Stories

Resource: *The Gutenberg Project* (gutenberg.org)

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Notes:

1. Since the stories this year come from many sources with many authors and editors, it is the suggestion of the storytelling committee that, for the sake of simplicity, students should cite their story in one of the following ways:
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2. All these stories are in the public domain, and minor edits have been made to certain texts at the discretion of the Storytelling Committee.

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1. THE LITTLE RED HEN

Book: The Little Red Hen

Author: Florence White Williams

Origin: English

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18735/18735-h/18735-h.htm>

A Little Red Hen lived in a barnyard. She spent almost all of her time walking about the barnyard in her picketty-pecketty fashion, scratching everywhere for worms. She dearly loved fat, delicious worms and felt they were absolutely necessary to the health of her children. As often as she found a worm she would call "Chuck-chuck-chuck!" to her chickies. When they were gathered about her, she would distribute choice morsels of her tid-bit. A busy little body was she!

A cat usually napped lazily in the barn door, not even bothering herself to scare the rat who ran here and there as he pleased. And as for the pig who lived in the sty—he did not care what happened so long as he could eat and grow fat.

One day the Little Red Hen found a Seed. It was a Wheat Seed, but the Little Red Hen was so accustomed to bugs and worms that she supposed this to be some new and perhaps very delicious kind of meat. She bit it gently and found that it resembled a worm in no way whatsoever as to taste although because it was long and slender, a Little Red Hen might easily be fooled by its appearance.

Carrying it about, she made many inquiries as to what it might be. She found it was a Wheat Seed and that, if planted, it would grow up and when ripe it could be made into flour and then into bread. When she discovered that, she knew it ought to be planted. She was so busy hunting food for herself and her family that, naturally, she thought she ought not to take time to plant it.

So she thought of the Pig—upon whom time must hang heavily and of the Cat who had nothing to do, and of the great fat Rat with his idle hours, and she called loudly: "Who will plant the Seed?"

But the Pig said, "Not I," and the Cat said, "Not I," and the Rat said, "Not I."

"Well, then," said the Little Red Hen, "I will." And she did.

Then she went on with her daily duties through the long summer days, scratching for worms and feeding her chicks, while the Pig grew fat, and the Cat grew fat, and the Rat grew fat, and the Wheat grew tall and ready for harvest.

So one day the Little Red Hen chanced to notice how large the Wheat was and that the grain was ripe, so she ran about calling briskly: "Who will cut the Wheat?"

The Pig said, "Not I," the Cat said, "Not I," and the Rat said, "Not I."

"Well, then," said the Little Red Hen, "I will." And she did.

She got the sickle from among the farmer's tools in the barn and proceeded to cut off all of the big plant of Wheat. On the ground lay the nicely cut Wheat, ready to be gathered and threshed, but the newest and yellowest and downiest of Mrs. Hen's chicks set up a "peep-peep-peeping" in their most vigorous fashion, proclaiming to the world at large, but most particularly to their mother, that she was neglecting them.

Poor Little Red Hen! She felt quite bewildered and hardly knew where to turn. Her attention was sorely divided between her duty to her children and her duty to the Wheat, for which she felt responsible. So, again, in a very hopeful tone, she called out, "Who will thresh the Wheat?"

But the Pig, with a grunt, said, "Not I," and the Cat, with a meow, said, "Not I," and the Rat, with a squeak, said, "Not I."

So the Little Red Hen, looking, it must be admitted, rather discouraged, said, "Well, I will, then." And she did.

Of course, she had to feed her babies first, though, and when she had gotten them all to sleep for their afternoon nap, she went out and threshed the Wheat. Then she called out: "Who will carry the Wheat to the mill to be ground?"

Turning their backs with snippy glee, that Pig said, "Not I," and that Cat said, "Not I," and that Rat said, "Not I."

So the good Little Red Hen could do nothing but say, "I will then." And she did.

Carrying the sack of Wheat, she trudged off to the distant mill. There she ordered the Wheat ground into beautiful white flour. When the miller brought her the flour she walked slowly back all the way to her own barnyard in her own picketty-pecketty fashion. She even managed, in spite of her load, to catch a nice juicy worm now and then and had one left for the babies when she reached them. Those cunning little fluff-balls were so glad to see their mother. For the first time, they really appreciated her.

After this really strenuous day Mrs. Hen retired to her slumbers earlier than usual—indeed, before the colors came into the sky to herald the setting of the sun, her usual bedtime hour. She would have liked to sleep late in the morning, but her chicks, joining in the morning chorus of the hen yard, drove away all hopes of such a luxury. Even as she sleepily half opened one eye, the thought came to her that to-day that Wheat must, somehow, be made into bread. She was not in the habit of making bread, although, of course, anyone can make it if he or she follows the recipe with care, and she knew perfectly well that she could do it if necessary.

So after her children were fed and made sweet and fresh for the day, she hunted up the Pig, the Cat and the Rat. Still confident that they would surely help her someday she sang out, "Who will make the bread?"

Alas for the Little Red Hen! Once more her hopes were dashed! For the Pig said, "Not I," the Cat said, "Not I," and the Rat said, "Not I."

So the Little Red Hen said once more, "I will then," and she did.

Feeling that she might have known all the time that she would have to do it all herself, she went and put on a fresh apron and spotless cook's cap. First of all she set the dough, as was proper. When it was time she brought out the moulding board and the baking tins, moulded the bread, divided it into loaves, and put them into the oven to bake. All the while the Cat sat lazily by, giggling and chuckling.

And close at hand the vain Rat powdered his nose and admired himself in a mirror. In the distance could be heard the long-drawn snores of the dozing Pig.

At last the great moment arrived. A delicious odor was wafted upon the autumn breeze. Everywhere the barnyard citizens sniffed the air with delight. The Red Hen ambled in her picketty-pecketty way toward the source of all this excitement. Although she appeared to be perfectly calm, in reality she could only with difficulty restrain an impulse to dance and sing, for had she not done all the work on this wonderful bread? Small wonder that she was the most excited person in the barnyard!

She did not know whether the bread would be fit to eat, but—joy of joys!—when the lovely brown loaves came out of the oven, they were done to perfection.

Then, probably because she had acquired the habit, the Red Hen called: "Who will eat the Bread?"

All the animals in the barnyard were watching hungrily and smacking their lips in anticipation, and the Pig said, "I will," the Cat said, "I will," the Rat said, "I will."

But the Little Red Hen said, "No, you won't. I will." And she did.

2. THE CRUEL CRANE OUTWITTED

Book: Indian Fairy Tales

Editor: Joseph Jacobs

Origin: Indian

Link: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7128/7128-h/7128-h.htm#The_Cruel_Crane_Outwitted

Long ago the Bodisat was born to a forest life as the Genius of a tree standing near a certain lotus pond. Now at that time the water used to run short at the dry season in a certain pond, not over large, in which there were a good many fish. And a crane thought on seeing the fish: "I must outwit these fish somehow or other and make a prey of them."

And he went and sat down at the edge of the water, thinking how he should do it. When the fish saw him, they asked him, "What are you sitting there for, lost in thought?"

"I am sitting thinking about you," said he.

"Oh, sir! what are you thinking about us?" said they.

"Why," he replied; "there is very little water in this pond, and but little for you to eat; and the heat is so great! So I was thinking, 'What in the world will these fish do now?'"

"Yes, indeed, sir! what *are* we to do?" said they.

"If you will only do as I bid you, I will take you in my beak to a fine large pond, covered with all the kinds of lotuses, and put you into it," answered the crane.

"That a crane should take thought for the fishes is a thing unheard of, sir, since the world began. It's eating us, one after the other, that you're aiming at."

"Not !! So long as you trust me, I won't eat you. But if you don't believe me that there is such a pond, send one of you with me to go and see it."

Then they trusted him, and handed over to him one of their number—a big fellow, blind of one eye, whom they thought sharp enough in any emergency, afloat or ashore.

Him the crane took with him, let him go in the pond, showed him the whole of it, brought him back, and let him go again close to the other fish. And he told them all the glories of the pond.

And when they heard what he said, they exclaimed, "All right, sir! You may take us with you."

Then the crane took the old purblind fish first to the bank of the other pond, and alighted in a Varana-tree growing on the bank there. But he threw it into a fork of the tree, struck it with his beak, and killed it; and then ate its flesh, and threw its bones away at the foot of the tree. Then he went back and called out:

"I've thrown that fish in; let another one come."

And in that manner he took all the fish, one by one, and ate them, till he came back and found no more!

But there was still a crab left behind there; and the crane thought he would eat him too, and called out:

"I say, good crab, I've taken all the fish away, and put them into a fine large pond. Come along. I'll take you too!"

"But how will you take hold of me to carry me along?"

"I'll bite hold of you with my beak."

"You'll let me fall if you carry me like that. I won't go with you!"

"Don't be afraid! I'll hold you quite tight all the way."

Then said the crab to himself, "If this fellow once got hold of fish, he would never

let them go in a pond! Now if he should really put me into the pond, it would be capital; but if he doesn't—then I'll cut his throat, and kill him!" So he said to him:

"Look here, friend, you won't be able to hold me tight enough; but we crabs have a famous grip. If you let me catch hold of you round the neck with my claws, I shall be glad to go with you."

And the other did not see that he was trying to outwit him, and agreed. So the crab caught hold of his neck with his claws as securely as with a pair of blacksmith's pincers, and called out, "Off with you, now!"

And the crane took him and showed him the pond, and then turned off towards the Varana-tree.

"Uncle!" cried the crab, "the pond lies that way, but you are taking me this way!"

"Oh, that's it, is it?" answered the crane. "Your dear little uncle, your very sweet nephew, you call me! You mean me to understand, I suppose, that I am your slave, who has to lift you up and carry you about with him! Now cast your eye upon the heap of fish-bones lying at the root of yonder Varana-tree. Just as I have eaten those fish, every one of them, just so I will devour you as well!"

"Ah! those fishes got eaten through their own stupidity," answered the crab; "but I'm not going to let you eat *me*. On the contrary, is it *you* that I am going to destroy. For you in your folly have not seen that I was outwitting you. If we die, we die both together; for I will cut off this head of yours, and cast it to the ground!" And so saying, he gave the crane's neck a grip with his claws, as with a vice.

Then gasping, and with tears trickling from his eyes, and trembling with the fear of death, the crane beseeched him, saying, "O my Lord! Indeed I did not intend to eat you. Grant me my life!"

"Well, well! step down into the pond, and put me in there."

And he turned round and stepped down into the pond, and placed the crab on the mud at its edge. But the crab cut through its neck as clean as one would cut a lotus-stalk with a hunting-knife, and then only entered the water!

When the Genius who lived in the Varana-tree saw this strange affair, he made the wood resound with his plaudits, uttering in a pleasant voice the verse:

"The villain, though exceeding clever,
Shall prosper not by his villainy.
He may win indeed, sharp-witted in deceit,
But only as the Crane here from the Crab!"

3. THE GHOST-BRAHMAN

Book: Folk-Tales of Bengal

Author: Lal Behari Day

Origin: Indian

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/38488/38488-h/38488-h.htm#ch12>

Once on a time there lived a poor Brahman, who not being a Kulin, found it the hardest thing in the world to get married. He went to rich people and begged of them to give him money that he might marry a wife. And a large sum of money was needed, not so much for the expenses of the wedding, as for giving to the parents of the bride. He begged from door to door, flattered many rich folk, and at last succeeded in scraping together the sum needed.

The wedding took place in due time; and he brought home his wife to his mother. After a short time he said to his mother—

“Mother, I have no means to support you and my wife; I must therefore go to distant countries to get money somehow or other. I may be away for years, for I won’t return till I get a good sum. In the meantime I’ll give you what I have; you make the best of it, and take care of my wife.”

The Brahman receiving his mother’s blessing set out on his travels.

In the evening of that very day, a ghost assuming the exact appearance of the Brahman came into the house. The newly married woman, thinking it was her husband, said to him—

“How is it that you have returned so soon? You said you might be away for years; why have you changed your mind?”

The ghost said—“To-day is not a lucky day, I have therefore returned home; besides, I have already got some money.”

The mother did not doubt but that it was her son. So the ghost lived in the house as if he was its owner, and as if he was the son of the old woman and the husband of the young woman. As the ghost and the Brahman were exactly like each other in everything, like two peas, the people in the neighbourhood all thought that the ghost was the real Brahman.

After some years the Brahman returned from his travels; and what was his surprise when he found another like him in the house.

The ghost said to the Brahman—“Who are you? what business have you to come to my house?” “Who am I?” replied the Brahman, “let me ask who you are. This is my house; that is my mother, and this is my wife.” The ghost said—“Why herein is a strange thing. Everyone knows that this is my house, that is my wife, and yonder is my mother; and I have lived here for years. And you pretend this is your house, and that woman is your wife. Your head must have got turned, Brahman.” So saying the ghost drove away the Brahman from his house.

The Brahman became mute with wonder. He did not know what to do. At last he bethought himself of going to the king and of laying his case before him.

The king saw the ghost-Brahman as well as the Brahman, and the one was the picture of the other; so he was in a fix, and did not know how to decide the quarrel. Day after day the Brahman went to the king and besought him to give him back his house, his wife, and his mother; and the king, not knowing what to say every time, put him off to the following day. Every day the king tells him to—“Come to-morrow”; and every day the Brahman goes away from the palace weeping and striking his forehead with the palm of his hand, and saying—“What a wicked world this is! I am driven from my own house, and

another fellow has taken possession of my house and of my wife! And what a king this is! He does not do justice.”

Now, it came to pass that as the Brahman went away every day from the court outside the town, he passed a spot at which a great many cowboys used to play. They let the cows graze on the meadow, while they themselves met together under a large tree to play. And they played at royalty. One cowboy was elected king; another, prime minister or vizier; another, kotwal, or prefect of the police; and others, constables. Every day for several days together they saw the Brahman passing by weeping.

One day the cowboy king asked his vizier whether he knew why the Brahman wept every day. On the vizier not being able to answer the question, the cowboy king ordered one of his constables to bring the Brahman to him. One of them went and said to the Brahman—

“The king requires your immediate attendance.”

The Brahman replied—“What for? I have just come from the king, and he put me off till to-morrow. Why does he want me again?”

“It is our king that wants you—our neat-herd king,” rejoined the constable.

“Who is neat-herd king?” asked the Brahman.

“Come and see,” was the reply.

The neat-herd king then asked the Brahman why he every day went away weeping. The Brahman then told him his sad story.

The neat-herd king, after hearing the whole, said, “I understand your case; I will give you again all your rights. Only go to the king and ask his permission for me to decide your case.”

The Brahman went back to the king of the country, and begged his Majesty to send his case to the neat-herd king, who had offered to decide it. The king, whom the case had greatly puzzled, granted the permission sought. The following morning was fixed for the trial. The neat-herd king, who saw through the whole, brought with him next day a phial with a narrow neck.

The Brahman and the ghost-Brahman both appeared at the bar. After a great deal of examination of witnesses and of speech-making, the neat-herd king said—

“Well, I have heard enough. I’ll decide the case at once. Here is this phial. Whichever of you will enter into it shall be declared by the court to be the rightful owner of the house the title of which is in dispute. Now, let me see, which of you will enter.”

The Brahman said—“You are a neat-herd, and your intellect is that of a neat-herd. What man can enter into such a small phial?”

“If you cannot enter,” said the neat-herd king, “then you are not the rightful owner. What do you say, sir, to this?” turning to the ghost-Brahman and addressing him. “If you can enter into the phial, then the house and the wife and the mother become yours.”

“Of course I will enter,” said the ghost.

And true to his word, to the wonder of all, he made himself into a small creature like an insect, and entered into the phial. The neat-herd king forthwith corked up the phial, and the ghost could not get out. Then, addressing the Brahman, the neat-herd king said,

“Throw this phial into the bottom of the sea, and take possession of your house, wife, and mother.” The Brahman did so, and lived happily for many years and begat sons and daughters.

4. WHY THE BAT IS ASHAMED TO BE SEEN IN THE

DAYTIME

Book: Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, West Africa

Author: Elphinstone Dayrell

Origin: Nigerian

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34655/34655-h/34655-h.htm#XII>

There was once an old mother sheep who had seven lambs, and one day the bat, who was about to make a visit to his father-in-law who lived a long day's march away, went to the old sheep and asked her to lend him one of her young lambs to carry his load for him. At first the mother sheep refused, but as the young lamb was anxious to travel and see something of the world, and begged to be allowed to go, at last she reluctantly consented.

So in the morning at daylight the bat and the lamb set off together, the lamb carrying the bat's drinking-horn. When they reached half-way, the bat told the lamb to leave the horn underneath a bamboo tree. Directly he arrived at the house, he sent the lamb back to get the horn. When the lamb had gone the bat's father-in-law brought him food, and the bat ate it all, leaving nothing for the lamb. When the lamb returned, the bat said to him, "Hullo! you have arrived at last I see, but you are too late for food; it is all finished." He then sent the lamb back to the tree with the horn, and when the lamb returned again it was late, and he went supperless to bed. The next day, just before it was time for food, the bat sent the lamb off again for the drinking-horn, and when the food arrived the bat, who was very greedy, ate it all up a second time. This mean behaviour on the part of the bat went on for four days, until at last the lamb became quite thin and weak. The bat decided to return home the next day, and it was all the lamb could do to carry his load.

When he got home to his mother the lamb complained bitterly of the treatment he had received from the bat, and was baa-ing all night, complaining of pains in his inside.

The old mother sheep, who was very fond of her children, determined to be revenged on the bat for the cruel way he had starved her lamb; she therefore decided to consult the tortoise, who, although very poor, was considered by all people to be the wisest of all animals. When the old sheep had told the whole story to the tortoise, he considered for some time, and then told the sheep that she might leave the matter entirely to him, and he would take ample revenge on the bat for his cruel treatment of her son.

Very soon after this the bat thought he would again go and see his father-in-law, so he went to the mother sheep again and asked her for one of her sons to carry his load as before. The tortoise, who happened to be present, told the bat that he was going in that direction, and would cheerfully carry his load for him.

They set out on their journey the following day, and when they arrived at the half-way halting-place the bat pursued the same tactics that he had on the previous occasion. He told the tortoise to hide his drinking-horn under the same tree as the lamb had hidden it before; this the tortoise did, but when the bat was not looking he picked up the drinking-horn again and hid it in his bag. When they arrived at the house the tortoise hung the horn up out of sight in the back yard, and then sat down in the house. Just before it was time for food the bat sent the tortoise to get the drinking-horn, and the tortoise went outside into the yard, and waited until he heard that the beating of the boiled yams into foo-foo had finished; he then went into the house and gave the drinking-horn to the bat, who was so surprised and angry, that when the food was passed he refused to eat any of it, so the tortoise ate it all; this went on for four days, until at last the bat became as thin as the poor little lamb had been on the previous

occasion.

At last the bat could stand the pains of his inside no longer, and secretly told his mother-in-law to bring him food when the tortoise was not looking. He said, "I am now going to sleep for a little, but you can wake me up when the food is ready."

The tortoise, who had been listening all the time, being hidden in a corner out of sight, waited until the bat was fast asleep, and then carried him very gently into the next room and placed him on his own bed; he then very softly and quietly took off the bat's cloth and covered himself in it, and lay down where the bat had been; very soon the bat's mother-in-law brought the food and placed it next to where the bat was supposed to be sleeping, and having pulled his cloth to wake him, went away. The tortoise then got up and ate all the food; when he had finished he carried the bat back again, and took some of the palm-oil and foo-foo and placed it inside the bat's lips while he was asleep; then the tortoise went to sleep himself.

In the morning when he woke up the bat was more hungry than ever, and in a very bad temper, so he sought out his mother-in-law and started scolding her, and asked her why she had not brought his food as he had told her to do. She replied she had brought his food, and that he had eaten it; but this the bat denied, and accused the tortoise of having eaten the food. The woman then said she would call the people in and they should decide the matter; but the tortoise slipped out first and told the people that the best way to find out who had eaten the food was to make both the bat and himself rinse their mouths out with clean water into a basin. This they decided to do, so the tortoise got his tooth-stick which he always used, and having cleaned his teeth properly, washed his mouth out, and returned to the house.

When all the people had arrived the woman told them how the bat had abused her, and as he still maintained stoutly that he had had no food for five days, the people said that both he and the tortoise should wash their mouths out with clean water into two clean calabashes; this was done, and at once it could clearly be seen that the bat had been eating, as there were distinct traces of the palm-oil and foo-foo which the tortoise had put inside his lips floating on the water.

When the people saw this they decided against the bat, and he was so ashamed that he ran away then and there, and has ever since always hidden himself in the bush during the daytime, so that no one could see him, and only comes out at night to get his food.

The next day the tortoise returned to the mother sheep and told her what he had done, and that the bat was for ever disgraced. The old sheep praised him very much, and told all her friends, in consequence of which the reputation of the tortoise for wisdom was greatly increased throughout the whole country.

5. THE KING AND THE FISHERMAN

Book: The Cat and the Mouse

Editor: Hartwell James

Origin: Persian

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24473/24473-h/24473-h.htm#story4>

The countries washed by the great rivers Tigris and Euphrates were once ruled by a certain King who was passionately fond of fish. He was seated one day with Sherem, his wife, in the royal gardens that stretch down to the banks of the Tigris, at the point where it is spanned by the wonderful bridge of boats; and looking up spied a boat gliding by, in which was seated a fisherman having a large fish.

Noticing that the King was looking closely at him, and knowing how much the King liked this particular kind of fish, the fisherman made his obeisance, and skilfully bringing his boat to the shore, came before the King and begged that he would accept the fish as a present. The King was greatly pleased at this, and ordered that a large sum of money be given to the fisherman.

But before the fisherman had left the royal presence, the Queen turned towards the King and said: "You have done a foolish thing." The King was astonished to hear her speak in this way, and asked how that could be. The Queen replied: "The news of your having given so large a reward for so small a gift will spread through the city and it will be known as the fisherman's gift. Every fisherman who catches a big fish will bring it to the palace, and should he not be paid in like manner, he will go away discontented, and secretly speak evil of you among his fellows."

"Thou speakest the truth, light of my eyes," said the King, "but can not you see how mean it would be for a King, if for that reason he were to take back his gift?" Then perceiving that the Queen was ready to argue the matter, he turned away angrily, saying: "The matter is closed."

However, later in the day, when he was in a more amiable frame of mind, the Queen again approached him, and said that if that was his only reason for not taking back his gift, she would arrange it. "You must summon the fisherman," she said, "and then ask him, 'Is this fish male or female?' If he says male, then you will tell him that you wanted a female fish; but if he should say female, your reply will be that you wanted a male fish. In this way the matter will be properly adjusted."

The King thought this an easy way out of the difficulty, and commanded the fisherman to be brought before him. When the fisherman, who by the way, was a most intelligent man, stood before the King, the King said to him: "O fisherman, tell me, is this fish male or female?"

The fisherman replied, "The fish is neither male nor female." Whereupon the King smiled at the clever answer, and to add to the Queen's annoyance, directed the keeper of the royal purse to give the fisherman a further sum of money.

Then the fisherman placed the money in his leather bag, thanked the King, and swinging the bag over his shoulder, hurried away, but not so quickly that he did not notice that he had dropped one small coin. Placing the bag on the ground, he stooped and picked up the coin, and again went on his way, with the King and Queen carefully watching his every action.

"Look! what a miser he is!" said Sherem, triumphantly. "He actually put down his bag to pick up one small coin because it grieved him to think that it might reach the hands of one of the King's servants, or some poor person, who, needing it, would buy bread and pray for the long life of the King."

"Again thou speakest the truth," replied the King, feeling the justice of this remark; and once more was the fisherman brought into the royal presence. "Are you a human being or a beast?" the King asked him. "Although I made it possible for you to become rich without toil, yet the miser within you could not allow you to leave even one small piece of money for others." Then the King bade him to go forth and show his face no more within the city.

At this the fisherman fell on his knees and cried: "Hear me, O King, protector of the poor! May God grant the King a long life. Not for its value did thy servant pick up the coin, but because on one side it bore the name of God, and on the other the likeness of the King. Thy servant feared that someone, not seeing the coin, would tread it into the dirt, and thus defile both the name of God and the face of the King. Let the King judge if by so doing I have merited reproach."

This answer pleased the King beyond all measure, and he gave the fisherman another large sum of money. And the Queen's wrath was turned away, and she looked kindly upon the fisherman as he departed with his bag laden with money.

6. THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Book: The Yellow Fairy Book

Editor: Andrew Lang

Origin: Danish

Link: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/640/640-h/640-h.htm#link2H_4_0006

Many years ago there lived an Emperor who was so fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on them in order to be beautifully dressed. He did not care about his soldiers, he did not care about the theatre; he only liked to go out walking to show off his new clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day; and just as they say of a king, 'He is in the council-chamber,' they always said here, 'The Emperor is in the wardrobe.'

In the great city in which he lived there was always something going on; every day many strangers came there. One day two impostors arrived who gave themselves out as weavers, and said that they knew how to manufacture the most beautiful cloth imaginable. Not only were the texture and pattern uncommonly beautiful, but the clothes which were made of the stuff possessed this wonderful property that they were invisible to anyone who was not fit for his office, or who was unpardonably stupid.

'Those must indeed be splendid clothes,' thought the Emperor. 'If I had them on I could find out which men in my kingdom are unfit for the offices they hold; I could distinguish the wise from the stupid! Yes, this cloth must be woven for me at once.' And he gave both the impostors much money, so that they might begin their work.

They placed two weaving-looms, and began to do as if they were working, but they had not the least thing on the looms. They also demanded the finest silk and the best gold, which they put in their pockets, and worked at the empty looms till late into the night.

'I should like very much to know how far they have got on with the cloth,' thought the Emperor. But he remembered when he thought about it that whoever was stupid or not fit for his office would not be able to see it. Now he certainly believed that he had nothing to fear for himself, but he wanted first to send somebody else in order to see how he stood with regard to his office. Everybody in the whole town knew what a wonderful power the cloth had, and they were all curious to see how bad or how stupid their neighbour was.

'I will send my old and honoured minister to the weavers,' thought the Emperor. 'He can judge best what the cloth is like, for he has intellect, and no one understands his office better than he.'

Now the good old minister went into the hall where the two impostors sat working at the empty weaving-looms. 'Dear me!' thought the old minister, opening his eyes wide, 'I can see nothing!' But he did not say so.

Both the impostors begged him to be so kind as to step closer, and asked him if it were not a beautiful texture and lovely colours. They pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old minister went forward rubbing his eyes; but he could see nothing, for there was nothing there.

'Dear, dear!' thought he, 'can I be stupid? I have never thought that, and nobody must know it! Can I be not fit for my office? No, I must certainly not say that I cannot see the cloth!'

'Have you nothing to say about it?' asked one of the men who was weaving.

'Oh, it is lovely, most lovely!' answered the old minister, looking through his spectacles. 'What a texture! What colours! Yes, I will tell the Emperor that it pleases me very much.'

'Now we are delighted at that,' said both the weavers, and thereupon they named the colours and explained the make of the texture.

The old minister paid great attention, so that he could tell the same to the Emperor when he came back to him, which he did.

The impostors now wanted more money, more silk, and more gold to use in their weaving. They put it all in their own pockets, and there came no threads on the loom, but they went on as they had done before, working at the empty loom. The Emperor soon sent another worthy statesman to see how the weaving was getting on, and whether the cloth would soon be finished. It was the same with him as the first one; he looked and looked, but because there was nothing on the empty loom he could see nothing.

'Is it not a beautiful piece of cloth?' asked the two impostors, and they pointed to and described the splendid material which was not there.

'Stupid I am not!' thought the man, 'so it must be my good office for which I am not fitted. It is strange, certainly, but no one must be allowed to notice it.' And so he praised the cloth which he did not see, and expressed to them his delight at the beautiful colours and the splendid texture. 'Yes, it is quite beautiful,' he said to the Emperor.

Everybody in the town was talking of the magnificent cloth.

Now the Emperor wanted to see it himself while it was still on the loom. With a great crowd of select followers, amongst whom were both the worthy statesmen who had already been there before, he went to the cunning impostors, who were now weaving with all their might, but without fibre or thread.

'Is it not splendid!' said both the old statesmen who had already been there. 'See, your Majesty, what a texture! What colours!' And then they pointed to the empty loom, for they believed that the others could see the cloth quite well.

'What!' thought the Emperor, 'I can see nothing! This is indeed horrible! Am I stupid? Am I not fit to be Emperor? That were the most dreadful thing that could happen to me. Oh, it is very beautiful,' he said. 'It has my gracious approval.' And then he nodded pleasantly, and examined the empty loom, for he would not say that he could see nothing.

His whole Court round him looked and looked, and saw no more than the others; but they said like the Emperor, 'Oh! it is beautiful!' And they advised him to wear these new and magnificent clothes for the first time at the great procession which was soon to take place. 'Splendid! Lovely! Most beautiful!' went from mouth to mouth; everyone seemed delighted over them, and the Emperor gave to the impostors the title of Court weavers to the Emperor.

Throughout the whole of the night before the morning on which the procession was to take place, the impostors were up and were working by the light of over sixteen candles. The people could see that they were very busy making the Emperor's new clothes ready. They pretended they were taking the cloth from the loom, cut with huge scissors in the air, sewed with needles without thread, and then said at last, 'Now the clothes are finished!'

The Emperor came himself with his most distinguished knights, and each impostor held up his arm just as if he were holding something, and said, 'See! here are the breeches! Here is the coat! Here the cloak!' and so on.

'Spun clothes are so comfortable that one would imagine one had nothing on at all; but that is the beauty of it!'

'Yes,' said all the knights, but they could see nothing, for there was nothing there.

'Will it please your Majesty graciously to take off your clothes,' said the impostors, 'then we will put on the new clothes, here before the mirror.'

The Emperor took off all his clothes, and the impostors placed themselves before him as if they were putting on each part of his new clothes which was ready, and the Emperor turned and bent himself in front of the mirror.

'How beautifully they fit! How well they sit!' said everybody. 'What material! What colours! It is a gorgeous suit!'

'They are waiting outside with the canopy which your Majesty is wont to have borne over you in the procession,' announced the Master of the Ceremonies.

'Look, I am ready,' said the Emperor. 'Doesn't it sit well!' And he turned himself again to the mirror to see if his finery was on all right.

The chamberlains who were used to carry the train put their hands near the floor as if they were lifting up the train; then they did as if they were holding something in the air. They would not have noticed that they could see nothing.

So the Emperor went along in the procession under the splendid canopy, and all the people in the streets and at the windows said, 'How matchless are the Emperor's new clothes! That train fastened to his dress, how beautifully it hangs!'

No one wished it to be noticed that he could see nothing, for then he would have been unfit for his office, or else very stupid. None of the Emperor's clothes had met with such approval as these had.

'But he has nothing on!' said a little child at last.

'Just listen to the innocent child!' said the father, and each one whispered to his neighbour what the child had said.

'But he has nothing on!' the whole of the people called out at last.

This struck the Emperor, for it seemed to him as if they were right; but he thought to himself, 'I must go on with the procession now. And the chamberlains walked along still more uprightly, holding up the train which was not there at all.'

7. ICARUS AND DAEDALUS

Book: Old Greek Folk Stories Told Anew

Author: Josephine Preston Peabody

Origin: Greek

Link: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/9313/9313-h/9313-h.htm#link2H_4_0007

Among all those mortals who grew so wise that they learned the secrets of the gods, none was more cunning than Daedalus.

He once built, for King Minos of Crete, a wonderful Labyrinth of winding ways so cunningly tangled up and twisted around that, once inside, you could never find your way out again without a magic clue. But the king's favor veered with the wind, and one day he had his master architect imprisoned in a tower. Daedalus managed to escape from his cell; but it seemed impossible to leave the island, since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the king.

At length, watching the sea-gulls in the air,—the only creatures that were sure of liberty,—he thought of a plan for himself and his young son Icarus, who was captive with him.

Little by little, he gathered a store of feathers great and small. He fastened these together with thread, moulded them in with wax, and so fashioned two great wings like those of a bird. When they were done, Daedalus fitted them to his own shoulders, and after one or two efforts, he found that by waving his arms he could winnow the air and cleave it, as a swimmer does the sea. He held himself aloft, wavered this way and that with the wind, and at last, like a great fledgling, he learned to fly.

Without delay, he fell to work on a pair of wings for the boy Icarus, and taught him carefully how to use them, bidding him beware of rash adventures among the stars. "Remember," said the father, "never to fly very low or very high, for the fogs about the earth would weigh you down, but the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers apart if you go too near."

For Icarus, these cautions went in at one ear and out by the other. Who could remember to be careful when he was to fly for the first time? Are birds careful? Not they! And not an idea remained in the boy's head but the one joy of escape.

The day came, and the fair wind that was to set them free. The father bird put on his wings, and, while the light urged them to be gone, he waited to see that all was well with Icarus, for the two could not fly hand in hand. Up they rose, the boy after his father. The hateful ground of Crete sank beneath them; and the country folk, who caught a glimpse of them when they were high above the tree-tops, took it for a vision of the gods,—Apollo, perhaps, with Cupid after him.

At first there was a terror in the joy. The wide vacancy of the air dazed them,—a glance downward made their brains reel. But when a great wind filled their wings, and Icarus felt himself sustained, like a halcyon-bird in the hollow of a wave, like a child uplifted by his mother, he forgot everything in the world but joy. He forgot Crete and the other islands that he had passed over: he saw but vaguely that winged thing in the distance before him that was his father Daedalus. He longed for one draught of flight to quench the thirst of his captivity: he stretched out his arms to the sky and made towards the highest heavens.

Alas for him! Warmer and warmer grew the air. Those arms, that had seemed to uphold him, relaxed. His wings wavered, drooped. He fluttered his young hands vainly,—he was falling,—and in that terror he remembered. The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings; the feathers were falling, one by one, like snowflakes; and there was none to help.

He fell like a leaf tossed down the wind, down, down, with one cry that overtook Daedalus far away. When he returned, and sought high and low for the poor boy, he saw nothing but the bird-like feathers afloat on the water, and he knew that Icarus was drowned.

The nearest island he named Icaria, in memory of the child; but he, in heavy grief, went to the temple of Apollo in Sicily, and there hung up his wings as an offering. Never again did he attempt to fly.

8. THE WELL OF THE WORLD'S END

Book: English Fairy Tales

Editor: Joseph Jacobs

Origin: English

Link: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7439/7439-h/7439-h.htm#link2H_4_0043

Once upon a time, and a very good time it was, though it wasn't in my time, nor in your time, nor anyone else's time, there was a girl whose mother had died, and her father had married again. And her stepmother hated her because she was more beautiful than herself, and she was very cruel to her. She used to make her do all the servant's work, and never let her have any peace. At last, one day, the stepmother thought to get rid of her altogether; so she handed her a sieve and said to her: "Go, fill it at the Well of the World's End and bring it home to me full, or woe betide you." For she thought she would never be able to find the Well of the World's End, and, if she did, how could she bring home a sieve full of water?

Well, the girl started off, and asked every one she met to tell her where was the Well of the World's End. But nobody knew, and she didn't know what to do, when a queer little old woman, all bent double, told her where it was, and how she could get to it. So she did what the old woman told her, and at last arrived at the Well of the World's End. But when she dipped the sieve in the cold, cold water, it all ran out again. She tried and she tried again, but every time it was the same; and at last she sat down and cried as if her heart would break.

Suddenly she heard a croaking voice, and she looked up and saw a great frog with goggle eyes looking at her and speaking to her.

"What's the matter, dearie?" it said.

"Oh, dear, oh dear," she said, "my stepmother has sent me all this long way to fill this sieve with water from the Well of the World's End, and I can't fill it no how at all."

"Well," said the frog, "if you promise me to do whatever I bid you for a whole night long, I'll tell you how to fill it."

So the girl agreed, and then the frog said:

"Stop it with moss and daub it with clay,
And then it will carry the water away;"

and then it gave a hop, skip and jump, and went flop into the Well of the World's End.

So the girl looked about for some moss, and lined the bottom of the sieve with it, and over that she put some clay, and then she dipped it once again into the Well of the World's End; and this time, the water didn't run out, and she turned to go away.

Just then the frog popped up its head out of the Well of the World's End, and said: "Remember your promise."

"All right," said the girl; for thought she, "what harm can a frog do me?"

So she went back to her stepmother, and brought the sieve full of water from the Well of the World's End. The stepmother was fine and angry, but she said nothing at all.

That very evening they heard something tap tapping at the door low down, and a voice cried out:

"Open the door, my hinny, my heart,
Open the door, my own darling;
Mind you the words that you and I spoke,
Down in the meadow, at the World's End Well."

"Whatever can that be?" cried out the stepmother, and the girl had to tell her all about it, and what she had promised the frog.

“Girls must keep their promises,” said the stepmother. “Go and open the door this instant.” For she was glad the girl would have to obey a nasty frog.

So the girl went and opened the door, and there was the frog from the Well of the World’s End. And it hopped, and it skipped, and it jumped, till it reached the girl, and then it said:

“Lift me to your knee, my hinny, my heart;
Lift me to your knee, my own darling;
Remember the words you and I spoke,
Down in the meadow by the World’s End Well.”

But the girl didn’t like to, till her stepmother said “Lift it up this instant, you hussy! Girls must keep their promises!”

So at last she lifted the frog up onto her lap, and it lay there for a time, till at last it said:

“Give me some supper, my hinny, my heart,
Give me some supper, my darling;
Remember the words you and I spake,
In the meadow, by the Well of the World’s End.”

Well, she didn’t mind doing that, so she got it a bowl of milk and bread, and fed it well. And when the frog, had finished, it said:

“Go with me to bed, my hinny, my heart,
Go with me to bed, my own darling;
Mind you the words you spake to me,
Down by the cold well, so weary.”

But that the girl wouldn’t do, till her stepmother said: “Do what you promised, girl; girls must keep their promises. Do what you’re bid, or out you go, you and your froggie.”

So the girl took the frog with her to bed, and kept it as far away from her as she could. Well, just as the day was beginning to break what should the frog say but:

“Chop off my head, my hinny, my heart,
Chop off my head, my own darling;
Remember the promise you made to me,
Down by the cold well so weary.”

At first the girl wouldn’t, for she thought of what the frog had done for her at the Well of the World’s End. But when the frog said the words over again, she went and took an axe and chopped off its head, and lo! and behold, there stood before her a handsome young prince, who told her that he had been enchanted by a wicked magician, and he could never be unspelled till some girl would do his bidding for a whole night, and chop off his head at the end of it.

The stepmother was that surprised when she found the young prince instead of the nasty frog, and she wasn’t best pleased, you may be sure, when the prince told her that he was going to marry her stepdaughter because she had unspelled him. So they were married and went away to live in the castle of the king, his father, and all the stepmother had to console her was, that it was all through her that her stepdaughter was married to a prince.

9. THE TRAVELS OF THE LITTLE TOY SOLDIER

Book: Boys and Girls Bookshelf: Folk-Lore, Fables, And Fairy Tales

Author: Carolyn Sherwin Bailey

Origin: American

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29386/29386-h/29386-h.htm#TRAVELS>

He was the largest and the best dressed and the bravest looking of all the toy soldiers in the toy shop. Some of the toy soldiers were made of paper, and these tore easily if they even tried to drill. Some of the toy soldiers were made of tin, and these bent if they had an encounter.

But this toy soldier, who stood head and shoulders above the others, was made of wood. He had once been part of a great pine tree that stood in the forest, and his heart was as brave and true as the heart of the tree.

His trousers were painted green, with yellow stripes; and his jacket was painted red, with gold buttons. He wore a painted blue cap upon the side of his head, with a band that went under his chin, and he carried a wooden gun in one arm. He could stand alone, for his wooden legs were glued to a block of wood, and his eyes were black and shining, and his mouth was painted in a smile.

When the Toy Soldier went from the toy shop to live in Gregory's house the little boy thought that he had never seen such a fine soldier in his life. He made him captain of all the soldier ninepins and guard of the toy train, and he took him to bed with him at night. Then, one day, James, who lived next door and was Gregory's neighbor, came over to play with Gregory.

"What a nice Toy Soldier!" James said.

"Yes, he's mine," Gregory said.

"May I play with him?" James asked.

"No, I said he was my Toy Soldier," Gregory answered.

"Then I'll take him," James said.

"I won't let you," Gregory said.

Then the two little boys began pulling the Toy Soldier to see which could get him away from the other, and the Toy Soldier did not like it at all. He was fond of a good battle, but not of a quarrel. He decided that he would not stay in a house where there was a quarrelsome boy, and so he tumbled out of a window that was close by and fell, down, down, to the street below.

The Toy Soldier had not lain long on the sidewalk when Harold passed by and picked him up.

"I wanted a toy soldier and here is the finest one I ever saw," Harold said; and he slipped the soldier inside his coat and started on, for he was going to school. The Toy Soldier lay close to Harold's watch that was tick, tick, ticking the time away, but Harold loitered, and at last he stopped to play a game of marbles with another little boy whom he met. "I don't care if I am late for school," he said.

"Oho!" thought the Toy Soldier, and as the two little boys played he dropped out from under Harold's coat and into the gutter. When Harold reached school, late, the Toy Soldier was gone.

Joe found the Toy Soldier in the gutter and ran home with him to his mother.

"I have a Toy Soldier!" he said.

"How brave he looks," said Joe's mother.

All the rest of the day the Toy Soldier went about with Joe and listened to what he said and watched what he did.

"I can't go to the grocer's; I'm afraid of his dog."

“I can’t put in that nail. I am afraid that the hammer will slip and hit my finger.”
This was what the Toy Soldier heard.

Then it was Joe’s bedtime, and the Toy Soldier went upstairs with him to bed, but Joe cried all the way.

“I’m afraid of the dark!” he said.

When Joe was asleep the Toy Soldier slipped out of his hand and fell into a scrap basket. He knew very well that he couldn’t stay with a child who was a coward.

No one saw the Toy Soldier when the basket was emptied in the morning. He went with the scraps into a huge bag, and then into a wagon, and then into a factory where men sorted the cloth to make it into paper. One of these men found the Toy Soldier and took him home to his little boy, who was lame and had to stay alone all day.

“Has it been a good day, John?” his father asked.

“Oh, yes!” laughed John as he hugged the Toy Soldier.

“You have my supper ready just in time,” his father said, watching the soup bubbling in a shining pot on the stove.

“And I cleaned a little and set the table,” John said.

“Has your back hurt you very much to-day?” asked his father.

“A little, but I don’t mind that,” John said. “See how fine the Toy Soldier looks standing on the table!”

“Oho!” thought the Toy Soldier, “now I have found a place where I can stay. Here is another soldier, cheerful and willing to work, and brave!”

10. THE IDIOT

Book: The Golden Maiden and Other Folk Tales and Fairy Stories Told in Armenia

Author: A. G. Seklemian

Origin: Armenian

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/46944/46944-h/46944-h.htm#t13>

Once upon a time there was a man who inherited much wealth from his father, but who led such an irregular and unwise life that in a short time he had spent everything, even to the last penny. Then he sat down, folded his arms upon his breast, and sighed as he thought of his unfortunate condition. His father's friends gathered about him to console him. One of them, an old and learned man, said to him:

"Son, you have offended your Luck, who has run away from you. You would better go after your Luck; perchance you can find it, and being reconciled with it become, as before, a fortunate man."

The man at once set out and traveled mountains and plains in search of his Luck. One night he saw in his dreams that his Luck was a human being like himself, who had fallen upon his face on the top of a high mountain, sighing and beating his breast all the time, just as he himself had done. On the morrow he got up and continued his journey toward that mountain.

On his way he met the Fairy Lion, sitting upon a mound of earth beside the road.

"Don't be afraid, human being, proceed," said the Lion. And when the man approached, he said: "Where are you going?"

"I am going to find my Luck," said the man.

"Good!" said the Lion, "your Luck is very wise; ask him what is the remedy for my disease. I have been an invalid for seven years. If you find the right remedy I will reward you."

"Very well," said the man, and went on his way. Soon he came to a very beautiful orchard full of all kinds of fruits. He picked some of the fruits and began to eat, but lo! they were all bitter. Thereupon the gardener came and asked where he was going.

"I am going to find my Luck," said the man.

"Please ask your Luck," said the gardener, "what is the remedy for my orchard. I grafted my plants, but it was of no use. I cut down the old trees and planted new ones, but neither did this avail. If your Luck can devise some remedy, I will reward you bountifully." The man promised to ask his Luck, and again went on his way.

Soon he came to a magnificent palace situated in a garden as beautiful as paradise, whose sole inhabitant was a beautiful maiden.

"What man are you?" asked the maiden, seeing the man, "and why have you come?"

The man told her his story.

"You see," said the maiden, "I have this splendid palace and measureless wealth and property; but I have a grief which grows in my heart day and night, and I spend my life sighing all the time. Please ask your Luck about me, and if you bring me a device to make me happy, I promise to reward you bountifully."

The man promised, and went on his way until he came to the mountain top where his Luck had fallen on his face. He described to him his own unfortunate condition, and poured out all his grievances. Luck listened to him attentively, and said:

"Everything may yet be well, seeing that you have come so far in search of me."

Then the man asked of Luck the things he had promised to ask, and received answers.

"Now will you not come with me?" asked the man.

“Go first,” said Luck, “I will come after you.”

The man returned. On his way back, he first met the maiden, and said:

“Your grief will disappear, and you shall be happy as soon as you marry a young man of your choice.”

Then he met the gardener, and said:

“There is gold-ore in the spring from which flows the water with which you irrigate your orchard. The plants suck up particles of gold, which causes the fruits to be bitter. You must either irrigate your orchard by the water of some other spring, or take away the ore from the present fountain,—then your fruits will be sweet.”

Then he came to the Fairy Lion and told him how he had seen his Luck, and what messages he had brought to the maiden and to the gardener.

“And what present did the maiden give you?” asked the Lion.

“She said,” answered the man, “that she had fallen in love with me and proposed to marry me, but I refused.”

“And what reward did the gardener give you?” asked the Lion.

“He took the gold ore out of the spring,” answered the man, “and refining it, prepared a horse-load of pure gold. He gave all to me, but I refused, saying that I did not care to trouble myself and carry such a heavy thing so far.”

“And what remedy did your Luck devise for my ailment?” asked the Lion.

“He said,” answered the man, “the moment you devour an Idiot’s head you shall be healed.”

The Lion looked the man in the face, and said:

“By Heaven! I cannot find a greater idiot than you on the face of the earth.” And striking at his head with his paw, he made one mouthful of it and the Idiot was dead.

Remember the moral of this tale,—Time never befriends a fool.

11. THE WISE PARROT AND THE FOOLISH PARROT

Book: The Giant Crab and Other Tales from Old India

Author: W.H.D. Rouse

Origin: Indian

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/36039/36039-h/36039-h.htm#ch5>

Once upon a time there was a man who had two pet parrots that could talk very nicely; indeed they had more sense than most people have, and when their master was alone he used to spend the evening chattering with them. They cracked jokes like any Christian, and told the funniest tales.

But this man had a thievish maid-servant. He had to lock everything up, and even as it was, never turned his back but she was filching and pilfering.

One day the man had to go away on a journey. Before he went he took out the two parrots, and perched one on each fist, and says he to them, "Now, Beaky and Tweaky, I want you to watch the maid while I am gone; and if she steals anything, you are to tell me when I come home again."

They blinked at him, their eyelids coming up over their eyes from underneath, as you must have noticed in parrots; looking very solemn as they did so. Then Beaky said,

"If she do it, she shall rue it!"

But Tweaky said nothing at all; only winked again more solemnly than ever.

"Good Beaky!" said the man, "naughty Tweaky!"

Then he went away.

As soon as he was out of sight, the maid began her games. She picked the locks of his cupboards and ate the sugar, she ate the biscuits, she drank the wine. Beaky hopped into the room, stood on one leg, and shrieked,

"Naughty maid!

Aren't you afraid?

Master shall know,

And you shall go!"

The maid jumped as if she had been shot, and looked round. She thought somebody had caught her unawares; but when she saw it was Beaky she put on a sweet smile, and held out a lump of sugar, saying in a coaxing voice, "Pretty Poll! pretty Beaky! I won't do it again! Come, then, and have a nice lump of sugar."

This temptation was too strong for poor Beaky. He wanted very much to do his duty, but he wanted the lump of sugar more. So he put his head on one side and, looking very wise, sidled up to the maid. This was very wrong of Beaky, because he knew the sugar was stolen; and in another minute he was sorry; for as soon as he came within reach and pecked at the sugar, the maid caught him by the neck with the other hand. Then her smile changed, and she sneered,

"So Beaky is going to tell, is he? Tell-tale twit! I'll teach Beaky to tell tales!" As she said each word, she plucked out a feather from poor Beaky's head. Beaky shrieked and Beaky struggled, but all in vain; she did not let him go till he was bald as a bullet.

Tweaky saw all this, but said nothing, only winked and blinked, and looked more solemn than ever. The maid looked at him, but thought she, "That bird is too stupid to tell, and he isn't worth the trouble of plucking." So she left him alone.

By-and-by the master came in. The maid went up to him in a great bustle, and said she had found Beaky stealing sugar, and she had plucked him as a punishment.

When the evening came, the master sat in his room with Beaky and Tweaky. Poor Beaky felt ashamed of himself, and had nothing to say; he sat on his perch the

picture of misery, with his tail drooping, and his ridiculous bald head. Tweaky said nothing at all.

Now it happened that the master had a bald head too, and when he took off his skull-cap, which he generally wore to keep his head warm, Tweaky noticed it.

He laughed loud and shrieked out, "Oh-oh-oh! Where's your feathers, Tell-tale twit? Where's your feathers, Tell-tale twit?" Tweaky was only a parrot, you see, and was not always quite correct in his grammar, as you are.

"What do you mean?" asked the master.

But for a long time Tweaky would say nothing but the same words over and over again, "Where's your feathers, Tell-tale twit?" However, by-and-by they heard the maid going to bed, tramp, tramp, tramp. Then Tweaky grew a little braver; and next time the master asked him what he meant, he replied:

"Every parrot has two eyes,
Both the foolish and the wise;
But the wise can shut them tight
When 'tis best to have no sight.
Wisdom has the best of it:
Where's your feathers, Tell-tale twit?"

Then the master understood what had happened, for he was a very clever man; and without any delay he ran upstairs two steps at a time, and woke the maid, and made her dress herself, and turned her out of the house then and there. I wonder why he did not do it before, but that is no business of mine.

After that, poor Beaky never had the heart to talk again; but Tweaky, whenever he saw a bald-headed man, or a woman with a high forehead, shrieked out at the top of his voice—

"Ha! ha! ha! Where's your feathers, Tell-tale twit?"

12. THE WHITE DUCK

Book: The Yellow Fairy Book

Editor: Andrew Lang

Origin: Russian

Link: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/640/640-h/640-h.htm#link2H_4_0014

Once upon a time a great and powerful King married a lovely Princess. No couple were ever so happy; but before their honeymoon was over they were forced to part, for the King had to go on a warlike expedition to a far country, and leave his young wife alone at home. Bitter were the tears she shed, while her husband sought in vain to soothe her with words of comfort and counsel, warning her, above all things, never to leave the castle, to hold no intercourse with strangers, to beware of evil counsellors, and especially to be on her guard against strange women. And the Queen promised faithfully to obey her royal lord and master in these four matters.

So when the King set out on his expedition she shut herself up with her ladies in her own apartments, and spent her time in spinning and weaving, and in thinking of her royal husband. Often she was very sad and lonely, and it happened that one day while she was seated at the window, letting salt tears drop on her work, an old woman, a kind, homely-looking old body, stepped up to the window, and, leaning upon her crutch, addressed the Queen in friendly, flattering tones, saying:

'Why are you sad and cast down, fair Queen? You should not mope all day in your rooms, but should come out into the green garden, and hear the birds sing with joy among the trees, and see the butterflies fluttering above the flowers, and hear the bees and insects hum, and watch the sunbeams chase the dew-drops through the rose-leaves and in the lily-cups. All the brightness outside would help to drive away your cares, O Queen.'

For long the Queen resisted her coaxing words, remembering the promise she had given the King, her husband; but at last she thought to herself: After all, what harm would it do if I were to go into the garden for a short time and enjoy myself among the trees and flowers, and the singing birds and fluttering butterflies and humming insects, and look at the dew-drops hiding from the sunbeams in the hearts of the roses and lilies, and wander about in the sunshine, instead of remaining all day in this room? For she had no idea that the kind-looking old woman leaning on her crutch was in reality a wicked witch, who envied the Queen her good fortune, and was determined to ruin her. And so, in all ignorance, the Queen followed her out into the garden and listened to her smooth, flattering words. Now, in the middle of the garden there was a pond of water, clear as crystal, and the old woman said to the Queen: 'The day is so warm, and the sun's rays so scorching, that the water in the pond looks very cool and inviting. Would you not like to bathe in it, fair Queen?'

'No, I think not,' answered the Queen; but the next moment she regretted her words, and thought to herself: Why shouldn't I bathe in that cool, fresh water? No harm could come of it. And, so saying, she slipped off her robes and stepped into the water. But scarcely had her tender feet touched the cool ripples when she felt a great shove on her shoulders, and the wicked witch had pushed her into the deep water, exclaiming: 'Swim henceforth, White Duck!'

And the witch herself assumed the form of the Queen, and decked herself out in the royal robes, and sat among the Court ladies, awaiting the King's return. And suddenly the tramp of horses' hoofs was heard, and the barking of dogs, and the witch hastened forward to meet the royal carriages, and, throwing her arms round the King's

neck, kissed him. And in his great joy the King did not know that the woman he held in his arms was not his own dear wife, but a wicked witch.

In the meantime, outside the palace walls, the poor White Duck swam up and down the pond; and near it laid three eggs, out of which there came one morning two little fluffy ducklings and a little ugly drake. And the White Duck brought the little creatures up, and they paddled after her in the pond, and caught gold-fish, and hopped upon the bank and waddled about, ruffling their feathers and saying 'Quack, quack' as they strutted about on the green banks of the pond. But their mother used to warn them not to stray too far, telling them that a wicked witch lived in the castle beyond the garden, adding, 'She has ruined me, and she will do her best to ruin you.' But the young ones did not listen to their mother, and, playing about the garden one day, they strayed close up to the castle windows. The witch at once recognised them by their smell, and ground her teeth with anger; but she hid her feelings, and, pretending to be very kind she called them to her and joked with them, and led them into a beautiful room, where she gave them food to eat, and showed them a soft cushion on which they might sleep. Then she left them and went down into the palace kitchens, where she told the servants to sharpen the knives, and to make a great fire ready, and hang a large kettleful of water over it.

In the meantime the two little ducklings had fallen asleep, and the little drake lay between them, covered up by their wings, to be kept warm under their feathers. But the little drake could not go to sleep, and as he lay there wide awake in the night he heard the witch come to the door and say:

'Little ones, are you asleep?'

And the little drake answered for the other two:

'We cannot sleep, we wake and weep,
Sharp is the knife, to take our life;
The fire is hot, now boils the pot,
And so we wake, and lie and quake.'

'They are not asleep yet,' muttered the witch to herself; and she walked up and down in the passage, and then came back to the door, and said:

'Little ones, are you asleep?'

And again the little drake answered for his sisters:

'We cannot sleep, we wake and weep,
Sharp is the knife, to take our life;
The fire is hot, now boils the pot,
And so we wake, and lie and quake.'

'Just the same answer,' muttered the witch; 'I think I'll go in and see.' So she opened the door gently, and seeing the two little ducklings sound asleep, she there and then killed them.

The next morning the White Duck wandered round the pond in a distracted manner, looking for her little ones; she called and she searched, but could find no trace of them. And in her heart she had a foreboding that evil had befallen them, and she fluttered up out of the water and flew to the palace. And there, laid out on the marble floor of the court, dead and stone cold, were her three children. The White Duck threw herself upon them, and, covering up their little bodies with her wings, she cried:

'Quack, quack—my little loves!
Quack, quack—my turtle-doves!

I brought you up with grief and pain,
And now before my eyes you're slain.
I gave you always of the best;
I kept you warm in my soft nest.

I loved and watched you day and night—

You were my joy, my one delight.'

The King heard the sad complaint of the White Duck, and called to the witch:
'Wife, what a wonder is this? Listen to that White Duck.'

But the witch answered, 'My dear husband, what do you mean? There is nothing wonderful in a duck's quacking. Here, servants! Chase that duck out of the courtyard.' But though the servants chased and chevied, they could not get rid of the duck; for she circled round and round, and always came back to the spot where her children lay, crying:

'Quack, quack—my little loves!

Quack, quack—my turtle-doves!

The wicked witch your lives did take—

The wicked witch, the cunning snake.

First she stole my King away,

Then my children did she slay.

Changed me, from a happy wife,

To a duck for all my life.

Would I were the Queen again;

Would that you had never been slain.'

And as the King heard her words he began to suspect that he had been deceived, and he called out to the servants, 'Catch that duck, and bring it here.' But, though they ran to and fro, the duck always fled past them, and would not let herself be caught. So the King himself stepped down amongst them, and instantly the duck fluttered down into his hands. And as he stroked her wings she was changed into a beautiful woman, and he recognised his dear wife. And she told him that a bottle would be found in her nest in the garden, containing some drops from the spring of healing. And it was brought to her; and the ducklings and little drake were sprinkled with the water, and from the little dead bodies three lovely children arose. And the King and Queen were overjoyed when they saw their children, and they all lived happily together in the beautiful palace. But the wicked witch was taken by the King's command, and she came to no good end.

13. THE MONKEY AND THE JELLY-FISH

Book: The Violet Fairy Book

Editor: Andrew Lang

Origin: Japanese

Link: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/641/641-h/641-h.htm#link2H_4_0026

Children must often have wondered why jelly-fishes have no shells, like so many of the creatures that are washed up every day on the beach. In old times this was not so; the jelly-fish had as hard a shell as any of them, but he lost it through his own fault, as may be seen in this story.

The sea-queen Otohime, whom you read of in the story of Uraschimatoro, grew suddenly very ill. The swiftest messengers were sent hurrying to fetch the best doctors from every country under the sea, but it was all of no use; the queen grew rapidly worse instead of better. Everyone had almost given up hope, when one day a doctor arrived who was cleverer than the rest, and said that the only thing that would cure her was the liver of an ape. Now apes do not dwell under the sea, so a council of the wisest heads in the nation was called to consider the question how a liver could be obtained. At length it was decided that the turtle, whose prudence was well known, should swim to land and contrive to catch a living ape and bring him safely to the ocean kingdom.

It was easy enough for the council to entrust this mission to the turtle, but not at all so easy for him to fulfil it. However he swam to a part of the coast that was covered with tall trees, where he thought the apes were likely to be; for he was old, and had seen many things. It was some time before he caught sight of any monkeys, and he often grew tired with watching for them, so that one hot day he fell fast asleep, in spite of all his efforts to keep awake. By-and-by some apes, who had been peeping at him from the tops of the trees, where they had been carefully hidden from the turtle's eyes, stole noiselessly down, and stood round staring at him, for they had never seen a turtle before, and did not know what to make of it. At last one young monkey, bolder than the rest, stooped down and stroked the shining shell that the strange new creature wore on its back. The movement, gentle though it was, woke the turtle. With one sweep he seized the monkey's hand in his mouth, and held it tight, in spite of every effort to pull it away. The other apes, seeing that the turtle was not to be trifled with, ran off, leaving their young brother to his fate.

Then the turtle said to the monkey, 'If you will be quiet, and do what I tell you, I won't hurt you. But you must get on my back and come with me.'

The monkey, seeing there was no help for it, did as he was bid; indeed he could not have resisted, as his hand was still in the turtle's mouth.

Delighted at having secured his prize, the turtle hastened back to the shore and plunged quickly into the water. He swam faster than he had ever done before, and soon reached the royal palace. Shouts of joy broke forth from the attendants when he was seen approaching, and some of them ran to tell the queen that the monkey was there, and that before long she would be as well as ever she was. In fact, so great was their relief that they gave the monkey such a kind welcome, and were so anxious to make him happy and comfortable, that he soon forgot all the fears that had beset him as to his fate, and was generally quite at his ease, though every now and then a fit of home-sickness would come over him, and he would hide himself in some dark corner till it had passed away.

It was during one of these attacks of sadness that a jelly-fish happened to swim by. At that time jelly-fishes had shells. At the sight of the gay and lively monkey crouching under a tall rock, with his eyes closed and his head bent, the jelly-fish was

filled with pity, and stopped, saying, 'Ah, poor fellow, no wonder you weep; a few days more, and they will come and kill you and give your liver to the queen to eat.'

The monkey shrank back horrified at these words and asked the jelly-fish what crime he had committed that deserved death.

'Oh, none at all,' replied the jelly-fish, 'but your liver is the only thing that will cure our queen, and how can we get at it without killing you? You had better submit to your fate, and make no noise about it, for though I pity you from my heart there is no way of helping you.' Then he went away, leaving the ape cold with horror.

At first he felt as if his liver was already being taken from his body, but soon he began to wonder if there was no means of escaping this terrible death, and at length he invented a plan which he thought would do. For a few days he pretended to be gay and happy as before, but when the sun went in, and rain fell in torrents, he wept and howled from dawn to dark, till the turtle, who was his head keeper, heard him, and came to see what was the matter. Then the monkey told him that before he left home he had hung his liver out on a bush to dry, and if it was always going to rain like this it would become quite useless. And the rogue made such a fuss and moaning that he would have melted a heart of stone, and nothing would content him but that somebody should carry him back to land and let him fetch his liver again.

The queen's councillors were not the wisest of people, and they decided between them that the turtle should take the monkey back to his native land and allow him to get his liver off the bush, but desired the turtle not to lose sight of his charge for a single moment. The monkey knew this, but trusted to his power of beguiling the turtle when the time came, and mounted on his back with feelings of joy, which he was, however, careful to conceal. They set out, and in a few hours were wandering about the forest where the ape had first been caught, and when the monkey saw his family peering out from the tree tops, he swung himself up by the nearest branch, just managing to save his hind leg from being seized by the turtle. He told them all the dreadful things that had happened to him, and gave a war cry which brought the rest of the tribe from the neighbouring hills. At a word from him they rushed in a body to the unfortunate turtle, threw him on his back, and tore off the shield that covered his body. Then with mocking words they hunted him to the shore, and into the sea, which he was only too thankful to reach alive. Faint and exhausted he entered the queen's palace for the cold of the water struck upon his naked body, and made him feel ill and miserable. But wretched though he was, he had to appear before the queen's advisers and tell them all that had befallen him, and how he had suffered the monkey to escape. But, as sometimes happens, the turtle was allowed to go scot-free, and had his shell given back to him, and all the punishment fell on the poor jelly-fish, who was condemned by the queen to go shieldless for ever after.

14. THE BATTLE OF THE APE AND THE CRAB

Book: Tales of Old Japan

Author: Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford

Origin: Japanese

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13015/13015-h/13015-h.htm#page149>

If a man thinks only of his own profit, and tries to benefit himself at the expense of others, he will incur the hatred of Heaven. Men should lay up in their hearts the story of the Battle of the Ape and Crab, and teach it, as a profitable lesson, to their children.

Once upon a time there was a crab who lived in a marsh in a certain part of the country. It fell out one day that, the crab having picked up a rice cake, an ape, who had got a nasty hard persimmon-seed, came up, and begged the crab to make an exchange with him. The crab, who was a simple-minded creature, agreed to this proposal; and they each went their way, the ape chuckling to himself at the good bargain which he had made.

When the crab got home, he planted the persimmon-seed in his garden, and, as time slipped by, it sprouted, and by degrees grew to be a big tree. The crab watched the growth of his tree with great delight; but when the fruit ripened, and he was going to pluck it, the ape came in, and offered to gather it for him. The crab consenting, the ape climbed up into the tree, and began eating all the ripe fruit himself, while he only threw down the sour persimmons to the crab, inviting him, at the same time, to eat heartily. The crab, however, was not pleased at this arrangement, and thought that it was his turn to play a trick upon the ape; so he called out to him to come down head foremost. The ape did as he was bid; and as he crawled down, head foremost, the ripe fruit all came tumbling out of his pockets, and the crab, having picked up the persimmons, ran off and hid himself in a hole. The ape, seeing this, lay in ambush, and as soon as the crab crept out of his hiding-place gave him a sound drubbing, and went home. Just at this time a friendly egg and a bee, who were the apprentices of a certain rice-mortar, happened to pass that way, and, seeing the crab's piteous condition, tied up his wounds, and, having escorted him home, began to lay plans to be revenged upon the cruel ape.

Having agreed upon a scheme, they all went to the ape's house, in his absence; and each one having undertaken to play a certain part, they waited in secret for their enemy to come home. The ape, little dreaming of the mischief that was brewing, returned home, and, having a fancy to drink a cup of tea, began lighting the fire in the hearth, when, all of a sudden, the egg, which was hidden in the ashes, burst with the heat, and bespattered the frightened ape's face, so that he fled, howling with pain, and crying, "Oh! what an unlucky beast I am!" Maddened with the heat of the burst egg, he tried to go to the back of the house, when the bee darted out of a cupboard, and a piece of seaweed, who had joined the party, coming up at the same time, the ape was surrounded by enemies. In despair, he seized the clothes-rack, and fought valiantly for awhile; but he was no match for so many, and was obliged to run away, with the others in hot pursuit after him. Just as he was making his escape by a back door, however, the piece of seaweed tripped him up, and the rice-mortar, closing with him from behind, made an end of him.

So the crab, having punished his enemy, went home in triumph, and lived ever after on terms of brotherly love with the seaweed and the mortar. Was there ever such a fine piece of fun!

15. THE BABA YAGA

Book: Russian Fairy Tales: A Choice Collection of Muscovite Folk-lore

Author: W.R.S. Ralston

Origin: Russian

Link: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22373/22373-h/22373-h.htm#Page_148

Note: The correct Russian pronunciation is “BAH-buh yuh-GAH.”

Once upon a time there was an old couple. The husband lost his wife and married again. But he had a daughter by the first marriage, a young girl, and she found no favor in the eyes of her evil stepmother, who considered how she could get her killed outright. One day the father went away somewhere or other, so the stepmother said to the girl, “Go to your aunt, my sister, and ask her for a needle and thread to make you a shift.”

Now that aunt was a Baba Yaga. Well, the girl was no fool, so she went to a real aunt of hers first, and says she: “Good morning, auntie!”

“Good morning, my dear! what have you come for?”

“Mother has sent me to her sister, to ask for a needle and thread to make me a shift.”

Then her aunt instructed her what to do. “There is a birch-tree there, niece, which would hit you in the eye—you must tie a ribbon round it; there are doors which would creak and bang—you must pour oil on their hinges; there are dogs which would tear you in pieces—you must throw them these rolls; there is a cat which would scratch your eyes out—you must give it a piece of bacon.”

So the girl went away, and walked and walked, till she came to the place. There stood a hut, and in it sat weaving the Baba Yaga, the Bony-shanks.

“Good morning, auntie,” says the girl. “Good morning my dear,” replies the Baba Yaga.

“Mother has sent me to ask you for a needle and thread to make me a shift.”

“Very well; sit down and weave a little in the meantime.”

So the girl sat down behind the loom, and the Baba Yaga went outside, and said to her servant-maid:

“Go and heat the bath, and get my niece washed; and mind you look sharp after her. I want to breakfast off her.”

Well, the girl sat there in such a fright that she was as much dead as alive. Presently she spoke imploringly to the servant-maid, saying:

“Kinswoman dear, do please wet the firewood instead of making it burn; and fetch the water for the bath in a sieve.” And she made her a present of a handkerchief.

The Baba Yaga waited awhile; then she came to the window and asked:

“Are you weaving, niece? are you weaving, my dear?”

“Oh yes, dear aunt, I’m weaving.” So the Baba Yaga went away again, and the girl gave the Cat a piece of bacon, and asked:

“Is there no way of escaping from here?”

“Here’s a comb for you and a towel,” said the Cat; “take them, and be off. The Baba Yaga will pursue you, but you must lay your ear on the ground, and when you hear that she is close at hand, first of all throw down the towel. It will become a wide, wide river. And if the Baba Yaga gets across the river, and tries to catch you, then you must lay your ear on the ground again, and when you hear that she is close at hand, throw down the comb. It will become a dense, dense forest; through that she won’t be able to force her way anyhow.”

The girl took the towel and the comb and fled. The dogs would have rent her, but she threw them the rolls, and they let her go by; the doors would have begun to bang, but she poured oil on their hinges, and they let her pass through; the birch-tree would have poked her eyes out, but she tied the ribbon around it, and it let her pass on. And the Cat sat down to the loom, and worked away; muddled everything about, if it didn't do much weaving. Up came the Baba Yaga to the window, and asked:

"Are you weaving, niece? are you weaving, my dear?"

"I'm weaving, dear aunt, I'm weaving," gruffly replied the Cat.

The Baba Yaga rushed into the hut, saw that the girl was gone, and berated it for not having scratched the girl's eyes out. "Long as I've served you," said the Cat, "you've never given me so much as a bone; but she gave me bacon." Then the Baba Yaga pounced upon the dogs, on the doors, on the birch-tree, and on the servant-maid, and berated them all. Then the dogs said to her, "Long as we've served you, you've never so much as pitched us a burnt crust; but she gave us rolls to eat." And the doors said, "Long as we've served you, you've never poured even a drop of water on our hinges; but she poured oil on us." The birch-tree said, "Long as I've served you, you've never tied a single thread round me; but she fastened a ribbon around me." And the servant-maid said, "Long as I've served you, you've never given me so much as a rag; but she gave me a handkerchief."

The Baba Yaga, bony of limb, quickly jumped into her mortar, sent it flying along with the pestle, sweeping away the while all traces of its flight with a broom, and set off in pursuit of the girl. Then the girl put her ear to the ground, and when she heard that the Baba Yaga was chasing her, and was now close at hand, she flung down the towel. And it became a wide, such a wide river! Up came the Baba Yaga to the river, and gnashed her teeth with spite; then she went home for her oxen, and drove them to the river. The oxen drank up every drop of the river, and then the Baba Yaga began the pursuit anew. But the girl put her ear to the ground again, and when she heard that the Baba Yaga was near, she flung down the comb, and instantly a forest sprang up, such an awfully thick one! The Baba Yaga began gnawing away at it, but however hard she worked, she couldn't gnaw her way through it, so she had to go back again.

But by this time the girl's father had returned home, and he asked:

"Where's my daughter?"

"She's gone to her aunt's," replied her stepmother.

Soon afterwards the girl herself came running home.

"Where have you been?" asked her father.

"Ah, father!" she said, "mother sent me to aunt's to ask for a needle and thread to make me a shift. But aunt's a Baba Yaga, and she wanted to eat me!"

"And how did you get away, daughter?"

"Why like this," said the girl, and explained the whole matter. As soon as her father had heard all about it, he became wroth with his wife, and she fled. But he and his daughter lived on and flourished, and everything went well with them.