

1812

**GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES
THE THREE LANGUAGES**

Jacob Ludwig Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm

Grimm, Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) - German philologists whose collection "Kinder- und Hausmarchen," known in English as "Grimm's Fairy Tales," is a timeless literary masterpiece. The brothers transcribed these tales directly from folk and fairy stories told to them by common villagers. The Three Languages (1812) - A count orders that his stupid son, who knows only what the dogs bark, what the birds sing, and what the frogs croak, be killed. The boy lives, marries a princess, and goes on to become Pope.

THREE LANGUAGES

IN SWITZERLAND there lived an old count, who had an only son, a boy who was so stupid he never learned anything. One day the father said, "My son, listen to what I have to say; do all I may, I can knock nothing into your head.

Now you shall go away, and an eminent master shall try his hand with you." So the youth was sent to a foreign city, and remained a whole year with his master, and at the end of that time he returned home. His father asked him at once what he had learned, and he replied, "My father, I have learned what the dogs bark." "Heavens!" exclaimed the father, "is this all you have learned? I will send you to some other city, to another master." So the youth went away a second time, and after he had remained a year with this master, came home again. His father asked him, as before, what he had learned, and he replied, "I have learned what the birds sing." This answer put the father in a passion, and he exclaimed, "Oh, you prodigal! Has all this precious time passed, and have you learned nothing? Are you not ashamed to come into my presence? Once more, I will send you to a third master; but if you learn nothing this time I will no longer be a father to you." With this third master the boy remained, as before, a twelve-month; and when he came back to his father, he told him that he had learned the language that the frogs croak. At this the father flew into a great rage, and, calling his people together, said, "This youth is no longer my son; I cast him off, and command that you lead him into the forest and take away his life." The servants led

him away into the forest, but they had not the heart to kill him, so they let him go. They cut out, however, the eyes and the tongue of a fawn, and took them for a token to the old count.

The young man wandered along, and after some time came to a castle, where he asked for a night's lodging. The lord of the castle said, "Yes, if you will sleep down below. There is the tower; you may go, but I warn you it is very perilous, for it is full of wild dogs, which bark and howl at every one, and, at certain hours, a man must be thrown to them, whom they devour." Now, on account of these dogs the whole country round was in terror and sorrow, for no one could prevent their ravages; but the youth, being afraid of nothing, said, "Only let me in to these barking hounds, and give me something to throw to them; they will not harm me." Since he himself wished it, they gave him some meat for the wild hounds, and let him into the tower. As soon as he entered, the dogs ran about him quite in a friendly way, wagging their tails, and never once barking. They ate, also, the meat he brought, and did not attempt to do him the least injury. The next morning, to the astonishment of every one, he came forth unharmed, and told the lord of the castle, "The hounds have informed me, in their language, why they thus waste and bring destruction upon the land. They have the guardianship of a large treasure beneath the tower, and till that is raised, they have no rest. In what way and manner this is to be done I have also understood from them." At these words every one began rejoicing, and the lord promised him his daughter in marriage, if he could raise the treasure. This task he happily accomplished, and the wild hounds thereupon disappeared, and the country was freed from that plague. Then the beautiful maiden was married to him, and they lived happily together.

After some time, he one day got into a carriage with his wife and set out on the road to Rome. On their way thither, they passed a swamp, where the frogs sat croaking. The young count listened, and when he heard what they said, he became quite thoughtful and sad, but he did not tell his wife the reason. At last they arrived at Rome, and found the Pope was just dead, and there was a great contention among the cardinals as to who should be his successor. They at length resolved, that he on whom some miraculous sign should be shown should be elected. Just as they had thus resolved, at the same moment the young count stepped into the church, and suddenly two snow-white Doves flew down, one on each of his shoulders, and remained perched there. The clergy recognized in this circumstance the sign they required, and asked him on the spot whether he would be Pope. The young count was undecided, and

knew not whether he were worthy; but the Doves whispered to him that he might take the honor, and so he consented. Then he was anointed and consecrated; and so was fulfilled what the frogs had prophesied- and which had so disturbed him- that he should become Pope.

Upon his election he had to sing a mass, of which he knew nothing; but the two Doves sitting upon his shoulder told him all that was required.

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