

1812

**GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES
TALES OF SNAKES**

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. Tales of Snakes (1812) - Three short tales about snakes. A snake eats with a child and helps her grow strong; a child asks a snake if it has seen her little sister; and a snake brings a treasure to an orphan child.

I

THERE WAS once a little child whose mother gave her every afternoon a small bowl of milk and bread, and the child seated herself in the yard with it.

When she began to eat, however, a snake came creeping out of a crevice in the wall, dipped its little head in the dish, and ate with her. The child had pleasure in this, and when she was sitting there with her little dish and the snake did not come at once, she cried,

"Snake, snake, come swiftly, Hither come, thou tiny thing, Thou shalt have thy crumbs of bread, Thou shalt refresh thyself with milk."

Then the snake came in haste, and enjoyed its food. Moreover it showed gratitude, for it brought the child all kinds of pretty things from its hidden treasures, bright stones, pearls, and gold playthings. The snake, however, only drank the milk, and left the bread-crumbs alone. Then one day the child took its little spoon and struck the snake gently on its head with it, and said, "Eat the bread-crumbs as well, little thing." The mother, who was standing in the kitchen, heard the child talking to some one, and when she saw that she was striking a snake with her spoon, ran out with a log of wood, and killed the good little creature.

From that time forth, a change came over the child. As long as the snake had eaten with her, she had grown tall and strong, but now she lost her pretty rosy cheeks and wasted away. It was not long before the funeral bird began to cry in the night, and the redbreast

to collect little branches and leaves for a funeral garland, and soon afterwards the child lay on her bier.

II

A SNAKE cries "Huhu, huhu." A child says, "Come out." The snake comes out, then the child inquires about her little sister: "Hast thou not seen little Redstockings?" The snake says, "No." "Neither have I." "Then I am like you. Huhu, huhu, huhu."

III

AN ORPHAN child was sitting on the town walls spinning, when she saw a snake coming out of a hole low down in the wall. Swiftly she spread out beside this one of the blue silk handkerchiefs which snakes have such a strong liking for, and which are the only things they will creep on. As soon as the snake saw it, it went back, then returned, bringing with it a small golden crown, laid it on the handkerchief, and then went away again. The girl took up the crown; it glittered and was of delicate golden filigree work. It was not long before the snake came back for the second time, but when it no longer saw the crown, it crept up to the wall and in its grief smote its little head against it as long as it had strength to do so, until at last it lay there dead. If the girl had but left the crown where it was, the snake would certainly have brought still more of its treasures out of the hole.

THE END