

1812

**GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES
TOM THUMB'S TRAVELS**

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. Tom Thumb's Travels (1812) - Tom Thumb goes out into the world on a cloud of steam from his chimney. In his travels he has many adventures: he helps a gang of robbers, works at an inn, and is eaten by a cow, among other things.

TOM THUMB'S TRAVELS

THERE WAS once a tailor who had a son no higher than a thumb, so he was called Tom Thumb. Notwithstanding his small size, he had plenty of spirit, and one day he said to his father, "Father, go out into the world I must and will." "Very well, my son," said the old man, and taking a long darning needle, he put a knob of sealing-wax on the end, saying, "Here is a sword to take with you on your journey." Now the little tailor wanted to have one more meal first, and so he trotted into the kitchen to see what sort of farewell feast his mother had cooked for him. It was all ready, and the dish was standing on the hearth. Then said he, "Mother, what is the fare today?" "You can see for yourself," said the mother. Then Tom Thumb ran to the hearth and peeped into the dish, but as he stretched his neck too far over it, the steam caught him and carried him up the chimney. For a time he floated about with the steam in the air, but at last he sank down to the ground. Then the little tailor found himself out in the wide world, and he wandered about, and finally engaged himself to a master tailor, but the food was not good enough for him.

"Mistress," said Tom Thumb, "if you do not give us better victuals, I shall go out early in the morning and write with a piece of chalk on the house-door, 'Plenty of potatoes to eat, and but little meat; so good-bye, Mr. Potato.'" "

"What are you after, grasshopper?" said the mistress, and growing angry she seized a piece of rag to beat him off; but he crept

underneath her thimble, and then peeped at her, and put his tongue out at her. She took up the thimble, and would have seized him, but he hopped among the rags, and as the mistress turned them over to find him, he stepped into a crack in the table. "He-hee! Mistress!" cried he, sticking out his head, and when she was just going to grasp him, he jumped into the table-drawer. But in the end she caught him, and drove him out of the house.

So he wandered on until he came to a great wood; and there he met a gang of robbers that were going to rob the King's treasury. When they saw the little tailor, they thought to themselves, "Such a little fellow might easily creep through a keyhole, and serve instead of a pick-lock." "Holloa!" cried one, "you giant Goliath, will you come with us to the treasure-chamber? You can slip in, and then throw us out the money." Tom Thumb considered a little, but at last he consented and went with them to the treasure-chamber. Then he looked all over the door above and below, but there was no crack to be seen; at last he found one broad enough to let him pass, and he was getting through, when one of the sentinels that stood before the door saw him, and said to the other, "See what an ugly spider is crawling there! I will put an end to him." "Let the poor creature alone," said the other, "it has done you no harm."

So Tom Thumb got safely through the crack into the treasure-chamber, and he opened the window beneath which the thieves were standing, and he threw them out one dollar after another. Just as he had well settled to the work, he heard the King coming to take a look at his treasure, and so Tom Thumb had to creep away.

The King presently remarked that many good dollars were wanting, but could not imagine how they could have been stolen, as the locks and bolts were in good order, and everything seemed secure. And he went away, saying to the two sentinels, "Keep good guard; there is some one after the money." When Tom Thumb had set to work anew, they heard the chink, chink of the money, and hastily rushed in to catch the thief. But the little tailor, as he heard them coming, was too quick for them, and, hiding in a corner, he covered himself up with a dollar, so that nothing of him was to be seen, and then he mocked the sentinels, crying, "Here I am!" They ran about, and when they came near him, he was soon in another corner under a dollar, crying, "Here I am!" Then the sentinels ran towards him, and in a moment he was in a third corner, crying, "Here I am!" In this way he made fools of them, and dodged them so long about the treasurechamber, that they got tired and went away. Then he set to work, and threw the dollars out of the window, one after the other, till they were all gone; and when it

came to the last, as he flung it with all his might, he jumped nimbly on it, and flew with it out of the window.

The robbers gave him great praise, saying, "You are a most valiant hero; will you be our captain?"

But Tom Thumb thanked them, and said he would like to see the world first.

Then they divided the spoil; but the little tailor's share was only one farthing, which was all he was able to carry.

Then binding his sword to his side, he bid the robbers good day, and started on his way. He applied to several master tailors, but they would not have anything to do with him; and at last he hired himself as indoor servant at an inn. The maidservants took a great dislike to him, for he used to see everything they did without being seen by them, and he told the master and mistress about what they took from the plates, and what they carried away out of the cellar. And they said, "Wait a little, we will pay you out," and took counsel together to play him some mischievous trick.

Once when one of the maids was mowing the grass in the garden she saw Tom Thumb jumping about and creeping among the cabbages, and she mowed him with the grass, tied all together in a bundle, and threw it to the cows. Among the cows was a big black one, who swallowed him down, without doing him any harm. But he did not like his lodging, it was so dark, and there was no candle to be had. When the cow was being milked, he cried out, "Strip, strap, strull, Will the pail soon be full?" But he was not understood because of the noise of the milk.

Presently the landlord came into the stable and said, "Tomorrow this cow is to be slaughtered." At that Tom Thumb felt very terrified; and with his shrillest voice he cried, "Let me out first; I am sitting inside here!" The master heard him quite plainly, but could not tell where the voice came from. "Where are you?" asked he. "Inside the black one," answered Tom Thumb, but the master, not understanding the meaning of it all, went away.

The next morning the cow was slaughtered. Happily, in all the cutting and slashing he escaped all harm, and he slipped among the sausage-meat. When the butcher came near to set to work, he cried with all his might, "Don't cut so deep, don't cut so deep, I am underneath!" But for the sound of the butcher's knife his voice was not heard.

Now, poor Tom Thumb was in great straits, and he had to jump nimbly out of the way of the knife, and finally he came through

with a whole skin. But he could not get quite away, and he had to let himself remain with the lumps of fat to be put in a black pudding. His quarters were rather narrow, and he had to be hung up in the chimney in the smoke, and to remain there a very long while. At last, when winter came, he was taken down, for the black pudding was to be set before a guest. And when the landlady cut the black pudding in slices, he had to take great care not to lift up his head too much, or it might be shaved off at the neck. At last he saw his opportunity, took courage, and jumped out.

But as things had gone so badly with him in that house, Tom Thumb did not mean to stay there, but betook himself again to his wanderings. His freedom, however, did not last long. In the open fields there came a fox who snapped him up without thinking.

“Oh, Mr. Fox,” cried Tom Thumb, “here I am sticking in your throat; let me out again.” “Very well,” answered the fox. “It is true you are no better than nothing; promise me the hens in your father’s yard, then I will let you go.” “With all my heart,” answered Tom Thumb, “you shall have them all, I promise you.” Then the fox let him go, and he ran home. When the father saw his dear little son again, he gave the fox willingly all the hens that he had.

“And look, besides, what a fine piece of money I’ve got for you!” said Tom Thumb, and handed over the farthing which he had earned in his wanderings.

But how, you ask, could they let the fox devour all the poor chicks? Why, you silly child, you know that your father would rather have you than the hens in his yard!

THE END