

1812

GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES

THE TABLE, THE ASS, AND THE STICK

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 Table, the Ass, and the Stick (1812) - A tailor believes his three sons are liars and drives them out of his house. They later return, one with a food-providing table, one a gold-providing ass, and the last with a stick.

THE TABLE, THE ASS, AND THE STICK

THERE WAS once a tailor who had three sons and one goat. And the goat, as she nourished them all with her milk, was obliged to have good food, and so she was led every day down to the willows by the water-side; and this business the sons did in turn. One day the eldest took the goat to the churchyard, where the best sprouts are, that she might eat her fill and gambol about.

In the evening, when it was time to go home, he said, "Well, goat, have you had enough?" The goat answered, "I am so full, I cannot pull Another blade of grass- ba! baa!"

"Then come home," said the youth, and fastened a string to her, led her to her stall and fastened her up.

"Now," said the old tailor, "has the goat had her proper food?" "Oh," answered the son, "she is so full, she no more can pull." But the father, wishing to see for himself, went out to the stall, stroked his dear goat, and said, "My dear goat, are you full?" And the goat answered, "How can I be full? There was nothing to pull, Though I looked all about me- ba! baa!"

"What is this that I hear?" cried the tailor, and he ran and called out to the youth, "O you liar, to say that the goat was full, and she has been hungry all the time!" And in his wrath he took up his yard-measure and drove his son out of the house with many blows.

The next day came the turn of the second son, and he found a fine place in the garden hedge, where there were good green sprouts, and the goat ate them all up.

In the evening, when he came to lead her home, he said, "Well, goat, have you had enough?" And the goat answered, "I am so full, I cannot pull Another blade of grass- ba! baa!"

"Then come home," said the youth, and led her home, and tied her up.

"Now," said the old tailor, "has the goat had her proper food?" "Oh," answered the son, "she is so full, she no more can pull."

The tailor, not feeling satisfied, went out to the stall, and said, "My dear goat, are you really full?" And the goat answered, "How can I be full? There was nothing to pull, Though I looked all about me- ba! baa!"

"The good-for-nothing rascal," cried the tailor, "to let the dear creature go fasting!" and, running back, he chased the youth with his yard-wand out of the house.

Then came the turn of the third son, who, meaning to make all sure, found some shrubs with the finest sprouts possible, and left the goat to devour them. In the evening, when he came to lead her home, he said, "Well, goat, are you full?" And the goat answered, "I am so full, I cannot pull Another blade of grass- ba! baa!"

"Then come home," said the youth; and he took her to her stall, and fastened her up.

"Now," said the old tailor, "has the goat had her proper food?" "Oh," answered the son, "she is so full, she no more can pull."

But the tailor, not trusting his word, went to the goat and said, "My dear goat, are you really full?" The malicious animal answered, "How can I be full? There was nothing to pull, Though I looked all about me- ba! baa!"

"Oh, the wretches!" cried the tailor; "the one as good-for-nothing and careless as the other. I will no longer have such fools about me"; and rushing back, in his wrath he laid about him with his yard-wand, and belabored his son's back so unmercifully that he ran away out of the house.

So the old tailor was left alone with the goat. The next day he went out to the stall, and let out the goat, saying, "Come, my dear creature, I will take you myself to the willows." So he led her by the string, and brought her to the green hedges and pastures where there was plenty of food to her taste, and saying to her, "Now, for

once, you can eat to your heart's content," he left her there till the evening. Then he returned, and said, "Well, goat, are you full?" She answered, "I am so full, I cannot pull

Another blade of grass- ba! baa!"

"Then come home," said the tailor, and leading her to her stall, he fastened her up.

Before he left her he turned once more, saying, "Now then, for once you are full." But the goat actually cried, "How can I be full? There was nothing to pull, Though I looked all about me- ba! baa!"

When the tailor heard that he marveled, and saw at once that his three sons had been sent away without reason. "Wait a minute," cried he, "you ungrateful creature! It is not enough merely to drive you away- I will teach you to show your face again among honorable tailors." So in haste he went and fetched his razor, and seizing the goat he shaved her head as smooth as the palm of his hand. And as the yard-measure was too honorable a weapon, he took the whip and fetched her such a crack that with many a jump and spring she ran away.

The tailor felt very sad as he sat alone in his house, and would willingly have had his sons back again, but no one knew where they had gone.

The eldest son, when he was driven from home, apprenticed himself to a joiner, and he applied himself diligently to his trade, and when the time came for him to travel, his master gave him a little table, nothing much to look at, and made of common wood; but it had one great quality. When any one set it down and said, "Table, be covered!" all at once the good little table had a clean cloth on it, and a plate, and knife, and fork, and dishes with roast and boiled meat, and a large glass of red wine sparkling so as to cheer the heart. The young apprentice thought he was set up for life, and he went merrily out into the world, and never cared whether an inn were good or bad, or whether he could get anything to eat there or not. When he was hungry, it did not matter where he was, whether in the fields, in the woods, or in a meadow, he set down his table and said, "Be covered!" and there he was provided with everything that heart could wish. At last it occurred to him that he would go back to his father, whose wrath might by this time have subsided, and perhaps because of the wonderful table he might receive him again gladly.

It happened that one evening during his journey home he came to an inn that was quite full of guests, who bade him welcome, and asked him to sit down with them and eat, as otherwise he would

have found some difficulty in getting anything. "No," answered the young joiner, "I could not think of depriving you; you had much better be my guests." Then they laughed, and thought he must be joking. But he brought his little wooden table, and put it in the middle of the room, and said, "Table, be covered!"

Immediately it was set out with food much better than the landlord had been able to provide, and the good smell of it greeted the noses of the guests very agreeably.

"Fall to, good friends," said the joiner; and the guests, when they saw how it was, needed no second asking, but taking up knife and fork fell to valiantly. And what seemed most wonderful was that when a dish was empty immediately a full one stood in its place. All the while the landlord stood in a corner, and watched all that went on. He could not tell what to say about it; but he thought "such cooking as that would make my inn prosper." The joiner and his fellowship kept it up very merrily until late at night. At last they went to sleep, and the young joiner, going to bed, left his wishing-table standing against the wall. The landlord, however, could not sleep for thinking of the table, and he remembered that there was in his lumber room an old table very like it, so he fetched it, and taking away the joiner's table, he left the other in its place.

The next morning the joiner paid his reckoning, took up the table, not dreaming that he was carrying off the wrong one, and went on his way. About noon he reached home, and his father received him with great joy.

"Now, my dear son, what have you learned?" said he to him. "I have learned to be a joiner, father," he answered.

"That is a good trade," returned the father; "but what have you brought back with you from your travels?" "The best thing I've got, father, is this little table," said he.

The tailor looked at it on all sides, and said, "You have certainly produced no masterpiece. It is a rubbishing old table." "But it is a very wonderful one," answered the son. "When I set it down, and tell it to be covered, at once the finest meats are standing on it, and wine so good that it cheers the heart. Let us invite all the friends and neighbors, that they may feast and enjoy themselves, for the table will provide enough for all." When the company was all assembled, he put his table in the middle of the room, and commanded it, "Table, be covered!" But the table never stirred, and remained just as empty as any other table that does not understand talking. When the poor joiner saw that the table remained unfurnished, he felt ashamed to stand there like a fool.

The company laughed at him freely, and were obliged to return unfilled and uncheered to their houses. The father gathered his pieces together and returned to his tailoring, and the son went to work under another master.

The second son had bound himself apprentice to a miller. And when his time was up, his master said to him, "As you have behaved yourself so well, I will give you an ass of a remarkable kind: he will draw no cart, and carry no sack." "What is the good of him then?" asked the young apprentice. "He spews forth gold," answered the miller. "If you put a cloth before him and say, 'Bricklebrit,' out come gold pieces from back and front."

"That is a capital thing," said the apprentice, and thanking his master, he went out into the world. Whenever he wanted gold he had only to say "Bricklebrit" to his ass, and there was a shower of gold pieces, and so he had no cares as he traveled about. Wherever he came he lived on the best, and the dearer the better, as his purse was always full. And when he had been looking about him about the world a long time, he thought he would go and find out his father, who would perhaps forget his anger and receive him kindly because of his gold ass.

And it happened that he came to lodge in the same inn where his brother's table had been exchanged. He was leading his ass in his hand, and the landlord was for taking the ass from him to tie it up, but the young apprentice said, "Don't trouble yourself, old fellow, I will take him into the stable myself and tie him up, and then I shall know where to find him." The landlord thought this was very strange, and he never supposed that a man who was accustomed to look after his ass himself could have much to spend; but when the stranger, feeling in his pocket, took out two gold pieces and told him to get him something good for supper, the landlord stared, and ran and fetched the best that could be got. After supper the guest called the reckoning, and the landlord, wanting to get all the profit he could, said that it would amount to two gold pieces more. The apprentice felt in his pocket, but his gold had come to an end.

"Wait a moment, landlord," said he, "I will go and fetch some money," and he went out of the room, carrying the tablecloth with him. The landlord could not tell what to make of it, and, curious to know his proceedings, slipped after him, and as the guest shut the stable-door, he peeped in through a knothole. Then he saw how the stranger spread the cloth before the ass, saying, "Bricklebrit," and directly the ass let gold pieces fall from back and front, so that it rained down money upon the ground.

“Dear me,” said the landlord, “that is an easy way of getting ducats; a purse of money like that is no bad thing.” After that the guest paid his reckoning and went to bed; but the landlord slipped down to the stable in the middle of the night, led the gold ass away, and tied up another ass in his place. The next morning early the apprentice set forth with his ass, never doubting that it was the right one. By noon he came to his father’s house, who was rejoiced to see him again, and received him gladly.

“What trade have you taken up, my son?” asked the father. “I am a miller, dear father,” answered he.

“What have you brought home from your travels?” continued the father.

“Nothing but an ass,” answered the son.

“We have plenty of asses here,” said the father. “You had much better have brought me a nice goat!” “Yes,” answered the son, “but this is no common ass.

When I say, ‘Bricklebrit,’ the good creature spits out a whole clothful of gold pieces. Let me call all the neighbors together. I will make rich people of them all.” “That will be fine!” said the tailor. “Then I need labor no more at my needle”; and he rushed out himself and called the neighbors together. As soon as they were all assembled, the miller called out to them to make room, and brought in the ass, and spread his cloth before him.

“Now, pay attention,” said he, and cried, “Bricklebrit!” but no gold pieces came, and that showed that the animal was not more scientific than any other ass.

So the poor miller made a long face when he saw that he had been taken in, and begged pardon of the neighbors, who all went home as poor as they had come. And there was nothing for it but that the old man must take to his needle again, and that the young one should take service with a miller.

The third brother had bound himself apprentice to a turner; and as turning is a very ingenious handicraft, it took him a long time to learn it. His brothers told him in a letter how badly things had gone with them, and how on the last night of their travels the landlord deprived them of their treasures. When the young turner had learnt his trade, and was ready to travel, his master, to reward him for his good conduct, gave him a sack, and told him that there was a stick inside it.

“I can hang up the sack, and it may be very useful to me,” said the young man. “But what is the good of the stick?” “I will tell you,”

answered the master. "If any one does you any harm, and you say, 'Stick, out of the sack!' the stick will jump out upon them, and will belabor them so soundly that they shall not be able to move or to leave the place for a week, and it will not stop until you say, 'Stick, into the sack!'"

The apprentice thanked him, and took up the sack and started on his travels, and when any one attacked him he would say, "Stick, out of the sack!" and directly out jumped the stick, and dealt a shower of blows on the coat or jerkin, and the back beneath, which quickly ended the affair. One evening the young turner reached the inn where his two brothers had been taken in. He laid his knapsack on the table, and began to describe all the wonderful things he had seen in the world.

"Yes," said he, "you may talk of your self-spreading table, gold-supplying ass, and so forth; very good things, I do not deny, but they are nothing in comparison with the treasure that I have acquired and carry with me in that sack!" Then the landlord opened his ears. "What in the world can it be?" thought he.

"Very likely the sack is full of precious stones; and I have a perfect right to it, for all good things come in threes." When bedtime came the guest stretched himself on a bench, and put his sack under his head for a pillow, and the landlord, when he thought the young man was sound asleep, came, and, stooping down, pulled gently at the sack, so as to remove it cautiously, and put another in its place. The turner had only been waiting for this to happen, and just as the landlord was giving a last courageous pull, he cried, "Stick, out of the sack!" Out flew the stick directly, and laid to heartily on the landlord's back; and in vain he begged for mercy; the louder he cried the harder the stick beat time on his back, until he fell exhausted to the ground.

Then the turner said, "If you do not give me the table and the ass directly, this game shall begin all over again."

"Oh dear, no!" cried the landlord, quite collapsed; "I will gladly give it all back again if you will only make this terrible goblin go back into the sack." Then said the young man, "I will be generous instead of just, but beware!" Then he cried, "Stick, into the sack!" and left him in peace.

The next morning the turner set out with the table and the ass on his way home to his father. The tailor was very glad indeed to see him again, and asked him what he had learned abroad. "My dear father," answered he, "I am become a turner." "A very ingenious handicraft," said the father. "And what have you brought with you

from your travels?" "A very valuable thing, dear father," answered the son. "A stick in a sack!" "What!" cried the father. "A stick! The thing is not worth so much trouble when you can cut one from any tree." "But it is not a common stick, dear father," said the young man. "When I say, 'Stick, out of the bag!' out jumps the stick upon any one who means harm to me, and makes him dance again, and does not leave off till he is beaten to the earth, and asks pardon. Just look here, with this stick I have recovered the table and the ass which the thieving landlord had taken from my two brothers. Now, let them both be sent for, and bid all the neighbors too, and they shall eat and drink to their hearts' content, and I will fill their pockets with gold."

The old tailor could not quite believe in such a thing, but he called his sons and all the neighbors together. Then the turner brought in the ass, opened a cloth before him, and said to his brother, "Now, my dear brother, speak to him." And the miller said, "Bricklebrit!" and immediately the cloth was covered with gold pieces, until they had all got more than they could carry away. (I tell you this because it is a pity you were not there.) Then the turner set down the table, and said, "Now, my dear brother, speak to it." And the joiner said, "Table, be covered!" and directly it was covered, and set forth plentifully with the richest dishes. Then they held a feast such as had never taken place in the tailor's house before, and the whole company remained through the night, merry and content.

The tailor after that locked up in a cupboard his needle and thread, his yardmeasure and goose, and lived ever after with his three sons in great joy and splendor.

But what became of the goat, the unlucky cause of the tailor's sons being driven out? I will tell you. She felt so ashamed of her bald head that she ran into a fox's hole and hid herself. When the fox came home he caught sight of two great eyes staring at him out of the darkness, and was very frightened and ran away. A bear met him, and seeing that he looked very disturbed, asked him, "What is the matter, brother fox, that you should look like that?" "Oh dear," answered the fox, "a grisly beast is sitting in my hole, and he stared at me with fiery eyes!"

"We will soon drive him out," said the bear; and went to the hole and looked in, but when he caught sight of the fiery eyes he likewise felt great terror seize him, and not wishing to have anything to do with so grisly a beast, he made off.

He was soon met by a bee, who remarked that he had not a very courageous air, and said to him, "Bear, you have a very depressed

countenance, what has become of your high spirit?" "You may well ask," answered the bear. "In the fox's hole there sits a grisly beast with fiery eyes, and we cannot drive him out." The bee answered, "I know you despise me, bear. I am a poor feeble little creature, but I think I can help you." So she flew into the fox's hole, and settling on the goat's smooth-shaven head, stung her so severely that she jumped up, crying, "Ba- baa!" and ran out like mad into the world. And to this hour no one knows where she ran to.

THE END