

FAIRY TALES OF HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

THE SNAIL AND THE ROSE TREE

Hans Christian Andersen

Andersen, Hans Christian (1805-1875) - A Danish writer who is remembered as one of the world's greatest story-tellers. Although most of his poems, novels, and dramas have been forgotten, his Fairy Tales, (compiled 1835- 1872), have gained him lasting fame. *The Snail and the Rose-Tree* - One of Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales. Underneath a blooming, simple-minded rose-tree sits an idle snail whose shell contains a great deal — himself.

THE SNAIL AND THE ROSE TREE

ROUND about the garden ran a hedge of hazel-bushes; beyond the hedge were fields and meadows with cows and sheep; but in the middle of the garden stood a Rose-tree in bloom, under which sat a Snail, whose shell contained a great deal- that is, himself.

"Only wait till my time comes," he said; "I shall do more than grow roses, bear nuts, or give milk, like the hazel-bush, the cows and the sheep." "I expect a great deal from you," said the rose-tree. "May I ask when it will appear?" "I take my time," said the snail. "You're always in such a hurry. That does not excite expectation." The following year the snail lay in almost the same spot, in the sunshine under the rose-tree, which was again budding and bearing roses as fresh and beautiful as ever. The snail crept half out of his shell, stretched out his horns, and drew them in again.

"Everything is just as it was last year! No progress at all; the rose-tree sticks to its roses and gets no farther."

The summer and the autumn passed; the rose-tree bore roses and buds till the snow fell and the weather became raw and wet; then it bent down its head, and the snail crept into the ground.

A new year began; the roses made their appearance, and the snail made his too.

"You are an old rose-tree now," said the snail. "You must make haste and die.

You have given the world all that you had in you; whether it was of much importance is a question that I have not had time to think about. But this much is clear and plain, that you have not done the

least for your inner development, or you would have produced something else. Have you anything to say in defence? You will now soon be nothing but a stick. Do you understand what I say?" "You frighten me," said the rose- tree. "I have never thought of that." "No, you have never taken the trouble to think at all. Have you ever given yourself an account why you bloomed, and how your blooming comes about why just in that way and in no other?" "No," said the rose-tree. "I bloom in gladness, because I cannot do otherwise.

The sun shone and warmed me, and the air refreshed me; I drank the clear dew and the invigorating rain. I breathed and I lived! Out of the earth there arose a power within me, whilst from above I also received strength; I felt an ever-renewed and ever-increasing happiness, and therefore I was obliged to go on blooming. That was my life; I could not do otherwise."

"You have led a very easy life," remarked the snail.

"Certainly. Everything was given me," said the rose-tree. "But still more was given to you. Yours is one of those deep-thinking natures, one of those highly gifted minds that astonishes the world." "I have not the slightest intention of doing so," said the snail. "The world is nothing to me. What have I to do with the world? I have enough to do with myself, and enough in myself" "But must we not all here on earth give up our best parts to others, and offer as much as lies in our power? It is true, I have only given roses. But you- you who are so richly endowed- what have you given to the world? What will you give it?" "What have I given? What am I going to give? I spit at it; it's good for nothing, and does not concern me. For my part, you may go on bearing roses; you cannot do anything else. Let the hazel bush bear nuts, and the cows and sheep give milk; they have each their public. I have mine in myself. I retire within myself and there I stop. The world is nothing to me." With this the snail withdrew into his house and blocked up the entrance.

"That's very sad," said the rose tree. "I cannot creep into myself, however much I might wish to do so; I have to go on bearing roses. Then they drop their leaves, which are blown away by the wind. But I once saw how a rose was laid in the mistress's hymn-book, and how one of my roses found a place in the bosom of a young beautiful girl, and how another was kissed by the lips of a child in the glad joy of life. That did me good; it was a real blessing. Those are my recollections, my life." And the rose tree went on blooming in innocence, while the snail lay idling in his house- the world was nothing to him.

Years passed by.

The snail had turned to earth in the earth, and the rose tree too. Even the souvenir rose in the hymn-book was faded, but in the garden there were other rose trees and other snails. The latter crept into their houses and spat at the world, for it did not concern them.

Shall we read the story all over again? It will be just the same.

THE END