

From *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales*, by Edwin Sidney Hartland, 1890

### **A Note to Teachers:**

The following are selections from *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales* by Edwin Sidney Hartland. While the book was published in 1890, it is a collection of older tales, many of which can be traced to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and before.

More of these stories can be found at:

<http://sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/efft/index.htm>

## LAZY JACK

ONCE upon a time there was a boy whose name was Jack, and he lived with his mother on a dreary common. They were very poor, and the old woman got her living by spinning, but Jack was so lazy that he would do nothing but bask in the sun in the hot weather, and sit by the corner of the hearth in the winter time. His mother could not persuade him to do anything for her, and was obliged at last to tell him that if he did not begin to work for his porridge she would turn him out to get his living as he could.

This threat at length roused Jack, and he went out and hired himself for the day to a neighbouring farmer for a penny; but as he was coming home, never having had any money in his possession before, he lost it in passing over a brook. "You stupid boy," said his mother, "you should have put it in your pocket." "I'll do so another time," replied Jack.

The next day Jack went out again and hired himself to a cowkeeper, who gave him a jar of milk for his day's work. Jack took the jar and put it into the large pocket of his jacket, spilling it all long before he got home. "Dear me!" said the old woman; "you should have carried it on your head." "I'll do so another time," said Jack.

The following day Jack hired himself again to a farmer, who agreed to give him a cream cheese for his services.

In the evening Jack took the cheese, and went home with it on his head. By the time he got home the cheese was completely spoilt, part of it being lost, and part matted with his hair. "You stupid lout," said his mother, "you should have carried it very carefully in your hands." "I'll do so another time," replied Jack.

The day after this Jack again went out, and hired himself to a baker, who would give him nothing for his work but a large tom-cat. Jack took the cat, and began carrying it very carefully in his hands, but in a short time pussy scratched him so much that he was compelled to let it go. When he got home, his mother said to him: "You silly fellow, you should have tied it with a string, and dragged it along after you." "I'll do so another time," said Jack.

The next day Jack hired himself to a butcher, who rewarded his labours by the handsome present of a shoulder of mutton. Jack took the mutton, tied it to a string, and trailed it along after him in the dirt, so that by the time he had got home the meat was completely spoilt. His mother was this time quite out of patience with him, for the next day was Sunday, and she was obliged to content herself with cabbage for her dinner. "You ninney-hammer," said she to her son, "you should have carried it on your shoulder." "I'll do so another time," replied Jack.

On the Monday Jack went once more, and hired himself to a cattle-keeper, who gave him a donkey for his trouble. Although Jack was very strong, he found some difficulty in hoisting the donkey on his shoulders, but at last he accomplished it, and began walking slowly home with his prize. Now it happened that in the course of his journey there lived a rich man with his only daughter, a beautiful girl, but unfortunately could not speak; she had never laughed in her life, and the doctors said she would never recover till somebody made her laugh. This young lady happened to be looking out of the window when Jack was passing with the donkey on his shoulders, the legs sticking up in the air, and the sight was so comical and strange that she burst out into a great fit of laughter, and immediately recovered her speech. Her father was overjoyed, and fulfilled his promise by marrying her to Jack, who was thus made a rich gentleman. They lived in a large house, and Jack's mother lived with them in great happiness until she died.

## THE PRINCESS OF CANTERBURY

IN days of yore, when this country was governed by many kings, among the rest the King of Canterbury had an only daughter, wise, fair, and beautiful. The king issued a decree that whoever would watch one night with his daughter, and neither sleep nor slumber, should have her the next day in marriage; but if he did either he should lose his head. Many knights and squires attempted it, but ended in losing their lives.

Now it happened, a young shepherd, grazing his flock near the road, said to his master, "Zur, I zee many gentlemen ride to the Court at Canterbury, but I ne'er see 'em return again." "Oh, shepherd," said his master, "I know not how you should, for they attempt to watch with the king's daughter, according to the decree, and not performing it, they are all beheaded." "Well," said the shepherd, "I'll try my vorton; zo now vor a king's daughter or a headless shepherd!" And taking his bottle and bag, he trudged to Court Now, in his way he was to cross a river, over which lay a plank, and down he sits and pulls off his shoes and stockings to wash his feet. While he was doing this a fish came biting his toes, and he caught it and put it in his bag. After this, came a second, and a third, and a fourth; which he put in his bag likewise, and then pursued his journey.

When he came to the palace he knocked at the gate loudly with his crook, and having told his business, was conducted to a hall, where the king's daughter sat ready to receive him, while the better to lull his senses, he was placed in a rich chair, and wines and fine dishes of fruit and meat were set before him. Of these the shepherd ate and drank plentifully, so that he began to slumber before midnight "O shepherd," said the lady, "I have caught you napping!" "Noa, sweet ally, I was busy a-feeshing." "A-fishing!" said the princess in the utmost astonishment. "Nay, shepherd, there is no fish-pond in the hall" "No matter vor that, I have been feeshing in my bag." "Oh me!" said she, "have you caught one?" Thereupon the shepherd slyly drew the fish out of his bag, at sight of which she was greatly pleased, and praised it for a pretty fish, and said, "Dear shepherd, do you think you could catch one in mine too?" He replied, "Mayhap I. may, when I have baited my hook." Then he did as before, and brought out another, which the princess also extolled as ten times finer, and then gave him leave to go to sleep, promising to excuse him to her father.

In the morning the king came to the hall, with his headsman, as usual, but the princess cried out, "Here is no work for you." "How so," said the king, "has he neither slumbered nor slept?" "No," said the princess, "he has been fishing in the hall all night." When the king heard this and saw the fish, he asked him to catch one in his own bag. The shepherd then bade the king lie down, and having another fish ready, and giving the king a prick with a packing needle, he drew out the fish and showed it to his majesty. The king said he never knew such fishing before. "However," said he, "take my daughter according to my royal decree." So the wedding was kept in great triumph, and the poor shepherd became a king's son.

## THE PARSON AND CLERK

NEAR Dawlish stand, out in the sea, two rocks, of red sandstone conglomerate, to which the above name is given.

Seeing that this forms a part of Old Cornwall, I do not go beyond my limits in telling the true story of these singular rocks.

The Bishop of Exeter was sick unto death at Dawlish. An ambitious priest, from the east, frequently rode with his clerk to make anxious inquiries after the condition of the dying bishop. It is whispered that this priest had great hopes of occupying the bishop's throne in Exeter Cathedral.

The clerk was usually the priest's guide; but somehow or other, on a particularly stormy night, he lost the road, and they were wandering over Haldon. Excessively angry was the priest, and very provoking was the clerk. He led his master this way and that way, but they were yet upon the elevated country of Haldon.

At length the priest, in a great rage, exclaimed: "I would rather have the devil for a guide than you." Presently the clatter of horse's hoofs were heard, and a peasant on a moor pony rode up. The priest told of his condition, and the peasant volunteered to guide them. On rode peasant, priest, and clerk, and presently they were at Dawlish. The night was tempestuous, the ride had quickened the appetite of the priest, and he was wet through; therefore, when his friend asked him to supper, as they approached an old ruined house, through the windows of which bright lights were shining, there was no hesitation in accepting the invitation.

There were a host of friends gathered together--a strange, wild-looking lot of men. But as the tables were laden with substantial dishes, and black-jacks were standing thick around, the parson, and the clerk too, soon made friends with all.

They ate and drank, and became most irreligiously uproarious. The parson sang hunting songs, and songs in praise of a certain old gentleman, with whom a priest should not have maintained any acquaintance. These were very highly appreciated, and every man joined loudly in the choruses. Night wore away, and

at last news was brought that the bishop was dead. This appeared to rouse up the parson, who was only too eager to get the first intelligence and go to work to secure the hope of his ambition. So master and man mounted their horses, and bade adieu to their hilarious friends.

They were yet at the door of the mansion--somehow or other the horses did not appear disposed to move. They were whipped and spurred, but to no purpose.

"The devil's in the horses," said the priest.

"I b'lieve he is," said the clerk.

"Devil or no devil, they shall go," said the parson, cutting his horse madly with his heavy whip.

There was a roar of unearthly laughter.

The priest looked round--his drinking friends were all turned into demons, wild with glee, and the peasant guide was an arch little devil, looking on with a marvellously curious twinkle in his eyes. The noise of waters was around them; and now the priest discovered that the mansion had disappeared, and that waves beat heavy upon his horse's flanks, and rushed over the smaller horse of his man.

Repentance was too late.

In the morning following this stormy night, two horses were found straying on the sands at Dawlish; and clinging with the grasp of death to two rocks were found the parson and the clerk. There stand the rocks, to which the devil had given the forms of horses--an enduring monument to all generations.

## MR. FOX

ONCE upon a time there was a young lady called Lady Mary, who had two brothers. One summer they all three went to a country seat of theirs, which they had not before visited. Among the other gentry in the neighbourhood who came to see them was a Mr. Pox, a bachelor, with whom they, particularly the young lady, were much pleased. He used often to dine with them, and frequently invited Lady Mary to come and see his house. One day that her 'brothers were absent elsewhere, and she had nothing better to do, she determined to go thither, and accordingly set out unattended. When she arrived at the house and knocked at the door, no one answered.

At length she opened it and went in; over the portal of the door was written--

"Be bold, be bold, but not too bold."

She advanced; over the staircase was the same inscription. She went up; over the entrance of a gallery, the same again. Still she went on, and over the door of a chamber found written--

"Be bold, be bold, but not too bold,  
Lest that your heart's blood should run cold!"

She opened it; it was full of skeletons and tubs of blood. She retreated in haste, and, coming downstairs, saw from a window Mr. Fox advancing towards the house with a drawn sword in one hand, while with the other he dragged along a young lady by her hair. Lady Mary had just time to slip down and hide herself under the stairs before Mr. Fox and his victim arrived at the foot of them. As he pulled the young lady upstairs, she caught hold of one of the banisters with her hand, on which was a rich bracelet. Mr. Fox cut it off with his sword. The hand and bracelet fell into Lady Mary's lap, who then contrived to escape unobserved, and got safe home to her brothers' house.

A few days afterwards Mr. Fox came to dine with them as usual. After dinner the guests began to amuse each other with extraordinary anecdotes, and Lady Mary said she would relate to them a remarkable dream she had lately had. I dreamt, said she, that as you, Mr. Fox, had often invited me to your house, I would go



there one morning. When I came to the house I knocked at the door, but no one answered. When I opened the door, over the hail I saw written, "Be bold, be bold, but not too bold." But, said she, turning to Mr. Fox, and smiling, "It is not so, nor it was not so." Then she pursued the rest of the story, concluding at every turn with, "It is not so, nor it was not so," till she came to the room full of skeletons, when Mr. Fox took up the burden of the tale, and said--

"It is not so, nor it was not so,  
And God forbid it should be so!"--

which he continued to repeat at every subsequent turn of the dreadful story, till she came to the circumstance of his cutting off the young lady's hand, when, upon his saying, as usual--

"It is not so, nor it was not so,  
And God forbid it should be so  
Lady Mary retorts by saying--  
"But it is so, and it was so,  
And here the hand I have to show!"--

at the same moment producing the hand and bracelet from her lap, whereupon the guests drew their swords, and instantly cut Mr. Fox into a thousand pieces.

## OUTWITTING THE BOGIE

AN elf once asserted a claim to a field hitherto possessed by a farmer, and after much disputing they came to an arrangement by agreeing to divide its produce between Lhem.

At seed-time the farmer asks the Bogie what part of the crop he will have, "tops or bottoms." "Bottoms," said the spirit: upon hearing which his crafty antagonist saws the field with wheat, so that when harvest arrived the corn falls to his share, while the poor Bogie is obliged to content himself with the stubble.

Next year the Bogie, finding he had made such an unfortunate selection in the bottoms, chose the "tops"; whereupon the crafty farmer sets the field with turnips, thus again outwitting the simple claimant.

Tired of this unprofitable farming, the Bogie agrees to hazard his claims on a mowing match, the land in question to be the stake for which they played. Before the day of meeting, the canny earth-tiller procures a number of iron bars, which he strews among the grass to be mown by his opponent; and when the trial commences, the unsuspecting goblin finds his progress retarded by his scythe continually coming into contact with these obstacles, which he takes to be some hard species of dock. "Mortal bard docks these!" said he; "Nation hard docks!"

His blunted blade soon brings him to a standstill; and as, in such cases, it is not allowable for one to sharpen without the other, he turns to his antagonist, now far ahead, and, in a tone of despair, inquires: "When d'ye wiffle-waffle (*whet*), mate?" "Waffle!" said the farmer, with a well feigned stare of amazement, "oh, about noon, mebby." "Then," said the despairing Bogie, "I've lost my land!"

So saying he disappeared, and the farmer reaped the reward of his artifice by ever afterwards continuing the undisputed possessor of the soil.

*Note: "whet" means to sharpen a blade*

## THE HAUNTED HOUSE

ABOUT half a mile from Tavistock there is a farm called Down House; the dwelling itself was rebuilt about eleven or twelve years ago. It was considered before an ancient place, and haunted by ghosts. Here is a story of one.

The family who resided there well knew the hour of the night in which the ghosts made their appearance, and always took care to go to bed before they came. But it happened on a time that a child was very ill, and asked its mother for water. She went to the pitcher to get some, when the child refused any but such as might be got directly from the pump. The mother became quite distressed, unwilling to displease the child, yet afraid to go down to the pump, as it was about the hour in which the ghost walked. She considered upon it a little while, and at last said: "In the name of God I will go down."

She did so. Passing over the stairs she perceived a shadow, and then she heard footsteps; and when she came to the pump she felt a hand on her shoulder. She turned and perceived a tall man. Summoning a good resolution, however, she said: "In the name of God, why troublest thou me?" The ghost replied: "It is well for thee that thou hast spoken to me in the name of God; this being the last time allotted me to trouble this world, or else I should have injured thee. Now do as I tell thee, and be not afraid. Come with me, and I will direct thee to a something which shall remove this pump. Under it is concealed treasure."

This something was procured, and applied as the ghost directed. The pump was quickly removed, when under it there lay a great deal of money. She was desired to take up the treasure and stock her farm with it. And the spirit told her that if ever any person molested or deprived her of her property, he would suffer well for it. He then ordered her to go and give the water to the child, who, in reward for her courage and trust in God, should recover. The cock crew; directly the figure dwindled again to a shadow, ascended through the air, and she watched till he soon became a small bright cloud.

## THE THREE SILLIES

ONCE upon a time there was a farmer and his wife who had one daughter, and she was courted by a gentleman. Every evening he used to come and see her, and stop to supper at the farmhouse, and the daughter used to be sent down into the cellar to draw the beer for supper. So one evening she was gone down to draw the beer, and she happened to look up at the ceiling while she was drawing, and she saw an axe stuck into one of the beams. It must have been there a long, long time, but somehow or other she had never noticed it before, and she began a-thinking. And she thought it was very dangerous to have that axe there, for she said to herself: "Suppose him and me was to be married, and we was to have a son, and he was to grow up to be a man, and come down into the cellar to draw the beer, like as I'm doing now, and the axe was to fall on his head and kill him, what a dreadful thing it would be!" And she put down the candle and the jug, and sat herself down and began a-crying.

Well, they began to wonder upstairs how it was that she was so long drawing the beer, and her mother went down to see after her, and she found her sitting on the setluss crying, and the beer running over the floor. "Why whatever is the matter?" said her mother. "Oh, mother!" says she, "look at that horrid axe! Suppose we was to be married, and was to have a son, and he was to grow up, and was to come down to the cellar to draw the beer, and the axe was to fall on his head and kill him, what a dreadful thing it would be!" "Dear, dear! what a dreadful thing it would be!" said the mother, and she sat her down aside of the daughter and started a-crying too. Then after a bit the father began to wonder that they didn't come back, and he went down into the cellar to look after them himself, and there they two sat a-crying, and the beer running all over the floor. "Whatever is the matter?" says he. "Why," says the mother, "look at that horrid axe. Just suppose, if our daughter and her sweetheart was to be married, and was to have a son, and he was to grow up. and was to come down into the cellar to draw the beer, and the axe was to fall on his head and kill him, what a dreadful thing it would be!" "Dear, dear, dear! so it would!" said the father, and he sat himself down aside of the other two, and started a-crying.

Now the gentleman got tired of stopping up in the kitchen by himself, and at last he went down into the cellar too, to see what they were after; and there they three sat a-crying side by side, and the beer running all over the floor. And he ran

straight and turned the tap. Then he said: "Whatever are you three doing, sitting there crying, and letting the beer run all over the floor?" "Oh!" says the father, "look at that horrid axe! Suppose you and our daughter was to be married, and was to have a son, and he was to grow up, and was to come down into the cellar to draw the beer, and the axe was to fall on his head and kill him!" And then they all started a-crying worse than before.

But the gentleman burst out a-laughing, and reached up and pulled out the axe, and then he said: "I've travelled many miles, and I never met three such big sillies as you three before; and now I shall start out on my travels again, and when I can find three bigger sillies than you three, then I'll come back and marry your daughter. So he wished them good-bye, and started off on his travels, and left them all crying because the girl had lost her sweetheart.

Well, he set out, and he travelled a long way, and at last he came to an old woman's cottage that had some grass growing on the roof. And the old woman was trying get her cow to go up a ladder to the grass, and the poor thing durst not go. So the gentleman asked the old woman what she was doing. "Why, lookye," she said, "look all that beautiful grass. I'm going to get the cow on to the roof to eat it. She'll be quite safe, for I shall tie a string round her neck, and pass it down the chimney, and tie it my wrist as I go about the house, so she can't fall off without my knowing it." "Oh, you poor old silly!" said the gentleman, "you should cut the grass and throw down to the cow!" But the old woman thought it was easier to get the cow up the ladder than to get the grass down, so she pushed her and coaxed her and got her up and tied a string round her neck, and passed it down the chimney, and fastened it to her own wrist. And the gentleman went on his way, but he hadn't gone far when the cow tumbled off the roof, and hung by the string tied round her neck, and it strangled her. And the weight of the cow tied to her wrist pulled the old woman up the chimney and she stuck fast half-way, and was smothered in the soot.

Well, that was one big silly.

And the gentleman went on and on, and he went to an inn to stop the night, and they were so full at the inn that they had to put him in a double-bedded room, and another traveller was to sleep in the other bed. The other man was a very pleasant fellow, and they got very friendly together; but in the morning, when they were both getting up, the gentleman was surprised to see the other hang his

trousers on the knobs of the chest of drawers and run across the room and try to jump into them, and he tried over and over again, and couldn't manage it; and the gentleman wondered whatever he was doing it for. At last he stopped and wiped his face with his handkerchief. "Oh dear," he says, "I do think trousers are the most awkwardest kind of clothes that ever were. I can't think who could have invented such things. It takes me the best part of an hour to get into mine every morning, and I get so hot! How do you manage yours?" So the gentleman burst out a-laughing, and showed him how to put them on; and he was very much obliged to him, and said he never should have thought of doing it that way. So that was another big silly.

Then the gentleman went on his travels again; and he came to a village, and outside the village there was a pond, and round the pond was a crowd of people. And they had got rakes, and brooms, and pitchforks, reaching into the pond; and the gentleman asked what was the matter. "Why," they says, "matter enough! Moon's tumbled into the pond, and we can't get her out anyhow!" So the gentleman burst out a-laughing, and told them to look up into the sky, and that it was only the shadow in the water. But they wouldn't listen to him, and abused him shamefully, and he got away as quick as he could.

So there was a whole lot of sillies bigger than them all, and the gentleman turned back home again and married the farmer's daughter.