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Opening extract from

Grimm's Fairy Tales

Written by

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Published by

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From the Publisher

Arthur Rackham stands at the summit of the Golden Age of book illustration. His sensitivity for the world of fairy tale and myth is unmatched, and his style and approach have influenced innumerable artists. In the early nineteenth century, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm brought together a collection of ancient folk tales that had been passed from generation to generation throughout northern Europe. They are here presented with a freshness that is entirely the product of Rackham's unique vision of the color and texture of this narrative world. His imaginative richness was able to perfectly capture the ugly and repulsive, the sensuous, the terrifying, but with a moderation and sense of wonder that keeps true to the tales, and prevents the overall effect from teetering too far towards the macabre. Rackham's forty glorious color plates and many black & white illustrations to Grimm's tales are among the best known and most loved in all his substantial body of work.

The King could not contain himself for joy

BRIAR ROSE

GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

ILLUSTRATED BY
ARTHUR RACKHAM

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THE GOLDEN BIRD

A LONG TIME AGO there was a King who had a lovely pleasure-garden round his palace, and in it stood a tree which bore golden apples. When the apples were nearly ripe they were counted, but the very next morning one was missing.

This was reported to the King, and he ordered a watch to be set every night under the tree.

The King had three sons, and he sent the eldest into the garden at nightfall; but

by midnight he was overcome with sleep, and in the morning another apple was missing.

On the following night the second son had to keep watch, but he fared no better. When the clock struck twelve, he too was fast asleep, and in the morning another apple was gone.

The turn to watch now came to the third son. He was quite ready, but the King had not much confidence in him, and thought that he would accomplish even less than his brothers. At last, however, he gave his permission; so the youth lay down under the tree to watch, determined not to let sleep get the mastery over him.

As the clock struck twelve there was a rustling in the air, and by the light of the moon he saw a Bird, whose shining feathers were of pure gold. The Bird settled on the tree, and was just plucking an apple when the young Prince shot an arrow at it. The Bird flew away, but the arrow hit its plumage, and one of the golden feathers fell to the ground. The Prince picked it up, and in the morning took it to the King and told him all that he had seen in the night.

The King assembled his council, and everybody declared that a feather like that was worth more than the whole kingdom. "If the feather is worth so much," said the King, "one will not satisfy me; I must and will have the whole Bird."

The eldest, relying on his cleverness, set out in search of the Bird, and thought that he would be sure to find it soon.

When he had gone some distance he saw a Fox sitting by the edge of a wood; he raised his gun and aimed at it. The Fox cried out, "Do not shoot me, and I will give you some good advice. You are going to look for the Golden Bird; you will come to a village at nightfall, where you will find two inns opposite each other. One of them will be brightly lighted, and there will be noise and revelry going on in it. Be sure you do not choose that one, but go into the other, even if you don't like the look of it so well."

"How can a stupid animal like that give me good advice?" thought the King's son, and he pulled the trigger, but missed the Fox, who turned tail and made off into the wood.

Thereupon the Prince continued his journey, and at nightfall reached the village with the two inns. Singing and dancing were going on in the one, and the other had a poverty-stricken and decayed appearance.

"I should be a fool," he said, "if I were to go to that miserable place with this good one so near."

So he went into the noisy one, and lived there in rioting and revelry, forgetting the Bird, his father, and all his good counsels.

When some time had passed and the eldest son did not come back, the second prepared to start in quest of the Golden Bird. He met the Fox, as the eldest son had done, and it gave him the same good advice, of which he took just as little heed.

He came to the two inns, and saw his brother standing at the window of the one whence sounds of revelry proceeded. He could not withstand his brother's calling, so he went in and gave himself up to a life of pleasure.

Again some time passed, and the King's youngest son wanted to go out to try his luck; but his father would not let him go.

"It is useless," he said. "He will be even less able to find the Golden Bird than his brothers, and when any ill luck overtakes him, he will not be able to help himself; he has no backbone."

But at last, because he gave him no peace, he let him go. The Fox again sat at the edge of the wood, begged for its life, and gave its good advice. The Prince was good-natured, and said: "Be calm, little Fox, I will do thee no harm."

"You won't repent it," answered the Fox; "and so that you may get along faster, come and mount on my tail."

No sooner had he seated himself than the Fox began to run, and away they flew over stock and stone, at such a pace that his hair whistled in the wind.

When they reached the village, the Prince dismounted, and following the good advice of the Fox, he went straight to the mean inn without looking about him, and there he passed a peaceful night. In the morning when he went out into the fields, there sat the Fox, who said: "I will now tell you what you must do next. Walk straight on till you come to a castle, in front of which a whole regiment of soldiers is encamped. Don't be afraid of them; they will all be asleep and snoring. Walk through the midst of them straight into the castle, and through all the rooms, and at last you will reach an apartment where the Golden Bird will be hanging in a common wooden cage. A golden cage stands near it for show, but beware! whatever you do, you must not take the bird out of the wooden cage to put it into the other, or it will be the worse for you."

After these words the Fox again stretched out his tail, the Prince took his seat on it, and away they flew over stock and stone, till his hair whistled in the wind.

When he arrived at the castle, he found everything just as the Fox had said.

The Prince went to the room where the Golden Bird hung in the wooden cage, with a golden cage standing by, and the three golden apples were scattered about the room. He thought it would be absurd to leave the beautiful Bird in the common old cage, so he opened the door, caught it, and put it into the golden cage. But as he did it, the Bird uttered a piercing shriek. The soldiers woke up, rushed in, and carried him away to prison. Next morning he was taken before a judge, and, as he confessed all, he was sentenced to death. The King, however, said that he would spare his life on one condition, and this was that he should bring him the Golden Horse which runs faster than the wind. In addition, he should have the Golden Bird as a reward.

So the Prince set off with many sighs; he was very sad, for where was he to find the Golden Horse?

Away they flew over stock and stone, at such a pace
that his hair whistled in the wind

Then suddenly he saw his old friend the Fox sitting on the road. "Now you see," said the Fox, "all this has happened because you did not listen to me. All the same, keep up your spirits; I will protect you and tell you how to find the Golden Horse. You must keep straight along the road, and you will come to a palace, in the stable of which stands the Golden Horse. The grooms will be lying round the stable, but they will be fast asleep and snoring, and you can safely lead the horse through them. Only, one thing you must beware of. Put the old saddle of wood and leather upon it, and not the golden one hanging near, or you will rue it."

Then the Fox stretched out his tail, the Prince took his seat, and away they flew over stock and stone, till his hair whistled in the wind.

Everything happened just as the Fox had said. The Prince came to the stable where the Golden Horse stood, but when he was about to put the old saddle on its back, he thought, "Such a beautiful animal will be disgraced if I don't put the good saddle upon him, as he deserves." Hardly had the golden saddle touched the horse than he began neighing loudly. The grooms awoke, seized the Prince, and threw him into a dungeon.

The next morning he was taken before a judge, and condemned to death; but the King promised to spare his life, and give him the Golden Horse as well, if he could bring him the beautiful Princess out of the golden palace. With a heavy heart the Prince set out, when to his delight he soon met the faithful Fox.

"I ought to leave you to your fate," he said; "but I will have pity on you and once more help you out of your trouble. Your road leads straight to the golden palace,—you will reach it in the evening; and at night, when everything is quiet, the beautiful Princess will go to the bathroom to take a bath. As she goes along, spring forward and give her a kiss, and she will follow you. Lead her away with you; only on no account allow her to bid her parents good-bye, or it will go badly with you."

Again the Fox stretched out his tail, the Prince seated himself upon it, and off they flew over stock and stone, till his hair whistled in the wind.

When he got to the palace, it was just as the Fox had said. He waited till midnight, and when the whole palace was wrapped in sleep, and the Maiden went to take a bath, he sprang forward and gave her a kiss. She said she was quite willing to go with him, but she implored him to let her say good-bye to her parents. At first he refused; but as she cried, and fell at his feet, at last he gave her leave. Hardly had the Maiden stepped up to her father's bed, when he and every one else in the palace woke up. The Prince was seized, and thrown into prison.

Next morning the King said to him, "Your life is forfeited, and it can only be spared if you clear away the mountain in front of my window, which shuts out the view. It must be done in eight days, and if you accomplish the task you shall have my daughter as a reward."

So the Prince began his labours, and he dug and shovelled without ceasing. On the seventh day, when he saw how little he had done, he became very sad, and gave up all hope. However, in the evening the Fox appeared and said, "You do not deserve any help from me, but lie down and go to sleep; I will do the work." In the morning when he woke and looked out of the window, the mountain had disappeared.

Overjoyed, the Prince hurried to the King and told him that his condition was fulfilled, and, whether he liked it or not, he must keep his word and give him his daughter.

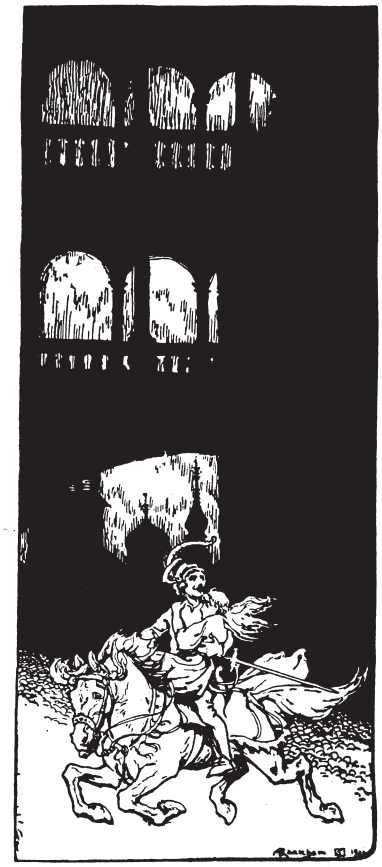
So they both went away together, and before long the faithful Fox joined them.

"You certainly have got the best thing of all," said he; "but to the Maiden of the golden palace the Golden Horse belongs."

"How am I to get it?" asked the Prince.

"Oh! I will tell you that," answered the Fox. "First take the beauti-

ful Maiden to the King who sent you to the golden palace. There will be great joy when you appear, and they will bring out the Golden Horse to you. Mount it at once, and shake hands with everybody, last of all with the beautiful Maiden; and when you have taken her hand firmly, pull her up beside you with a swing and gallop away. No one will be able to catch you, for the horse goes faster than the wind."



The Prince carried off the beautiful Maiden on the Golden Horse

All this was successfully done, and the Prince carried off the beautiful Maiden on the Golden Horse.

The Fox was not far off, and he said to the Prince, "Now I will help you to get the Golden Bird, too. When you approach the castle where the Golden Bird lives, let the Maiden dismount, and I will take care of her. Then ride with the Golden Horse into the courtyard of the castle; there will be great rejoicing when they see you, and they will bring out the Golden Bird to you. As soon as you have the cage in your hand, gallop back to us and take up the Maiden again."

When these plans had succeeded, and the Prince was ready to ride on with all his treasures, the Fox said to him:

"Now you must reward me for my help."

"What do you want?" asked the Prince.