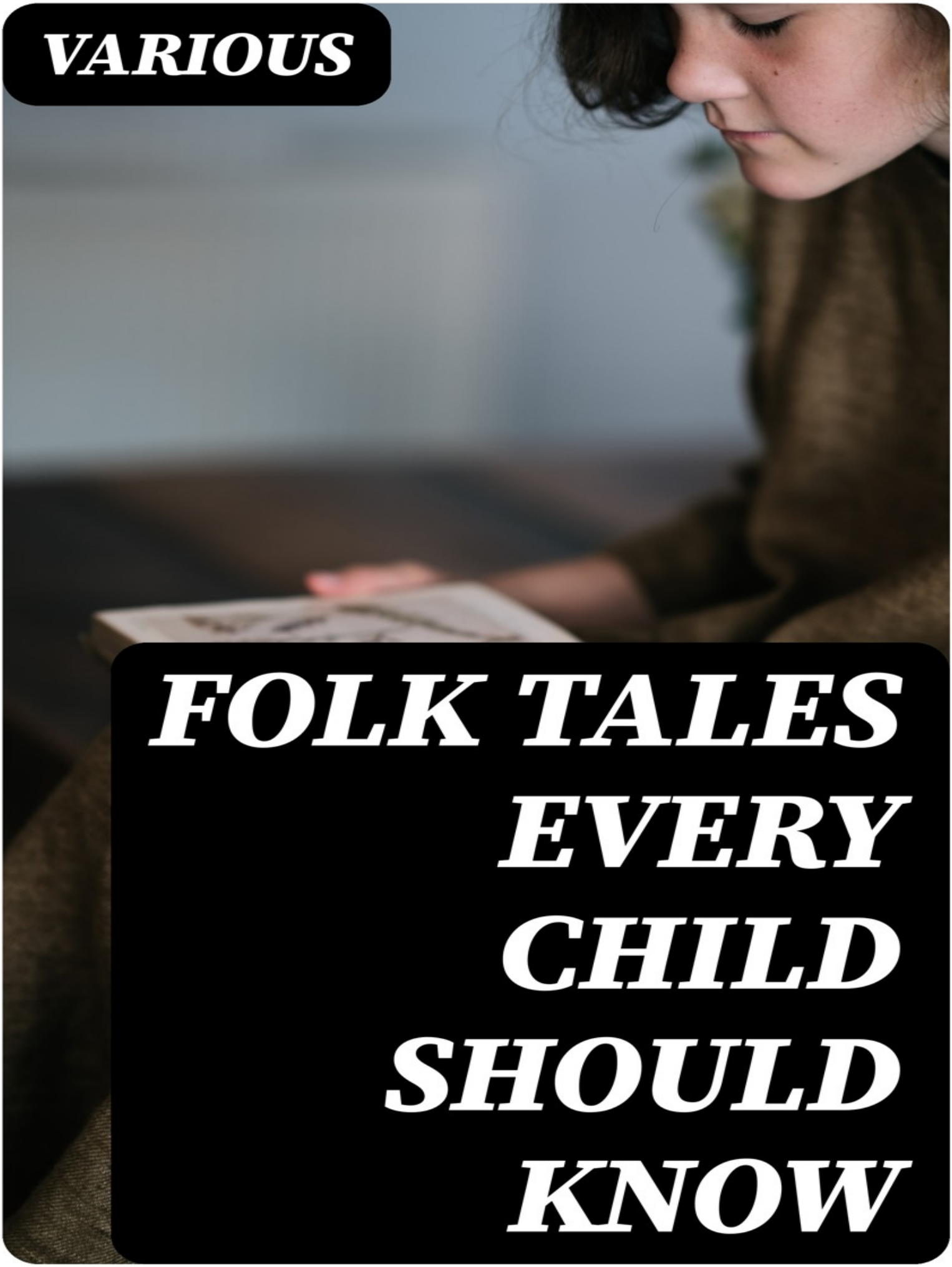
VARIOUS
FOLK TALES EVERY CHILD SHOULD KNOW

Various

Folk Tales Every Child Should Know

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INTRODUCTION

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When the traveller looks at Rome for the first time he does not realize that there have been several cities on the same piece of ground, and that the churches and palaces and other great buildings he sees to-day rest on an earlier and invisible city buried in dust beneath the foundations of the Rome of the Twentieth Century. In like manner, and because all visible things on the surface of the earth have grown out of older things which have ceased to be, the world of habits, the ideas, customs, fancies, and arts, in which we live is a survival of a younger world which long ago disappeared. When we speak of Friday as an unlucky day, or touch wood after saying that we have had good luck for a long time, or take the trouble to look at the new moon over the right shoulder, or avoid crossing the street while a funeral is passing, we are recalling old superstitions or beliefs, a vanished world in which our remote forefathers lived.

We do not realize how much of this vanished world still survives in our language, our talk, our books, our sculpture and pictures. The plays of Shakespeare are full of reference to the fancies and beliefs of the English people in his time or in the times not long before him. If we could understand all these references as we read, we should find ourselves in a world as different from the England of to-day as England is from Austria, and among a people whose ideas and language we should find it hard to understand.

In those early days there were no magazines or newspapers, and for the people as contrasted with the scholars there were no books. The most learned men were ignorant of things which intelligent children know to-day; only a very few men and women could read or write; and all kinds of beliefs about animals, birds, witches, fairies, giants, and the magical qualities of herbs and stones flourished like weeds in a neglected garden. There came into existence an immense mass of misinformation about all manner of things; some of it very stupid, much of it very poetic and interesting. Below the region of exact knowledge accessible to men of education, lay a region of popular fancies, ideas, proverbs, and superstitions in which the great mass of men and women lived, and which was a kind of invisible playground for children. Much of the popular belief about animals and the world was touched with imagination and was full of suggestions, illustrations, and pictorial figures which the poets were quick to use. When the king says to Cranmer in "Henry VIII:" "Come, come, my lord, you'd spare your spoons," he was thinking of the old custom of giving children at christenings silver or gilt spoons with handles shaped to represent the figures of the Apostles. Rich people gave twelve of the "apostles' spoons;" people of more moderate means gave three or four, or only one with the figure of the saint after whom the child was named. On Lord Mayor's Day in London, which came in November and is still celebrated, though shorn of much of its ancient splendour, the Lord Mayor's fool, as part of the festivities, jumped into a great bowl of custard, and this is what Ben Jonson had in mind when he wrote:

"He may, perchance, in tail of a sheriff's dinner,
Skip with a rime o' the table, from near
nothing,
And take his almain leap into a custard,
Shall make my lady Maydress and her sisters,
Laugh all their hoods over their shoulders."

It was once widely believed that a stone of magical, medicinal qualities was set in the toad's head, and so Shakespeare wrote:

"Sweet are the uses of adversity;
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head."

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" is the most wonderful fairy story in the world, but Shakespeare did not create it out of hand; he found the fairy part of it in the traditions of the country people. One of his most intelligent students says: "He founded his elfin world on the prettiest of the people's traditions, and has clothed it in the ever-living flower of his own exuberant fancy."

This immense mass of belief, superstition, fancy, is called folk-lore and is to be found in all parts of the world. These fancies or faiths or superstitions were often distorted with stories, and side by side with folk-lore grew up the folk-tales, of which there are so many that a man might spend his whole life writing them down. They were not made as modern stories are often made, by men who think out carefully what they are to say, arrange the different parts so that they go together like the parts of a house or of a

machine, and write them with careful selection of words so as to make the story vivid and interesting.

The folk-tales were not written out; many of them grew out of single incidents or little inventions of fancy, and became longer and larger as they passed from one story-teller to another and were retold generation after generation.

Men love stories, and for very good reasons, as has been pointed out in introductions to other volumes in this series; and the more quick and original the imagination of a race, the more interesting and varied will be its stories. From the earliest times, long before books were made, the people of many countries were eagerly listening to the men and women who could tell thrilling or humorous tales, as in these later days they read the novels of the writers who know how to tell a story so as to stir the imagination or hold the attention and make readers forget themselves and their worries and troubles. In India and Japan, in Russia and Roumania, among the Indians at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, these stories are still told, not only to children by their mothers and grandmothers, but to crowds of grown-up people by those who have the art of making tales entertaining; and there are still so many of these stories floating about the world from one person to another that if they were written down they would fill a great library. "Until the generation now lately passed away," says Mr. Gosse in his introduction to that very interesting book, "Folk and Fairy Tales" by Asbjörnsen, "almost the only mode in which the Norwegian peasant killed time in the leisure moments between his daily labour and his religious observances, was

in listening to stories. It was the business of old men and women who had reached the extreme limit of their working hours, to retain and repeat these ancient legends in prose and verse, and to recite or sing them when called to do so." And Miss Hapgood has told us that in Russia these stories have not only been handed down wholly by word or mouth for a thousand years, but are flourishing to-day and extending into fresh fields.

The stories made by the people, and told before evening fires, or in public places and at the gates of inns in the Orient, belong to the ages when books were few and knowledge limited, or to people whose fancy was not hampered by familiarity with or care for facts; they are the creations, as they were the amusement, of men and women who were children in knowledge, but were thinking deeply and often wisely of what life meant to them, and were eager to know and hear more about themselves, their fellows, and the world. In the earlier folk-stories one finds a childlike simplicity and readiness to believe in the marvellous; and these qualities are found also in the French peasant's version of the career of Napoleon.

HAMILTON W. MABIE

FOLK TALES EVERY CHILD SHOULD KNOW

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HANS IN LUCK

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Hans had served his Master seven years, and at the end of that time he said to him: "Master, since my time is up, I should like to go home to my mother; so give me my wages, if you please."

His Master replied, "You have served me truly and honestly, Hans, and such as your service was, such shall be your reward;" and with these words he gave him a lump of gold as big as his head. Hans thereupon took his handkerchief out of his pocket, and, wrapping the gold up in it, threw it over his shoulder and set out on the road toward his native village. As he went along, carefully setting one foot to the ground before the other, a horseman came in sight, trotting gaily and briskly along upon a capital animal. "Ah," said Hans, aloud, "what a fine thing that riding is! one is seated, as it were, upon a stool, kicks against no stones, spares one's shoes, and gets along without any trouble!"

The Rider, overhearing Hans making these reflections, stopped and said, "Why, then, do you travel on foot, my fine fellow?"

"Because I am forced," replied Hans, "for I have got a bit of a lump to carry home; it certainly is gold, but then I can't carry my head straight, and it hurts my shoulder."

"If you like we will exchange," said the Rider. "I will give you my horse, and you can give me your lump of gold."

"With all my heart," cried Hans; "but I tell you fairly you undertake a very heavy burden."

The man dismounted, took the gold, and helped Hans on to the horse, and, giving him the reins into his hands, said, "Now, when you want to go faster, you must chuckle with your tongue and cry, 'Gee up! gee up!'"

Hans was delighted indeed when he found himself on the top of a horse, and riding along so freely and gaily. After a while he thought he should like to go rather quicker, and so he cried, "Gee up! gee up!" as the man had told him. The horse soon set off at a hard trot, and, before Hans knew what he was about, he was thrown over head and heels into a ditch which divided the fields from the road. The horse, having accomplished this feat, would have bolted off if he had not been stopped by a Peasant who was coming that way, driving a cow before him. Hans soon picked himself up on his legs, but he was terribly put out, and said to the countryman, "That is bad sport, that riding, especially when one mounts such a beast as that, which stumbles and throws one off so as to nearly break one's neck. I will never ride on that animal again. Commend me to your cow: one may walk behind her without any discomfort, and besides one has, every day for certain, milk, butter, and cheese. Ah! what would I not give for such a cow!"

"Well," said the Peasant, "such an advantage you may soon enjoy; I will exchange my cow for your horse."

To this Hans consented with a thousand thanks, and the Peasant, swinging himself upon the horse, rode off in a hurry.

Hans now drove his cow off steadily before him, thinking of his lucky bargain in this wise: "I have a bit of bread, and I can, as often as I please, eat with it butter and cheese, and

when I am thirsty I can milk my cow and have a draught: and what more can I desire?"

As soon, then, as he came to an inn he halted, and ate with great satisfaction all the bread he had brought with him for his noonday and evening meals, and washed it down with a glass of beer, to buy which he spent his two last farthings. This over, he drove his cow farther, but still in the direction of his mother's village. The heat meantime became more and more oppressive as noontime approached, and just then Hans came to a common which was an hour's journey across. Here he got into such a state of heat that his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and he thought to himself: "This won't do; I will just milk my cow, and refresh myself." Hans, therefore tied her to a stump of a tree, and, having no pail, placed his leathern cap below, and set to work, but not a drop of milk could he squeeze out. He had placed himself, too, very awkwardly, and at last the impatient cow gave him such a kick on the head that he tumbled over on the ground, and for a long time knew not where he was. Fortunately, not many hours after, a Butcher passed by, trundling a young pig along upon a wheelbarrow. "What trick is this!" exclaimed he, helping up poor Hans; and Hans told him that all that had passed. The Butcher then handed him his flask and said, "There, take a drink; it will revive you. Your cow might well give no milk: she is an old beast, and worth nothing at the best but for the plough or the butcher!"

"Eh! eh!" said Hans, pulling his hair over his eyes, "who would have thought it? It is all very well when one can kill a beast like that at home, and make a profit of the flesh; but

for my part I have no relish for cow's flesh; it is too tough for me! Ah! a young pig like yours is the thing that tastes something like, let alone the sausages!"

"Well now, for love of you," said the Butcher, "I will make an exchange, and let you have my pig for your cow."

"Heaven reward you for your kindness!" cried Hans; and, giving up the cow, he untied the pig from the barrow and took into his hands the string with which it was tied.

Hans walked on again, considering how everything had happened just as he wished, and how all his vexations had turned out for the best after all! Presently a boy overtook him carrying a fine white goose under his arm, and after they had said "Good-day" to each other, Hans began to talk about his luck, and what profitable exchanges he had made. The Boy on his part told him that he was carrying the goose to a christening-feast. "Just lift it," said he to Hans, holding it up by its wings, "just feel how heavy it is; why, it has been fattened up for the last eight weeks, and whoever bites it when it is cooked will have to wipe the grease from each side of his mouth!"

"Yes," said Hans, weighing it with one hand, "it is weighty, but my pig is no trifle either."

While he was speaking the Boy kept looking about on all sides, and shaking his head suspiciously, and at length he broke out, "I am afraid it is not all right about your pig. In the village through which I have just come, one has been stolen out of the sty of the mayor himself; and I am afraid, very much afraid, you have it now in your hand! They have sent out several people, and it would be a very bad job for

you if they found you with the pig; the best thing you can do is to hide it in some dark corner!"

Honest Hans was thunderstruck, and exclaimed, "Ah, Heaven help me in this fresh trouble! you know the neighbourhood better than I do; do you take my pig and let me have your goose," said he to the boy.

"I shall have to hazard something at that game," replied the Boy, "but still I do not wish to be the cause of your meeting with misfortune;" and, so saying, he took the rope into his own hand, and drove the pig off quickly by a side-path, while Hans, lightened of his cares, walked on homeward with the goose under his arm. "If I judge rightly," thought he to himself, "I have gained even by this exchange: first there is a good roast; then the quantity of fat which will drip out will make goose broth for a quarter of a year; and then there are fine white feathers, which, when once I have put into my pillow I warrant I shall sleep without rocking. What pleasure my mother will have!"

As he came to the last village on his road there stood a Knife-grinder, with his barrow by the hedge, whirling his wheel round and singing:

> "Scissors and razors and such-like I grind;
> And gaily my rags are flying behind."

Hans stopped and looked at him, and at last he said, "You appear to have a good business, if I may judge by your merry song?"

"Yes," answered the Grinder, "this business has a golden bottom! A true knife-grinder is a man who as often as he

puts his hand into his pocket feels money in it! But what a fine goose you have got; where did you buy it?"

"I did not buy it at all," said Hans, "but took it in exchange for my pig." "And the pig?" "I exchanged for my cow." "And the cow?" "I exchanged a horse for her." "And the horse?" "For him I gave a lump of gold as big as my head." "And the gold?" "That was my wages for a seven years' servitude." "And I see you have known how to benefit yourself each time," said the Grinder; "but, could you now manage that you heard the money rattling in your pocket as you walked, your fortune would be made."

"Well! how shall I manage that?" asked Hans.

"You must become a grinder like me; to this trade nothing peculiar belongs but a grindstone; the other necessaries find themselves. Here is one which is a little worn, certainly, and so I will not ask anything more for it than your goose; are you agreeable?"

"How can you ask me?" said Hans; "why, I shall be the luckiest man in the world; having money as often as I dip my hand into my pocket, what have I to care about any longer?"

So saying, he handed over the goose, and received the grindstone in exchange.

"Now," said the Grinder, picking up an ordinary big flint stone which lay near, "now, there you have a capital stone upon which only beat them long enough and you may straighten all your old nails! Take it, and use it carefully!"

Hans took the stone and walked on with a satisfied heart, his eyes glistening with joy. "I must have been born," said