

The Fairy and the Miller's Wife

ONE day as a mother was sitting rocking her baby to sleep, she was surprised, on looking up, to see a lady of elegant and courtly demeanor, so unlike any one she had ever seen in that part of the country, standing in the middle of the room. She had not heard any one enter, therefore you may judge it was with no little surprise, not unmingled with curiosity, that she rose to welcome her strange visitor.

She handed her a chair, but she very politely declined to be seated. She was very magnificently attired; her dress was of the richest green, embroidered round with spangles of gold, and on her head was a small coronet of pearls. The woman was still more surprised at her strange request.

She asked, in a rich musical voice, if she would oblige her with a basin of oatmeal. A basin full to overflowing was immediately handed to her, for the woman's husband, being both a farmer and miller, had plenty of meal at command. The lady promised to return it, and named the day she would do so.

One of the children put out her hand to get hold of the grand lady's spangles, but told her mother afterwards that she felt nothing. The mother was afraid the child would lose the use of her hands, but no such calamity ensued. It would have been very ungrateful in her fairy majesty if she had struck the child powerless for touching her dress, if indeed such power were hers.

But to return to our story. The very day mentioned the oatmeal was returned, not by the same lady, but by a curious little figure with a yelping voice; she was likewise dressed in green. After handing the meal, she yelped out, "Braw meal; it's the top pickle of the sin corn." It was excellent; and what was very strange, all the family were advised to partake of it but one servant lad, who spurned the fairy's meal; and he dying shortly after, the miller and his wife firmly believed it was because he refused to eat of the meal.

They also firmly believed their first visitor was no less a personage than the Queen of the Fairies, who, having dismissed her court, had not one maid of honor in waiting to obey her commands. A few nights after this strange visit, as the miller was going to bed, a gentle tap was heard at the door, and on its being opened by him, with a light in his hand, there stood a little figure dressed in green, who, in a shrill voice, but very polite manner, requested him to let on the water and set the mill in order, for she was going to grind some corn. The miller did not dare to refuse, so did as she desired him. She told him to go to bed again, and he would find all as he had left it. He found everything in the morning as she said he would. So much for the honesty of fairies.

Stories about the Fox

THE FOX OUTWITTED

ONE day the fox succeeded in catching a fine fat goose asleep by the side of a loch; he held her by the wing, and making a joke of her cackling, hissing, and fears, he said—

"Now, if you had me in your mouth as I have you, tell me what you would do?"

"Why," said the goose, "that is an easy question. I would fold my hands, shut my eyes, say a grace, and then eat you."

"Just what I mean to do," said Rory; and folding his hands, and looking very demure, he said a pious grace with his eyes shut.

But while he did this the goose had spread her wings, and she was now half way over the loch; so the fox was left to lick his lips for supper.

"I will make a rule of this," he said in disgust, "never in all my life to say a grace again till after I feel the meat warm in my belly."

THE FOX TROUBLED WITH FLEAS

THE fox is much troubled by fleas, and this is the way in which he gets rid of them. He hunts about till he finds a lock of wool, and then he takes it to the river, and holds it in his mouth, and so puts the end of his brush into the water, and down he goes slowly. The fleas run away from the water, and at last they all run over the fox's nose into the wool, and then the fox dips his nose under and lets the wool go off with the stream.

THE FOX AND THE BAG-PIPES

THE fox, being hungry one day, found a bag-pipe, and proceeded to eat the bag, which is generally, or was till lately, made of hide. There was still a remnant of breath in the bag, and when the fox bit it the drone gave a groan, when the fox, surprised but not frightened, said—

"Here is meat and music!"

THE FOX'S STRATAGEM

THE fox is very wise indeed. I don't know whether it is true or not, but an old fellow told me that he had seen him go to a loch where there were wild ducks, and take a bunch of heather in his mouth, then go into the water, and swim down with the wind till he got into the middle of the ducks, and then he let go the heather and killed two of them.

THE FOX AND THE WRENS

A FOX had noticed for some days a family of wrens, off which he wished to dine. He might have been satisfied with one, but he was determined to have the whole lot— father and eighteen sons,—and all so like that he could not tell one from the other, or the father from the children.

"It is no use to kill one son," he said to himself, "because the old cock will take warning and fly away with the seventeen. I wish I knew which is the old gentleman."

He set his wits to work to find out, and one day, seeing them all threshing in a barn, he sat down to watch them; still he could not be sure.

"Now I have it," he said; "well done the old man's stroke! He hits true," he cried.

"Oh!" replied the one he suspected of being the head of the family; "if you had seen my grandfather's strokes you might have said that."

The sly fox pounced on the cock, ate him up in a trice, and then soon caught and disposed of the eighteen sons, all flying in terror about the barn.

THE FOX AND THE COCK

A FOX one day met a cock, and they began talking.

"How many tricks canst thou do?" said the fox.

"Well," said the cock, "I could do three; how many canst thou do thyself?"

"I could do three score and thirteen," said the fox.

"What tricks canst thou do?" said the cock.

"Well," said the fox, "my grandfather used to shut one eye and give a great shout."

"I could do that myself," said the cock.

"Do it," said the fox. And the cock shut one eye and crowed as loud as ever he could, but he shut the eye that was next the fox, and the fox gripped him by the neck and ran away with him. But the wife to whom the cock belonged saw him and cried out, "Let go the cock; he's mine."

"Say thou, SE MO CHOILEACH FHEIN A TH' ANN" (it is my own cock), said the cock to the fox.

Then the fox opened his mouth to say as the cock did, and he dropped the cock, and he sprang up on the top of a house, and shut one eye and gave a loud crow; and that's all there is of that sgeulachd (tale).

HOW THE WOLF LOST HIS TAIL

ONE day the wolf and the fox were out together, and they stole a dish of crowdie. Now the wolf was the biggest beast of the two, and he had a long tail like a greyhound, and great teeth.

The fox was afraid of him, and did not dare to say a word when the wolf ate the most of the crowdie, and left only a little at the bottom of the dish for him, but he determined to punish him for it; so the next night when they were out together the fox said—

"I smell a very nice cheese, and" (pointing to the moonshine on the ice) "there it is too."

"And how will you get it?" said the wolf. "Well, stop you here till I see if the farmer is asleep, and if you keep your tail on it, nobody will see you or know that it is there. Keep it steady. I may be some time coming back."

So the wolf lay down and laid his tail on the moonshine in the ice, and kept it for an hour till it was fast. Then the fox, who had been watching him, ran in to the farmer and said: "The wolf is there; he will eat up the children, —the wolf! the wolf!"

Then the farmer and his wife came out with sticks to kill the wolf, but the wolf ran off leaving his tail behind him, and that's why the wolf is stumpy-tailed to this day, though the fox has a long brush.

THE TWO FOXES

A MAN was one day walking along the road with a creel of herrings on his back, and two foxes saw him, and the one, who was the biggest, said to the other, "Stop thou here, and follow the man, and I will run round and pretend that I am dead." So he ran round, and stretched himself on the road. The man came on, and when he saw the fox, he was well pleased to find so fine a beast, and he picked him up, and threw him into the creel, and he walked on. But the fox threw the herrings out of the creel, and the other followed and picked them up; and when the creel was empty, the big fox leaped out and ran away, and that is how they got the herrings.

Well, they went on together till they came to a smith's house, and there was a horse tied at the door, and he had a golden shoe, and there was a name on it.

"I will go and read what is written on that shoe," said the big fox, and he went; but the horse lifted his foot, and struck a kick on him, and drove his brains out.

"Lad, lad," said the little fox, "no scholar me, nor wish I to be;" and, of course, he got the herrings.