

HANS IN LUCK

BY THE GRIMM BROTHERS



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
cer-
tain,
milk, but-
ter, 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 war-

rant 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 he, “to a heap of luck; everything happens just as I wish, as if I were a Sunday-child.”

Soon, however, having been on his legs since daybreak, he began to feel very tired, and was plagued too with hunger, since he had eaten all his provision at once in his joy about the cow bargain. At last he felt quite unable to go farther, and was forced, too, to halt every minute for the stones encumbered him very much. Just then the thought overcame him, what a good thing it were if he had no need to carry them any longer, and at the same moment he came up to a stream. Here he resolved to rest and refresh himself

with drink, and so that the stones might not hurt him in kneeling he laid them carefully down by his side on the bank. This done, he stooped down to scoop up some water in his hand, and then it happened that he pushed one stone a little too far, so that both presently went plump into the water. Hans, as soon as he saw them sinking to the bottom, jumped up for joy, and then kneeled down and returned thanks, with tears in his eyes, that so mercifully, and without any act on his part, and in so nice a way, he had been delivered from the heavy stones, which alone hindered him from getting on.

“So lucky as I am,” exclaimed Hans, “is no other man under the sun!”

Then with a light heart, and free from every burden, he leaped gaily along till he reached his mother’s house.