

MORE ENGLISH FAIRY TALES

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More English fairy tales by Joseph Jacobs

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FAIRY TALES**

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Janet casts the flaming

Sword into the Well

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MORE ENGLISH
FAIRY TALES

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY
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1894

Preface

THIS volume will come, I fancy, as a surprise both to my brother folk-lorists and to the public in general. It might naturally have been thought that my former volume (*English Fairy Tales*, Nutt, 1889) had almost exhausted the scanty remains of the traditional folk-tales of England. Yet I shall be much disappointed if the present collection is not found to surpass the former in interest and vivacity, while for the most part it goes over hitherto untrodden ground. The majority of the tales in this book have either never appeared before, or have never been brought between the same boards.

In putting these tales together, I have acted on the same principles as in the preceding volume, which has already, I am happy to say, established itself as a kind of English Grimm. I have taken English tales wherever I could find them, one from the United States, some from the Lowland Scotch, and a few have been adapted from ballads, while I have left a couple in their original

metrical form. I have re-written most of them, and in doing so have adopted the traditional English style of folk-telling, with its "Wells" and "Lawkamerey" and archaic touches, which are known nowadays as vulgarisms. From former experience, I find that each of these principles has met with some dissent from critics who have written from the high and lofty standpoint of folk-lore, or from the lowlier vantage of "mere literature." I take this occasion to soften their ire, or perhaps give them further cause for reviling.

My folk-lore friends look on with sadness while they view me laying profane hands on the sacred text of my originals. I have actually at times introduced or deleted whole incidents, have given another turn to a tale, or finished off one that was incomplete, while I have had no scruple in prosing a ballad or softening down over-abundant dialect. This is rank sacrilege in the eyes of the rigid orthodox in matters folk-lorical. My defence might be that I had a cause at heart as sacred as our science of folk-lore—the filling of our children's imaginations with bright trains of images. But even on the lofty heights of folk-lore science I am not entirely defenceless. Do my friendly critics believe that even Campbell's materials had not been modified by the various narrators before they reached the great J. F.? Why may I not have the same privilege as any other story-teller, especially when I know the ways of story-telling as she is told in English, at least as well as a Devonshire or Lancashire

peasant? And — conclusive argument — wilt thou, oh orthodox brother folk-lorist, still continue to use Grimm and Asbjørnsen? Well, they did the same as I.

Then as to using tales in Lowland Scotch, whereat a Saturday Reviewer, whose identity and fatherland were not difficult to guess, was so shocked. Scots a dialect of English! Scots tales the same as English! Horror and Philistinism! was the Reviewer's outcry. Matter of fact, is my reply, which will only confirm him, I fear, in his convictions. Yet I appeal to him, why make a difference between tales told on different sides of the Border? A tale told in Durham or Cumberland in a dialect which only Dr. Murray could distinguish from Lowland Scotch, would on all hands be allowed to be "English." The same tale told a few miles farther North, why should we refuse it the same qualification? A tale in Henderson is English: why not a tale in Chambers, the majority of whose tales are to be found also south of the Tweed?

The truth is, my folk-lore friends and my Saturday Reviewer differ with me on the important problem of the origin of folk-tales. They think that a tale probably originated where it is found. They therefore attribute more importance than I to the exact form in which it is found and restrict it to the locality of birth. I consider the probability to lie in an origin elsewhere: I think it more likely than not that any tale found in a place was rather brought there than born there. I have discussed