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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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How the Pigeon Became a Tame Bird

Once upon a time there was a father with three sons who had reached the age when they must go out into the world to earn their own living. When the time for parting came he gave to each of them a large melon with the advice that they open the melons only at a place where there was water nearby.

The three brothers set out from their father's house, each taking a different path. As soon as the eldest son was out of sight of the house he opened his melon. A beautiful maiden sprang out of the melon saying, "Give me water or give me milk." There was no water nearby and neither did the young man have any milk to give her. She fell down dead.

The second son left his father's house by a path which led over a steep hill. The large melon was heavy to carry and in a little while he became very tired and thirsty. He saw no water nearby and feared that there was no possibility of finding any soon, so he thought he would open the melon and use it to quench his thirst. Accordingly he opened his melon. To his great surprise, a beautiful maiden sprang forth saying, "Give me water or give me milk." Of course he had neither to give her and she fell down dead.

The third son also travelled by a path which led over a steep hill. He, too, became very tired and thirsty and he often thought how much he would like to open his melon. However, he remembered his father's advice to open it only where there was water nearby. So he travelled on and on hoping to find a spring of water on the hillside. He did not have the good fortune to pass near a spring either going up the hill or coming down on the opposite side. At the foot of the hill there was a town and in the centre of the town there was a fountain. The young man hurried straight to the fountain and took a long refreshing drink. Then he opened his melon. A beautiful maiden sprang forth saying, "Give me water or give me milk." The young man gave her a drink of water. Then he helped her to a hiding place among the thick branches of the tree which grew beside the fountain and went away in search of food.

Soon a little servant girl came to the fountain to fill a big water jar which she carried on her head. The maiden in the tree above the fountain peeped out through the branches. When the little servant girl bent over the water to fill her jar she saw the reflection of a charming face in the water. "How beautiful I have become," she said to herself. "How ridiculous that any one as beautiful as I am should carry water on her head." She threw her water jar upon the ground in disdain and it broke into a thousand pieces.

When the little maid reached home with neither water nor water jar her mistress punished her severely and sent her again to the fountain with a new water jar to

fill. This time the maiden in the tree gave a little silvery laugh when the servant girl bent over the water. The little maid looked up and spied her in the tree. "O, it is you, is it, who are responsible for my beating?" she said. She pulled a pin out of her camisa and, reaching up, she stuck it savagely into the beautiful maiden in the tree. Then a strange thing happened. There was no longer any beautiful maiden in the tree. There was just a pigeon there.

At that moment the young man came back to the tree with the food he had procured. When the little maid heard his footsteps she was frightened nearly to death. She hid herself quickly among the thick branches of the tree. The young man was very much surprised to find a little maid in the tree in the place of the beautiful maiden he had left there. "What has happened to you during my absence" he asked in horror as soon as he saw her. "The sun has burned my complexion. That is all. It is nothing. I shall be myself again when I get away from this hot place," the little maid replied.

The young man married the little maid and took her away out of sunny places hoping that she would soon be again the beautiful maiden she was



when he left her by the fountain in search of food. But she always remained different.

Years passed and the young man became very rich. He lived in a beautiful mansion. All around the house there was a wonderful garden full of lovely flowers and splendid trees where birds loved to sing sweet songs and build their nests. In spite of his beautiful home the young man was not very happy. It was a great trial to have a wife who looked so different from when they first met. He often walked up and down the paths in his garden at the close of the day and thought about how beautiful his wife had been the first time he ever saw her. As he walked in the garden there was always a pigeon which followed him about. It flew about his head in a way that annoyed him, so one day when his wife was sick and asked for a pigeon to be roasted for her dinner he commanded that this particular pigeon should be killed. When the cook was preparing the pigeon for her mistress to eat for dinner she noticed a black speck on the pigeon's breast. She thought that it was a speck of dirt and tried to brush it away. To her surprise she could not brush it off easily because it was a pin firmly embedded in the pigeon's breast. She pulled and pulled but could not pull it out so she sent for her master to come and see what he could do to remove it. He at once pulled out the pin and then a wonderful thing happened. The pigeon was transformed into a beautiful maiden. He at once recognised her as the same lovely maiden who had sprung forth from his melon by the fountain and whom he had left hidden in the tree.

When the young man's wife learned that her husband had found the beautiful maiden again after all these years she confessed her deceit and soon died. The young man married the beautiful maiden who was still just as beautiful as she was the first time he saw her. They were very happy together but the wife never forgot about the time she had been a pigeon. Up to that time pigeons had been wild birds who built their nests in the deep forest. The wife often wished that they would build their nests in her beautiful garden so she had little bird houses built and set up there. One day a pigeon, bolder than the rest, flew through the garden and spied the little bird houses. He moved his family there at once and told the other pigeons that there were other houses there for them too. The other pigeons were timid and so they waited to see what terrible calamity might happen to the bold pigeon and his family, but not a single unpleasant thing occurred. They were just as happy as happy could be in their new home. After a while other pigeon families moved into the garden and were happy too. Thus it came about that after years and years the pigeons no longer build their nests in the deep forest, but they always make their homes near the homes of men. The pigeons, themselves, do not know how it all came about, but the beautiful woman who was once a pigeon, when she had children of her own, told them about it, and they told their children. Thus it happens that the mothers in Brazil tell their children this story about the pigeon.