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The Brook and the Water Wheel

Emilie Poulsson

The water wheel in a gristmill went round and round, by day and by night, without stopping. Said the brook one day, as it passed over the wheel: "Are you not tired of being always at work, and of doing the same thing today that you did yesterday? When I have done my work in making you turn, I glide on and take my pleasure in flowing through the fields and woods."

"But my pleasure," replied the wheel, "is in continuing to work and go round and round grinding up the corn."

"Yesterday," continued the brook, "as I flowed through the meadow, I heard some people who were wandering there say how beautiful I was, and what sweet music I made as I rippled over the stones."

"And no doubt they said what was true," replied the wheel, "but it could never be said of me. How would I look rolling through the meadow? I would not be admired by others, nor would I enjoy it myself."

"You are to be admired for your humility," said the brook, "in being contented with so dismal a place."

"Not at all," replied the wheel, "for when this place was given me, I was given also a liking for it."

"But do you not long for the sunshine and the breeze and a sight of the birds and the flowers?"

"No more than you do for this dim chamber under the mill. Here I was made to dwell, and here I am satisfied to be. I greet you tumbling in from the mountain side over my head, and bid you adieu as you flow out joyously under my feet; but I do not long to follow you. The summer's heat does not parch me here, nor the winter's frost stop me from turning. Even in this dim twilight I revolve and listen to the sound of the grinding. I delight to hear the farmer drive his team to the mill door loaded with grain, and afterward haul it away when I have made it into flour for his wife and children to eat. I am content to stay here and labor --



not by constraint nor for duty's sake alone, but because the place accords with my nature and therefore it is my choice."

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