



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Oat Cake

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One time the farmer's wife made two oat cakes. She shaped them, and patted them and put them down in front of the fire to bake. "They will do for the good man's dinner," said she.

Then said one cake to the other cake, "It is all very well for the woman to say that, but I have no wish to be eaten. I will wait until I am baked hard, and then I shall set out to see the world."

"That is a poor way to talk, brother," replied the other. "Oat cakes were made to be eaten, and you should be proud to think the master himself is to have you for dinner."

"Master or no master, I have no wish to be eaten," repeated the first oat cake.

Not long after that, the farmer came home, and he was very hungry. First he ate the oat cake that wished to be eaten, and after he had finished it, he stretched out his hand for the other, but it slipped through his fingers and away it rolled, out of the door and on down the road.

It rolled along and rolled along until it came to a neat, tidy house with a thatched roof.

"This looks like a good and proper place for me to stop," said the oat cake, so it rolled on in through the doorway.

There inside were a tailor and his two apprentices, all of them sitting cross-legged and sewing away; and the tailor's wife stood by the fire, stirring the porridge.

When the tailor and the boys saw the oat cake come rolling in across the floor so boldly, they were frightened, and jumped up and hid behind the woman.

"Now out upon you! To be frightened by an oat cake!" cried the good wife. "Quick! Catch hold of it and divide it among you, and I'll give you some milk to drink with it."

When the tailor and his apprentices heard this, they took courage and ran out and tried to catch the oat cake; but it dodged them and rolled under the table and under the chairs, and while they were chasing it and the woman watching them, the porridge boiled over into the fire and was burned.

But the oat cake escaped them, and rolled out through the door, and on down the road again. "I'd better go a bit farther before I settle down for the night," it thought to itself.

Presently it came to a little small house. "I'll try how it is in here," said the oat cake, and in it rolled.

There sat a weaver at his loom, and his wife was winding some yarn.



"What's that that just came in at the door?" asked the weaver, for his eyesight was not very good.

"It's an oat cake!" said his wife staring.

"Catch it woman! Catch it, before it rolls away again!" cried the weaver.

The woman chased the oat cake up and down and round about, and the weaver left his work and joined in the chase, but the oat cake was too lively for them. Every time they thought they had it, it slipped through their fingers as though it were buttered.

"Throw your yarn over it and snare it," cried the weaver.

The woman threw her yarn over the oat cake, but the cake tangled up the yarn so that later on it took the woman a good two days to straighten it out again. But the oat cake escaped and rolled out and down the road.

"That's too lively a place for me to stay," said the oat cake to itself.

At the next place where the oat cake stopped, a woman was churning.

"Oh, the dear little, pretty little oat cake!" cried she. "I have good thick cream to-day, and plenty of it, and the oat cake will taste good with it."

"But first you must catch me," said the oat cake.

It rolled round and round the churn, and the woman ran after it, and in the end she fell against the churn and upset it.

While she was cleaning up the mess, the oat cake set out on further adventures.

"So far I've found no place in the world where an oat cake can rest in peace and quiet," said the cake. "But, there must be such a place somewhere, and if there is, I mean to find it."

Soon it came to a bit of a stream, with a mill beside it.

The oat cake rolled into the mill, and there stood a miller at work, and he was all

white with flour. "Oat cake and a bit of cheese taste well together," said the miller. "The cheese I already have. Come in, come in and make the other half of the feast."

But the oat cake was frightened and rolled on out, and the miller never bothered his head further about it.

The next place the oat cake stopped was at a smithy. The smith was busy beating out a horseshoe, but when he saw the oat cake he laid aside the shoe.

"Welcome! Welcome! I like an oat cake and a drink of ale as well as the next man. Come in and let us feast together."

"Not I," cried the oat cake, and away it rolled in haste, and as the road was downhill now, it made good time.

The smith ran after it, and when he found the cake was going too fast for him, he threw his hammer after it, and the hammer fell into a thicket, and the smith had a great time finding it.

But the oat cake hid in a crack between two rocks, and lay there quiet until the smith had found his hammer and gone back to his smithy again grumbling. Then out it came and away it rolled, but it was getting tired now.

"Maybe it would have been better if I had gone to rest in the good man's stomach," said the oat cake, "but here we go, and I have no mind to be eaten by the first stranger who takes a fancy to me,—no, nor by the second either."

In the next house the oat cake entered, the good wife was cooking supper, and her husband sat plaiting straw rope.

"Look at that!" cried the woman. "You're always asking me for oat cake, and there is one ready to your hand. Quick! Quick! Shut the door and catch it."

The man jumped up to shut the door, but he caught his foot in the rope he was plaiting and fell flat on the floor. The woman threw her porridge stick at the cake, but away it went and off down the road.

"Now I'll have to find some place to sleep," said it to itself. "No knowing what will happen if I lay me down by the roadside."

It saw an open door, and in it rolled. The good man of the house had just taken off his breeches, and the woman was tucking the children into bed.

"Look! Look!" cried the woman. "There is an oat cake rolling in at the door, and no one coming after to claim it. Catch it before it can get away again."

The good man jumped up and threw his breeches at it. They fell on the oat cake and almost smothered it, but it managed to roll out from under them and away it

went, with the man and his wife in full chase after it, and the children crying after them.

But the oat cake was too quick, even for the two of them. It outran them both, and the man and his wife had to go back home without it, the man with his bare legs, and the neighbors peeking out at him from behind their window curtains.

By this time it was dark. "I'll have to hurry if I want to find a place to-night where I can sleep in quiet," said the oat cake.

So now it rolled along more briskly, and presently it came to a pasture, and it leaped and bounded across it at a great rate, for it was all downhill, and then suddenly—plunk!—it fell down into a fox's hole.

The fox was at home and half asleep, but as soon as he saw the oat cake, he was wide awake again in a moment. The fox had had nothing to eat all day, and he did not stop to look twice at the oat cake, but bit it in half and swallowed it down in a trice and with no words about it.

So the oat cake slept quiet after all its wanderings, but it might as well have been eaten by the farmer in the first place.

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