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The Rooster, The Hand-mill And The Swarm Of Hornets

Unknown writer

Once upon a time there was a peasant who wanted to go to sell a pig. After he had gone a while, he met a man who asked him where he was going with his pig. "I want to sell it," answered the peasant, "but I do not know what to do to get rid of it." "Go to the devil," said the man, "he will be the first to rid you of it." So the peasant kept on along the broad highway.

When he came to the devil's place, there stood a man out by the wood-pile making wood. The peasant went to him and asked whether he could tell him if they wanted to buy a pig in the devil's place. "I'll go in and ask," said the man, "if you will make wood in my stead while I am gone." "Yes, I will do that gladly," said the peasant, took the ax, stood at the wood-pile and began to make wood. And he worked and worked until evening came; but the man did not return to tell him whether they would or would not buy a pig in the devil's place.

At length another man came that way, and the peasant asked him whether he would make wood in his stead, for it was impossible to lay down the ax unless another took it up and went on working. So the man took the ax and stood there making wood, and the peasant went into the devil's place himself, and asked whether any one wanted to buy a pig.

A crowd as large as that at a fair at once gathered, and all wanted to buy the pig. Then the peasant thought: "Whoever pays the most, gets it." And one would overbid another, offering far more than a whole herd of pigs were worth. But at last a gentleman came along who whispered something to the peasant, and told him to come along with him; and he could have all the money he wanted.

So when they had reached the gentleman's house, and the peasant had given him the pig, he received in payment a rooster who would lay silver coins as often as he was told to do so. Then the peasant went his way, well content with his bargain. But on the way home he stayed overnight at a tavern kept by an old woman. And he was so exceedingly happy about his splendid rooster, that he had to boast about him to the old woman, and show her how he went about laying silver coins. And at night, when the peasant was fast asleep, the old woman came and took away his rooster, and put another in its place. No sooner did the peasant awake in the morning than he wanted to set his rooster to work.

"Lay quickly, rooster of mine! Lay big silver coins, my rooster!" But the rooster could lay no silver coins at all, and only answered "Kikeriki! Kikeriki! Kikeriki!" Then the peasant fell into a rage, wandered back to the devil's place, complained about the rooster, and told how absolutely worthless he was. He was kindly received, and the same gentleman gave him a hand-mill. When he called out "Mill grind!" to it, it would grind as much meal as he wanted it to, and would not stop until he said: "Mill, stop grinding!" And the mill would grind out every kind of meal for which he asked.

When the peasant set out for home, he reached the same tavern at which he had already put up in the evening, so he turned in and decided to stay over night. He was so pleased with the mill that it was impossible for him to hold his tongue; so he told the old woman what a valuable mill he had, and showed her how it worked. But during the night, while he was asleep, the old woman came and stole his mill and put another in its place.



When the peasant awoke in the morning, he was in a great hurry to test his mill; but he could not make it obey. "Mill grind!" he cried. But the mill stood still. Then he said: "Dear mill, grind wheat meal!" but it had no effect. "Then grind rye meal!" he shouted; but that did not help, either. "Well, then, grind peas!" But the mill did not seem to hear; but stood as still as though it had never turned a single time in all its life. Then the peasant took the road back to the devil's place again, and at once hunted up the gentleman who had purchased his pig, and told him the mill would grind no more meal.

"Do not grieve about that," said the gentleman, and gave him a large, large hornets' nest, full of hornets, who flew out in swarms and stung any one whom they were told to sting, until one said "stop!" to them. Now when the peasant again came to the old woman, he told her he had a swarm of hornets who obeyed his commands. "Heavens above!" cried the woman, "that's something worth while seeing!" "You may see it without any trouble," replied the peasant, and at once called: "Out, out, my hornets and sting the old woman!" And at once the entire swarm fell upon the old woman, who began to scream pitifully. She begged the peasant to please call back his hornets, and said she was only too willing to give back the rooster and the mill she had taken.

The peasant did not object to this; but ordered his hornets to leave the old woman alone, and fly back into their house. Then he went home with his rooster, his mill and his hornets, became a rich man and lived happily until he died. And he was in the habit of saying: "They have a big fair in the devil's place, and you

find real decent people there, and above all, a liberal gentleman, with whom it is a pleasure to do business."

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