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The Gluttonous Girl

R.H. Busk

There was a mother who had a daughter who was lazy and greedy and could not be persuaded to spin, no matter how often she was told, no matter how loudly she was scolded. One day the scolding reached such a pitch that a passing merchant—a man of some wealth, who happened to be walking below the window—stopped to listen. He could not quite make out the words, but he heard a great deal of enthusiasm from the mother about her daughter, and concluded that what he was hearing was a mother who couldn't stop praising her child's extraordinary passion for spinning—so passionate that she could not be made to stop even when told to.

He sent his compliments in through the door, asked to meet this remarkable girl, and shortly arrived at the conclusion that he would like to marry her. The mother, astonished by her luck, kept her mouth shut and arranged everything quickly.

The new husband was delighted with his wife and was looking forward to a great deal of excellent spinning.

On the first evening, three visitors appeared at the window: an old woman who limped badly on one leg, an old woman who squinted so severely she could barely see, and an old woman with such a curious growth in her throat that she walked at a permanent strange angle. They had heard there was a new bride in the house, they said, and they had come to watch her spin.



The wife nearly fainted. She could not spin at all. She picked up the spindle in the wrong hand, sat down at the wrong angle, and produced something that could not properly be called thread, being closer in spirit to a small catastrophe. The three old women watched. Then one of them began to laugh—not a polite laugh but a real one, from the belly—and as she laughed, her limp disappeared. The second laughed until her squint straightened itself. The third laughed until whatever had been lodged in her throat was gone.

They were so grateful—and so entertained—that they stayed and spun everything in the house before morning, and left it all perfectly done.

The wife's husband was wonderfully impressed.

After this, whenever he began to say something about spinning, or looked thoughtfully at her hands, she would rattle a bag of walnuts in a way that distracted him until the topic had passed. In this manner she kept house for many years without ever being asked to spin again.

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