

CINDERELLA

There was once a gentleman who took for his second wife the proudest and most haughty lady that was ever seen. She had two daughters who were exactly like her in character, as in everything else. The gentleman had likewise a young daughter, but of uncommon sweetness and gentleness of disposition, which she took from her mother, who was the best person in the world.

The wedding was hardly over when the stepmother began to give full vent to her bad temper. She could not bear this young girl, whose good qualities made her own daughters appear even more hateful in contrast. She gave her the meanest work in the house to do: it was she who washed the dishes and tables, and scrubbed the stairs, and cleaned the chambers of madam and her young lady daughters. She slept at the top of the house in a garret, on a miserable straw bed, while her sisters were in rooms with inlaid floors, where they had beds of the newest fashion, and mirrors in which they could see themselves from head to foot.



All this the poor girl bore patiently. She dared not complain to her father, who would only have reproved her, for his wife governed him entirely. When she had done her work she used to go into the chimney corner and sit among the cinders; so they commonly called her "Cinder-wench." The younger sister, who was not so rude and uncivil as the elder, called her "Cinderella." But Cinderella, for all her mean dress, was still a hundred times more beautiful than her sisters, although they were always dressed magnificently.

It happened that the King's son gave a ball, to which he invited all persons of fashion. Our two young ladies were invited, for they were people of distinction in the country. They were much

delighted and were absorbed in selecting the gowns and headdresses which would best become them. Here was fresh trial for Cinderella, for it was she who ironed her sisters' linen and starched their ruffles. All day long they talked of nothing but how they should be dressed.

"For my part," said the elder, "I will wear my red velvet dress with French trimmings."

"And I," said the younger, "shall have only my ordinary skirt; but to make amends for that I shall wear my gold-flowered mantle and my diamond necklace, which are very far from being ordinary."

They sent for the best hairdresser to arrange their hair in the most stylish way, and bought patches for their cheeks from the most fashionable maker. They called in Cinderella to consult with them, for she had good taste. She gave them the best advice she could, and even offered to arrange their headdresses, a proposal which they were very ready to accept.

While she was doing this they said to her, "Cinderella, should you not like to go to the ball?"

"Ah!" replied Cinderella, "you mock me! It is not for me to go to balls."

"You are right," said they; "people might well laugh to see a cinder-wench at a ball." Any one but Cinderella might have left their hair awry, but she was good-humored and did it to perfection.

For almost two days they scarcely ate anything, so transported were they with joy. They broke a dozen or more laces by drawing them too tight in their efforts to make themselves look as slender as possible, and they spent all their time before the mirror.

At last the happy day came; they departed, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could. When she could see them no longer she began to cry.

Her godmother, seeing her in tears, asked her what was the matter.

"I wish—I w-i-s-h"—but she could not finish for weeping.

Her godmother, who was a fairy, said to her, "You wish you could go to the ball, do you not?"

"Alas, yes!" said Cinderella, sighing.

"Well," said her godmother, "be a good girl, and I will see to it that you go."



She led her into her chamber, and said to her, "Run into the garden, my child, and fetch me a pumpkin."

Cinderella went at once to pick the finest she could find, although she could not imagine how this pumpkin could help her to go to the ball.

Her godmother scooped out the inside, leaving nothing but the rind; then she struck it with her wand, and the pumpkin immediately became a beautiful gilded coach.

She then went to look into the mouse trap, where she found six mice, all alive. She told Cinderella to lift the door of the trap, and as each mouse passed out the godmother gave it a little tap with her wand and it was turned into a fine horse. The six made a splendid team of six horses of a fine dapple-gray mouse color.

While she was wondering what she should do for a coachman, Cinderella said, "I will run and see if there is not a rat in the rat trap; we will turn him into a coachman."

"You are right," said her godmother; "go and look."

Cinderella brought the trap to her, and in it there were three huge rats. The fairy chose the one which had the largest beard, and, touching him with her wand, turned him into an imposing coachman with the finest mustache and whiskers ever seen.

Then she said to Cinderella, "Go into the garden and you will find six lizards behind the watering pot; bring them to me."

She had no sooner done this than her godmother changed them into six footmen, who jumped up at once behind the coach in their laced liveries, and held on as if they had done nothing else all their lives.

The fairy then said to Cinderella, “Well, here is something in which to go to the ball; are you not pleased with it?”

“Yes; but am I to go like this,—in these miserable rags?”

Her godmother simply touched her with her wand, and in the same instant her clothes were changed into apparel of cloth of gold and silver, all decked with jewels. Then she gave her a pair of the prettiest glass slippers in the world. Thus attired, she got into the carriage. Her godmother charged her on no account to stay beyond midnight, and warned her that, if she stayed one moment longer, her coach would become a pumpkin again, her horses mice, her footmen lizards, and her clothes just as they were before. She promised her godmother that she would not fail to leave the ball before midnight, and set off, almost beside herself with joy.



The King's son, when he was told that a great Princess, whom nobody knew, had arrived, ran out to receive her; he gave her his hand as she alighted from the coach and conducted her to the hall

where the company was assembled. A deep silence at once fell upon every one; they stopped dancing and the violins ceased to play, so taken up was every one with gazing at the marvelous beauty of this unknown arrival. Nothing was heard but the confused murmur of voices saying, "Ah! how beautiful she is!"

The King himself, old as he was, could not keep his eyes off her, and whispered to the Queen that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and so lovely a creature.

All the ladies were taken up with studying her headdress and her costume, in order to have some made for themselves after the same pattern the next day,—provided they could find materials which would be fine enough and work-people clever enough to make them.

The King's son conducted her to the seat of honor, and soon took her out to dance with him. She danced with such grace that every one admired her still more. A fine collation was served, but the young Prince was so absorbed in gazing at her that he did not touch a morsel.

She seated herself beside her sisters and showed them a thousand courtesies, sharing with them, among other things, the oranges and citrons which the Prince had presented to her. This astonished them very much, for they did not know her.

While they were conversing together Cinderella heard the clock strike a quarter to twelve. She rose at once, curtsied to the company, and hastened away as fast as she could.

As soon as she got home she ran to find her godmother, and, after having thanked her, told her how much she wished to go to the ball the next day, because the King's son had begged her to come. While she was telling her godmother all that had happened at the ball her two sisters knocked at the door.

Cinderella opened it. "How long you have stayed!" she said, yawning, rubbing her eyes, and stretching herself as if she had just been awakened. (She had not, however, had any great desire for sleep since they left her.)

"If you had been at the ball," said one of her sisters, "you would not have been sleepy or bored. There came thither the most beautiful Princess, the very loveliest ever seen; she paid us a thousand attentions, and gave us oranges and citrons."

Cinderella asked the name of this Princess, but they replied that no one knew it; that the King's son was very much disturbed by this, and would give anything in the world to know who she was.

Cinderella smiled and said: "How very beautiful she must be! How fortunate you are! Could I not see her? Ah, dear Miss Charlotte, do lend me the yellow gown that you wear every day!"

"Indeed!" said Charlotte, "I should think so! Lend my dress to a dirty cinder-wench like you! I must be out of my mind indeed if I would do that."

Cinderella expected this refusal and was very glad of it, for she would have been greatly embarrassed if her sister had been willing to lend her the gown.

The next day the two sisters went to the ball, and so did Cinderella, but dressed much more magnificently than before. The King's son was always by her side, and made all manner of pretty speeches to her. The young lady was far from being wearied by them, and completely forgot her godmother's commands, so that she heard the clock begin to strike twelve when she had no idea that it was even eleven o'clock yet. She rose at once, and fled as nimbly as a deer. The Prince followed, but could not overtake her; but she dropped one of her glass slippers, which he picked up very carefully.



Cinderella reached home quite out of breath, without either coach or footmen, and in her old clothes, having nothing left of all her finery but one of her little glass slippers, the mate of the one which she had dropped. The guards at the palace gates were questioned as to whether they had not seen a princess go out, and they replied that they had seen no one go out but a little ragged girl who looked more like a peasant than a princess.

When her two sisters returned from the ball Cinderella asked them if they had had a good time, and if the beautiful lady was there. They told her Yes, but that she had hurried away as the clock struck twelve, and in such great haste that she had dropped one of her little glass slippers, the prettiest in the world. They told, too, how the Prince had picked it up, and how he had done nothing but look at it all the rest of the evening, and agreed that he was undoubtedly very much in love with the beautiful owner of the little slipper.

They spoke truly, for a few days after, the Prince had it proclaimed, at the sound of the trumpet, that he would marry her whose foot this slipper fitted exactly. They began to try it on the princesses, then on the duchesses, and then on all the ladies of the court, but to no purpose. They brought it to the two sisters, and each one did all she possibly could to squeeze a foot into the slipper; but neither could manage to do it. Cinderella, who was watching them and recognized her slipper, said laughingly, "Let me see if it will not fit me!"

Her sisters burst out laughing, and made fun of her. The gentleman who was trying on the slipper looked at her earnestly, and finding her very beautiful, said that it was but fair she should try, and that he had orders to let every young lady try it on. He made Cinderella sit down, and putting the slipper to her little foot, he saw that it slipped on easily and fitted like wax.

The astonishment of the two sisters was great, but it was even greater when Cinderella pulled from her pocket the other little slipper and put it on her foot. Thereupon in came her godmother, who, touching Cinderella's clothes with her wand, made them become more magnificent than those which she had worn before.

Now her sisters recognized her as the beautiful stranger whom they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet and asked her forgiveness for all the ill treatment she had received from them. Cinderella raised them up and, embracing them, said that she forgave them with all her heart, and begged them to love her always.

She was conducted to the young Prince, dressed as she was. He found her more beautiful than ever, and a few days later married her. Cinderella, who was as good as she was beautiful, gave her two sisters apartments in the palace, and married them that same day to two great lords of the court.

