

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

AND OTHER TALES

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Reformation
Lightning

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INTRODUCTION

There once lived a pair of famous brothers with a strange nickname. They were called the Brothers Grimm. “Grimm” was their last name, and they were brothers, so the name makes sense—even if it sounds a bit strange to us now. The brothers lived in Germany over 200 years ago and they were famous for collecting folk stories and ancient fairy tales that parents told their children at bedtime. These stories were full of magical and unusual incidents. In them, birds and animals talk, and people do extraordinary and bizarre things. Being good is rewarded and being evil is punished. A typical story is fun and has a simple moral behind it that reflects something of God’s good creation and design for our lives.

While they were alive, the Brothers Grimm

INTRODUCTION

became librarians for the king of a country called Westphalia, which is now in Germany. They had plenty of time to gather folk stories and fairy tales from their family and friends, as well as from the villagers and townspeople who lived nearby. They published over 200 stories and their books were sold all over Europe. Thousands of copies of their stories are read all over the world today. Many of them have been turned into cartoons and movies, perhaps you've even seen some them.

This book has ten stories that the Brothers Grimm discovered. At the end of each story we will discover something more about the Lord Jesus and his wonderful gospel. The life of the Lord Jesus is not a fairy tale like those in this book, but he did do some extraordinary things, including coming from heaven to die for our sins on the cross. So let us read some of the stories that the Brothers Grimm wrote and let us think about how they point to the Lord Jesus and the life he wants us to live.

THE PRINCESS AND THE MATTRESSES

“It was a dark and stormy night ...”

I wonder if you’ve ever heard a story that began with those words? This is how the story about the princess and the mattresses begins.

The rain was falling and the wind was howling around the royal palace, and suddenly there was the sound of someone pulling the bell rope at the great front door.

“Oh dear,” said the king. “Someone is getting wet standing at our door on this ghastly night. Who can it be?”

One of the servants went to open the front door and then came back to the drawing room where the king was sitting in front of a large fire.

“There is a young woman standing at the door,

and she is rather wet, sir. She says she is a royal princess and a wheel came off her coach and the coachman has had to stay with the horses and coach and she has found her way here.”

“Well, don’t keep her standing there man. Invite her in and bring her here.”

Soon a bedraggled girl came into the drawing room. Her hair was plastered around her face and her wet clothes clung to her body. She was shivering with cold and apologised for disturbing the king. She introduced herself explaining that she was the daughter of a minor prince of a nearby principality.

The king’s son, Hans, who had heard the commotion and had come to see what was going on spoke, “So sorry to hear your tale of woe. You must stay the night,” he said. “We will arrange for a coach to drive you home tomorrow. My sister looks about the same size as you. You can borrow some dry clothes from her and the servants will run a hot bath for you in case you catch a cold.”

He gave orders for the butler to prepare a bath and a bedroom for the princess, and an hour later a very different young lady joined the royal family. The dress fitted well and her hair was dry and plaited in a French braid. She was very grateful for the king’s welcome and talked naturally to the family. Hans was

quite captivated by her and asked her many questions. They discovered they knew some people in common. The queen, however, was rather quiet, watching everything, thinking she was seeing the beginning of a romance between her son and this stranger who had rang the bell and appeared out of nowhere. The evening sped by and soon they began to talk about going to bed.

The queen called the butler to one side and whispered, "Get every spare mattress in the house and put it on that princess's bed."

"Every mattress?" said the butler.

"How many are available?" asked the queen.

"Maybe ten," said the butler.

"Good," said the queen. "Put them all on the bed and put an acorn under the bottom mattress."

The butler looked surprised.

"She claims that she is a princess. If she is, then she will feel the acorn even under all those mattresses. Everyone knows that all true princesses have extremely sensitive skin."

So they all went to their beds. The queen was looking forward to breakfast and discovering if the lady who had turned up at their door that night was really a princess.

The queen was the first to arrive in the dining

room and was soon joined by the princess. The queen was happy to see that she looked tired and depressed.

“How are you this morning?” asked the queen. “Did you have a good night’s sleep?”

“Oh no,” said the princess. “I tossed and turned all night. There seemed to be a large lump at the bottom of my mattress. I could not get comfy at all. I don’t think I slept a wink all night.”

The queen was secretly delighted to hear those words. The young girl had passed her test with flying colours. What tender skin! She had to be a real princess. The queen could allow the developing romance between her son and this princess to continue. In time they were married, and, yes, they lived happily ever after ... this is a fairy tale, after all! Did you expect another ending?

What a funny story! Of course we know that the queen’s test to see if the girl was a princess was nonsense. You don’t prove that someone is part of a royal family by seeing if they have sensitive skin.

Did you know that if you have received Jesus Christ into your life as your Lord and Saviour then you have become part of his royal family and you are a

child of the King of kings? And a sign that shows if you are part of his family is if you are sensitive to doing bad things. We feel guilty when we tell fibs or when we have bad thoughts about other people.

When Jesus lived on earth and he was arrested, one of his closest friends, a man call Peter, was embarrassed to say that he knew Jesus. He told a young girl who asked him if he was Jesus' friend that he had never even heard of him. After he had said that, Peter realised he had hurt Jesus and he had to go somewhere quiet and cry to God. He was so ashamed and sad that he had said those things—especially as Jesus had loved and cared so much for him.

That is the kind of sensitivity that every true child of the King of heaven possesses. You or I might have acted like Peter. But we can be thankful that the Lord Jesus has more love and forgiveness and grace than we could ever know and he is able to cover all of the things that we do wrong with it. Still, it is good that God, in his wisdom and kindness, has given us sensitive hearts because it helps us not to sin. If you are trusting in Jesus, thank him for the sensitivity you have in your heart. That is one sign that shows you are a real prince or princess of the King of heaven and earth.

THE WOLF AND THE SEVEN KIDS

There was once a dear Nanny Goat whose husband Billy Goat was away with the farmer at the Royal Show. The farmer had entered Billy Goat to win the prize as the best goat in all the show. Nanny Goat had so much to do all by herself for she had seven sweet kids that she loved dearly. Their father had chosen their names: Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La and Ti. She had grown to like those names though at first she had said, "Are you serious?" But he told her that the farmer and his family loved to sing, and that they all sang those seven words before they sang psalms and hymns together each morning. So Nanny Goat would call the kids in for supper and she would sing out the words going up the scale, "Do! Re! Mi! Fa! So! La! Ti!

Do!” and the seven kids would come in singing it back to her in turn.

The day that her husband was at the Royal Show, she had to do all the shopping. So she gathered the seven kids together and said to them, “Now kids, I have to go to the market and I want you to be very careful when I am away. There is a wicked wolf in the forest. I think I saw a glimpse of him a few days ago. He is a cruel liar and he would love to eat you up. Make sure you do not open the door and let him into our house. He will say he is your long lost cousin, or he is the postman with a parcel, or some other sort of nonsense. Don’t listen to him. He has a low husky voice, and his paws are as black as charcoal. He also mhas a long snout with a black nose.”

Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La and Ti all cried out together, “We will be ever so careful and never let him in. Never, never, never, mother dear.”

So Nanny Goat went off with her bag to the market, but crouching behind a big log watching from a distance was the wolf, and as soon as she had gone he skulked down to the house and knocked on the door.

“Who is there?” shouted the kids.

“It is the delivery man with a special parcel for you,” cried the wolf with his throaty, husky voice.