

THE SEVEN RAVENS

There was once a man who
had seven sons, and last of
all one daughter. Although
the little girl was very pretty,
she was so weak and small
that they thought she could
not live; but they said she
should at once be christened.
So the father sent one of his
sons in haste to the spring to
get some water, but the other
six ran with him. Each
wanted to be first at drawing
the water, and so they were
in such a hurry that all let
their pitchers fall into the
well, and they stood very
foolishly looking at one
another, and did not know
what to do, for none dared go
home. In the meantime the
father was uneasy, and could
not tell what made the young
men stay so long. 'Surely,'
said he, 'the whole seven
must have forgotten
themselves over some game
of play'; and when he had
waited still longer and they
yet did not come, he flew
into a rage and wished them
all turned into ravens.
Scarcely had he spoken these
words when he heard a
croaking over his head, and
looked up and saw seven
ravens as black as coal flying
round and round. Sorry as he

was to see his wish so
fulfilled, he did not know
how what was done could be
undone, and comforted
himself as well as he could
for the loss of his seven sons
with his dear little daughter,
who soon became stronger
and every day more
beautiful. For a long time she
did not know that she had
ever had any brothers; for her
father and mother took care
not to speak of them before
her: but one day by chance
she heard the people about
her speak of them. 'Yes,'
said they, 'she is beautiful
indeed, but still 'tis a pity
that her brothers should have
been lost for her sake.' Then
she was much grieved, and
went to her father and
mother, and asked if she had
any brothers, and what had
become of them. So they
dared no longer hide the truth
from her, but said it was the
will of Heaven, and that her
birth was only the innocent
cause of it; but the little girl
mourned sadly about it every
day, and thought herself
bound to do all she could to
bring her brothers back; and
she had neither rest nor ease,
till at length one day she
stole away, and set out into
the wide world to find her
brothers, wherever they
might be, and free them,

whatever it might cost her.
She took nothing with her
but a little ring which her
father and mother had given
her, a loaf of bread in case
she should be hungry, a little
pitcher of water in case she
should be thirsty, and a little
stool to rest upon when she
should be weary. Thus she
went on and on, and
journeyed till she came to the
world's end; then she came
to the sun, but the sun looked
much too hot and fiery; so
she ran away quickly to the
moon, but the moon was cold
and chilly, and said, 'I smell
flesh and blood this way!' so
she took herself away in a
hurry and came to the stars,
and the stars were friendly
and kind to her, and each star
sat upon his own little stool;
but the morning star rose up
and gave her a little piece of
wood, and said, 'If you have
not this little piece of wood,
you cannot unlock the castle
that stands on the glass-
mountain, and there your
brothers live.' The little girl
took the piece of wood,
rolled it up in a little cloth,
and went on again until she
came to the glass-mountain,
and found the door shut.
Then she felt for the little
piece of wood; but when she
unwrapped the cloth it was
not there, and she saw she

had lost the gift of the good stars. What was to be done?

She wanted to save her brothers, and had no key of the castle of the glass-mountain; so this faithful little sister took a knife out of her pocket and cut off her little finger, that was just the size of the piece of wood she had lost, and put it in the door and opened it. As she went in, a little dwarf came up to her, and said, 'What are you seeking for?' 'I seek for my brothers, the seven ravens,' answered she. Then the dwarf said, 'My masters are not at home; but if you will wait till they come, pray step in.' Now the little dwarf was getting their dinner ready, and he brought their food upon seven little plates, and their drink in seven little glasses, and set them upon the table, and out of each little plate their sister ate a small piece, and out of each little glass she drank a small drop; but she let the ring that she had brought with her fall into the last glass. On a sudden she heard a fluttering and croaking in the air, and the dwarf said, 'Here come my masters.' When they came in, they wanted to eat and drink, and looked for their little plates and glasses. Then said one after the other,

‘Who has eaten from my
little plate? And who has
been drinking out of my little
glass?’ *‘Caw! Caw! well I
ween. Mortal lips have this
way been.* When the seventh
came to the bottom of his
glass, and found there the
ring, he looked at it, and
knew that it was his father’s
and mother’s, and said, ‘O
that our little sister would but
come! then we should be
free.’ When the little girl
heard this (for she stood
behind the door all the time
and listened), she ran
forward, and in an instant all
the ravens took their right
form again; and all hugged
and kissed each other, and
went merrily home.