Europe-Germany

Hansl and Gretl

By Brothers Grimm

Once upon a time a woodcutter lived at the edge of a great forest with his wife and their two children. They had a boy called Hansl and a girl called Gretl. The family’s house was very small, it was just a hut really, and they were very poor, often they had to go to bed without any food. The woodcutter and his wife worried a great deal, and as time went by their situation seemed to get worse and worse.  There were just not enough people around who needed the woodsman’s services. “How can we feed our children?” the woodcutter lamented, “when we have hardly enough to feed ourselves.”

His wife cried quietly. “there’s nothing for it”, she said, “tomorrow we’ll take them into the woods with us, and we’ll lose them somehow. We just can’t carry on like this.” The woodcutter wasn’t very happy when he heard his wife say this. “But what will happen to them, they’ll be in danger. Anything could happen, some wild animal might come along and eat them alive!” But his wife had made up her mind. “What can we do? We have no choice; if we stay together, surely we’ll all perish. At least if don’t have their mouths to feed, we might stand a chance.” Quietly her husband consented. He knew she was right, but he also knew that he was not able to take care of them.

Hansl and Gretl were in their beds in the next room. They couldn’t sleep either, and because the walls in their little house were so thin and flimsy, they had been able to hear the whole of their parents’ conversation. Gretl was terrified. “Hansl”, she cried, what are we going to do? Are we going to die?” Hansl was a very clever little boy. Immediately he had a plan. “Don’t worry, Gretl”, he whispered to his sister, “I’ll think of something. Just try and get some sleep, and tomorrow, just act normal. Don’t let our parents know that we’ve heard what they want to do.” After a while Gretl did fall asleep, and the little boy lay there waiting patiently. Eventually he could hear his father snoring, and he knew that his parents were asleep too. He got up as quietly as he could,  tiptoed through his parents’ room, and went outside. There he collected lots of little white pebbles, as many as he could stuff in his pockets, and when they were full, he crept back inside and into his bed.

The next morning, at the crack of dawn, the children were woken up by their mother. Te only thing to have for breakfast was a little stale bread, which they ate quickly, and then they were off. They walked through the woods for several hours. The parents were very quiet, they hardly spoke a word, the woodsman walked ahead, determined, his wife followed and behind here Hansl and Gretl came. Every now and then Hansl would drop one of his little white pebbles in the middle of the path, or by the side of a rock, or by a tree root. He had almost used up all his pebbles when his father stopped in a little clearing in the wood. “Let’s make a fire here”, he said. Then you children can have a little rest, while mother and I go into the woods to do some cutting.” He made a small fire, the mother gave the children the last of the bread she had been saving, and then off she went with her husband. It only took a few seconds, and the disappeared amongst the trees. Hansl and Gretl sat down by the fire and ate the bread. Then they sat and waited. They waited for an hour, then another hour and another. Eventually they got so tired from waiting that they fell asleep. When they finally woke up, it was the middle of the night. The fire had long ago gone out, but there was a full moon, so they could see quite clearly. He took his sister’s hand, and they started walking back to where they’d come from. The bright moonlight meant that Hansl had no trouble finding his little white pebbles. They played a game, who could spot the next pebble first, and the time went so fast and they made such good headway that before they realised how far they’d come they could see their little house. The door was open and they went inside, where their father was just getting up. He was absolutely delighted to see them, and threw his arms up in the air and cried for joy. Their mother too was happy to see them again. It had been very hard indeed for these poor people to leave their children in the middle of that dark wood, and now they were just so relieved that they had survived and that they were back together again.

For some time they lived happily together, but their situation did not improve, in fact things just kept going from bad o worse. It seemed that the woodcutter could never make enough money to keep their bellies full.  Before too long he and his wife had that same conversation again. “I really wish I could change things”, the mother said, “but it’s just impossible. I just can’t go on watching these children go hungry every day. Day in day out.” The woodcutter was very sad, he loved his children dearly, but there was nothing he could do or say to make the situation better. He had tried very hard to come up with some ideas to make some more money, but to no avail. They were not the only people in the area who were poor. Everybody was in the same boat. Even though it made him feel very guilty he felt he had no choice but to agree with his wife again. Just like the previous time, Hansl had been wide awake and had heard every word they had spoken. Hansl stayed awake until he could hear his father snoring, then he crept quietly through his parents’ room, to go out the door, but to his consternation the door was locked. This door was the only way out of the little house, so there was nothing to do for the poor boy but to crawl back into his bed, and think of something else that would help him and his little sister to find their way back home.

The next morning the children were woken up very early by their mother. For breakfast there was only some stale bread and they ate it quickly, except for Hansl. He didn’t eat his bread but stuffed it in his pockets. They set out again, the woodcutter leading the way, followed by his wife and the children trailing behind. Every now and then Hansl would drop a bread crumb, as he had done before with the pebbles. In the middle of the path, next to a rock, or by the side of the root of a tree. By and by they arrived at a clearing in the wood, and the woodcutter started a fire, “You children have a little rest here”, he said, “while mother and I go to cut some wood.” Mother gave the children the last few bits of the stale bread she had been saving, and off they went.   Very quickly the trees swallowed them, and the children were left alone. Hey ate the bead, and waited. They waited an hour, then another hour and then another hour. Eventually the waiting tired them out and they fell asleep. When they woke up it was the middle of the night. Hansl took his little sister’s hand, and they started back the way they had come. But to his consternation, Hansl couldn’t find the breadcrumbs he had dropped so diligently. He realised the birds must have eaten them. The children tried to remember which way they had come. They walked this way a little, then that way, then another way yet, and they soon realised they were hopelessly lost. But they kept walking, as there was nothing else to do. Hansl was sure they’d find somebody who would help them.

They walked until they were so tired they just fell asleep were the stood, then carried n walking. Now and then they found some berries and nuts that they could eat, but it was very little and they got more and more hungry. Before long they lost all sense of time. They had no idea how any days and nights they had wandered through these woods, when suddenly they came upon a most extraordinary little house in the middle of a small clearing. They couldn’t believe their eyes, they house appeared to have been constructed from loaves of bread, cakes, fruit pies, biscuits and candy. They ran up to it and just started tearing bits of the delicacies from the walls of the little house. They were so hungry they never stopped to think what they were doing, and they stuffed their mouths, when suddenly they heard a loud croaky voice: “Nibbly gwibbly gnawsy, who’s that chomping at my housey?”

The front door, covered in huge gingerbread men,  opened, and their stood a little grey woman, older than anybody the children had ever see. Her back was crooked, and she had a great big knobbly nose, and hairs were growing out of her chin. Her teeth were as black as charcoal, and her face and her hands were covered in wrinkles. At first Hansl and Gretl were frightened by this apparition, but the old lady spoke, and she appeared o be quite friendly. “Children, children”, she croaked. “Wellcome to my humble little abode, why don’t you darlings come inside and I’ll treat you to some milk and pancakes.” The children were delighted to hear this, and they stepped inside. The old lady sat them at a table and poured them some delicious cold milk. The table was covered with goodies. They ate and ate until their stomachs couldn’t take any more. The old lady showed them into a little bedroom, with two lovely beds, with soft mattresses and quilted covers. Before they could say “Goodnight” they were fast asleep.

When Hansl woke up, he tried to sit up but he bumped his head on something. He realised he was inside a cage! The floor was wood, so was the ceiling, and three sides. One side was a metal door with bars, which was locked with a giant padlock! He shook his head, was he dreaming? He shouted: “Help! Help! Gretl, where are you?”

Just then, Gretl was still in bed, but the old woman had come into her room, and was shaking her roughly. “Wake up, wake up, you lazy little slut. Time to get up and do some work!” She pulled Gretl out of the bed, and handed her a broom. “Start sweeping!” she commanded. It now became obvious to the children that this old woman, who had been so kind to them the previous evening, was an old witch, and a very bad one at that. Gretl was made to work all day long, she had to sweep and scrub the floors, she had to clean the windows and wash the curtains, she had to prepare food and cook it. Then she had to scour al the pots and pans, the plates and cups and knives and forks. She had to weed the path outside and water the plants. She wasn’t allowed to rest for a minute. At the end of the day, just before she fell asleep because she was so exhausted, the witch would throw her a few scraps of food to eat. But Hansl was treated very well. Apart from being locked up in his cage, that is. Every few minutes the witch would bring him something to eat. Some buttered bread and cheese one minute, sausages in gravy the next, apples and pears, carrots and beets. He hardly had time to digest the morsels the witch fed him, when the next one came along. The witch would stand by his cage and watch him, to make sure he ate every last bite of the food she gave him. She’d stand there, bent over, watching him and giggling. “Eat, my little sweet one”, she’d croak, “eat and get fat! Heha heha heha!”

Very rarely did the children get an opportunity to talk to each other. The witch was always ordering Gretl about, as soon as she’d finish one job, the witch would give her another one. And when she wasn’t ordering Gretl about, she was in front of Hansl’s cage, feeding him, fattening him up. She’d order him to stick a finger out through the bars, and she’d feel it and inspect it. When Gretl saw this she realised what the witch was doing. She was fattening up her brother to eat him, and she was checking his finger to see how fat he was getting! She knew it was up to her to rescue him, because he was totally powerless, locked up in that cage with the metal bars and the padlock. The key was hidden under the witch’s mattress, it was impossible to get near there without being seen. She came up with a clever little plan to gain some time. She found a little stick, and one minute, when the witch was having her supper, she slipped it into the cage, and told Hansl to stick it out next time the witch came to check his finger. Gretl had noticed that the witch’s eyesight wasn’t very good. She knew they wouldn’t be able to fool her for very long, but she just needed to buy some time to come up with a good plan!

The plan with the little stick worked quite well. The witch didn’t realise she was being fooled; she’d feel the thin stick, and mutter to herself. “A little bit more, a few more days, a few more pounds. Heha, heha, heha!” Weeks and weeks went by, and eventually the witch lost patience. The boy just wasn’t putting on any weight! She had enough. She called out to Gretl. “Fetch me some firewood”, she said. “I’m going to light the oven and roast that stupid brother of yours, skinny or not! I can’t wait any longer, I’ve just gotta eat him!”

Gretl came back with a bunch of firewood. The witch opened the oven door, and told Gretl to put the firewood inside. Gretl pushed the wood as far back into the oven as it would go, then stood back. “Well?!” shouted the witch. “What are you waiting for? Light it up!” Gretl knew very well how to light the wood in the oven, she’d seen the witch do it several times, but she pretended to be dum. “How do you o that?” she asked in a little girl voice. The witch threw her arms in the air and cursed her. “Oh bother, I’ll do it myself”, she said. She picked up one of the big matches she used for this job, and stuck her head inside the oven door. Gretl had really pushed the wood all the way back, so the witch had to lean all the way into the oven. Gretl quickly took her chance, lifted up the witch’s legs and pushed her all the way into the oven, and then quickly shut the oven door on her. Gretl quickly ran into the witch’s bedroom and got the key. She opened up Hansl’s cage, and the boy had got so fat the he only just about managed to crawl out. “Well done sis!” he cried. They could hear the witch kicking against the inside of the oven door, and they could just about hear her croaking voice pleading with them to let her out. “I’ll be kind to you again”, she cried, “just wait and see, I can be a very nice old witch!” But the children left her where she was, and started looking through all the witch’s cupboards and chests of drawers to see if they could find anything useful for their journey before they escaped from that horrible place.  To their great surprise they found bags full of gold coins and precious stones. They carried as much as they could out of the house and started walking away, glad to still be alive.

As they walked along the path away from the horrible witch’s house, some birds flew done from the trees, and asked what had happened to the wicked witch. “She’s locked up in the oven” said Gretl, “I think she’ll be in there for some time!” The birds were very happy. They had always been scared of the witch who used to like to catch birds and eat them. To show their gratitude to Hansl and Gretl, they guided them all the way home. When the children got home their parents were so happy to see them that they cried tears of joy. They hugged and kissed each of them in turn, and promised the children that whatever happened, however poor they might be, they would never try to get rid of them again. Hansl then gave his father the bag full of gold coins and precious stones he’d carried all the way back with him. “Look father”, he said, “Look what we found, we’ll never have to be poor again!” And so it happened. The woodcutter was able to build a nice big house for his family, and they now were rich enough to buy all the food they needed for the rest of their lives!

Europe-Denmark

[Hans Christian Andersen](http://www.eastoftheweb.com/cgi-bin/read_db.pl?search_field=author_id&search_for=HansChristianAndersen&order_by=author_last,title&page=1)

The Little Match-Seller

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| It was terribly cold and nearly dark on the last evening of the old year, and the snow was falling fast. In the cold and the darkness, a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet, roamed through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but they were not of much use. They were very large, so large, indeed, that they had belonged to her mother, and the poor little creature had lost them in running across the street to avoid two carriages that were rolling along at a terrible rate. One of the slippers she could not find, and a boy seized upon the other and ran away with it, saying that he could use it as a cradle, when he had children of his own. So the little girl went on with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold.       In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and had a bundle of them in her hands. No one had bought anything of her the whole day, nor had any one given here even a penny. Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along; poor little child, she looked the picture of misery. The snowflakes fell on her long, fair hair, which hung in curls on her shoulders, but she regarded them not.       Lights were shining from every window, and there was a savory smell of roast goose, for it was New-year's eve - yes, she remembered that. In a corner, between two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sank down and huddled herself together. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she could not keep off the cold; and she dared not go home, for she had sold no matches, and could not take home even a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; besides, it was almost as cold at home as here, for they had only the roof to cover them, through which the wind howled, although the largest holes had been stopped up with straw and rags.       Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold. Ah! perhaps a burning match might be some good, if she could draw it from the bundle and strike it against the wall, just to warm her fingers.  [**<**](http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LitMat.shtml#1)  [2](http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LitMat.shtml" \l "2)  [**>**](http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LitMat.shtml#3)       She drew one out - "scratch!" how it sputtered as it burnt! It gave a warm, bright light, like a little candle, as she held her hand over it. It was really a wonderful light. It seemed to the little girl that she was sitting by a large iron stove, with polished brass feet and a brass ornament. How the fire burned! and seemed so beautifully warm that the child stretched out her feet as if to warm them, when, lo! the flame of the match went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the half-burnt match in her hand.       She rubbed another match on the wall. It burst into a flame, and where its light fell upon the wall it became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room. The table was covered with a snowy white table-cloth, on which stood a splendid dinner service, and a steaming roast goose, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more wonderful, the goose jumped down from the dish and waddled across the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast, to the little girl. Then the match went out, and there remained nothing but the thick, damp, cold wall before her.       She lighted another match, and then she found herself sitting under a beautiful Christmas-tree. It was larger and more beautifully decorated than the one which she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's. Thousands of tapers were burning upon the green branches, and colored pictures, like those she had seen in the show-windows, looked down upon it all. The little one stretched out her hand towards them, and the match went out.       The Christmas lights rose higher and higher, till they looked to her like the stars in the sky. Then she saw a star fall, leaving behind it a bright streak of fire. "Some one is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only one who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star falls, a soul was going up to God.  [**<**](http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LitMat.shtml#2)  [3](http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LitMat.shtml" \l "3)  [**>**](http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LitMat.shtml#4)       She again rubbed a match on the wall, and the light shone round her; in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining, yet mild and loving in her appearance.       "Grandmother," cried the little one, "O take me with you; I know you will go away when the match burns out; you will vanish like the warm stove, the roast goose, and the large, glorious Christmas-tree."       And she made haste to light the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to keep her grandmother there. And the matches glowed with a light that was brighter than the noon-day, and her grandmother had never appeared so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and they both flew upwards in brightness and joy far above the earth, where there was neither cold nor hunger nor pain, for they were with God.       In the dawn of morning there lay the poor little one, with pale cheeks and smiling mouth, leaning against the wall; she had been frozen to death on the last evening of the year; and the New-year's sun rose and shone upon a little corpse! The child still sat, in the stiffness of death, holding the matches in her hand, one bundle of which was burnt.       "She tried to warm herself," said some.       No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on New-year's day.  Asia-China  The Lady of the Moon  In the days of the Emperor Yau lived a prince by the name of Hou I, who was a mighty hero and a good archer. Once ten suns rose together in the sky, and shone so brightly and burned so fiercely that the people on earth could not endure them. So the Emperor ordered Hou I to shoot at them. And Hou I shot nine of them down from the sky. Besides his bow, Hou I also had a horse which ran so swiftly that even the wind could not catch up with it. He mounted it to go a-hunting, and the horse ran away and could not be stopped. So Hou I came to Kunlun Mountain and met the Queen-Mother of the Jasper Sea. And she gave him the herb of immortality. He took it home with him and hid it in his room. But his wife who was named Tschang O, once ate some of it on the sly when he was not at home, and she immediately floated up to the clouds. When she reached the moon, she ran into the castle there, and has lived there ever since as the Lady of the Moon.  On a night in mid-autumn, an emperor of the Tang dynasty once sat at wine with two sorcerers. And one of them took his bamboo staff and cast it into the air, where it turned into a heavenly bridge, on which the three climbed up to the moon together. There they saw a great castle on which was inscribed: “The Spreading Halls of Crystal Cold.” Beside it stood a cassia tree which blossomed and gave forth a fragrance filling all the air. And in the tree sat a man who was chopping off the smaller boughs with an ax. One of the sorcerers said: “That is the man in the moon. The cassia tree grows so luxuriantly that in the course of time it would overshadow all the moon’s radiance. Therefore it has to be cut down once in every thousand years.” Then they entered the spreading halls. The silver stories of the castle towered one above the other, and its walls and columns were all formed of liquid crystal. In the walls were cages and ponds, where fishes and birds moved as though alive. The whole moon-world seemed made of glass. While they were still looking about them on all sides the Lady of the Moon stepped up to them, clad in a white mantle and a rainbow-colored gown. She smiled and said to the emperor: “You are a prince of the mundane world of dust. Great is your fortune, since you have been able to find your way here!” And she called for her attendants, who came flying up on white birds, and sang and danced beneath the cassia tree. A pure clear music floated through the air. Beside the tree stood a mortar made of white marble, in which a jasper rabbit ground up herbs. That was the dark half of the moon. When the dance had ended, the emperor returned to earth again with the sorcerers. And he had the songs which he had heard on the moon written down and sung to the accompaniment of flutes of jasper in his pear-tree garden.  North America-Native Indian  The Toad-Woman  Great good luck once happened to a young woman who was living all alone in the woods with nobody near her but her little dog; for, to her surprise, she found fresh meat every morning at her door. She was very curious to know who it was that supplied her, and watching one morning, just as the sun had risen, she saw a handsome young man gliding away into the forest. Having seen her, he became her husband, and she had a son by him.  One day, not long after this, he did not return at evening, as usual, from hunting. She waited till late at night, but he came no more.  The next day, she swung her child to sleep in its cradle, and then said to her dog, "Take care of your brother while I am gone, and when he cries, halloo for me."  The cradle was made of the finest wampum, and all its bandages and ornaments were of the same precious stuff.  After a short time, the woman heard the cry of the dog, and running home as fast as she could, she found her child gone, and the dog too. On looking around, she saw scattered upon the ground pieces of the wampum of her child's cradle, and she knew that the dog had been faithful, and had striven his best to save her child from being carried off, as he had been, by an old woman, from a distant country, called Mukakee Mindemoea, or the Toad-Woman.  The mother hurried off at full speed in pursuit, and as she flew along, she came, from time to time, to lodges inhabited by old women, who told her at what time the child-thief had passed; they also gave her shoes that she might follow on. There was a number of these old women who seemed as if they were prophetesses, and knew what was to come long beforehand. Each of them would say to her that when she had arrived at the next lodge, she must set the toes of the moccasins they had given her pointing homeward, and that they would return of themselves. The young woman was very careful to send back in this manner all the shoes she borrowed.  She thus followed in the pursuit, from valley to valley, and stream to stream, for many months and years; when she came at length to the lodge of the last of the friendly old grandmothers, as they were called, who gave her the last instructions how to proceed. She told her that she was near the place where her son was to be found; and she directed her to build a lodge of cedar-boughs, hard by the old Toad-Woman's lodge, and to make a little bark dish, and to fill it with the juice of the wild grape.  "Then," she said, "your first child (meaning the dog) will come and find you out."  These directions the young woman followed just as they had been given to her, and in a short time she heard her son, now grown up, going out to hunt, with his dog, calling out to him, "Peewaubik—Spirit-Iron—Twee! Twee!"  The dog soon came into the lodge, and she set before him the dish of grape-juice.  "See, my child," she said, addressing him, "the pretty drink your mother gives you."  Spirit-Iron took a long draught, and immediately left the lodge with his eyes wide open; for it was the drink which teaches one to see the truth of things as they are. He rose up when he got into the open air, stood upon his hind legs, and looked about. "I see how it is," he said; and marching off, erect like a man, he sought out his young master.  Approaching him in great confidence, he bent down and whispered in his ear (having first looked cautiously around to see that no one was listening), "This old woman here in the lodge is no mother of yours. I have found your real mother, and she is worth looking at. When we come back from our day's sport, I'll prove it to you."  They went out into the woods, and at the close of the afternoon they brought back a great spoil of meat of all kinds. The young man, as soon as he had laid aside his weapons, said to the old Toad-Woman, "Send some of the best of this meat to the stranger who has arrived lately."  The Toad-Woman answered, "No! Why should I send to her, the poor widow!"  The young man would not be refused; and at last the old Toad-Woman consented to take something and throw it down at the door. She called out, "My son gives you this." But, being bewitched by Mukakee Mindemoea, it was so bitter and distasteful, that the young woman immediately cast it out of the lodge after her.  In the evening the young man paid the stranger a visit at her lodge of cedar-boughs. She then told him that she was his real mother, and that he had been stolen away from her by the old Toad-Woman, who was a child-thief and a witch. As the young man appeared to doubt, she added, "Feign yourself sick when you go home to her lodge; and when the Toad-Woman asks what ails you, say that you wish to see your cradle; for your cradle was of wampum, and your faithful brother the dog, in striving to save you, tore off these pieces which I show you."  They were real wampum, white and blue, shining and beautiful; and the young man, placing them in his bosom, set off; but as he did not seem quite steady in his belief of the strange woman's story, the dog Spirit-Iron, taking his arm, kept close by his side, and gave him many words of encouragement as they went along. They entered the lodge together; and the old Toad-Woman saw, from something in the dog's eye, that trouble was coming.  "Mother," said the young man, placing his hand to his head, and leaning heavily upon Spirit-Iron, as if a sudden faintness had come upon him, "why am I so different in looks from the rest of your children?"  "Oh," she answered, "it was a very bright, clear blue sky when you were born; that is the reason."  He seemed to be so very ill that the Toad-Woman at length asked what she could do for him. He said nothing could do him good but the sight of his cradle. She ran immediately and brought a cedar cradle; but he said:  "That is not my cradle."  She went and got another of her own children's cradles, of which there were four; but he turned his head, and said:  "That is not mine; I am as sick as ever."  When she had shown the four, and they had been all rejected, she at last produced the real cradle. The young man saw that it was of the same stuff as the wampum which he had in his bosom. He could even see the marks of the teeth of Spirit-Iron left upon the edges, where he had taken hold, striving to hold it back. He had no doubt, now, which was his mother.  To get free of the old Toad-Woman, it was necessary that the young man should kill a fat bear; and, being directed by Spirit-Iron, who was very wise in such a matter, he secured the fattest in all that country; and having stripped a tall pine of all its bark and branches, he perched the carcass in the top, with its head to the east and its tail due west. Returning to the lodge, he informed the old Toad-Woman that the fat bear was ready for her, but that she would have to go very far, even to the end of the earth, to get it. She answered:  "It is not so far but that I can get it;" for of all things in the world, a fat bear was the delight of the old Toad-Woman.  She at once set forth; and she was no sooner out of sight than the young man and his dog, Spirit-Iron, blowing a strong breath in the face of the Toad-Woman's four children (who were all bad spirits, or bear-fiends), they put out their life. They then set them up by the side of the door, having first thrust a piece of the white fat in each of their mouths.  The Toad-Woman spent a long time in finding the bear which she had been sent after, and she made at least five and twenty attempts before she was able to climb to the carcass. She slipped down three times where she went up once. When she returned with the great bear on her back, as she drew near her lodge she was astonished to see the four children standing up by the door-posts with the fat in their mouths. She was angry with them, and called out:  "Why do you thus insult the pomatum of your brother?"  She was still more angry when they made no answer to her complaint; but when she found that they were stark dead, and placed in this way to mock her, her fury was very great indeed. She ran after the tracks of the young man and his mother as fast as she could; so fast, indeed, that she was on the very point of overtaking them, when the dog, Spirit-Iron, coming close up to his master, whispered to him—"Snakeberry!"  "Let the snakeberry spring up to detain her!" cried out the young man; and immediately the berries spread like scarlet all over the path, for a long distance; and the old Toad-Woman, who was almost as fond of these berries as she was of fat bears, could not avoid stooping down to pick and eat.  The old Toad-Woman was very anxious to get forward, but the snakeberry-vines kept spreading out on every side; and they still grow and grow, and spread and spread; and to this day the wicked old Toad-Woman is busy picking the berries, and she will never be able to get beyond to the other side, to disturb the happiness of the young hunter and his mother, who still live, with their faithful dog, in the shadow of the beautiful wood-side where they were born. |
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