

## BROTHER AND SISTER.

**N**EAR a large wood once lived a poor wood-cutter with his wife and two children. The little boy was called Hänsel and the little girl Grethel. They rarely had nice things to eat, and when there was a famine in the land they could not get so much as their daily bread. As he lay in bed at night the father was greatly troubled; he sighed and groaned and said to his wife:

“What is to become of us? How are we to feed our little ones when we haven’t anything ourselves?”

“I tell you what, husband,” answered the woman, “to-morrow morning early we will lead the children far into the wood, light them a fire, give each a bit of bread, and then go to our work and leave them alone. They will never find their way home, and we shall be rid of them.”

“No, wife,” said the man, “I cannot do that; how could any one have the heart to leave

two dear children, alone in the wood to be devoured by wild beasts?"

"Oh!" said she, "then we must all four die of hunger." But she continued to persuade him, and at last he half consented.

The two children were so hungry that they had not been able to go to sleep, and they had overheard what their step-mother proposed to do with them. Grethel wept bitter tears and said to Hänsel, "It is all up with us."

"Don't cry, Grethel," said Hänsel, "I will see that this does not happen."

When the old couple had fallen to sleep, he put on his little coat, crept downstairs, and let himself out at the back door. The moon was shining brightly, and the white pebbles on the path in front of the house shone like new coins. Hänsel stooped and stuffed his coat pockets full of pebbles. Then he went back and said to Grethel, "Be comforted, little sister, and go to sleep. God will not forsake us;" and he lay down on his little bed.

When day dawned the woman called the two children and told them to dress before the sun was high. "Get up, both of you," she said, "and come into the wood and pick up sticks." Then she gave each a piece of bread, and told

them to keep it for dinner and not eat it before, as they would get nothing else. Grethel put the bread under her apron, because Hänsel's pockets were full of pebbles.

Soon after, they all started together for the wood. They had not gone far before Hänsel stood still and looked back at the house. He did this again and again, till his father said, "Hänsel, what are you gaping at?"

"Oh, father," said Hänsel, "I am looking at my white kitten, who is sitting on the roof waving me good-bye."

"That isn't your kitten, silly child," said the woman, "it's the morning sunlight shining on the chimney." But Hänsel had not really been looking at the kitten; he was scattering behind him the pebbles out of his pocket.

When they came to the middle of the wood the father said, "Now, children, pick up sticks, and we will make a fire."

Hänsel and Grethel built up quite a pile of twigs, and when the fire was lighted and the flames were rising high, the woman said, "You can lie down by the fire and rest yourselves while we go further to hew wood. When we have finished we will come and fetch you."

Hänsel and Grethel sat by the fire, and when

dinner-time came 'ate their bread, and because they heard the blows of the hatchet they thought their father was not far off. But it was not the hatchet they heard, but a branch that he had tied to a rotten tree, and which the wind blew up and down. They sat such a long time that for very weariness they closed their eyes and went to sleep. They did not wake till it was night and pitch dark. Grethel began to cry and said, "We shall never find our way out of the wood."

"Wait," said Hänsel; "the moon will be up soon, and then we'll find our way fast enough."

Ere long the great full moon rose in the sky, and Hänsel took his little sister's hand and followed the track of the pebbles, which shone like new silver coins and showed them the way. They walked the whole night, and at break of day reached their father's house. They knocked at the door, and when the woman opened it and saw Hänsel and Grethel she said, "Why did you sleep so long in the wood? We began to think you were not coming back at all."

The father was delighted to see the children, for it had gone to his heart to desert them so cruelly.

Not long afterwards there was again great

distress, and the children heard their mother saying to their father in the night, "There is hardly anything left to eat, only half a loaf of bread, and when that is gone what are we to do? The children must be done away with. We will take them deeper into the wood this time, so that they will not be able to find their way out. It's the only thing to be done to save us."

The man's heart was heavy, and he thought to himself, "I would rather share our last crust with the children." But the woman had made up her mind, and all the man said made no difference. When you have said "A" you must say "B" too, and as he had given in the first time he was obliged to give in the second time.

The wakeful children, however, had heard the whole of the conversation. When his parents had gone to sleep, Hänsel got up again to go out as he had done before and pick up pebbles, but he found that the woman had locked the door. All the same, he comforted his little sister, saying, "Never mind, Grethel, don't cry, but go to sleep. God will take care of us."

At dawn the woman came and roused the

children. She gave them each a slice of bread, but it was smaller than last time.

As they walked to the wood Hänsel crumbled the bread in his pocket, stood still now and then, and dropped a crumb on the ground.

"Hänsel, why do you loiter behind and look round?" his father asked.

"I am looking at my little dove, who is sitting on the roof to coo good-bye."

"Stupid," cried the woman, "it is not your dove but the morning sun shining on the chimney." But Hänsel went on dropping his crumbs by the way.

The woman led the children deeper and deeper into the wood, to a part where they had never been before. Again a huge fire was kindled, and the mother said, "Stay here, children, and when you are tired take a nap. We are going further to chop wood. When we have finished we will fetch you."

When dinner-time came Grethel divided her bread with Hänsel, because he had scattered his as they came along. Then they fell asleep, and the evening went by without any one coming to them. They did not wake till it was pitch dark. Hänsel comforted his sister

by saying, "Wait till the moon is up, then we shall see the bread crumbs I strewed on the ground, and that will show us the way home."

But when the moon rose they could see no bread crumbs, for the birds which flew in the woods and fields had picked up every one.

Hänsel said, "We shall soon find our way, Grethel."

But they did not find it—though they walked the whole night and the whole of the next day, they were still in the wood and faint from hunger, for they had eaten nothing but a few berries. And now, because they were so tired and their legs would not carry them farther, they lay down under a tree and fell asleep.

The third morning after they had left their father's house they were still deeper in the wood and quite lost. If help did not come, they knew they would perish. Then they saw a beautiful snow-white bird sitting on a branch, and it was singing so beautifully that they stopped to listen. It spread its wings when it had finished its song, and flew in front of them, and they followed till it perched on the roof of a little house which, on coming near, they found was built of bread and thatched with cake, the windows being made of barley-sugar.





Grethel had taken out a window-pane and sat down to enjoy it, when suddenly the door opened and an old woman hobbled out.

“We will set to work,” said Hänsel, “and make a good meal for once. I will have a good slice of the roof, and you, Grethel, shall begin with a window, which will taste nice and sweet.”

Hänsel climbed up and broke off a bit of the roof to see how it tasted, and Grethel stood by a window and nibbled it. Then a voice called from inside—

“Nibble! nibble! nibble!  
Who’s nibbling at my house?”

The children answered—

“The wind, the wind,  
The child of heaven,”

and went on eating, quite unconcerned.

Hänsel, who found that the roof tasted very good, had torn off another great bit, and Grethel had taken out a window-pane and sat down to enjoy it. Suddenly the door opened and an old woman hobbled out. Hänsel and Grethel shook in their shoes for fright, letting the good stuff fall from their hands.

The old woman nodded her palsied head and said, “Dear children, who brought you here? Come in do, and stay with me; no harm shall come to you!”

She took them' by the hand and led them into the house. There a good dinner stood ready, milk pancakes, with sugar, apples, and nuts. Afterwards, two little white beds were uncovered, and Hänsel and Grethel lay down in them, feeling as if they were in heaven.

But the old woman was only pretending to be friendly; she was really a wicked old witch, who lay in wait for children, and had only had her house built of things good to eat in order to lure them into her clutches. When once she had little ones safe in her power, she slaughtered, cooked, and ate them. The witch had pink eyes and could not see far, but she had a keen scent, like animals, and could smell human flesh a long way off. Directly Hänsel and Grethel came near her house, she had laughed, chuckled wickedly and said to herself, "I'll have them on toast—they shan't escape."

Early the next morning, before the children were awake, she got up, and as she saw their round rosy cheeks, she muttered, "There's a tasty dish." Then she shook Hänsel and, scizing him with her shrivelled hand, carried him to a little stable, where she shut him in behind a grating. He howled as loudly as he could, but it was no use. Next she went to Grethel,

shook her and screamed, "Get up, lazy girl, and go and draw water to cook your brother something good, he is outside in the stable and must be fattened up; when he is fat I shall eat him."

Grethel began to cry bitterly, but she was forced to do what the wicked witch commanded.

Hänsel was now given the most nourishing food, but Grethel got only crab-shells. Every morning the old witch hobbled to the stable and cried:

"Hänsel, put your finger out that I may feel how fat you are getting." But Hänsel used to stick out a bone instead of a finger, and the old woman, whose eyes were so dim that she could not see, marvelled that he did not grow fat.

When four weeks had passed, and Hänsel still remained thin, she lost patience and declared she would not wait longer.

"Here, Grethel," she cried to the girl, "make haste and draw water—whether Hänsel is fat or thin, I will kill and eat him tomorrow!"

The poor little sister wept and lamented as she brought the water, and tears poured down her cheeks! "Dear God, help us!" she



The pipe was a fairy pipe, and whoever heard it was obliged to dance, whether one liked or not. So the old witch was forced to dance a jig, on and on without rest, and could not stop to reach the rose.

prayed. "If the wild beasts had eaten us in the woods we should at least have died together."

When the witch had gone poor Grethel watched her chance and ran to Hänsel, telling him what she had heard :

"We must run away quickly, for the old woman is a wicked witch, who will kill us."

But Hänsel said: "I know how to get out, for I have loosened the fastening. But you must first steal her fairy wand, that we may save ourselves if she should follow, and bring, too, the pipe that hangs in her room."

Grethel managed to get both the wand and the pipe, and away the children went.

When the old witch came to see whether her meal was ready, she sprang in a great rage to the window, and, though her eyes were bad, she spied the children running away.

She quickly put on her boots, which went yards at a step, and had scarcely made two steps with them before she overtook the children. But Grethel had seen that she was coming after them, and, by the help of the magic wand, turned Hänsel into a lake of water, and herself into a swan which swam in the middle of it. The witch sat on the

shore and tried to decoy the swan by throwing crumbs of bread to it; but it would not come near her, and she was at last forced to go home without her prisoners.

Then Grethel, by means of the wand, changed herself and Hänsel back to their proper forms, and they journeyed on until dawn of day. The girl then turned herself into a beautiful rose in the midst of a quickset hedge; and Hänsel sat by the side.

Soon the witch came striding along.

“Good piper,” she said, “may I pluck that beautiful rose?”

“Oh yes,” said he.

She went to the hedge in a hurry to gather the flower—well knowing what it was—and Hänsel pulled out his pipe and began to play.

Now the pipe was a fairy pipe, and whoever heard it was obliged to dance, whether one liked or not. So the old witch was forced to dance a jig, on and on without rest, and could not stop to reach the rose. As Hänsel did not cease playing for a moment the thorns tore the clothes from her body, and pricked her sorely, and at last she stuck quite fast.



The King lifted Grethel on to his prancing horse and they rode to his palace, the fawn running behind them.



Then Grethel set herself free once more, and she and Hänsel set out for home. After travelling a long way, Grethel grew tired, so they laid themselves down to sleep in a hollow tree that grew in a meadow near the wood. As they slept the witch—who had contrived to get out of the prickly bush—came by; and, seeing her wand, was glad to lay hold of it. At once she turned poor Hänsel into a fawn.

When Grethel woke and found what had happened she wept bitterly over the poor creature. The tears rolled down his eyes, as he laid himself beside her.

Grethel said, "Rest in peace, dear fawn; I will never leave you."

She took off her long golden necklace and put it round his neck, then she plucked some rushes and plaited them into a string, and led the poor fawn by her side wherever she went.

At last one day they came to a little cottage; and Grethel, seeing that it was quite empty, said, "We can live here."

She gathered leaves and moss to make a soft bed for the fawn; and every morning she went out and plucked nuts and berries for herself, and shrubs and tender grass for her

friend. The fawn ate out of her hand, and played and frisked about her. In the evening, when Grethel was tired, she laid her head on the fawn and slept; and if only poor Hänsei could have had his right form again they would have led a very happy life.

After living for years in the wood by themselves until Grethel was a grown maiden, it chanced that the King came one day to hunt there. When the fawn heard the echoing of the horns, the baying of the dogs, and the shouts of the huntsmen, he wished very much to see what was going on.

“Oh, sister!” said he, “let me go out into the wood. I can stay no longer.”

He begged so long that at last she let him go.

“But,” said she, “be sure to come back in the evening. I shall shut the door to keep out the huntsmen, but if you tap and say, ‘Sister, let me in,’ I shall know you. If you do not speak, I shall keep the door fast.”

Then away sprang the fawn, frisking and bounding along in the open air. The King and his huntsmen saw and followed the beautiful creature, but could not overtake

him; for just as they thought they were sure of their prize he would spring over the bushes and be out of sight at once.

When it grew dark the fawn came running home to the hut and tapped, saying, "Sister, let me in!" Then Grethel opened the door, and in he jumped, and slept soundly all night on his soft bed.

Next morning the hunt went on; and when he heard the huntsmen's horns the fawn said, "Sister, open the door for me; I must go."

When the King and the huntsmen saw the fawn with the golden collar they again gave chase. The chase lasted the whole day, but at last the huntsmen surrounded him, and one wounded him in the foot, so that he became lame and could hardly crawl home. The man who had wounded him followed behind and heard the little fawn say, "Sister, let me in," upon which the door opened and shut again. The huntsman went to the King and told him what he had seen and heard and the King said, "To-morrow we will have another chase."

Grethel was very frightened when she saw that her dear fawn was wounded; but after washing the blood away she put some healing herbs on the place. In the morning there was

nothing to be seen of the wound, and when the horn blew the little thing said, "I cannot stay here, I must go and look on; I will take care they don't catch me."

But Grethel said, "I am sure they will kill you this time: I will not let you go."

"I shall die of grief," said he, "if you keep me here." Then Grethel was forced to let him go: she opened the door with a heavy heart, and he bounded gaily into the wood.

When the King saw the fawn he cried to his men, "Chase him all day long till you catch him; but let no one do him harm."

At sunset, however, they had not been able to overtake him, and the King called the huntsmen, saying to the one who had watched, "Now show me the little hut."

So they went to the door and tapped, and the King said, "Sister, let me in."

The door was opened, and the King went in, and there stood a maiden more lovely than any he had ever seen.

Grethel was very frightened when she saw that it was not the fawn but a King with a golden crown who had entered her hut, but he spoke kindly and took her hand, and after they had talked awhile, he said, Will you

come with me to my castle and be my wife?"

"Yes," said Grethel, "I will go to your castle, but I cannot be your wife; and my fawn must go with me, for I cannot part with him."

"Well," said the King, "he shall come and live with you all your life, and shall want for nothing."

Just then in sprang the little fawn, and Grethel tied the string to his neck, and they left the hut together.

Then the King lifted Grethel on to his prancing horse and they rode to his palace, the fawn running behind them. On the way Grethel told the King her story. He knew the old witch and her wicked ways and sent for her, commanding her sternly to change the fawn into human form again.

When she saw her dear brother restored, Grethel was so grateful to the King that she at once consented to marry him. They lived happily all their days, and Hänsel became the King's chief councillor.