

## CINDERELLA.

ONCE upon a time there lived a worthy gentleman and his wife who had a pretty little baby girl. One sad day the mother died. A few years afterwards the gentleman married again, and so the little girl, who was now fast growing up, had a step-mother. Unfortunately, this stepmother was proud, haughty, and deceitful, and had a bad habit of always wanting her own way. To make matters worse, she had two daughters who were as disagreeable as herself.

These girls were nearly ten years older than the gentleman's own little daughter, and the poor child soon began to lead a very dreary life among her new relations. At first they only slighted and teased her; but when they found she bore this treatment patiently they went from bad to worse.

In a very few months the good man became ill and died, and the little girl was left without a friend in the world.

As she grew up, the child became prettier and prettier; and the prettier she became the more the sisters hated her. Her life was hard enough before, but now it became almost unbearable. She was treated worse than any servant, and made to do all the drudgery of the house. While the mother and the two elder sisters flaunted in silks and satins, the little girl was clothed in rags. She was compelled to eat any odd scraps that were left from the table and to sleep in a dark attic where there was only an old straw mattress and a broken chair.

When her household work was over for the day, the poor girl would go into the kitchen and sit down quietly in the chimney-corner among the cinders. This habit procured for her the nickname of *Cinder-ella*. So sweet and 'sunny was her nature, however, that she never complained of her hard lot, and went blithely about her work the whole day long, without once envying her cruel sisters.

But however shabbily Cinderella was clothed, she always looked handsomer than the sisters, for all their fine things, and as the years went by she became more and more beautiful. This made her jealous step-sisters

more unkind than ever, and they never tired of tormenting the poor girl. When they dressed themselves to go to balls and parties, Cinderella had to help them, and after she had taken the greatest pains they would reward her only with some harsh word as they went downstairs, or very likely with a blow.

One day the two sisters received a note on scented rose-coloured paper, which made them hold their heads higher than ever. It was an invitation to a grand state dress ball to be given by the King's son. For six weeks before the date of the ball the sisters talked of nothing else but what they should wear. It was wonderful how these girls, usually so lazy, became all at once industrious. They took all their dresses from the wardrobes, and had long talks over every one in turn. Also they held a sort of review of all their jewels, which were many and costly, and scared their mother by buying many quite needless ones. At the same time they found plenty of work for Cinderella, who, after her household drudgery was done, had to get up their fine linen and laces and to trim and sew for them; and when she had done her very best they only scolded her for her trouble.

When the day of the ball really came, there was a great hurry-skurry. The sisters, whose usual hour for rising was half-past ten, found they could very well get up at six; and at a quarter past they rang for Cinderella. They continued to dress by easy stages all day long, except during a couple of hours in the middle of the day, which they spent in having their dinner and lying down for a nap; but they found some work for Cinderella till they came back, so that the poor girl got no dinner at all that day.

As Cinderella was fastening the dress of one of the sisters, the other who sat by said, "Pray, Cinderella, would you not like to go to the ball?"

"Nay," replied poor Cinderella, "you are only mocking me. It is not for such as I to go to balls and parties."

"Very true," said the ill-natured girl; "people would stare, I dare say, to see a little cinder-wench at a ball."

That was all the return Cinderella got for her toil since six o'clock in the morning.

After all her pains the two sisters were not satisfied with their appearance, and declared that they looked shockingly, which was true

enough; but it was because they were full of pride and ill-nature, and not from any fault of Cinderella's. They drove off in a fine carriage, with a coachman and two footmen in handsome liveries; and Cinderella was left to retire to her dark, dismal, lonely kitchen.

For some time she stood thinking a little of her sisters' unkindness, and a great deal about the gay, merry ball, to which she would gladly have gone. The more she thought the more sorrowful and sad she became, and at length she sat down in her favourite corner and began to cry. How long she sat she did not know; but she felt very tired and sleepy and sobbed herself into a doze.

When she opened her eyes she was surprised to see before her a beautiful lady, standing on a small cloud, a wand in her hand.

"My dear Cinderella," said the lady, "I am your Fairy God-mother."

Cinderella wondered at this, because she had never seen the lady before.

"I do not like to see you so unhappy: tell me why you are crying."

Cinderella could only sob out, "Because

they treat me so badly, and are never satisfied—and—and——”

“And what, Cinderella?”

“And I do not like being here all by myself,” answered the poor child, “and—and I want—I want——”

“You want to go to the ball, Cinderella; is it not so?”

Cinderella nodded.

“Well, go you shall. But first we must get a coach and horses to take you. Go into the garden and fetch me the largest pumpkin you can find, and if there are any mice in the trap you had better bring them also.”

Cinderella was much surprised at this request, but at once did as she was told. The Fairy cut a hole in the pumpkin, just at the side, where the door of a real coach would be, and then scooped it out, leaving only the rind. Then she touched it with her wand, and it was changed at once into a beautiful coach of state, decked with scarlet and gold and lined with satin.

In the mouse-trap had been six of the sleekest and fattest mice you could wish to find, but they had somehow managed to make their way out and now sat in a row, looking

up at the Fairy Godmother like so many children on a bench at school. The Fairy touched them one by one with her wand, and they turned into handsome coach-horses, with arched necks, long tails, and splendid harness all plated with gold.

“Well, child,” said the Fairy, “here are a carriage and horses at least as handsome as those of your sisters; but now we want a coachman. Go and see if there are any rats in the rat-trap.”

Off tripped Cinderella, and soon returned in triumph, bearing the trap, in which was a large black rat with a fine beard. The Fairy touched it, and at once the rat became a handsome coachman with a splendid state livery embossed with gold. He climbed on to the coach-box, and sat there, the reins gathered in his hands, ready to start when his mistress was ready. Footmen were now required, and Cinderella was directed by the Fairy to bring in six lizards which she would find behind the garden watering-pot. A touch of the wonderful wand changed the four largest into tall footmen, with gorgeous liveries to match the coachman's; and the two small ones were turned into pages. The whole train of

servants was now complete, and looked fit for any Princess: the pumpkin-coach shone like gold, the mice-horses tossed their heads and pranced, the rat-coachman was in his place, the four tall lizard-footmen jumped up and hung on to the footboard, while the lizard-pages were ready to open and close the carriage door; all of them sprang at once into their positions with the ease of practised servants.

“Well, Cinderella,” said her Godmother, “are you not pleased with your carriage?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Cinderella doubtfully; “but——” And she glanced at her ragged frock.

Her Godmother understood her meaning and laughed.

“You do not think you can go in those clothes, my dear?—neither shall you.”

Once more the wand waved: in an instant Cinderella's shabby attire had changed to a beautiful robe of the loveliest rainbow tints, with precious stones here and there, and a beautiful rope of pearls. Her little feet were no longer bare but covered with silk stockings and a pair of beautiful slippers of spun glass, that glittered like diamonds.

“Now,” said the Fairy to Cinderella, as



she stood admiring her lovely clothes and carriage, "all you have to do is to get into the carriage and drive away. I hope you will enjoy yourself very much. But I have one thing to say. You must leave the palace before midnight; if you are there one second after the clock strikes twelve your coach will return to the form of a pumpkin, your coachman become a rat, your horses mice, your footmen and pages lizards, and you yourself will be the little cinder-wench you were a few minutes ago."

Cinderella, her heart full of joy, promised faithfully to leave the ball in good time. The footmen handed her into her coach, the coachman smacked his whip, and off they drove in grand style.

There was no small stir at the palace when the splendid carriage drove up, and great, indeed was the interest displayed in Cinderella. News was quickly carried to the Prince that a beautiful Princess whom nobody knew had arrived. The Prince himself went out to receive her, and conducted her to the ball-room. As they passed every one stood aside and people whispered, "How beautiful she is!" The Court ladies all took particular notice of

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glass slippers fell off.



her clothes, and some of them, thinking they had never seen so lovely a vision, resolved to have dresses made in exactly the same style. The Prince fell in love with her at once, and, to the annoyance of many of the ladies, would dance with no one else.

A grand supper was served, but the Prince was so very much in love that he could scarcely eat more than a single apple-tart and left untasted the very choicest ice-cream. As for Cinderella, she sought out her ugly sisters, whom nobody seemed to wish to speak to, and paid them all sorts of civil attentions, which, coming from so grand a lady, pleased and flattered them very much.

While she was talking to them, the warning voice of the clock told eleven and three-quarters, and Cinderella, mindful of her God-mother's instructions, at once rose, and, with a graceful curtsy to the royal family, hastened to her carriage.

The Prince hurried after her, begging her to renew her visit on the following evening, and, when her carriage had gone, returned to the company very dull and quite bored by the festivities.

Cinderella arrived home in time to receive

the approval of her Godmother and a promise that, as the invitation had been given, she should go to the ball again. While they were talking, a loud rap at the door announced the return of the two sisters. The Fairy Godmother vanished, leaving Cinderella sitting in the chimney-corner, rubbing her eyes and pretending to be very drowsy.

"Ah," said the elder sister, hoping to excite Cinderella's envy, "it has been a most charming ball. A rich and beautiful Princess—the most lovely girl I have ever seen—was there, and she specially singled us out and was very polite and attentive to us both."

"Indeed!" said Cinderella, pretending to stifle a yawn, but really laughing to herself. "And who was this wonderful Princess?"

"Nobody knows," said the sister, "not even the Prince, who takes no pains to conceal that he is greatly in love with her."

"Really!" said Cinderella, smiling to herself again. "How beautiful she must be. I should love to see her. Will you not let me go to-morrow? You could lend me the yellow gown you wear on Sundays!"

"Really!" cried the sister, glaring in surprise. "How impertinent you are to-night!

The idea of *you* going to the ball! Just mind your pots and pans, please, and leave balls and parties to your betters."

Cinderella accepted the rebuke with meekness, for if her sister had really been good-natured enough to lend her the gown she would not have known what to do.

The next evening the two sisters again went to the ball, and Cinderella appeared shortly afterwards, even more splendidly dressed than on the first night.

"Now remember twelve o'clock," had been her Fairy Godmother's parting words, and Cinderella had readily promised. The Prince had been watching for her ever since the first carriage drew up. He never left her side the whole of the evening; would dance with no one else; and paid her such compliments that Cinderella's cheeks flushed and she hardly dared lift her eyes to his face.

But what with the dancing, the lights, the supper, and the Prince's attentions, time went very quickly, and she quite forgot her Godmother's words about the clock. Suddenly, just in the middle of one of the Prince's nicest speeches, the first stroke of twelve rang upon her ear. Up she started, and without

even waiting to curtsy to the guests, ran from the ball-room as fast as she could. At the head of the stairs one of her glass slippers came off, but, fearful of what would happen, she dare not stop to put it on. As she reached the bottom stair came the last stroke of twelve; her beautiful gown fell from her, and she found herself clad once more in her dingy working-dress. The Prince hurried after her, but she was too quick for him. He caught sight of the glass slipper, however, and snatched it up. At the palace door all he saw was a poor dirty lass of whom no Prince could be expected to take the slightest notice.

Cinderella ran all the way home, and reached her house, panting and breathless and ragged, in very different style from the state in which she had left for the ball.

One thing she had, however, to remind her of her grandeur, and that was the other glass slipper, which had not disappeared with the rest of her fine attire.

She had barely slipped it into her pocket when she heard her sisters at the door.

She again met them rubbing her eyes, and with a weary yawn, asked how they had

been entertained, and whether the beautiful Princess had been there. "Yes," they replied, adding that at twelve o'clock she had suddenly started up and left the ball-room; nobody could tell what had made her run off in such a hurry, when just before she had been dancing gaily; that nobody could tell what had become of her, for the Prince and the sentinels had only seen a dirty little girl run out about that time, who could not possibly be the Princess, for she looked like a cinder-sifter; whereupon the Prince had seemed to lose all pleasure in the party, and everything flagged, so that the guests soon took their leave.

Cinderella listened without saying a word, turning her face to the kitchen fire, and perhaps it was this which made her look so rosy; but as nobody ever thought of noticing her at home it did not matter in the least.

Early the next morning she resumed her weary round of work and drudgery just as if nothing had happened.

The Prince dreamed all night of his beautiful partner, and rose the next morning still thinking of her. He lost all taste for the sports and amusements in which he had delighted, and grieved the old King, his father,



by refusing even to take his meals as usual. All day long he lay stretched on a couch, thinking of the fair Princess; and when he returned to his pillow at night, it was only to dream of her again. At last a bright idea struck him, and he hurriedly ordered a herald to ride through the city and proclaim by sound of trumpet—

“THAT THE KING’S SON WOULD MARRY ANY  
LADY WHO SHOULD BE FOUND ABLE TO  
WEAR THE GLASS SLIPPER WHICH HAD  
BEEN DROPPED AT THE BALL.”

He had noticed that the unknown lady had a pretty little foot, and felt sure he could by this means discover the owner of the slipper. So the herald went round the city and made the announcement in due form.

There was a great stir, you may be sure; for it was not every day that a chance offered to marry a Prince. It was noticed that the excitement was greatest among those fair ladies who had small feet, while the many not thus favoured preferred to think the proclamation only a silly joke.

Many a lady tried to make the slipper fit;

but in vain; for, you see, it was glass, and would not bend like an ordinary shoe. First one and then another tried, but all were obliged to dismiss the herald, and to renounce their hopes of obtaining the Prince's hand.

At last the herald came to the house of the two sisters. They knew well enough, of course, that neither of themselves was the beautiful lady, but they tried and tried again to get their clumsy feet into the slipper. At last they had to give up.

All this while Cinderella had been quietly listening in the chimney-corner. She now came forward and modestly asked if she might try.

"You!" cried the sisters, bursting into laughter. "Did any one ever hear anything so absurd!"

But the herald looked gravely at Cinderella's sweet face, and said his orders were to let *any one who liked* try on the slipper.

So he made Cinderella sit down, the sisters regarding her with an ugly sneer. At the very first attempt the slipper was seen to fit exactly, in fact on Cinderella's dainty little foot it appeared to be a skin of glass.

The sisters looked on, speechless with surprise. Their wonder increased when Cinderella quietly said that she had been at the ball and had danced with the Prince. They looked at each other as if to say, "However could a kitchen-maid have got in?" To convince the herald, Cinderella quietly put her hand in her pocket and drew out the other slipper, which she had carried about ever since the night of the ball.

Now, at last, the sisters began to see in Cinderella's face some likeness to the beautiful lady whose notice they were so proud and happy to attract at the ball; but their wonder was still not yet at an end, for the Fairy God-mother had entered the room unseen and now touched Cinderella with her wand, transforming the humble maiden again into the beautiful and richly dressed Princess who had excited so much admiration at the balls.

The herald, overjoyed with his success, at once returned to the palace to report to the Prince.

You may well imagine the feelings of the sisters. Amazement gave way to alarm, and at last to shame. Falling on their knees,



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appeared to be a skin of glass.

and with tears in their eyes, they begged Cinderella's pardon for all their former unkindness.

But Cinderella was of too fine a character to cherish ill-feeling. She not only freely forgave but promised to do everything in her power to help them.

Soon the herald returned and she was conducted in state to the royal palace. The Prince was delighted to have found her again, and thought she looked even more beautiful than before. The King and all the court were very much pleased with her story, and soon everybody in the land was expressing a wish that he or she could have a Fairy Godmother.

The wedding took place soon afterwards amid great rejoicings. A place of honour was given to the two sisters, though really they hardly deserved it. Cinderella also presented them with some lovely clothes for the occasion. She even did more, for a month or two later she found them husbands in the shape of two proud but poor lords who wanted wives—and money.

As for Cinderella, she was as happy as the days were long. But, after all, she owed

more of her joy to her own sweet and sunny nature and to her kind and loving disposition than to all the good gifts her devoted lover and husband showered upon her.