

THE FATHER OF EIGHTEEN ELVES ICELANDIC LEGEND

Превод от исландски: Джордж Е. Дж. Пауъл, Ейрикур Магнусон, 1864

chitanka.info

At a certain farm, long ago, it happened that all the household were out one day, making hay, except the goodwoman and her only child, a boy of four years old. He was a strong, handsome, lusty little fellow, who could already speak almost as well as his elders, and was looked upon by his parents with great pride and hope. But as his mother had plenty of other work to do besides watching him, she was obliged to leave him alone for a short time, while she went down to the brook to wash the milk-pails. So she left him playing in the door of the cottage, and came back again as soon as she had placed the milk-pails to dry.

Directly she spoke to the child, it began to cry in a strange and unnatural way, which amazed her not a little, as it had always been so quiet and sweet-tempered. When she tried to make the child speak to her, as it was wont to do, it only yelled the more, and so it went on for a long time, always crying and never would be soothed, till the mother was in despair at so wonderful a change in her boy, who now seemed to have lost his senses.

Filled with grief, she went to ask the advice of a learned and skillful woman in the neighbourhood, and confided to her all her trouble.

Her neighbour asked her all sorts of questions—How long ago this change in the child's manner had happened? What his mother thought to be the cause of it? and so forth. To all of which the wretched woman gave the best answers she could. At last the wise woman said:

“Do you not think, my friend, that the child you now have is a changeling? Without doubt it was put at your cottage door in the place of your son, while you were washing the milk pails.”

“I know not,” replied the other, “but advise me how to find it out.”

So the wise woman said, “I will tell you. Place the child where he may see something he has never seen before, and let him fancy himself alone. As soon as he believes no one to be near him, he will speak. But you must listen attentively, and if the child says something that declares him to be a changeling, then beat him without mercy.”

That was the wise woman's advice, and her neighbour, with many thanks for it, went home.

When she got to her house, she set a cauldron in the middle of the hearth, and taking a number of rods, bound them end to end, and at the bottom of them fastened a porridge-spoon. This she stuck into the cauldron in such a way that the new handle she had made for it reached right up the chimney: as soon as she had prepared everything, she fetched the child, and

placing him on the floor of the kitchen left him and went out, taking care, however, to leave the door ajar, so that she could hear and see all that went on.

When she had left the room, the child began to walk round and round the cauldron, and eye it carefully, and after a while he said:

“Well! I am old enough, as anybody may guess from my beard, and the father of eighteen elves, but never, in all my life, have I seen so long a spoon to so small a pot.”

On hearing this the goodwoman waited not a moment, but rushed into the room and snatching up a bundle of fire-wood flogged the changeling with it, till he kicked and screamed again. In the midst of all this, the door opened, and a strange woman, bearing in her arms a beautiful boy, entered and said, “See how we differ! I cherish and love your son, while you beat and illuse my husband;” with these words, she gave back to the farmer’s wife her own son, and taking the changeling by the hand, disappeared with him.

But the little boy grew up to manhood, and fulfilled all the hope and promise of his youth.

ЗАСЛУГИ

Имате удоволствието да четете тази книга благодарение на *Моята библиотека* и нейните всеотдайни помощници.

МОЯТА БИБЛИОТЕКА



<http://chitanka.info>

Вие също можете да помогнете за обогатяването на *Моята библиотека*. Посетете **работното ателие**, за да научите повече.