

84 Hans Married

There was once upon a time a young peasant named Hans, whose uncle wanted to find him a rich wife. He therefore seated Hans behind the stove, and had it made very hot. Then he fetched a pot of milk and plenty of white bread, gave him a bright newly-coined farthing in his hand, and said, "Hans, hold that farthing fast, crumble the white bread into the milk, and stay where you are, and do not stir from that spot till I come back." "Yes," said Hans, "I will do all that." Then the wooer put on a pair of old patched trousers, went to a rich peasant's daughter in the next village, and said, "Won't you marry my nephew Hans---you will get an honest and sensible man who will suit you?" The covetous father asked, "How is it with regard to his means? Has he bread to break?" "Dear friend," replied the wooer, "my young nephew has a snug berth, a nice bit of money in hand, and plenty of bread to break, besides he has quite as many patches as I have," (and as he spoke, he slapped the patches on his trousers, but in that district small pieces of land were called patches also.) "If you will give yourself the trouble to go home with me, you shall see at once that all is as I have said." Then the miser did not want to lose this good opportunity, and said, "If that is the case, I have nothing further to say against the marriage."

So the wedding was celebrated on the appointed day, and when the young wife went out of doors to see the bridegroom's property, Hans took off his Sunday coat and put on his patched smock-frock and said, "I might spoil my good coat." Then together they went out and wherever a boundary line came in sight, or fields and meadows were divided from each other,

Hans pointed with his finger and then slapped either a large or a small patch on his smock-frock, and said, "That patch is mine, and that too, my dearest, just look at it," meaning thereby that his wife should not stare at the broad land, but look at his garment, which was his own.

"Were you indeed at the wedding?" "Yes, indeed I was there, and in full dress. My head-dress was of snow; then the sun came out, and it was melted. My coat was of cobwebs, and I had to pass by some thorns which tore it off me, my shoes were of glass, and I pushed against a stone and they said, "Klink," and broke in two.