

SELECTED WORKS of Charles Perrault

Little Red Riding-Hood

Once upon a time, there lived in a certain village, a little country girl, the prettiest creature was ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her; and her grand-mother doated on her much more. This good woman got made for her a little red riding-hood; which became the girl so extremely well, that every body called her Little Red Riding-Hood.

One day, her mother, having made some girdle-cakes, said to her:

"Go, my dear, and see how thy grand-mamma does, for I hear she has been very ill, carry her a girdle-cake, and this little pot of butter."

Little Red Riding-Hood set out immediately to go to her grand-mother, who lived in another village. As she was going thro' the wood, she met with Gaffer Wolf, who had a very great mind to eat her up, but he durst not, because of some faggot-makers hard by in the forest.

He asked her whither she was going. The poor child, who did not know that it was dangerous to stay and hear a Wolf talk, said to him:

"I am going to see my grand-mamma, and carry her a girdle-cake, and a little pot of butter, from my mamma."

"Does she live far off?" said the Wolf.

"Oh! ay," answered Little Red Riding-Hood, "it is beyond that mill you see there, at the first house in the village."

"Well," said the Wolf, "and I'll go and see her too: I'll go this way, and you go that, and we shall see who will be there soonest."

The Wolf began to run as fast as he could, taking the nearest way; and the little girl went by that farthest about, diverting herself in gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and making nosegays of such little flowers as she met with. The Wolf was not long before he got to the old woman's house: he knocked at the door, *tap, tap* .

"Who's there?"

"Your grand-child, Little Red Riding-Hood," replied the Wolf, counterfeiting her voice, "who has brought you a girdle-cake, and a little pot of butter, sent you by mamma."

The good grand-mother, who was in bed, because she found herself somewhat ill, cry'd out:

"Pull the peg, and the bolt will fall."

The Wolf pull'd the peg, and the door opened, and then presently he fell upon the good woman, and ate her up in a moment; for it was above three days that

he had not touched a bit. He then shut the door, and went into the grand-mother's bed, expecting Little Red Riding-Hood, who came some time afterwards, and knock'd at the door, *tap, tap* .

"Who's there?"

Little Red Riding-Hood, hearing the big voice of the Wolf, was at first afraid; but believing her grand-mother had got a cold, and was hoarse, answered:

"'Tis your grand-child, Little Red Riding-Hood, who has brought you a girdle-cake, and a little pot of butter, mamma sends you."

The Wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could, "Pull the peg, and the bolt will fall."

Little Red Riding-Hood pulled the peg, and the door opened. The Wolf seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bedclothes:

"Put the cake, and the little pot of butter upon the bread-bin, and come and lye down with me."

Little Red Riding-Hood undressed herself, and went into bed; where, being greatly amazed to see how her grand-mother looked in her night-cloaths, she said to her:

"Grand-mamma, what great arms you have got!"

"That is the better to hug thee, my dear."

"Grand-mamma, what great legs you have got!"

"That is to run the better, my child."

"Grand-mamma, what great ears you have got!"

"That is to hear the better, my child."

"Grand-mamma, what great eyes you have got!"

"It is to see the better, my child."

"Grand-mamma, what great teeth you have got!"

"That is to eat thee up."

And, saying these words, this wicked Wolf fell upon poor Little Red Riding-Hood, and ate her all up.

The Moral

From this short story
easy we discern

What conduct all
young people ought to learn.

But above all, young,
growing misses fair,

Whose orient rosy
blooms begin t'appear:

Who, beauties in the
fragrant spring of age,

With pretty airs young
hearts are apt t'engage.

Ill do they listen to all
sorts of tongues,

Since some inchant
and lure like Syrens' songs.

No wonder therefore
'tis, if over-power'd,

So many of them has
the Wolf devour'd.

The Wolf, I say, for
Wolves too sure there are
Of every sort, and
every character.

Some of them mild
and gentle-humour'd be,
Of noise and gall, and
rancour wholly free;

Who tame, familiar,
full of complaisance
Ogle and leer,
languish, cajole and glance;
With luring tongues,
and language wond'rous
sweet,

Follow young ladies
as they walk the street,
Ev'n to their very
houses, nay, bedside,
And, artful, tho' their
true designs they hide;

Yet ah! these
simpering Wolves! Who
does not see

Most dangerous of
Wolves indeed they be?

The Fairy

There was, once upon a time, a widow, who had two daughters. The eldest was so much like her in the face and humour, that whoever looked upon the daughter saw the mother. They were both so disagreeable, and so proud, that there was no living with them. The youngest, who was the very picture of her father, for courtesy and sweetness of temper, was withal one of the most beautiful girls ever seen. As people naturally love their own likeness, this mother even doated on her eldest daughter, and at the same time had a horrible aversion for the youngest. She made her eat in the kitchen, and work continually.

Among other things, this poor child was forced twice a day to draw water above a mile and a half off the house, and bring home a pitcher full of it. One day, as she was at this fountain, there came to her a poor woman, who begged of her to let her drink.

"O ay, with all my heart, Goody," said this pretty maid; and rinsing immediately the pitcher, she took up some water from the clearest place of the fountain, and gave it to her, holding up the pitcher all the while, that she might drink the easier.

The good woman having drank, said to her:

"You are so very pretty, my dear, so good and so

mannerly, that I cannot help giving you a gift" (for this was a Fairy, who had taken the form of a poor country-woman, to see how far the civility and good manners of this pretty girl would go). "I will give you for gift," continued the Fairy, "that at every word you speak, there shall come out of your mouth either a flower, or a jewel."

When this pretty girl came home, her mother scolded at her for staying so long at the fountain.

"I beg your pardon, mamma," said the poor girl, "for not making more haste," and, in speaking these words, there came out of her mouth two roses, two pearls, and two diamonds.

"What is this I see?" said her mother quite astonished, "I think I see pearls and diamonds come out of the girl's mouth! How happens this, child?" (This was the first time she ever called her child.)

The poor creature told her frankly all the matter, not without dropping out infinite numbers of diamonds.

"In good faith," cried the mother, "I must send my child thither. Come hither, Fanny, look what comes out of thy sister's mouth when she speaks! Would'st not thou be glad, my dear, to have the same gift given to thee? Thou hast nothing else to do but go and draw water out of the fountain, and when a certain poor woman asks thee to let her drink, to give it her very civilly."

"It would be a very fine sight indeed," said this

ill-bred minx, "to see me go draw water!"

"You shall go, hussey," said the mother, "and this minute."

So away she went, but grumbling all the way, taking with her the best silver tankard in the house.

She was no sooner at the fountain, than she saw coming out of the wood a lady most gloriously dressed, who came up to her, and asked to drink. This was, you must know, the very Fairy who appeared to her sister, but had now taken the air and dress of a princess, to see how far this girl's rudeness would go.

"Am I come hither," said the proud, saucy slut, "to serve you with water, pray? I suppose the silver tankard was brought purely for your ladyship, was it? However, you may drink out of it, if you have a fancy."

"You are not over and above mannerly," answered the Fairy, without putting herself in a passion. "Well then, since you have so little breeding, and are so disobliging, I give you for gift, that at every word you speak there shall come out of your mouth a snake or a toad."

So soon as her mother saw her coming, she cried out: "Well, daughter?"

"Well, mother?" answered the pert hussey, throwing out of her mouth two vipers and two toads.

"O mercy!" cried the mother, "what is it I see! O, it is that wretch her sister who has occasioned all this; but she shall pay for it"; and immediately she ran to

beat her. The poor child fled away from her and went to hide herself in the forest, not far from thence.

The King's son, then on his return from hunting, met her, and seeing her so very pretty, asked her what she did there alone, and why she cried.

"Alas! sir, my mamma has turned me out of doors."

The King's son, who saw five or six pearls, and as many diamonds, come out of her mouth, desired her to tell him how that happened. She thereupon told him the whole story; and so the King's son fell in love with her; and, considering with himself that such a gift was worth more than any marriage-portion whatsoever in another, conducted her to the palace of the King his father, and there married her.

As for her sister, she made herself so much hated that her own mother turned her off; and the miserable wretch, having wandered about a good while without finding anybody to take her in, went to a corner in the wood and there died.

The Moral

Money and jewels
still, we find,
Stamp strong
impressions on the mind.
But sweet discourse

more potent riches yields;
Of higher value is the
pow'r it wiolds.

Another

Civil behaviour costs
indeed some pains,
Requires of
complaisance some little
share;
But soon or late its
due reward it gains,
And meets it often
when we're not aware.

Blue Beard

There was a man who had fine houses, both in town and country, a deal of silver and gold plate, embroidered furniture, and coaches gilded all over with gold. But this man had the misfortune to have a blue beard, which made him so frightfully ugly, that all the women and girls ran away from him.

One of his neighbours, a lady of quality, had two daughters who were perfect beauties. He desired of her

one of them in marriage, leaving to her the choice which of the two she would bestow upon him. They would neither of them have him, and each made the other welcome of him, being not able to bear the thought of marrying a man who had a blue beard. And what besides gave them disgust and aversion, was his having already been married to several wives, and nobody ever knew what became of them.

Blue Beard, to engage their affection, took them, with the lady their mother, and three or four ladies of their acquaintance, with other young people of the neighbourhood, to one of his country seats, where they stayed a whole week. There was nothing then to be seen but parties of pleasure, hunting, fishing, dancing, mirth and feasting. Nobody went to bed, but all passed the night in playing tricks upon each other. In short, every thing succeeded so well, that the youngest daughter began to think the master of the house not to have a beard so very blue, and that he was a mighty civil gentleman. As soon as they returned home, the marriage was concluded.

About a month afterwards Blue Beard told his wife that he was obliged to take a country journey for six weeks at least, about affairs of very great consequence, desiring her to divert herself in his absence, to send for her friends and acquaintances, to carry them into the country, if she pleased, and to make good cheer wherever she was.

"Here," said he, "are the keys of the two great wardrobes, wherein I have my best furniture; these are of my silver and gold plate, which is not every day in use; these open my strong boxes, which hold my money, both gold and silver; these my caskets of jewels; and this is the master-key to all my apartments. But for this little one here, it is the key of the closet at the end of the great gallery on the ground floor. Open them all; go into all and every one of them; except that little closet which I forbid you, and forbid it in such a manner that, if you happen to open it, there will be no bounds to my just anger and resentment."

She promised to observe, very exactly, whatever he had ordered; when he, after having embraced her, got into his coach and proceeded on his journey.

Her neighbours and good friends did not stay to be sent for by the newmarried lady, so great was their impatience to see all the rich furniture of her house, not daring to come while her husband was there, because of his blue beard which frightened them. They ran thro' all the rooms, closets, and wardrobes, which were all so rich and fine, that they seemed to surpass one another.

After that, they went up into the two great rooms, where were the best and richest furniture; they could not sufficiently admire the number and beauty of the tapestry, beds, couches, cabinets, stands, tables, and looking-glasses in which you might see yourself from head to foot; some of them were framed with glass,

others with silver, plain and gilded, the finest and most magnificent which were ever seen. They ceased not to extol and envy the happiness of their friend, who in the mean time no way diverted herself in looking upon all these rich things, because of the impatience she had to go and open the closet of the ground floor. She was so much pressed by her curiosity, that, without considering that it was very uncivil to leave her company, she went down a little back-stair-case, and with such excessive haste, that she had twice or thrice like to have broken her neck.

Being come to the closet door, she made a stop for some time, thinking upon her husband's orders, and considering what unhappiness might attend her if she was disobedient; but the temptation was so strong she could not overcome it. She took then the little key, and opened it trembling; but could not at first see any thing plainly, because the windows were shut. After some moments she began to perceive that the floor was all covered over with clotted blood, in which were reflected the bodies of several dead women ranged against the walls: these were all the wives whom Blue Beard had married and murdered one after another. She was like to have died for fear, and the key, which she pulled out of the lock, fell out of her hand.

After having somewhat recovered her senses, she took up the key, locked the door, and went up stairs

into her chamber to recover herself; but she could not, so much was she frightened. Having observed that the key of the closet was stained with blood, she tried two or three times to wipe it off, but the blood would not come off; in vain did she wash it, and even rub it with soap and sand, the blood still remained, for the key was a Fairy, and she could never make it quite clean; when the blood was gone off from one side, it came again on the other.

Blue Beard returned from his journey the same evening, and said, he had received letters upon the road, informing him that the affair he went about was ended to his advantage. His wife did all she could to convince him she was extremely glad of his speedy return. Next morning he asked her for the keys, which she gave him, but with such a trembling hand, that he easily guessed what had happened.

"What," said he, "is not the key of my closet among the rest?"

"I must certainly," answered she, "have left it above upon the table."

"Fail not," said Blue Beard, "to bring it me presently."

After putting him off several times, she was forced to bring him the key. Blue Beard, having very attentively considered it, said to his wife:

"How comes this blood upon the key?"

"I do not know," cried the poor woman, paler

than death.

"You do not know," replied Blue Beard; "I very well know, you were resolved to go into the closet, were you not? Mighty well, Madam; you shall go in, and take your place among the ladies you saw there."

Upon this she threw herself at her husband's feet, and begged his pardon with all the signs of a true repentance for her disobedience. She would have melted a rock, so beautiful and sorrowful was she; but Blue Beard had a heart harder than any rock.

"You must die, Madam," said he, "and that presently."

"Since I must die," answered she, looking upon him with her eyes all bathed in tears, "give me some little time to say my prayers."

"I give you," replied Blue Beard, "half a quarter of an hour, but not one moment more."

When she was alone, she called out to her sister, and said to her:

"Sister Anne" (for that was her name), "go up I beg you, upon the top of the tower, and look if my brothers are not coming; they promised me that they would come to-day, and if you see them, give them a sign to make haste."

Her sister Anne went up upon the top of the tower, and the poor afflicted wife cried out from time to time, "Anne, sister Anne, do you see any one coming?"