

The lazy spinner

In a certain village there once lived a man and his wife, and the wife was so idle that she would never work at anything; whatever her husband gave her to spin, she did not get done, and what she did spin she did not wind, but let it all remain entangled in a heap. If the man scolded her, she was always ready with her tongue, and said, "Well, how should I wind it, when I have no reel? Just you go into the forest and get me one." - "If that is all," said the man, "then I will go into the forest, and get some wood for making reels." Then the woman was afraid that if he had the wood he would make her a reel of it, and she would have to wind her yarn off, and then begin to spin again. She bethought herself a little, and then a lucky idea occurred to her, and she secretly followed the man into the forest, and when he had climbed into a tree to choose and cut the wood, she crept into the thicket below where he could not see her, and cried,

"He who cuts wood for reels shall die,
And he who winds, shall perish."

The man listened, laid down his axe for a moment, and began to consider what that could mean. "Hollo," he said at last, "what can that have been; my ears must have been singing, I won't alarm myself for nothing." So he again seized the axe, and began to hew, then again there came a cry from below:

"He who cuts wood for reels shall die,
And he who winds, shall perish."

He stopped, and felt afraid and alarmed, and pondered over the circumstance. But when a few moments had passed, he took heart again, and a third time he stretched out his hand for the axe, and began to cut. But some one called out a third time, and said loudly,

"He who cuts wood for reels shall die,
And he who winds, shall perish."

That was enough for him, and all inclination had departed from him, so he hastily descended the tree, and set out on his way home. The woman ran as fast as she could by by-ways so as to get home first. So when he entered the parlour, she put on an innocent look as if nothing had happened, and said, "Well, have you brought a nice piece of wood for reels?" - "No," said he, "I see very well that winding won't do," and told her what had happened to him in the forest, and from that time forth left her in peace about it. Nevertheless

after some time, the man again began to complain of the disorder in the house. "Wife," said he, "it is really a shame that the spun yarn should lie there all entangled!" - "I'll tell you what," said she, "as we still don't come by any reel, go you up into the loft, and I will stand down below, and will throw the yarn up to you, and you will throw it down to me, and so we shall get a skein after all." - "Yes, that will do," said the man. So they did that, and when it was done, he said, "The yarn is in skeins, now it must be boiled." The woman was again distressed; She certainly said, "Yes, we will boil it next morning early." but she was secretly contriving another trick.

Early in the morning she got up, lighted a fire, and put the kettle on, only instead of the yarn, she put in a lump of tow, and let it boil. After that she went to the man who was still lying in bed, and said to him, "I must just go out, you must get up and look after the yarn which is in the kettle on the fire, but you must be at hand at once; mind that, for if the cock should happen to crow, and you are not attending to the yarn, it will become tow." The man was willing and took good care not to loiter. He got up as quickly as he could, and went into the kitchen. But when he reached the kettle and peeped in, he saw, to his horror, nothing but a lump of tow. Then the poor man was as still as a mouse, thinking he had neglected it, and was to blame, and in future said no more about yarn and spinning. But you yourself must own she was an odious woman!

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