The wedding of Mrs. Fox

FIRST STORY

There was once on a time an old fox with nine tails, who believed that his wife was not faithful to him, and wished to try her. He stretched himself out under the bench, did not move a limb, and behaved as if he were stone dead. Mrs. Fox went up to her room, shut herself in, and her maid, Miss Cat, sat by the fire, and did the cooking. When it became known that the old fox was dead, wooers presented themselves. The maid heard some one standing at the house-door, knocking. She went and opened it, and it was a young fox, who said,

"What may you be about, Miss Cat.?
Do you sleep or do you wake?"

She answered,

"I am not sleeping, I am waking,
Wouldst thou know what I am making?
I am boiling warm beer with butter so nice,
Will the gentleman enter and drink some likewise?"

"No, thank you, miss," said the fox, "what is Mrs. Fox doing?" The maid replied,

"She sits all alone,
And makes her moan,
Weeping her little eyes quite red,
Because old Mr. Fox is dead."

"Do just tell her, miss, that a young fox is here, who would like to woo her." - "Certainly, young sir."

The cat goes up the stairs trip, trap,
The door she knocks at tap, tap, tap,
"Mistress Fox, are you inside?"
"Oh yes, my little cat," she cried.
"A wooer he stands at the door out there."
"Tell me what he is like, my dear?"
"But has he nine as beautiful tails as the late Mr. Fox?" - "Oh, no," answered the cat, "he has only one."

"Then I will not have him." Miss Cat went downstairs and sent the wooer away. Soon afterwards there was another knock, and another fox was at the door who wished to woo Mrs. Fox. He had two tails, but he did not fare better than the first. After this still more came, each with one tail more than the other, but they were all turned away, until at last one came who had nine tails, like old Mr. Fox. When the widow heard that, she said joyfully to the cat,

"Now open the gates and doors all wide,
And carry old Mr. Fox outside."

But just as the wedding was going to be solemnized, old Mr. Fox stirred under the bench, and cudgelled all the rabble, and drove them and Mrs. Fox out of the house.

SECOND STORY

When old Mr. Fox was dead, the wolf came as a wooer, and knocked at the door, and the cat who was servant to Mrs. Fox, opened it for him. The wolf greeted her, and said,

"Good day, Mrs. Cat of Kehrewit,
"How comes it that alone you sit?
What are you making good?"

The cat replied,

"In milk I'm breaking bread so sweet,
Will the gentleman please come in and eat?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Cat," answered the wolf. "Is Mrs. Fox not at home?"

The cat said,

"She sits upstairs in her room,
Bewailing her sorrowful doom,
Bewailing her trouble so sore,
For old Mr. Fox is no more."

The wolf answered,

"If she's in want of a husband now,
Then will it please her to step below?"

The cat runs quickly up the stair,
And lets her tail fly here and there,
Until she comes to the parlour door.
With her five gold rings at the door she knocks,

"Are you within, good Mistress Fox?
If you're in want of a husband now,
Then will it please you to step below?

Mrs. Fox asked, "Has the gentleman red stockings on' and has he a pointed mouth?" - "No," answered the cat. "Then he won't do for me."

When the wolf was gone, came a dog, a stag, a hare, a bear, a lion, and all the beasts of the forest, one after the other. But one of the good points which old Mr. Fox had possessed, was always lacking, and the cat had continually to send the wooers away. At length came a young fox. Then Mrs. Fox said, "Has the gentleman red stockings on, and has he a little pointed mouth?" - "Yes," said the cat, "he has." - "Then let him come upstairs," said Mrs. Fox, and ordered the servant to prepare the wedding-feast.

"Sweep me the room as clean as you can,
Up with the window, fling out my old man!
For many a fine fat mouse he brought,
Yet of his wife he never thought,
But ate up every one he caught."

Then the wedding was solemnized with young Mr. Fox, and there was much rejoicing and dancing; and if they have not left off, they are dancing still.

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