



Cinderella

OR THE LITTLE GLASS SLIPPER



CINDERELLA

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Once upon a time there lived a gentleman who married twice. His second wife was a widow with two grown-up daughters, both somewhat past their prime, and this woman would have been the proudest and most overbearing in the world had not her daughters exactly resembled her with their fine airs and insolent tempers. The husband, too, had by his first wife a child of his own, a young daughter, and so good and so gentle that she promised to grow up into the living image of her dead mother, who had been the most lovable of women.

The wedding festivities were no sooner over than the stepmother began to show herself in her true colours. She could not endure the girl's good qualities, which by contrast rendered her own daughters the more odious. She put her to drudge at the meanest household work, and thus she and her precious darlings not only wreaked their spite but saved money to buy themselves dresses and finery. It was the child who scoured the pots and pans, scrubbed the floors, washed down the stairs, polished the tables, ironed the linen, darned the stockings, and made the beds. She herself slept at the top of the house in a garret, upon a wretched straw mattress, while her sisters had

apartments of their own with inlaid floors, beds carved and gilded in the latest fashion, and mirrors in which they could see themselves from head to foot.

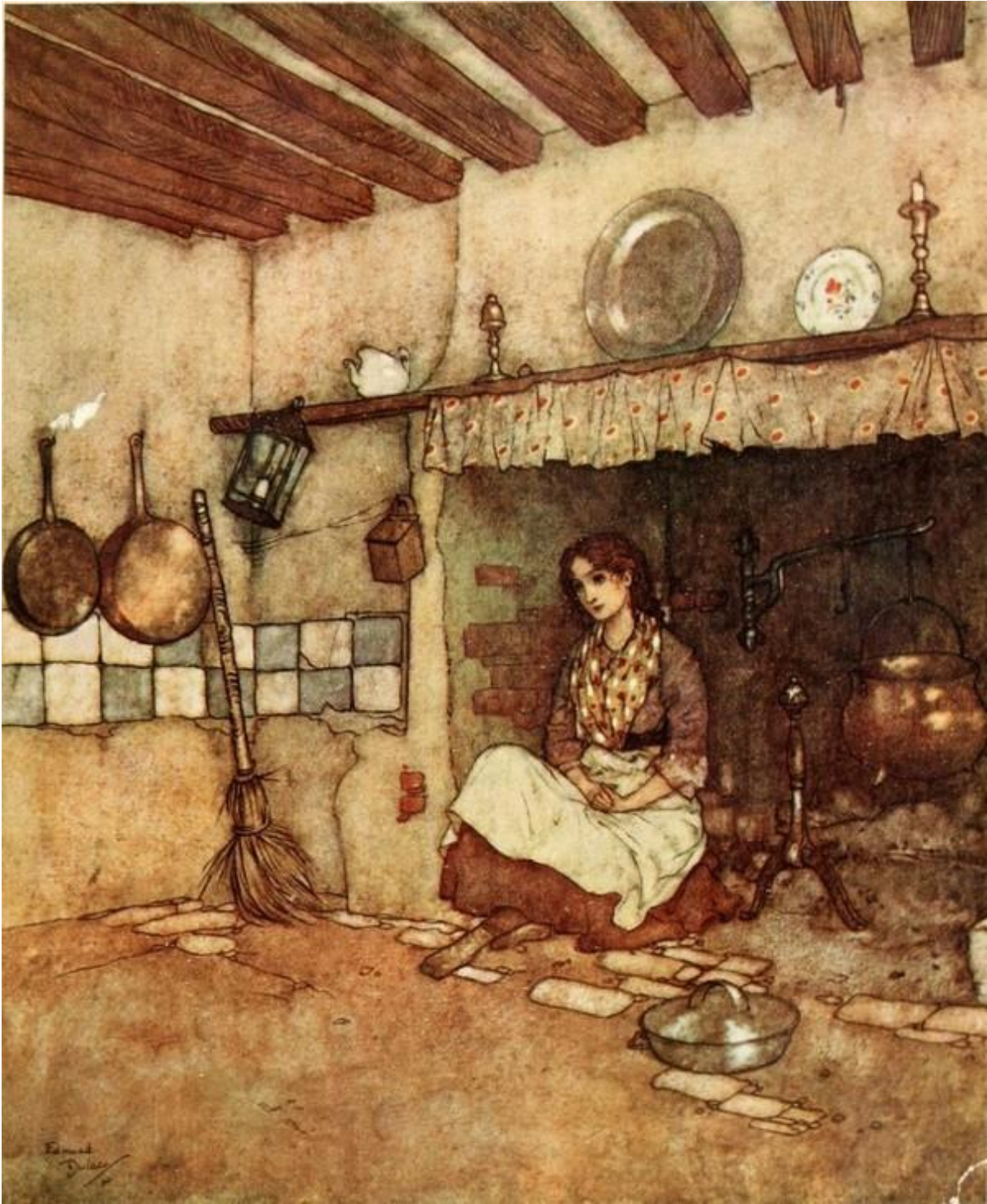
Yet they were so helpless, or rather they thought it so menial to do anything for themselves, that had they but a ribbon to tie, or a bow to adjust, or a bodice to be laced, the child must be sent for. When she came it was odds that they met her with a storm of abuse, in this fashion:—

'What do you mean, pray, by answering the bell in this state? Stand before the glass and look at yourself! Look at your hands—faugh! How can you suppose we should allow you to touch a ribbon, or even come near us, with such hands? Run downstairs, slut, and put yourself under the kitchen pump'—and so on.

'How can I help it?' thought the poor little drudge. 'If I do not run at once when the bell rings, they scold me for that. Yet they ring—both of them together sometimes—a minute after setting me to rake out a grate and sift the ashes. As for looking at myself in the glass, gladly would I do it if they allowed me one. But they have told me that if I had a glass I should only waste time in front of it.'

She kept these thoughts to herself, however, and suffered her ill-usage patiently, not daring to complain to her father, who would, moreover, have joined with the others in chiding her, for he was wholly under his wife's thumb; and she had enough of chiding already. When she had done her work she used to creep away to the chimney-corner and seat herself among the cinders, and from this the household name for her came to be *Cinder-slut*; but the younger sister, who was not so ill-tempered as the elder, called her *Cinderella*. They were wise in their way to deprive her of a looking-glass; for in truth, and in spite of her sorry rags, *Cinderella* was a hundred times more beautiful than they with all their magnificent dresses.

It happened that the King's son gave a ball, and sent invitations through the kingdom to every person of quality. Our two misses were invited among the rest, for they cut a great figure in that part of the country. Mightily pleased they were to be sure with their cards of invitation, all printed in gold and stamped with the broad red seal of the Heir Apparent; and mightily busy they were, discussing what gowns and head-dresses would best become them. This meant more worry for *Cinderella*, for it was she who ironed her sisters' linen, goffered their tucks and frills, pleated their wristbands, pressed their trimmings of old lace and wrapped them away in tissue paper. A score of times all this lace, piece by piece, had to be unwrapped, inspected, put away again; and after a trying-on, all the linen had to be ironed, goffered, crimped, or pleated afresh for them. They could talk of nothing but their ball dresses.



She used to creep away to the chimney-corner and seat herself among the cinders.

'For my part,' said the elder, 'I shall wear a velvet cramoisie trimmed *à l'Anglaise*'—for she had a passion for cramoisie, and could not perceive how ill the colour went with her complexion. 'I had thought of cloth-of-gold, but there's the cost of the underskirt to be considered; and underskirts seem to grow dearer and dearer in these days. What a relief,' she went on, 'it must be to have money and not be forced to set one thing against another!'

'I,' said the younger, 'must make shift with my old underskirt; that is, unless I can wheedle some money out of Papa'—for so, in their affection, they called their stepfather. '*Cinderella* can take out the worst stains to-morrow with a little eau-de-Cologne. I believe that, if she tries, she can make it look as good as new; and, at all events, it will give her something to do instead of wasting an afternoon. I don't pretend that I *like* wearing an old underskirt, and I hope to make dear Papa sensible of this; but against it I shall have the gold-flowered robe, on which I am determined, and my diamond stomacher, which is somewhat better than the common.'

'And I, of course,' said the elder, 'must wear my diamond spray. If only it had a ruby in the clasp instead of a sapphire! Rubies go so much better with cramoisie.... I suppose there is no time now to ask the jeweller to re-set it with a ruby.'

'But you don't possess a ruby, dear,' murmured her sister, who did possess one, and had no intention of lending it. 'And, besides, sapphires suit you so much better!'

They sent for the best milliner they could find, to build their mob-caps in triple tiers; and for the best hairdresser to arrange their hair; and their patches were supplied by the shop to which all the Quality went. From time to time they called up *Cinderella* to ask her advice, for she had excellent taste. *Cinderella* advised them perfectly, and even offered her services to dress their hair for them on the night of the ball. They accepted gladly enough.

Whilst she was dressing them one asked her: '*Cinderella*, would you not like to be going to the ball?'

'Alas! miss,' said *Cinderella*, 'you are making fun of me. It is not for the like of me to be there.'

'You are right, girl. Folks would laugh indeed to see *Cinder-slut* at a ball!'

Any one but *Cinderella* would have pinned on their mob-caps awry; and if you or I had been in her place, I won't swear but that we might have pushed in the pins just a trifle carelessly. But she had no malice in her nature; she attired them to perfection, though they found fault with her all the while it was doing, and quite forgot to thank her when

it was done. Let it be related, in excuse for their tempers, that they had passed almost two days without eating, so eager were they and excited. The most of this time they had spent in front of their mirrors, where they had broken more than a dozen laces in trying to squeeze their waists and make them appear more slender. They were dressed a full two hours before the time fixed for starting. But at length the coach arrived at the door. They were tucked into it with a hundred precautions, and *Cinderella* followed it with her eyes as long as she could; that is to say, until the tears rose and blinded them.

She turned away weeping, back to the house, and crept into her dear chimney-corner; where, being all alone in the kitchen, she could indulge her misery.

A long while she sat there. Suddenly, between two heavy sobs she looked up, her eyes attracted by a strange blue glow on the far side of the hearth: and there stood the queerest lady, who must have entered somehow without knocking.

Her powdered hair was dressed all about her head in the prettiest of short curls, amid which the most exquisite jewels—diamonds, and rubies, and emeralds—sparkled against the firelight. Her dress had wide panniers bulging over a skirt of lace flounces, billowy and delicate as sea-foam, and a stiff bodice, shaped to the narrowest waist imaginable. Jewels flashed all over this dress—or at least *Cinderella* supposed them to be jewels, though, on second thoughts, they might be fireflies, butterflies, glowworms. They seemed at any rate to be alive, and to dart from one point to another of her attire. Lastly, this strange lady held in her right hand a short wand, on the end of which trembled a pale bluish-green flame; and it was this which had first caught *Cinderella's* eye and caused her to look up.

'Good evening, child,' said the visitor in a sharp clear voice, at the same time nodding kindly across the firelight. 'You seem to be in trouble. What is the matter?'

'I wish,' sobbed *Cinderella*. 'I wish,' she began again, and again she choked. This was all she could say for weeping.

'You wish, dear, that you could go to the ball; is it not so?'

'Ah, yes!' said *Cinderella* with a sigh.

'Well, then,' said the visitor, 'be a good girl, dry your tears, and I think it can be managed. I am your godmother, you must know, and in younger days your mother and I were very dear friends.' She omitted, perhaps purposely, to add that she was a Fairy; but *Cinderella* was soon to discover this too. 'Do you happen to have any pumpkins in the garden?' her godmother asked.

Cinderella thought this an odd question. She could not imagine what pumpkins had to do with going to a ball. But she answered that there were plenty in the garden—a whole bed of them in fact.

'Then let us go out and have a look at them.'

They went out into the dark garden to the pumpkin patch, and her godmother pointed to the finest of all with her wand.

'Pick that one,' she commanded.

Cinderella picked it, still wondering. Her godmother opened a fruit knife that had a handle of mother-of-pearl. With this she scooped out the inside of the fruit till only the rind was left; then she tapped it with her wand, and at once the pumpkin was changed into a beautiful coach all covered with gold.

'Next we must have horses,' said her godmother. 'The question is, Have you such a thing as a mouse trap in the house?'

Cinderella ran to look into her mouse trap, where she found six mice all alive. Her godmother, following, told her to lift the door of the trap a little way, and as the mice ran out one by one she gave each a tap with her wand, and each mouse turned at once into a beautiful horse—which made a fine team of six horses, of a lovely grey, dappled with mouse colour.

Now the trouble was to find a coachman.

'I will go and see,' said *Cinderella*, who had dried her tears and was beginning to find this great fun, 'if there isn't such a thing as a rat in the rat trap. We can make a coachman of him.'

'You are right, dear,' said her godmother; 'run and look.'

Cinderella fetched her the rat trap. There were three large rats in it. The Fairy chose one of the three because of his enormous whiskers, and at a touch he was changed into a fat coachman.

Next she said: 'Go to the end of the garden; and there in the corner of the wall behind the watering-pot, unless I am mistaken, you will find six lizards. Bring them to me.'

Cinderella had no sooner brought them than her godmother changed them into six footmen, who climbed up at once behind the coach with their bedizened liveries, and clung on as though they had been doing nothing else all their lives.

The Fairy then said to *Cinderella*: 'Hey now, child! This will do to go to the ball with, unless you are hard to please.'

'Indeed, yes,' answered *Cinderella*. 'But how can I go, as I am, in these horrid clothes?'

'You might have given me credit for thinking of that too!' Her godmother did but touch her with her wand, and on the instant her rags were transformed into cloth of gold and silver, all bespangled with precious stones. She felt her hair creeping up into curls, and tiring and arranging itself in tiers, on the topmost of which a double ostrich feather grew from a diamond clasp that caught the rays of the old lady's wand and shot them about the garden, this way and that, making the slugs and snails crawl to shelter.

'But the chief mark of a lady,' said her godmother, eyeing her with approval, 'is to be well shod,' and so saying she pulled out a pair of glass slippers, into which *Cinderella* poked her toes doubtfully, for glass is not as a rule an accommodating material for slippers. You have to be measured very carefully for it.

But these fitted to perfection: and thus arrayed from top to toe, *Cinderella* had nothing more to do but kiss her godmother, thank her, and step into the coach, the six horses of which were pawing the cabbage beds impatiently.

'Good-bye, child!' said her godmother. 'But of one thing I must warn you seriously. I have power to send you thus to the ball, but my power lasts only until midnight. Not an instant beyond midnight must you stay there. If you over-stay the stroke of twelve, your coach will become but a pumpkin again, your horses will change back into mice, your footmen into lizards, and your ball dress shrink to the same rags in which I found you.'

Cinderella promised that she would not fail to take her departure before midnight: and, with that, the coachman cracked his whip and she was driven away, beside herself with joy.

In the royal palace, and in the royal gardens, over which shone the same stars which had looked down upon *Cinderella's* pumpkins, the ball was at its height: with scores and scores of couples dancing on the waxed floor to the music of the violins; and under the trees, where the music throbbed in faint echoes, other scores of couples moving, passing and repassing, listening to the splash of the fountains and inhaling the sweet scent of the flowers.

Now, as the King's son walked among his guests, word was brought to him by his Chamberlain that a grand Princess, whom nobody knew, had just arrived and desired admission.

'She will not tell her name,' said the Chamberlain; 'but that she is a Princess and of very high dignity cannot be doubted. Apart from her beauty and the perfection of her address (of which your Royal Highness, perhaps, will allow me to be no mean judge), I may mention that the very jewels in her hair are worth a whole province.'

The King's son hastened to the gate to receive the fair stranger, handed her down from the coach, and led her through the gardens, where the guests drew apart and gazed in wonder at her loveliness. Still escorted by him she entered the ball-room, where at once a great silence fell, the dancing was broken off, the violins ceased to play—so taken, so ravished was everybody by the vision of this unknown one. Everywhere ran the murmur, 'Ah! how beautiful she is!' The *King* himself, old as he was, could not take his eyes off her, and confided to the *Queen* in a low voice that it was long since he had seen so adorable a creature.

All the ladies were busily studying her head-dress and her ball gown, that they might order the like next day for themselves, if only (vain hope!) they could find materials so exquisite and dressmakers clever enough.

The King's son took her to the place of honour, and afterwards led her out to dance. She danced so gracefully that all admired her yet the more. A splendid supper was served, but the young *Prince* ate nothing of it, so intent was he on gazing upon her.

She went and sat by her sisters, who bridled with pleasure at the honour. She did them a thousand civilities, sharing with them the nectarines and citrons which the *Prince* brought her; and still not recognising her, they marvelled at this, being quite unused (as they never deserved) to be selected for attentions so flattering.

The King's son now claimed her for another dance. It had scarcely come to an end when *Cinderella* heard the clock strike the quarter to twelve; whereupon she instantly desired her partner to lead her to the *King* and *Queen*. 'For I must be going,' she said.

'It is cruel of you to go so early,' he protested. 'But at least you will come again to-morrow and grant me many dances?'

'Is there to be another ball, then, to-morrow?' she asked.

'To-morrow, yes; and as many morrows as you wish, if only you will come.'

'Ah, if I could!' sighed *Cinderella* to herself: for she was young, and it seemed to her that she could never have enough of such evenings as this, though they went on for ever and ever.

The *Prince* led her to the daïs where sat the *King* and *Queen*. She made a deep reverence before them, a slighter but no less gracious one to the company, and

withdrew. Although she had given no orders, her coach stood waiting for her. Slipping in, she was whisked home in the time it would take you to wink an eye.

She had scarcely entered the house, however, before she received a shock. For on the threshold of the kitchen, glancing down to make sure that her ball gown was not disarranged by this rapid journey, she perceived that it had vanished—changed back to the rags of her daily wear. But there, in the light of the hearth, stood her godmother, who smiled so pleasantly that *Cinderella* choked down her little cry of disappointment.



Whereupon she instantly desired her partner to lead her to the KING and QUEEN.

'Well, child? And how have you fared?'

'Godmama, I have never been so happy in all my life! And it is all thanks to you!' But after thanking her, *Cinderella* could not help confessing how she longed to go to the ball next evening. The King's son had begged her to come again, and oh! if she had been able to promise!

'As to that, child,' said her godmother, 'we will see about it when the time comes. But it has been lonely, keeping watch and sitting up for you. Will you not reward me by telling all about it?'

Cinderella needed no such invitation; she was dying to relate her adventures. She talked and talked, her godmother still smiling and questioning. For two hours, may be, she talked and was still recollecting a score of things to tell when her sisters' coach rumbled up to the gate, and almost at once there came a loud ring at the bell. She stared and rubbed her eyes, for at the first sound of it her godmother had vanished!

Cinderella ran and opened the door to her sisters. 'What a long time you have stayed,' said she, yawning, rubbing her eyes, and stretching herself as though she had just waked out of sleep. (She had felt, however, no inclination at all to sleep since their departure!)

'If you had been at the ball,' said the elder sister, 'you would not have felt tired. One of the guests was the loveliest Princess—oh, the loveliest you ever could see! She showed us a thousand civilities. She gave us nectarines and citrons.'

Cinderella contained her joy. Upstairs, while she unplaited her sisters' hair and unlaced their bodices, she asked the name of the Princess. But they answered that no one knew her; that the King's son was wild about her, and would give everything in the world to discover who she was. *Cinderella* smiled. She no longer felt any temptation at all to be clumsy with the hairpins.

'Why then,' she said, 'she must be beautiful indeed. And she went away, you say, without telling her name? Is no one going to see her again?'

'As for that, she may come again to the ball to-morrow. I am told that the *Prince* begged it, almost with tears in his eyes.... For there is to be another ball to-morrow, and we are going!'

'Ah, heavens!' sighed *Cinderella*, how lucky you are! Might I not just see her? Please, please, Sister Caroline, take me to-morrow—I could manage quite well if only you lent me your yellow gown which you wear every evening!'

'Hoity-toity! 'snapped *Miss Caroline*. 'You cannot be awake. You must have been dreaming to some purpose if you see me lending my clothes to a nasty little Cinder-slut!'

Cinderella had quite well expected some such rebuff, and was glad enough to get it, for it would have been very awkward if her sister had been willing to lend the gown.

The next evening the two sisters were at the ball; and so was *Cinderella*, but in even finer attire than before. Her godmother had spared no pains, and as for the expense, that hardly needs to be considered when you can turn pumpkins into gilt coaches, cobwebs into Valenciennes lace, and beetles' wings into rubies, with the tap of a wand.

The King's son in his impatience flew to her coach door as soon as she arrived. Throughout the evening he never left her side, nor ceased to make pretty speeches; and she, pretty maid, was far from finding his behaviour tiresome—so far, indeed, that she forgot her godmother's warning. The end was, that in the midst of a dance she heard the stroke of a clock, looked up, was dismayed to find it the first stroke of twelve when she believed it yet an hour short of midnight, and made her escape as lightly as a deer. The *Prince* followed, but could not catch her. Only she dropped one of her glass slippers, which he picked up and treasured.

With the last stroke of twelve, coach and footmen had whisked away, and poor *Cinderella*, barefoot now as well as in rags, panted homeward over roads where the flints cut her until she bled, and the owls and great moths blundered out of the bushes against her face. To make matters worse, a thunderstorm broke before she had ran half the distance, and she arrived home in a terrible plight, muddy, drenched to the skin, and almost more dead than alive. In one thing only she was fortunate: she had outstripped her sisters, whose coach on the way home lost a wheel—and I have a suspicion that *Cinderella's* godmother had something to do with this misadventure too.

At all events when *Cinderella* opened the kitchen door the little lady stood as she had stood the night before, in the glow of the hearth, awaiting her.

'Well, child,' she said, frowning, yet the frown was not altogether unkindly, 'it is easily seen that you have forgotten my warning and have suffered for it. But what is *that* you are clutching?'

Poor *Cinderella* drew from under her bedraggled bodice a crystal slipper, fellow to the missing one. It was the one remnant of all her finery, and somehow, scarcely knowing why, she had hugged it to her while she ran and never let it slip in all her stumblings.

Her godmother gazed at her with a queer expression, that began by being a frown, yet in the end had certainly changed into a shrewd smile.

'You have been careless,' she said. 'Yet I am pleased to see that you have managed to keep, at any rate, one-half of your godmother's gift. 'I think she meant by this that whereas all the rest of *Cinderella's* adornment had been contrived out of something other than it was, the two glass slippers had been really produced out of the Fairy's pocket. They alone had not vanished at the stroke of midnight. 'But what has become of the other one?' her godmother asked.

Cinderella did not know for certain, but fancied that she must have dropped it in her hurry to escape from the palace.

'Yes, you are careless,' repeated the Fairy; 'but decidedly you are not unlucky.'

And with that she vanished, as the bell sounded announcing the sisters' return.

They were not in the best of humours, to begin with. *Cinderella* asked them if they had again found the ball enjoyable, and if the beautiful lady had been there. They told her yes; but that on the stroke of twelve she had taken flight, and so hurriedly that she had let fall one of her small glass slippers, the prettiest in the world, which the King's son had picked up. They added, that this indeed was the first cause of their delay; for, seeking their carriage, they had found the entry blocked, and the *Prince* in the wildest state of mind, demanding of the guards if they had not seen a Princess pass out. The guards answered that they had seen no one pass out but a ragged girl, who looked more like a country wench than a Princess. Amid this to-do, the sisters had with difficulty found their coach; and then, within two miles of home, a wheel had come off and the coach had lurched over, in a thunderstorm, too; and they had been forced to walk the rest of the way, the one with a bruised shoulder, and the other (which was worse) with a twisted ankle. But, after all, the dance had been worth these mischances and sufferings; and, said they, harking back, the *Prince* was undoubtedly deep in love, for they had left him gazing fondly at the slipper, and little doubt—mysteriously as she chose to behave—he would make every effort to find the beautiful creature to whom it belonged.

They told the truth, too. For a few days after, the King's son had it proclaimed by sound of trumpet that he would marry her whose foot the slipper exactly fitted.

At first they tried it on the Princesses of the Court:

Then on the Duchesses:

Then on the Marchionesses:

Then on the Countesses and Viscountesses:

Then on the Baronesses:

And so on, through all the ladies of the Court, and a number of competitors, who, though they did not belong to it, yet supposed that the smallness of their feet was an argument that their parents had very unjustly come down in the world. The Prime Minister, who carried the glass slipper on a velvet cushion, was kept very busy during the next few weeks.

At length he called on *Cinderella's* two sisters, who did all they could to squeeze a foot into the slipper, but by no means could they succeed.

Cinderella, who was looking on and admiring their efforts, said laughingly:—

'Let me see if it will fit me.'

Her sisters began to laugh and mock at her, but the Prime Minister, who had come to make trial of the slipper, looked at *Cinderella* attentively, and seeing how good-looking she was, said that it was but just—he had orders to try it upon every one.



The Prime Minister was kept very busy during the next few weeks.

He asked *Cinderella* to sit down, and drawing the slipper upon her little foot, he saw that it went on easily, and fitted the foot like wax. Great was the astonishment of the two sisters; but it was greater when *Cinderella* pulled from her pocket the other little slipper and put it upon the other foot. On top of this came a rap at the door, and in walked the Fairy Godmother, who, by a touch of her wand upon *Cinderella's* clothes, made them still more magnificent than they had been before.

And now her two sisters knew *Cinderella* to be the same beautiful creature they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet, begging her pardon for all the ill-usage they had made her suffer. *Cinderella* raised and kissed them, saying that she forgave them with all her heart, and entreated them to be loving to her always.

They led her to the young *Prince*, arrayed as she was. He thought her lovelier than ever, and, a few days after, they were married. *Cinderella*, who was as good as she was beautiful, lodged her two sisters in the palace, and married them that same day to two great Lords of the Court.

MORAL

Better than wealth or art, Jewels or a painted face, It is when a natural heart Inhabits its natural place And beats at a natural pace.

ANOTHER

Yet youth that is poor of purse, No matter how witty or handsome, Will find its talents no worse For a godmamma to advance 'em.

