

A STORY FOR CHILDREN. FROM THE GERMAN.



AKING once lived in Holland who had heard a great deal about a wonderful ship that could sail over sea and land, and he wished very much to possess it, but no one could procure it for him. At last he caused it to be proclaimed in all lands that whoever would bring him such a ship should have his only daughter for a wife. A rich peasant heard this proclamation, and said to his three sons: "We have here a whole forest of trees, with the finest firs and pines in the world, and many a trunk has already been sent by us to Holland; I think one of you might make such a ship, and marry the Princess and then become King of Holland, which is much better than being a peasant in the Black Forest."

The young men agreed with him, but they quarrelled about it among themselves, until their father decided that the eldest should try first.

So the next morning he went with his servants into the forest and chopped away at

the trees until the fine old trunks cracked as if they had been bean-sticks. As chopping wood and building ships make one very hungry and thirsty, the old peasant sent bread and cheese and a large cask of wine into the forest, so that his son and the workmen might keep up their strength, and be able to build the ship that was to travel over land and sea. As they sat on a tree-trunk talking of the Princess of Holland, an old man with a large hat came along and asked for food and drink, as he had travelled a very long way. But the young man would not give him anything; he had to build a large ship for Holland, he said, and had nothing to spare for vagabonds. "You might as well leave it alone," murmured the old man, and disappeared into the thicket. And this was true, for they cut down nearly half the forest and accomplished nothing.

When the eldest son declared he was unable to build the ship to sail over land and sea, the father sent his second son into the forest, and gave him skillful workmen and a large waggon with wine, cheese, and bread, so that he might succeed in his work.

The old man with the large hat came to him also and begged for food. But the young peasant replied in like manner that he had nothing for strangers: he had to build a ship to sail over land and sea.

"The beautiful wood is much to be regretted," murmured the old man, and disappeared into the thicket.

And he was right; the peasant and his workmen cut down nearly the whole forest, but built no ship.

At last it was the youngest son's turn. His name was Hans; he was a good-natured, quiet fellow, who did not think much of himself, but he always applied himself earnestly to his work. He had been several days with his men in the forest, and had cut down a great many trees, when the same old man came to him and asked for food and drink. The young man immediately stepped to the cask, handed him bread and wine, and bade him sit down and rest. The old man thanked him, sat down, and enjoyed his refreshments. "What are you doing with all that wood?" he asked, after a time.

Then the young peasant told him of the ship for Holland and the hitherto fruitless work. The old man laughed and, rising from his seat, said, "No one can make such

a ship, not even you and your workmen, though you were to cut down the whole forest. But I have such a ship, and because you were kind and good I will give it to you, but in the meantime you must make that trunk into a mast; now you will hear from me no more." With these words he disappeared. The next morning, in the opening of the forest stood a noble ship, with sails and pennons, only the mast was wanting. Hans and his men soon set up the mast, then he stepped into the ship, but as soon as he was seated the ship began to move slowly through the forest as if it were on the sea. Then Hans placed himself at the rudder and made the vessel move to right and left, and backwards and forwards. It obeyed every movement, and when Hans cried, "Hio! hi!" off it ran in haste as if fifty horses were harnessed to it.

"Now Holland is won," he cried, joyfully, and presented himself proudly before his father's door. The old peasant could hardly believe his eyes: he was amazed that the ship should have fallen to the lot of his youngest son, in whom he had the least confidence. But he had a large cask of wine, a pair of scales, and a great many loaves of bread and cheese placed in the vessel, so that his son might not want anything on his journey, and then with a "Hio! hi!" away went Hans to Holland.

When Hans and his ship had left the Black Forest he saw a man standing by the way who had a crossbow and was aiming up at the heavens. Hans, astonished, stopped his ship, and asked him what he was doing. "I wish," said the man, "to shoot a young eagle who will fly up to the sun, for that is not allowed. I am aiming at his left eye, so that he may be killed at once."

Hans looked up at the heavens, and looked and looked, but could see nothing, the bird had soared so high. The archer took aim, and whirr, whirr, a beautiful golden brown eagle fell at his feet with an arrow in its left eye.

Hans was much pleased with the man, and asked him if he would go with him to Holland; perhaps he might make his fortune. The archer did not take long to decide, he stepped



"NOW YOU WILL HEAR FROM ME NO MORE."

into the ship, and they continued their journey. Soon they saw a man holding to his ear a tube as long as the longest cane that ever grew. Hans stopped in amazement, and asked what he was doing with the long tube in his ear.

"With it," replied the man, "I can hear anything I wish within a circle of a thousand miles."

"Just listen, then," said Hans, "to what they are saying in the King's palace at Holland."

The man obligingly put the tube to his ear and listened. "They are speaking of a ship that can sail over land and sea, and the Princess, who is laughing, says that no one can make such a thing."

"Come in and travel with me," said Hans, "perhaps you may make your fortune." The man did not require to be asked twice; he climbed into the vessel, and they journeyed on towards Holland.

Suddenly they beheld a great cloud of dust rising out of a forest, and when they reached it, there sat a man beating the dust out of an enormous pair of boots. In answer to their inquiries, he said that he was a celebrated swift runner, and had started early that day from a Bavarian forest. On the way he got so dusty passing through a large town in Swabia, that he had been already two hours beating the dust out of his boots, and was now exceedingly tired. Hans asked if he would not travel with them.

"Why not?" said the man. "Give me something to drink to wash the dust out of my lungs, and I will travel with you to the end of the world." Hans naturally could find

no fault with this speech; he gave the runner meat and drink in plenty, and so they arrived in Holland cheerful and content. Hans went at once to the King's palace, obtained an audience, and said, "I bring you, oh King, the ship that travels over land and sea, and wish to marry the most gracious Princess."

The King looked at the ship, but would not believe in it until Hans invited him and his

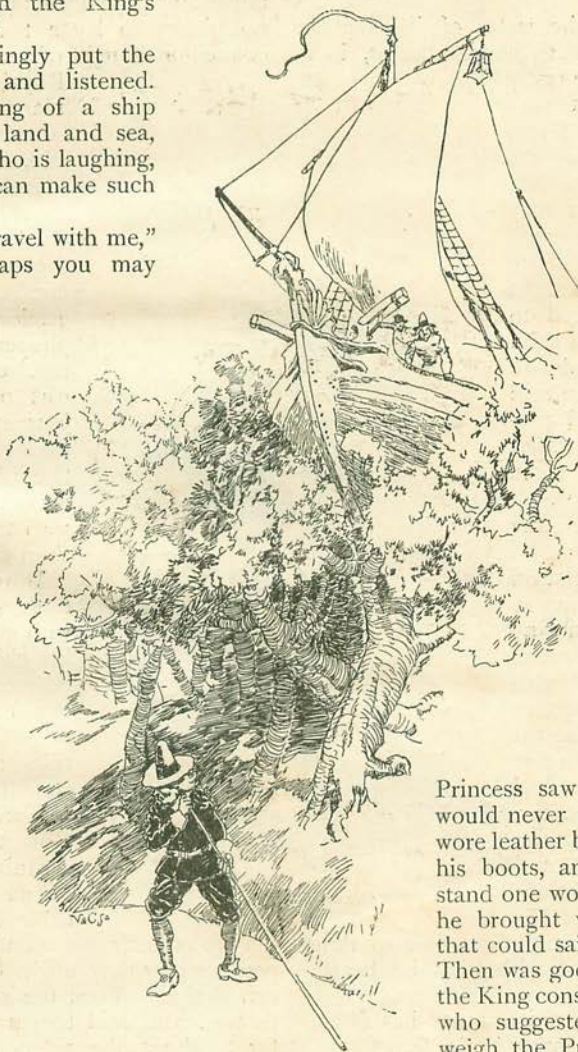
Ministers to take a trial journey. They stepped in and, lo, the vessel moved just as they wished, fast or slow, backwards or forwards, and it had this great advantage, that it did not stop at every hostelry as the King's post-horses did.

And when they had taken a journey on the great Zuyder Zee there could be no doubt that Hans had accomplished the appointed task, and the King went to announce to his daughter that her bridegroom Hans had come, and desired to pay his addresses to her.

But when the Princess saw him, she said she would never marry a peasant who wore leather breeches, had nails in his boots, and could not understand one word of Dutch; even if he brought with him ten ships that could sail over land and sea. Then was good advice precious—the King consulted his Chancellor, who suggested that they should weigh the Princess with gold, so that Hans, as the Princess was a stately lady, would receive two

hundred ducats. But Hans would not agree to this; he said the King must keep his word, or fill his ship with gold as compensation for his disappointed hopes.

Now Holland was in great distress, for the ship was so very large that it would take all



"THE MAN PUT THE TUBE TO HIS EAR AND LISTENED."

the treasures in the kingdom to fill it. The Ministers held council after council, but could come to no satisfactory conclusion, until at last an old councillor, who had been set aside, suggested they should tell Hans they would agree with his demand if he within six hours brought a flask of water from the stream of life, so that the Princess might be cured of the convulsions into which she had fallen every hour since the offer of marriage.

The stream of the water of life lay far away, more than sixty hours' distant, in a large forest, and the crafty Hollanders thought they could lay a snare for Hans, who was ignorant of the country, and deprive him of his reward. But they reckoned without the swift runner, who, with the others, was very fond of Hans, and had liked to drink the wine in his ship. When Hans heard the King's conditions, he said "Yes" at once, and promised to procure the water, not in six, but in three hours, on hearing which the old King became quite cold with fright.

The swift runner put on his large boots and ran so fast that within an hour he had reached the stream and filled the flask with the water of life; then, as he was very warm, he sat down under a tree to rest awhile. Now, Hans had set the man with the ear-tube to listen if the runner went the right way and carried out the instructions he had received. He listened for an hour, and from time to time nodded, well satisfied with what he heard. Suddenly he cried:—

"Oh, misery! the swift runner has fallen asleep: I hear him snoring in the forest."

Then Hans was very troubled and shivered with anxiety; but the archer told him not to fear, he would soon wake him. Then he took a pebble, put it in his bow, and shot at the sleeper.

"Halloa, he is awake again now," he cried, joyfully, and within half an hour the swift runner returned with the water of life and

murmured something about the length of the journey, for he would not acknowledge he had fallen asleep.

Now it was impossible for the Hollanders to escape, they had to empty their treasure-chambers and fill Hans' ship. At this time the King had an ingenious tax-gatherer, who suggested to him three new taxes by which he could refill his treasury: one on Dutch tobacco, one on gloves, and one on the musicians' instruments (at that time they had no pianos to lay a tax on). But the old councillor thought of another way to save the

Royal treasures. He said Hans had entered the country without a pass, and, therefore, could be seized for examination, and the ship and treasure taken from him by force; in Holland they called it to confiscate. With this suggestion everyone was well pleased. They therefore resolved to let Hans set out on his homeward journey, and take the ship from him by the way. But the clever Hollanders reckoned without the man with the ear-tube and the sharpshooter.

When Hans had set forth with the ship filled with gold, the King called his chief tax-gatherer and ordered him to take one of his regiments and start in pursuit, confiscate the ship and treasure, and banish Hans and his companions from the country. Now the man with the ear-tube did good service. Hans knew the whole affair about as soon as

the tax-gatherer, and consulted with his companions how they might frustrate the King's evil design. Then the swift runner stepped forward and said the archer was the man, for to shoot the riders or the legs of the horses with pebbles would soon put a stop to the pursuit. So saying he ran to the beach and soon returned with a heavy sack filled with beautiful round pebbles.

The story goes on to say the tax-gatherers had hardly started when klapp! klapp! the horses of the foremost riders fell lame and could go no farther. Their chief cursed and



swore, and ordered the second party to ride forward and the charge to be sounded, but it was in vain: in a moment the horses all hobbled like lame ducks, and the trumpeters' faces turned blue and green, as, in spite of all their efforts, no sounds came from their instruments. Now, the archer was the cause of all this, for he shot the horses on the legs, and shot pebbles into the trumpets, so they could give forth no sounds—in Holland they call them blasts. At last, as the chief tax-gatherer with the third party sprang over a hedge in which grew many hedge-roses with long thorns, the archer shot the chief's horse on the legs, and the animal sprang up and threw his rider on to the sharp thorns, which held him so fast that he could not get free.

For the tax-gatherers to cut away the hedge with their sabres and free their chief took a considerable time, for the chief was a heavy man; besides, they did not know how they should set to work, as "the setting free from hedges" did not appear in their rules. Thus Hans had sufficient time to reach the borders undisturbed, and the Hollanders had to pocket another disappointment. With a "Hio! hi!" he journeyed to his home, where he and his companions were well received, as they brought the ship full of gold with them.

They at once unloaded their treasure, and the sacks containing the crown-pieces and ducats were carried like sacks of corn to the barns, for there was no room in the house for so much gold. But this is noteworthy: as they emptied the ship it grew smaller and smaller, until at last it disappeared. Hans thought the old man had taken it back, that he might reward some well-disposed young man with it at a future time.

Hans gave half the gold to his father and

brothers, and with the other half he bought a splendid house with large grounds, where he dwells in a lordly manner with his three travelling companions. The people call him "The Hollander," and he is still very hurt at the refusal he met with in Holland, and very angry and annoyed with all women. He



"THE SHIP GREW SMALLER AND SMALLER."

has, however, declared that if he finds a maiden who is beautiful, clever, and industrious, a good housekeeper and experienced in cooking, he will not be averse to marry; he does not look for fortune, only she must not be a Princess.