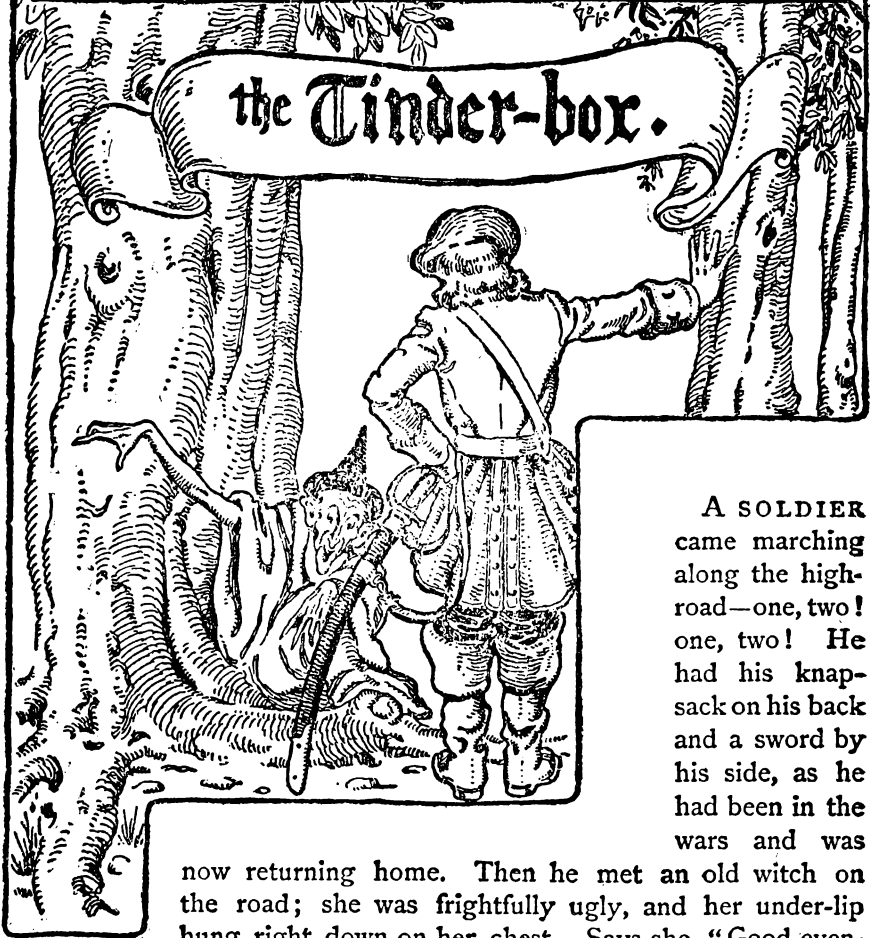


# Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales.

## the Tinder-box.



A SOLDIER came marching along the high-road—one, two! one, two! He had his knapsack on his back and a sword by his side, as he had been in the wars and was

now returning home. Then he met an old witch on the road; she was frightfully ugly, and her under-lip hung right down on her chest. Says she, "Good evening, soldier! What a fine sword and big knapsack you have got! You seem indeed a real soldier, and now you shall have as much money as you care about."

"Thank you, old witch," said the soldier.

"You see that big tree there," said the witch, pointing to a tree close by. "It is hollow, and you shall climb up to the top, when you will see a hole, through which you will slide to the bottom. I will fasten a rope round your body, and haul you up when you call to me."

“What shall I do in the tree?” said the soldier.

“Fetch money,” replied the witch. “When you reach the bottom you will find yourself in a great corridor light as day, for hundreds of lamps are burning there. Then you will see three doors which you can open, as the keys are in the holes. When you enter the first chamber you will see a large trunk in the middle of the floor, on which sits a dog with eyes as big as a pair of teacups; but don't let that frighten you. I give you my blue check apron, which you spread on the floor; then go straight up to the dog and place him on it. You may then open the trunk and take as much money as you like. It's all copper; but if you prefer silver, go into the next chamber, where there sits a dog with eyes as big as windmills. But don't let that frighten you; put him simply on my apron, and take the money. Should you, however, prefer gold, you can have it, and as much as you can carry, if you go into the third chamber. But the dog which sits on the trunk there has eyes as big as the Round Tower.<sup>1</sup> That is a dog, I can tell you. But don't be afraid of him; only put him on my apron, and he won't touch you, and then take as much gold from the trunk as you like.”

“That's not a bad offer,” said the soldier. “But what are you to have, old witch? Some of it you want too, of course.”

“No,” said the witch, “not a single coin do I want. You shall only fetch me an old tinder-box, which my grandmother forgot when she was last down there.”

“Well, tie the rope round me, then,” said the soldier.

“Here it is,” said the witch, “and here is my apron.”

And so the soldier climbed up the tree, slid through the hole, and stood next in the great corridor, where hundreds of lamps were burning. Lo! there sat the dog with eyes as big as teacups, staring at him.

“You are a nice fellow,” said the soldier, placed him on the witch's apron, took as many copper coins as he could get into his pockets, locked the trunk, put the dog back on it, and went into the next chamber. Lo! there sat the dog with the eyes as big as windmills.

“You shouldn't stare at me so,” said the soldier, “it might injure your eyes.” And so he placed the dog on the witch's apron; but when he saw all the silver coin in the trunk he threw away all the copper ones, and filled his pockets and his knapsack with silver instead.

<sup>1</sup> The tower of the Trinity Church in Copenhagen. — T.

Then he went into the third chamber. What a terrible sight! The dog there had really eyes as big as the Round Tower, and they rolled around in his head like wheels.

"Good evening," said the soldier, and touched his cap, as he had never seen such a dog before. But having had a good look at him he thought that would do, lifted him on to the floor, and opened the trunk. Dear me, what a quantity of gold! With that he could have bought the whole of the capital, all the gingerbread pigs, and all the tin soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the whole world. Then the soldier threw away all the silver coin with which he had filled his pockets and knapsack, and put gold into them instead, as well as in his boots and cap, so that he was hardly able to walk. Now he had indeed money! The dog he placed on the trunk, slammed the door, and called to the witch:—

"Now, haul me up, old witch!"

"Have you got the tinder-box?" asked the witch.

"Really," said the soldier, "I had quite forgotten that," and went back to fetch it. The witch hauled him up, and he stood again in the road, with pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap full of money.

"What are you going to do with that tinder-box?" asked the soldier.

"That's no business of yours," said the witch. "You have got your money. Give me then the tinder-box."

"Nonsense," said the soldier. "Tell me at once what you want to do with it, or I draw my sword and cut your head off."

"No, I won't!" said the witch.

So the soldier cut her head off. There she lay! But he tied up all the money in her apron, slung the bundle on his back, put the tinder-box in his pocket, and made straight for the town. It was a pretty town, and he put up at the best inn, engaged the very finest rooms, and ordered the dishes he liked best, because now with all the money he had he was a rich man. True, the waiter who cleaned his boots thought that they were rather a queer pair of old things for such a rich gentleman; but he had not yet bought new ones. The next day he obtained fine boots and clothes; and now the soldier had become quite a swell, and the people told him about all the beautiful things to be found in the town, about the King, and how lovely the Princess his daughter was.

"Where is she to be seen?" asked the soldier.

"She is not to be seen at all," they all said; "she lives in a great copper castle, with such a number of walls and towers around it!"

Nobody but the King is allowed to visit her, because it has been prophesied that she shall marry a private, and that the King cannot endure."

"I should indeed like to see her," thought the soldier; but that was of course out of the question.

Now he lived a merry life, went to the theatre, drove in the park, and gave much money to the poor; and that was kind of him. He knew from former days how hard it was not to have a penny. He was rich now, had fine clothes, and made many friends, who all said that he was a very good fellow and a real gentleman, and the soldier liked to hear that. But as he paid away money every day and had none in return, he had soon only a few coppers left, and was obliged to remove from the splendid rooms he had occupied, to a small garret right up under the roof, clean his own boots and patch them with a darning-needle, and none of his friends came to see him any more, as there were so many stairs to mount.

It was a pitch-dark evening, and he could not even afford to buy a candle, when he remembered that there was a little bit in the tinder-box, which he had fetched from the hollow tree into which the witch had helped him. He brought out the tinder-box and the bit of candle; but as soon as he struck fire and the sparks flew from the flint, the door sprang open and the dog with eyes as big as teacups, which he had seen down in the tree, stood before him and said, "What are your orders, Sir?"

"What does this mean?" said the soldier. "That is indeed something like a tinder-box. Can I thus get what I ask for? Get me some money, then," he said to the dog, which was gone in an instant, and returned as quickly with a bag of money in its mouth.

Yes, now the soldier knew what a splendid tinder-box it was. If he struck it once, the dog sitting on the trunk with the copper coin appeared; if twice, that sitting on the trunk with the silver ones; and if three times, the one on that with gold in it.

Now he moved back to his splendid rooms, and again dressed in his fine clothes, and all his former friends welcomed him and courted him again very much.

Once he said to himself: "It is strange that that Princess is not to be seen. She is so lovely everybody says; but what's the good of that, if she is always to be locked up in that great copper castle with the many towers? Cannot I possibly get a look at her? Where is my

tinder-box?" And then he struck fire, and lo! there was the dog with eyes as big as teacups.

"It is certainly midnight," said the soldier; "but I should so very much like to see the Princess only for a moment."

The dog at once ran out, and before the soldier knew of it was back with the Princess. She lay sleeping on the dog's back, and was so lovely that everybody could see she was a real Princess. The soldier could not help kissing her, as he was a true soldier. The dog ran back with the Princess; but the next morning, at the King and Queen's break-



fast, the Princess said she had had such a funny dream in the night, of a dog and a soldier. She had ridden on the dog's back, and the soldier had kissed her.

"That is indeed a nice story," said the Queen.

The following night one of the old ladies of the court had to watch by the bed of the Princess in order to see if it really was a dream, or what it might be.

The soldier longed immensely to see the Princess again, and in the night the dog came, took her on his back, and ran off as fast as he could; but the old lady put on hunting-boots and followed just as quickly. When she saw them disappearing in a big house, she thought, "Now I know where it is," and made a cross with a piece of chalk on the door of the house. Then she went home to bed, and soon the dog came back with the Princess; but when he saw that a cross had been made on the door of the house where the soldier lived, he too took a

piece of chalk and made a cross on all the doors of the town; and that was cleverly done, as now the old lady could not find the right one, there being crosses on all.

Early in the morning the King, the Queen, the old lady, and all the officers of the court went forth to see where the Princess had been.

"Here it is," said the King, seeing the first door with a cross on it.

"No, it is there, my dear," said the Queen, seeing another with a cross on.

"But there is one, and there is another," they all said. Wherever they turned their eyes there were crosses on the doors, and they saw it was useless to try to find the right one.



But the Queen was a very clever woman, who knew more than driving about in a carriage. She took her great gold scissors, cut up a large piece of silk and made a neat little bag, which she filled with grits and tied it to the Princess's back, and then cut a hole in the bag so that the grits should run out all along the road the Princess took.

The next night the dog came back, took the Princess on his back and ran with her to the soldier, who loved her dearly, and wished he was a prince so that he might marry her.

The dog did not notice the grits trailing behind, right from the castle to the soldier's window, where he ran up along the wall with the Princess.

In the morning the King and Queen saw plainly where their daughter had been, and so the soldier was arrested and put in jail.

There he was now, and oh! how dark and dismal it was there; and then they told him, "To-morrow you are to be hanged." That was not pleasant to hear, and he had left the tinder-box at the inn.

In the morning he could see, through the bars of the little window, people hurrying out of the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums beaten and saw the soldiers march past. Every one was on his legs. There was even a cobbler's 'prentice with his apron and slippers on, who ran so fast that one of the slippers flew off his foot and right up against the wall where the soldier sat looking through the bars.



"Hi! here, you cobbler's 'prentice," shouted the soldier. "You need not be in such a hurry, as nothing will be done till I come.<sup>1</sup> But if you will run to where I lived, and fetch me my tinder-box, I will give you a shilling; but mind you make use of your legs."

The cobbler's 'prentice liked to earn the shilling, and ran as fast as he could to fetch the tinder-box, which he gave to the soldier, and—yes, now you shall hear!

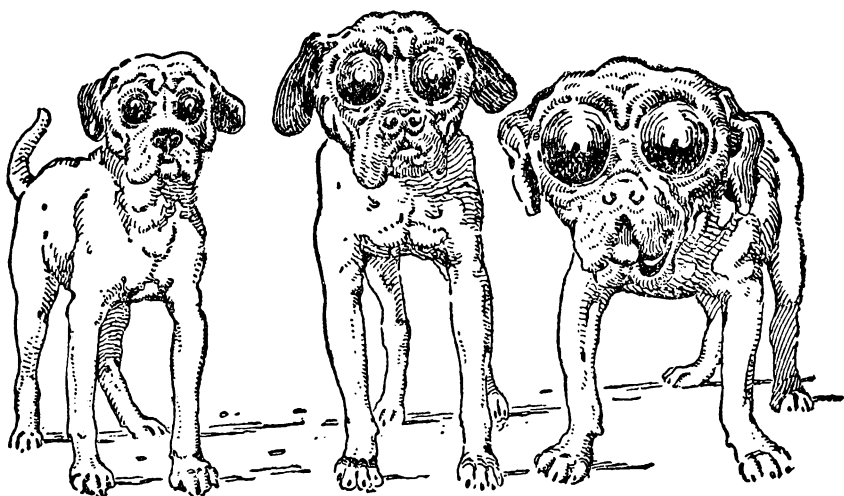
Outside the town a high gallows had been erected, and around it stood soldiers and thousands of people. The King and Queen sat on a beautiful throne right opposite the judge and the whole council.

The soldier stood already on the top of the ladder; but as they were

<sup>1</sup> Has since become a common adage in Scandinavia. — Tr.

putting the rope around his neck, he said that the condemned was always granted an innocent wish before he suffered his punishment. He would so much like a smoke; it would be the last in this world.

The King could not well refuse this; and so the soldier took his tinder-box and struck fire. One—two—three, and there stood all three dogs before him: that with eyes as big as teacups, that with eyes as big as windmills, and that with eyes as big as the Round Tower. "Now help me not to be hung!" said the soldier; and so the dogs rushed at the judge and the whole council, seized one by the leg and



another by the nose, and threw them so high into the air that they were smashed into bits.

"I won't," said the King; but the biggest dog seized both him and the Queen and threw them after the others.

Then all the soldiers became frightened; and the people shouted, "Dear soldier, you shall be King and have the lovely Princess."

So they seated the soldier in the King's carriage, and the three dogs jumped before it and shouted, "Hurrah!" The boys whistled with their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms. The Princess came forth from the copper castle and became Queen, which pleased her well enough. The marriage feast lasted a whole week, and the dogs, too, sat at table staring about with their big eyes.