

# ASHENPUTTEL

**T**HE WIFE OF a rich man fell ill, and when she felt that she was nearing her end, she called her only daughter to her bedside, and said:

“Dear child, continue devout and good, then God will always help you, and I will look down upon you from heaven, and watch over you.”

Thereupon she closed her eyes, and breathed her last.

The maiden went to her mother's grave every day and wept, and she continued



to be devout and good. When the winter came, the snow spread a white covering on the grave, and when the sun of spring had unveiled it again, the husband took another wife. The new wife brought home with her two daughters, who were fair and beautiful to look upon, but base and black at heart.

Then began a sad time for the unfortunate step-child.

"Is this stupid goose to sit with us in the parlour?" they said.

"Whoever wants to eat bread must earn it; go and sit with the kitchenmaid."

They took away her pretty clothes, and made her put on an old grey frock, and gave her wooden clogs.

"Just look at the proud Princess, how well she's dressed," they laughed, as they led her to the kitchen. There, the girl was obliged to do hard work from morning till night, to get up at daybreak, carry water, light the fire, cook, and wash. Not content with that, the sisters inflicted on her every vexation they could think of; they made fun of her, and tossed the peas and lentils among the ashes, so that she had to sit down and pick them out again. In the evening, when she was worn out with work, she had no bed to go to, but had to lie on the hearth among the cinders. And because, on account of that, she always looked dusty and dirty, they called her Ashenputtel.

It happened one day that the Father had a mind to go to the Fair. So he asked both his step-daughters what he should bring home for them.

"Fine clothes," said one.

"Pearls and jewels," said the other.

"But you, Ashenputtel?" said he, "what will you have?"

"Father, break off for me the first twig which brushes against your hat on your way home."

Well, for his two step-daughters he brought beautiful clothes, pearls and jewels, and on his way home, as he was riding through a green copse, a hazel twig grazed against him and knocked his hat off. Then

he broke off the branch and took it with him.

When he got home he gave his step-daughters what they had asked for, and to Ashenputtel he gave the twig from the hazel bush.

Ashenputtel thanked him, and went to her mother's grave and planted the twig upon it; she wept so much that her tears fell and watered it. And it took root and became a fine tree.

Ashenputtel went to the grave three times every day, wept and prayed, and every time a little white bird came and perched upon the tree, and when she uttered a wish, the little bird threw down to her what she had wished for.

Now it happened that the King proclaimed a festival, which was to last three days, and to which all the beautiful maidens in the country were invited, in order that his son might choose a bride.

When the two step-daughters heard that they were also to be present, they were in high spirits, called Ashenputtel, and said:

"Brush our hair and clean our shoes, and fasten our buckles, for we are going to the feast at the King's palace."

Ashenputtel obeyed, but wept, for she also would gladly have gone to the ball with them, and begged her step-mother to give her leave to go.

"You, Ashenputtel!" she said. "Why, you are covered with dust and dirt. You go to the festival! Besides you have no clothes or shoes, and yet you want to go to the ball."

As she, however, went on asking, her Step-mother said:

"Well, I have thrown a dishful of lentils into the cinders, if you have picked them all out in two hours you shall go with us."

The girl went through the back door into the garden, and cried, "Ye gentle doves, ye turtle doves, and all ye little birds under heaven, come and help me,

"The good into a dish to throw,  
The bad into your crops can go."

Then two white doves came in by the kitchen window, and were followed by the turtle doves, and finally all the little birds under heaven flocked in, chirping, and settled down among the ashes. And the doves gave a nod with their little heads, peck, peck, peck; and then the rest began also, peck, peck, peck, and collected all the good beans into the dish. Scarcely had an hour passed before they had finished, and all flown out again.

Then the girl brought the dish to her Step-mother, and was delighted to think that now she would be able to go to the feast with them.

But she said, "No, Ashenputtel, you have no clothes, and cannot dance; you will only be laughed at."

But when she began to cry, the Step-mother said:

"If you can pick out two whole dishes of lentils from the ashes in an hour, you shall go with us."

And she thought, "She will never be able to do that."

When her Step-mother had thrown the dishes of lentils among the ashes, the girl went out through the back door, and cried, "Ye gentle doves, ye turtle doves, and all ye little birds under heaven, come and help me,

"The good into a dish to throw,  
The bad into your crops can go."

Then two white doves came in by the kitchen window, and were followed by the turtle doves, and all the other little birds under heaven, and in less than an hour the whole had been picked up, and they had all flown away.

Then the girl carried the dish to her Step-mother, and was delighted to think that she would now be able to go to the ball.

But she said, "It's not a bit of good. You can't go with us, for you've got no clothes, and you can't dance. We should be quite ashamed of you."







Thereupon she turned her back upon her, and hurried off with her two proud daughters.

As soon as every one had left the house, Ashenputtel went out to her mother's grave under the hazel-tree, and cried:

"Shiver and shake, dear little tree,  
Gold and silver shower on me."

Then the bird threw down to her a gold and silver robe, and a pair of slippers embroidered with silk and silver. With all speed she put on the robe and went to the feast. But her step-sisters and their mother did not recognise her, and supposed that she was some foreign Princess, so beautiful did she appear in her golden dress. They never gave a thought to Ashenputtel, but imagined that she was sitting at home in the dirt picking the lentils out of the cinders.

The Prince came up to the stranger, took her by the hand, and danced with her. In fact, he would not dance with any one else, and never let go of her hand. If any one came up to ask her to dance, he said, "This is my partner."

She danced until nightfall, and then wanted to go home; but the Prince said, "I will go with you and escort you."

For he wanted to see to whom the beautiful maiden belonged. But she slipped out of his way and sprang into the pigeon-house.

Then the Prince waited till her Father came, and told him that the unknown maiden had vanished into the pigeon-house.

The old man thought, "Could it be Ashenputtel?" And he had an axe brought to him, so that he might break down the pigeon-house, but there was no one inside.

When they went home, there lay Ashenputtel in her dirty clothes among the cinders, and a dismal oil lamp was burning in the chimney corner. For Ashenputtel had quietly jumped down out of the pigeon-

house and ran back to the hazel-tree. There she had taken off her beautiful clothes and laid them on the grave, and the bird had taken them away again. Then she had settled herself among the ashes on the hearth in her old grey frock.

On the second day, when the festival was renewed, and her parents and step-sisters had started forth again, Ashenputtel went to the hazel-tree, and said:

“Shiver and shake, dear little tree,  
Gold and silver shower on me.”

Then the bird threw down a still more gorgeous robe than on the previous day. And when she appeared at the festival in this robe, every one was astounded by her beauty.

The King's son had waited till she came, and at once took her hand, and she danced with no one but him. When others came forward and invited her to dance, he said, “This is my partner.”

At nightfall she wished to leave; but the Prince went after her, hoping to see into what house she went, but she sprang out into the garden behind the house. There stood a fine big tree on which the most delicious pears hung. She climbed up among the branches as nimbly as a squirrel, and the Prince could not make out what had become of her.

But he waited till her Father came, and then said to him, “The unknown maiden has slipped away from me, and I think that she has jumped into the pear-tree.”

The Father thought, “Can it be Ashenputtel?” And he had the axe brought to cut down the tree, but there was no one on it. When they went home and looked into the kitchen, there lay Ashenputtel among the cinders as usual; for she had jumped down on the other side of the tree, taken back the beautiful clothes to the bird on the hazel-tree, and put on her old grey frock.

On the third day, when her parents and sisters had started, Ashenputtel went again to her mother's grave, and said:

“Shiver and shake, dear little tree,  
Gold and silver shower on me.”

Then the bird threw down a dress which was so magnificent that no one had ever seen the like before, and the slippers were entirely of gold. When she appeared at the festival in this attire, they were all speechless with astonishment. The Prince danced only with her, and if any one else asked her to dance, he said, “This is my partner.”

When night fell and she wanted to leave, the Prince was more desirous than ever to accompany her, but she darted away from him so quickly that he could not keep up with her. But the Prince had used a stratagem, and had caused the steps to be covered with cobbler's wax. The consequence was, that as the maiden sprang down them, her left slipper remained sticking there. The Prince took it up. It was small and dainty, and entirely made of gold.

The next morning he went with it to Ashenputtel's Father, and said to him, “No other shall become my wife but she whose foot this golden slipper fits.”

The two sisters were delighted at that, for they both had beautiful feet. The eldest went into the room intending to try on the slipper, and her Mother stood beside her. But her great toe prevented her getting it on, her foot was too long.

Then her Mother handed her a knife, and said, “Cut off the toe; when you are Queen you won't have to walk any more.”

The girl cut off her toe, forced her foot into the slipper, stifled her pain, and went out to the Prince. Then he took her up on his horse as his Bride, and rode away with her.

However, they had to pass the grave on the way, and there sat the



two Doves on the hazel-tree, and cried:

“Prithee, look back, prithee, look back,  
There’s blood on the track,  
The shoe is too small,  
At home the true Bride is waiting thy call.”

Then he looked at her foot and saw how the blood was streaming from it. So he turned his horse round and carried the false Bride back to her home, and said that she was not the right one; the second sister must try the shoe.

Then she went into the room, and succeeded in getting her toes into the shoe, but her heel was too big.

Then her Mother handed her a knife, and said, “Cut a bit off your heel; when you are Queen you won’t have to walk any more.”

The maiden cut a bit off her heel, forced her foot into the shoe, stifled her pain, and went out to the Prince.

Then he took her up on his horse as his Bride, and rode off with her.

As they passed the grave, the two Doves were sitting on the hazel-tree, and crying:

“Prithee, look back, prithee, look back,  
There’s blood on the track,  
The shoe is too small,  
At home the true Bride is waiting thy call.”

He looked down at her foot and saw that it was streaming with blood, and there were deep red spots on her stockings. Then he turned his horse and brought the false Bride back to her home.

“This is not the right one either,” he said. “Have you no other daughter?”

“No,” said the man. “There is only a daughter of my late wife’s, a

puny, stunted drudge, but she cannot possibly be the Bride."

The Prince said that she must be sent for.

But the Mother answered, "Oh no, she is much too dirty; she mustn't be seen on any account."

He was, however, absolutely determined to have his way, and they were obliged to summon Ashenputtel.

When she had washed her hands and face, she went up and curtsied to the Prince, who handed her the golden slipper.

Then she sat down on a bench, pulled off her wooden clog and put on the slipper, which fitted to a nicety.

And when she stood up and the Prince looked into her face, he recognised the beautiful maiden that he had danced with, and cried: "This is the true Bride!"

The Stepmother and the two sisters were dismayed and turned white with rage; but he took Ashenputtel on his horse and rode off with her.

As they rode past the hazel-tree the two White Doves cried:

"Prithee, look back, prithee, look back,  
No blood's on the track,  
The shoe's not too small,  
You carry the true Bride home to your hall."

And when they had said this they both came flying down, and settled on Ashenputtel's shoulders, one on the right, and one on the left, and remained perched there.

When the wedding was going to take place, the two false sisters came and wanted to curry favour with her, and take part in her good fortune. As the bridal party was going to the church, the eldest was on the right side, the youngest on the left, and the Doves picked out one of the eyes of each of them.



Afterwards, when they were coming out of the church, the elder was on the left, the younger on the right, and the Doves picked out the other eye of each of them. And so for their wickedness and falseness they were punished with blindness for the rest of their days.