



By Howard Pyle
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Once upon a time there was a lad who was a fisherman, and every morning he shouldered his net, and went down to the river to catch fish to sell in the town.

One morning as he walked beside the edge of the water, he came upon a great tall stork caught in a trap that had been set for the water-rats.

It was a tender heart that the young fisherman had under his jacket, so when he saw Father Longlegs in such a pickle he waded out into the water, among the reeds and arrowheads to where the other was, and loosened the noose from about his leg.

The storks bring good-luck to folks some people say, and that was what happened to the young fisherman.

“One good turn deserves another,” says Father Longlegs; “cross your heart three times, cast your net into the water yonder, and see what you catch.” So the lad did as he was told, and when he drew his net to the shore, there was just one fish in it.

Yes; just one fish, but that was worth the catching, I can tell you, for the scales were all or pure silver and gold, so that it glistened like the moon on smooth ice, and it was most wonderful to see.

“There,” says the stork: “and now if you have your wits about you, it is your fortune that you have caught out of the water. Take the fish up to the king’s castle and show it to nobody but the king. When he sees it he will want to have it for his own and will be for buying it, but there is only one price you must ask for it, and that is to have the princess for your wife.” That was what the stork said, and then he spread his wings and flew away over the house-tops.

So the lad wrapped the fish up in a clean white napkin and laid it in a wicker basket, and then off he marched to the king’s castle to try his luck there, as the stork had said.

Rap! tap! tap! he knocked at the door.

Well, and what did he want?

Oh, he had brought a fish that he had caught over at the river yonder, but he would show it to nobody but the king himself.

No, it did no good for them to ask and to question and to talk; what he had said he had said. So at last they had to take him up-stairs, and there was the king sitting upon a golden throne with a golden crown upon his head and a golden sceptre in his hand.

“Well, and why do you wish to see me?” That was what the king said.

It was no word that the lad spoke with his tongue, but he just unfolded the napkin, and showed the king what he had brought in the wicker basket.

When the king saw the gold-and-silver fish, he thought he had never seen anything so wonderful in all of his life before. Then it was just as the stork had said. He must and would have the fish, no matter what it cost; and what would the lad take for it?

Why, the body over at the river yonder, who had put the lad up to catching the fish, had told him that there was only one price to be asked for it. Now, if the king would let him have the princess for his wife, he might have the fish and welcome; for *that* was the price, and the long and the short of it.

Well, the king hemmed and hawed, but he did not speak the little word “no;” and after a while he said he would send for the princess, and see what she had to say about it. So the princess came, and she was a beauty I can tell you, for the very sight of her was enough to make one’s heart melt inside of one, like a lump of butter in the oven. And as for the wits of her, why, she was just as smart as she was pretty (which is saying much and a little over), and that is why the king had sent for her, for he wanted to get the gold-and-silver fish without paying the price for it.

“Yes,” says the princess when the king had told her all. “I am ready enough to marry the lad, only he must promise to do one thing first.”

Dear, dear, how the lad’s heart jumped inside of him at that. He was willing enough to promise whatever was asked, for he would do anything to marry the princess, now that he had seen how pretty she was.

“Very well, then,” said the princess, “just bring me the key of wish-house and I will marry you.”

“There,” said the king, “that is a bargain; go and bring the key of wish-house and you shall marry the princess; and you may just leave the fish here until you come back again. And don’t-show your face about here without the key, if you wish to keep your head upon your shoulders.”

So off went the lad from the king’s castle, with nothing at all in his pocket and ill-luck astride of his back. Down he went to the river as straight as he could walk, and there stood Father Stork gazing down into the water and



ather Longlegs, the Stork,
puts the Fisher Lad in y way of catch-
ing a strange fish in his nets. ❸



looking as wise as our minister on Sunday. See now, thus and so and thus and so had happened, and the stork had gotten him into a pretty scrape over at the castle by putting him up to asking such a price for his herring; that was what the lad said.

“Prut!” says the stork, “break no bones over that furrow; ill-luck; always comes before good-luck, and rain before the little flowers; what is worth having is worth working for. Just get upon my back and I will carry you to where the

queen of the birds lives; if anybody can put you in the way of finding the key of wish-house she will be the one.” So the stork bent his red legs and up the lad got upon his back. Then Father Longlegs spread his wings and away he flew! and on and on, over field and fallow, over valley and mountain, over forest and over stream.

After they had gone so far that the lad thought the end of the world could not be a great way off, they came to a grand house, all built of red brick, that stood on a high hill, and that was where the queen of the birds lived. The stork flew straight to the house, and there was the queen of the birds walking in the garden.

The stork told everything from first to last, and that now what they wanted to know was, whether the queen of the birds could tell them where the key of wish-house was to be found.

No, the queen did not know that herself, but she would call all of the birds of the heavens and of the earth, and perhaps there would be some one among them that could tell.

A little silver whistle hung about her neck; she put it to her lips and blew upon it so shrilly that it made a body’s ear ring to listen to it, and the birds of the heavens and of the earth came flying from far and near until the air was as full of them as a sunbeam is full of motes on sweeping-day.

The queen of the birds asked them one and all, from tom-tit to the wild swan, if they could tell where the key of wish-house was to be found; but not a single one of them knew.

After all the rest had spoken there came flying an old eagle, so old that he was as grey as the ashes upon the hearth, and he was six times’ as big as any of the rest. He had come from the other end of nowhere, and that is a long way off, as even simple Jack can tell you; that was what had kept him such a time in the coming.

And was it the key of wish-house that they were talking about? Oh, yes; the old eagle knew where the key of wish-house was as well as he knew his bread-and-butter, for the old Grey Master that lives on the iron mountain had it hanging back of the kitchen door, and the eagle had seen it there more than once.

“Very well,” says the queen of the birds; “then here is a lad who has come out into the world hunting for that key, a good-hearted fellow who helped Father Stork out of a tight place over at the river yonder, where he had been caught in a trap set for the water-rats. Now can you not help him to find what he wants?”

Well, the old eagle did not say no, for one good turn deserves another; so he took the lad on his back at the root of his wings and away he flew.

One would have thought that the red-legged stork had flown far, but it was nothing at all to the journey that the eagle took. On and on he flew for such a long way that I, for one, could never find words to tell you how far away it was.

All the same, every journey must have an ending. And at last they came to a great iron mountain the sides of which were as smooth as the face of a looking-glass; so it was a good thing for the lad that he had a great grey eagle to carry him up to the top, and that is the truth.

There on the top of the mountain lay a green meadow, so wide that the eye could not see to the other end of it. And in the middle of the meadow stood a tall castle; that was where the Grey Master lived who kept 'the key of wish-house back of the kitchen door.

"This is all the farther I can carry you just now," says the eagle: "but here is a feather, when you are ready to come away just throw it up into the air, and I will not be long in coming."

The lad thanked the eagle for the help he had had, and then he put the feather in the lining of his hat.

After that the eagle went one way and the lad went the other, and that was towards the castle where the Grey Master lived.

Off he stepped right foot foremost, and by and by he came to a little stream of water that ran along through the meadow. But just in the middle of the brook lay a great stone, that choked' the stream so that it could hardly crawl around it.

"Here is a body in trouble as well as myself," said the lad, and he stooped and rolled away the great round stone so that the brook might flow smoothly and freely.

"One good turn deserves another," said the brook. "Look in the place where the great round stone lay and you will find a little red pebble; so long as you keep that pebble in your mouth you will be as strong as ten common men."

Well, the lad hunted until he found the pebble, and then he thanked the brook and jogged along the way he was going.

By and by he came to an apple-tree, and it was so loaded down with apples that the branches were bent to the very ground.

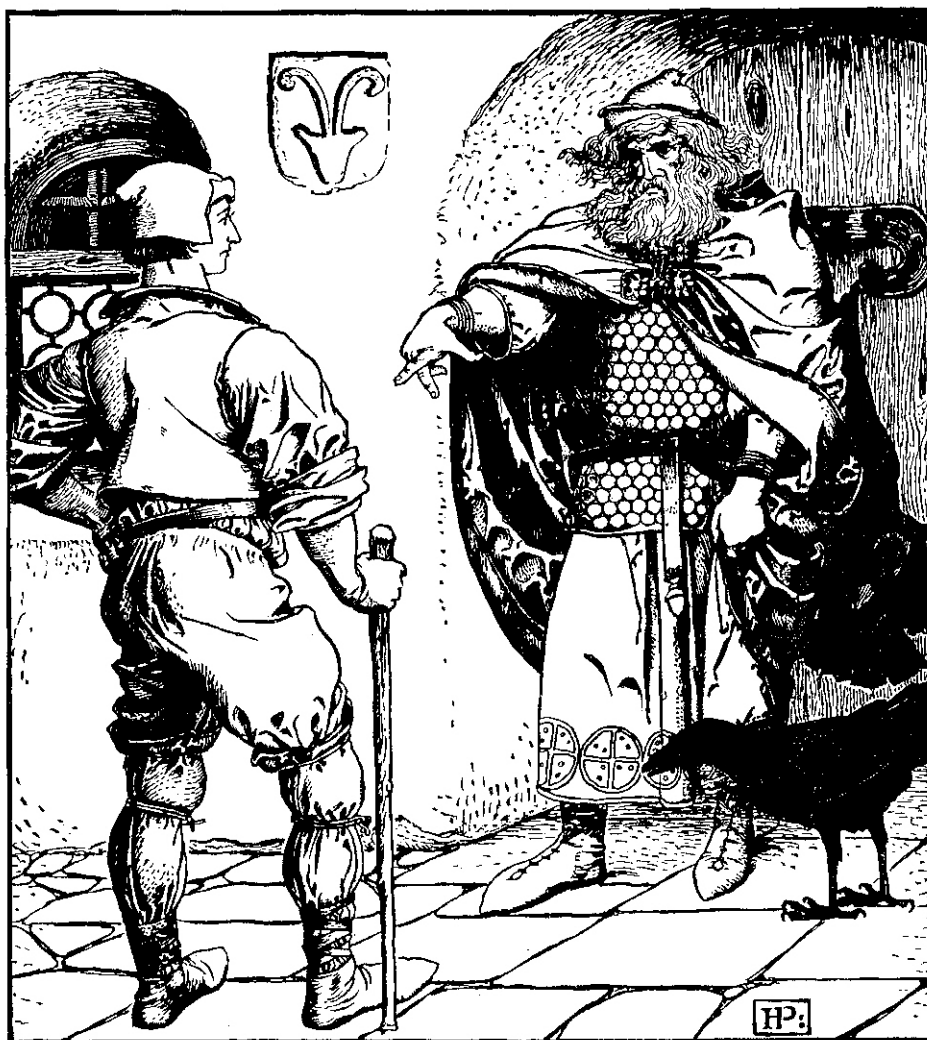
"Here is another body weighed down by the cares of the world," said the lad. So he shook some of the apples off and cut props to put under the branches, that they might not be broken by the load.

"One good turn deserves another," said the apple-tree. "Look under my roots and you will find a golden apple; while you keep that in your bosom neither fire nor water can harm you, for it is an apple' from the tree of life."

Well, the lad found the apple under the roots of the tree, and then he said" thank you," and went on his way.



he Fisher Lad cometh to the Grey Master's house.



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By and by he came to a place where he heard a great hubbub over the hedge; he looked and there he saw that it was a black cock and a red cock fighting for dear life, and the red cock was having the worst of it, for it was nearly dead already.

“Here is another who is having the worst of the fight,” said the lad, and he jumped over the hedge, and drove away the black cock with the staff he held in his hand.

“One good turn deserves another,” said the red cock. “I know what you have come hither to find, and I will give you a bit of advice that will be worth the having. When the Grey Master asks you what you want, tell him it is to watch his black cattle for one night. If you do that he must give you whatsoever you ask for. And listen; this is what you must do to watch the cattle. When you open the stable door there will come out three-and-twenty black cows, and after them a black bull breathing fire and smoke. Him you must catch by the horns and must hold him fast until the cock crows in the morning. But you must have the strength of ten men to do that.”

Well, the lad thanked the cock for the advice he had given, and then he went on his way and up to the castle where the Grey Master lived.

He knocked at the door, and it was the Grey Master himself who came and opened it. He was a head and shoulders taller than other men, was the Grey Master, and he had but one eye, which gleamed and glistened like the dog-star in January. Beside him flew two black ravens with eyes as red as coals of fire.

“And what is it that you want?” said the Grey Master.

“Oh!” said the lad, “I have come from over in the brown world yonder, and I want to watch your black cattle for one night, that is all I am after.”

When the Grey Master heard what the lad said, he frowned until his one eye shone like lightning. “Very well,” said he, “you shall have a chance and a try at what you want, but if you fail your head shall be cut off and hung up over the gate yonder.”

“That is not so pleasant to think of,” said the lad; “all the same, I will have a try and see what I can do.” So in he came, and he and the Grey Master sat down to supper together.

By and by, when the lad had eaten all that he wanted the Grey Master told him it was time to go about the business he had come for. So off went the lad to the stable where the four-and-twenty black cattle stood all in a row. He opened the door, and out they ran helter-skelter and as fast as they could push, and—whisk! Pop!—soon as they came out of the door each cow changed into a black crow and flew around and around the lad’s head as though it would beat his eyes out. Last of all came the black bull, and the lad was ready and waiting for him.

He clapped the red pebble into his mouth, and then he was as strong as ten common men. He caught the bull by the horns, and it might puff out fire and smoke, as it chose, for it could do him no harm because of the apple of life which he carried in his bosom.

How the bull did pitch and toss, and bellow and roar, to be sure, but it was all for no use, the lad held on like hunger, until by and by the bull stopped struggling and stood as quiet as a lamb. But the lad held fast to the bull’s horns,

and all the time the black crows flew about his head, but never once so much as touched him.

At last a cock crew, and then they all changed again into cows, and the lad drove them back into the stable once more, and there they were.

By and by came the Grey Master. "Well," said he, "and did you watch the black cattle?"

Oh, yes, the lad had watched them, and it was no such hard task to do: there they were in the stable yonder, safe and sound.

Then you should have seen what a sour face the Master pulled over the business! All the same, he had to pay the lad; so what did he want for his wages?

"Oh!" said the lad, "it is little that I want. If you will let me have the key that hangs back of the kitchen door I will be satisfied." So the Grey Master had to go and get it for him, though he would rather have given him one of his eye-teeth.

Off marched the lad with what he had come for, and that is more than most of us get. But the Grey Master was not for letting him off so easy as all that, I can tell you, for the more he thought over the business the less he liked to give up the key of wish-house.

So after a while he took down the Sword of Sharpness which hung against the wall, slipped his feet into the Shoes of Speed that stood in the corner, took a peep into the Book of Knowledge which lay upon the shelf, to see which way the lad had gone, and then set off after him hot-foot, to get back what he had given away.

Just as the lad got to where the apple-tree stood he looked over his shoulder, and there he saw the Grey Master coming over the hills.

"And where shall I go now," says he.

"One good turn deserves another," said the apple-tree; "just come under my branches."

The lad did as he was told, and the apple-tree drooped its branches about him, until one could see neither hide nor hair of him.

By and by up came the Grey Master puffing and blowing. "Apple-tree," says he, "did you see the fisher-lad come by this way?"

No, the apple-tree had seen nobody go past that place. So back went the Master home again to have another look into his Book of Knowledge. There he saw as clear as day what sort of trick had been played upon him. Off he started again after the lad at such a rate that the ground smoked under his feet.

But the lad had lost no time either, so that when he looked over his shoulder and saw the Grey Master coming across the hills behind him, he had gone as far as the brook.

“One good turn deserves another,” said the brook, and it made itself small and smaller, so that the lad stepped over without wetting so much as the sole of his foot. Then it spread itself out again three times as broad as before. Presently up came the Master, fuming like a pot on the fire.

“Brook,” says he, “did you see the fisher-lad go by this way?”

“Yes,” said the brook; “there he is just on the other side.” And there he was sure enough.

The Grey Master never stopped to take off his shoes and stockings, but into the water he splashed as fast as he could go. Just as he reached the middle of the stream the brook began to swell, and grew large and larger until it carried away the Grey Master like a cork in the gutter, and there was an end of him.

After that the lad went on without hurrying any more than he chose, until he came to the side of the mountain. He took the eagle’s feather from out his cap and threw it up in the air, and there was the eagle before he had time to grow tired of waiting.

He sat him upon the eagle’s back, and away they flew, and on and on without stopping until they came to the house where the queen of the birds lived. There was Father Longlegs (the stork) waiting for them. He took his turn of carrying the lad, and when they stopped it was just over beyond the king’s castle.

But the lad had been out into the world, and had learned a thing or two.

“See now,” says he, “it was hasty cooking that burned the broth;” and so he would not go up to the castle with his key of wish-house without first trying what door he could unlock with it himself. He took it out of his pocket and struck it a rap or two upon the ground.

“I should like,” says he, “to have golden clothes upon my back, and to have a golden horse and a golden greyhound that shall chase a golden hare.” That was what he said, and he did not have to say it twice; for before he could wink there they were standing beside him just as he wanted. He leaped upon his horse and away he rode after the greyhound and the golden hare.

How the people in the castle did stare when they saw him riding past! The princess herself ran to the window to see the fine sight, and as for the king, he sent six of his knights posting after the fisher-lad, for he thought that it was some great lord who had come into those parts.

By and by the lad came to a thicket, and there he jumped off of his horse and rapped upon the ground with his key.

“I wish to be as I was before,” says he, and then he was the poor fisher-lad and nothing else. As for the golden clothes, the golden horse, the golden greyhound, and the golden hare, they went back to Nomans-land whither they had come; and when the king’s people came riding up there was nobody but a lad in rags and tatters whistling into a key.



**The Grey Master is caught
in the stream and is swept away, but y
Fisher Lad crosses it dry-shod.**

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They hunted up and they hunted down, but they could find neither sign nor trace of the golden rider and the golden horse. So after a while they had to ride back to the castle without them.

“You should have brought the lad who blew upon the key,” said the princess.

The next day the lad rapped upon the ground with his key again.

“I should like to have,” says he, “a golden coach drawn by six milk-white horses, with coachman and footman and out-riders dressed in clothes of gold and silver.”

That was what he said; and there they were just as he wanted, into the coach he got, and off he rode down by the king’s castle.



he Princess finds the fisher Lad with the key of Luck's house.



Dear, dear, how the folks did stare, to be sure! This time the king sent twelve knights after the golden coach, for he thought it must be a king or a prince for certain who rode by in such style.

Pretty soon the lad came to a woods, and there he jumped out of the coach and rapped upon the ground with his key.

"I want to be just as I was before," says he; and, sure enough, he was.

Up clattered the twelve knights on their horses, and there sat the lad in rags and tatters whistling upon his key.

The twelve knights hunted high and hunted low, and not another soul could they find, and so they had to ride back to the castle again.

"See now," said the princess, "did I not say that you should have brought the lad who blew upon the key?"

The next day the lad went out and rapped upon the ground for the third time.

"I should like," said he, "to have a splendid castle all built of silver and gold, such as nobody ever saw before."

That was what he said, and before the words had left his tongue just such a great castle grew up out of nothing like a soap-bubble.

The king chanced to look out of the window just then, and there was the great splendid gold-and-silver castle. He took off his spectacles and rubbed them and rubbed them, but there was the castle just the same as ever.

He bade them saddle the horses, and he and the princess, and all of the court besides, rode away to find out who it was that had built such a fine castle all in one night.

But the lad saw them coming, and rapped upon the ground with his key. "I should like," said he, "for things to be just as they were before;" and puff! away went the castle like the light of a candle when one blows it out.

Up came the king and the princess and all the court, and not a speck of the grand castle could they find, but only a lad in rags and tatters who sat upon a great round stone and whistled upon a key.

But the princess was a lass who could see through a millstone with a hole in it. So soon as she set eyes upon him she knew the whole business from beginning to end. Up she marched to him, before them all, and took him by the hand. "Now I will marry you," said she, "for I see that you have brought the key of wish-house with you;" and there she was as wise as ever. For there be many kings and princes in the world, but I have never yet heard of anyone except the fisher-lad who had the key of wish-house. Have you?