

# **SERBIAN FAIRY TALES**

BY

**MADAME ELODIE L. MIJATOVICH**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

THE BEAR'S SON

THE GOLDEN APPLE-TREE AND THE NINE PEAHENS

PAPALLUGA; OR, THE GOLDEN SLIPPER

SATAN'S JUGGLINGS AND GOD'S MIGHT

GOOD DEEDS ARE NEVER LOST

THE WICKED STEPMOTHER

BIRD GIRL

SIR PEPPERCORN

BASH-CHALEK; OR, TRUE STEEL

THE BITER BIT

THE TRADE THAT NO ONE KNOWS

THE THREE SUITORS

THE GOLDEN-HAIRED TWINS

THE DREAM OF THE KING'S SON

THE THREE BROTHERS

THE SHEPHERD AND THE KING'S DAUGHTER



"Fished out a small box"

## THE BEAR'S SON

Once upon a time a bear married a woman, and they had one son. When the boy was yet a little fellow he begged very hard to be allowed to leave the bear's cave, and to go out into the world to see what was in it. His father, the Bear, however, would not consent to this, saying, "You are too young yet, and not strong enough. In the world there are multitudes of wicked beasts called men, who will kill you." So the boy was quieted for a while, and remained in the cave.

But, after some time, the boy prayed so earnestly that the Bear, his father, would let him go into the world, that the Bear brought him into the wood, and showed him a beech-tree, saying, "If you can pull up that beech by the roots, I will let you go; but if you cannot, then this is a proof that you are still too weak, and must remain with me." The boy tried to pull up the tree, but, after long trying, had to give it up, and go home again to the cave.

Again some time passed, and he then begged again to be allowed to go into the world, and his father told him, as before, if he could pull up the beech-tree he might go out into the world. This time the boy pulled up the tree, so the Bear consented to let him go, first, however, making him cut away the branches from the beech, so that he might use the trunk for a club. The boy now started on his journey, carrying the trunk of the beech over his shoulder.

One day as the Bear's son was journeying he came to a field, where he found hundreds of ploughmen working for their master. He asked them to give him something to eat, and they told him to wait a bit till their dinner was brought them, when he should have some—for, they said, "Where so many are dining one mouth more or less matters but little." Whilst they were speaking there came carts, horses, mules, and asses, all carrying the dinner. But when the meats were spread out the Bear's son declared he could eat all that up himself. The workmen wondered greatly at his words, not believing it possible that one man could consume as great a quantity of victuals as would satisfy several hundred men. This, however, the Bear's son persisted in affirming he could do, and offered to bet with them that he would do this. He proposed that the stakes should be all the iron of their ploughshares and other agricultural implements. To this they assented. No sooner had they made the wager than he fell upon the provisions, and in a short time consumed the whole. Not a fragment was left. Hereupon the labourers, in accordance with their wager, gave him all the iron which they possessed.

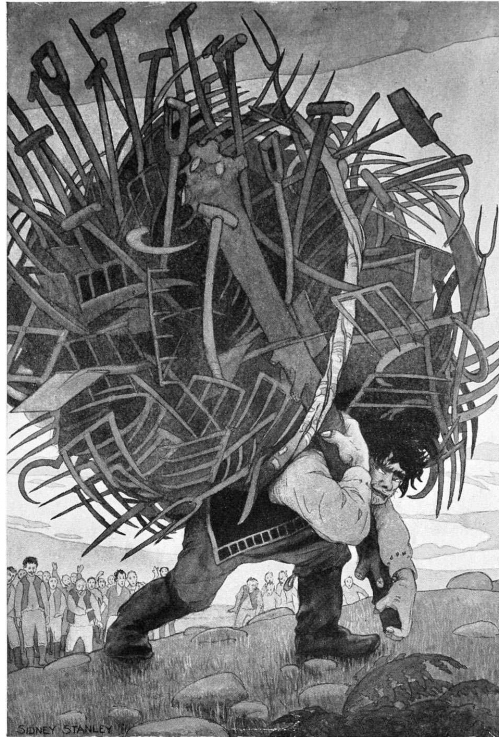
When the Bear's son had collected all the iron, he tore up a young birch-tree, twisted it into a band and tied up the iron into a bundle, which he hung at the end of his staff, and, throwing it across his shoulder, trudged off from the astonished and affrighted labourers.

Going on a short distance, he arrived at a forge in which a smith was employed making a ploughshare. This man he requested to make him a mace with the iron which he was

carrying. This the smith undertook to do; but, putting aside half the iron, he made of the rest a small, coarsely-finished mace.

The Bear's son saw at a glance that he had been cheated by the smith. Moreover, he was disgusted at the roughness of the workmanship. He however took it, and declared his intention of testing it. Then, fastening it to the end of his club and throwing it into the air high above the clouds, he stood still and allowed it to fall on his shoulder. It had no sooner struck him than the mace shivered into fragments, some of which fell on and destroyed the forge. Taking up his staff, the Bear's son reproached the smith for his dishonesty, and killed him on the spot.

Having collected the whole of the iron, the Bear's son went to another smithy, and desired the smith whom he found there to make him a mace, saying to him, "Please play no tricks on me. I bring you these fragments of iron for you to use in making a mace. Beware that you do not attempt to cheat me as I was cheated before!" As the smith had heard what had happened to the other one, he collected his workpeople, threw all the iron on his fire, and welded the whole together and made a large mace of perfect workmanship.



“Tied up the iron into a bundle, which he hung at the end of his staff.”

When it was fastened on the head of his club the Bear’s son, to prove it, threw it up high, and caught it on his back. This time the mace did not break, but rebounded. Then the Bear’s son got up and said: “This work is well done!” and, putting it on his shoulder, walked away. A little farther on he came to a field wherein a man was ploughing with two oxen, and he went up to him and asked for something to eat. The man said, “I expect every moment my daughter to come with my dinner, then we shall see what God has given us!” The Bear’s son told him how

he had eaten up all the dinner prepared for many hundreds of ploughmen, and asked, "From a dinner prepared for one person how much can come to me or to you?" Meanwhile the girl brought the dinner. The moment she put it down, the Bear's son stretched out his hand to begin to eat, but the man stopped him. "No" said he, "you must first say grace, as I do!" The Bear's son, hungry as he was, obeyed, and, having said grace, they both began to eat. The Bear's son, looking at the girl who brought the dinner (she was a tall, strong, beautiful girl), became very fond of her, and said to the father, "Will you give me your daughter for a wife?" The man answered, "I would give her to you very gladly, but I have promised her already to the Moustached." The Bear's son exclaimed, "What do I care for Moustachio? I have my mace for him!" But the man answered, "Hush! hush! Moustachio is also somebody! You will see him here soon." Shortly after a noise was heard afar off, and lo! behind a hill a moustache showed itself, and in it were three hundred and sixty-five birds' nests. Shortly after appeared the other moustache, and then came Moustachio himself. Having reached them, he lay down on the ground immediately to rest. He put his head on the girl's knee, and told her to scratch his head a little. The girl obeyed him, and the Bear's son, getting up, struck him with his club over the head. Whereupon Moustachio, pointing to the place with his finger, said, "Something bit me here." The Bear's son struck him with his mace on another spot, and Moustachio again pointed to the place, saying to the girl, "Something has bitten me here!" When he was struck a third time he said to the girl angrily, "Look you! something bites me here!" Then the girl said, "Nothing has bitten you; a man struck you."



When Moustachio heard that he jumped up, but the Bear's son had thrown away his mace and run away. Moustachio pursued him, and though the Bear's son was lighter than he, and had gained the start of him a considerable distance, he would not give up pursuing him.

At length the Bear's son, in the course of his flight, came to a wide river, and found, near it, some men threshing corn. "Help me, my brothers, help—for God's sake!" he cried; "Help! Moustachio is pursuing me! What shall I do? How can I get across the river?" One of the men stretched out his shovel, saying, "Here, sit down on it, and I will throw you over the river." The Bear's son sat on the shovel, and the man threw him over the water to the other shore. Soon after, Moustachio came up, and asked, "Has any one passed here?" The threshers replied that a man had passed. Moustachio demanded, "How did he cross the river?" They answered, "He sprang over." Then Moustachio went back a little to take a start, and with a hop he sprang to the other side, and continued to pursue the Bear's son. Meanwhile this last, running hastily up a hill, got very tired. At the top of the hill he found a man sowing, and the sack with seeds was hanging on his neck. After every handful of seed sown in the ground, the man put a handful in his mouth and ate them. The Bear's son shouted to him, "Help, brother, help!—for God's sake! Moustachio is following me, and will soon catch me! Hide me somewhere!" Then the man said, "Indeed, it is no joke to have Moustachio pursuing you. But I have nowhere to hide you, unless in this sack among the seeds." So he put him in the sack. When Moustachio came up to the sower he asked him if he had seen the Bear's son anywhere. The man replied, "Yes, he

passed by long ago, and God knows where he has got to before this!"

Then Moustachio went back again. By-and-by the sower forgot that Bear's son was in the sack, and he took him out with a handful of seeds, and put him in his mouth. Then Bear's son was afraid of being swallowed, so he looked round the mouth quickly, and, seeing a hollow tooth, hid himself in it.

When the sower returned home in the evening, he called to his sisters-in-law, "Children, give me my toothpick! There is something in my broken tooth." The sisters-in-law brought him two iron picks, and, standing one on each side, they poked about with the two picks in his tooth till the Bear's son jumped out. Then the man remembered him, and said, "What bad luck you have! I had nearly swallowed you."

After they had taken supper they talked about many different things, till at last the Bear's son asked what had happened to break that one tooth, whilst the others were all strong and healthy. Then the man told him in these words: "Once upon a time ten of us started with thirty horses to the sea-shore to buy some salt. We found a girl in a field watching sheep, and she asked us where we were going. We said we were going to the sea-shore to buy salt. She said, 'Why go so far? I have in the bag in my hand here some salt which remained over after feeding the sheep. I think it will be enough for you.' So we settled about the price, and then she took the salt from her bag, whilst we took the sacks from the thirty horses, and we weighed the salt and filled the sacks with it till all the thirty sacks were full. We then paid the girl, and returned home. It was a very fine autumn day, but as we were crossing a high mountain, the sky

became very cloudy and it began to snow, and there was a cold north wind, so that we could not see our path, and wandered about here and there. At last, by good luck, one of us shouted, 'Here, brothers! Here is a dry place!' So we went in one after the other till we were all, with the thirty horses, under shelter. Then we took the sacks from the horses, made a good fire, and passed the night there as if it were a house. Next morning, just think what we saw! We were all in one man's head, which lay in the midst of some vineyards; and whilst we were yet wondering and loading our horses, the keeper of the vineyards came and picked the head up. He put it in a sling and, slinging it about several times, threw it over his head, and cast it far away over the vines to frighten the starlings away from his grapes. So we rolled down a hill, and it was then that I broke my tooth."

## **THE GOLDEN APPLE-TREE AND THE NINE PEAHENS**

Once upon a time there lived a king who had three sons. Now, before the king's palace grew a golden apple-tree, which in one and the same night blossomed, bore fruit, and lost all its fruit, though no one could tell who took the apples. One day the king, speaking to his eldest son, said, "I should like to know who takes the fruit from our apple-tree." And the son said, "I will keep guard to-night, and will see who gathers the apples." So when the evening came he went and laid himself down under the apple-tree upon the ground to watch. Just as the apples ripened, however, he fell asleep, and when he awoke in the morning there was not a single one left on the tree. Whereupon he went and told his father what had happened. Then the second son offered to keep watch by the tree, but he had no better success than his eldest brother.

So the turn came to the king's youngest son to keep guard. He made his preparations, brought his bed under the tree, and immediately went to sleep. Before midnight he awoke and looked up at the tree, and saw how the apples ripened, and how the whole palace was lit up by their shining. At that minute nine peahens flew towards the tree, and eight of them settled on its branches, but the ninth alighted near him and turned instantly into a beautiful girl—so beautiful, indeed, that the whole kingdom could not produce one who could in any way compare with her. She stayed, conversing kindly with him, till after midnight, then, thanking him for the golden apples,

she prepared to depart; but, as he begged she would leave him one, she gave him two, one for himself and one for the king, his father. Then the girl turned again into a peahen, and flew away with the other eight. Next morning, the king's son took the two apples to his father, and the king was much pleased, and praised his son. When the evening came, the king's youngest son took his place again under the apple-tree to keep guard over it. He again conversed as he had done the night before with the beautiful girl, and brought to his father, the next morning, two apples as before. But, after he had succeeded so well several nights, his two elder brothers grew envious because he had been able to do what they could not. At length they found an old woman, who promised to discover how the youngest brother had succeeded in saving the two apples. So, as the evening came, the old woman stole softly under the bed which stood under the apple-tree and hid herself. And after a while came also the king's son, and laid himself down as usual to sleep. When it was near midnight the nine peahens flew up as before, and eight of them settled on the branches and the ninth stood by his bed, and turned into a most beautiful girl.

Then the old woman slowly took hold of one of the girl's curls and cut it off, and the girl immediately rose up, changed again into a peahen and flew away, and the other peahens followed her, and so they all disappeared. Then the king's son jumped up, and cried out, "What is that?" and, looking under the bed, he saw the old woman, and drew her out. Next morning he ordered her to be tied to a horse's tail, and so torn to pieces. But the peahens never came back, so the king's son was very sad for a long time, and wept at his loss. At length he resolved to go and look after his peahen, and never to come back again

unless he should find her. When he told the king, his father, of his intention, the king begged him not to go away, and said that he would find him another beautiful girl, and that he might choose out of the whole kingdom.

But all the king's persuasions were useless. His son went into the world to search everywhere for his peahen, taking only one servant to serve him. After many travels he came one day to a lake. Now by the lake stood a large and beautiful palace. In the palace lived an old woman as queen, and with the queen lived a girl, her daughter. He said to the old woman, "For heaven's sake, grandmother, do you know anything about nine golden peahens?" and the old woman answered, "Oh, my son, I know all about them; they come every mid-day to bathe in the lake. But what do you want with them? Let them be, think nothing about them. Here is my daughter. Such a beautiful girl! and such an heiress! All my wealth will remain to you if you marry her." But he, burning with desire to see the peahens, would not listen to what the old woman spoke about her daughter.

Next morning, when day dawned, the prince prepared to go down to the lake to wait for the peahens. Then the old queen bribed the servant and gave him a little pair of bellows, and said, "Do you see these bellows? When you come to the lake you must blow secretly with them behind his neck, and then he will fall asleep, and not be able to speak to the peahens." The mischievous servant did as the old woman told him; when he went with his master down to the lake, he took occasion to blow with the bellows behind his neck, and the poor prince fell asleep just as though he were dead. Shortly after the nine peahens came flying, and eight of them alighted by the lake, but

the ninth flew towards him, as he sat on horseback, and caressed him, and tried to awaken him. "Awake, my darling! Awake, my heart! Awake, my soul!" But for all that he knew nothing, just as if he were dead. After they had bathed, all the peahens flew away together, and after they were gone the prince woke up and said to his servant, "What has happened? Did they not come?" The servant told him they had been there, and that eight of them had bathed, but the ninth had sat by him on his horse, and caressed and tried to awaken him. Then the king's son was so angry that he almost killed himself in his rage. Next morning he went down again to the shore to wait for the peahens, and rode about a long time till the servant again found an opportunity of blowing with the bellows behind his neck, so that he again fell asleep as though dead. Hardly had he fallen asleep when the nine peahens came flying, and eight of them alighted by the water, but the ninth settled down by the side of his horse and caressed him, and cried out to awaken him, "Arise, my darling! Arise, my heart! Arise, my soul."

But it was of no use; the prince slept on as if he were dead. Then she said to the servant, "Tell your master to-morrow he can see us here again, but never more." With these words the peahens flew away. Immediately after the king's son woke up, and asked his servant, "Have they not been here?" And the man answered, "Yes, they have been, and say that you can see them again to-morrow, at this place, but after that they will not return again." When the unhappy prince heard that he knew not what to do with himself, and in his great trouble and misery tore the hair from his head.

The third day he went down again to the shore, but, fearing to fall asleep, instead of riding slowly, galloped along the shore. His servant, however, found an opportunity of blowing with the bellows behind his neck, and again the prince fell asleep. A moment after came the nine peahens, and the eight alighted on the lake and the ninth by him, on his horse, and sought to awaken him, caressing him. "Arise, my darling! Arise, my heart! Arise, my soul!" But it was of no use, he slept on as if dead. Then the peahen said to the servant, "When your master awakens, tell him he ought to strike off the head of the nail from the lower part, and then he will find me." Thereupon all the peahens fled away. Immediately the king's son awoke, and said to his servant, "Have they been here?" And the servant answered, "They have been, and the one which alighted on your horse ordered me to tell you to strike off the head of the nail from the lower part, and then you will find her." When the prince heard that he drew his sword and cut off his servant's head.

After that he travelled alone about the world, and, after long travelling, came to a mountain and remained all night there with a hermit, whom he asked if he knew anything about nine golden peahens. The hermit said, "Eh, my son, you are lucky; God has led you in the right path. From this place it is only half a day's walk. But you must go straight on, then you will come to a large gate, which you must pass through; and, after that, you must keep always to the right hand, and so you will come to the peahens' city, and there find their palace." So next morning the king's son arose, and prepared to go. He thanked the hermit, and went as he had told him. After a while he came to the great gate, and, having passed it, turned to the right, so that at mid-



day he saw the city, and beholding how white it shone, rejoiced very much. When he came into the city he found the palace where lived the nine golden peahens. But at the gate he was stopped by the guard, who demanded who he was, and whence he came. After he had answered these questions, the guards went to announce him to the queen. When the queen heard who he was, she came running out to the gate and took him by the hand to lead him into the palace. She was a young and beautiful maiden, and so there was a great rejoicing when, after a few days, he married her and remained there with her.

One day, some time after their marriage, the queen went out to walk, and the king's son remained in the palace. Before going out, however, the queen gave him the keys of twelve cellars, telling him, "You may go down into all the cellars except the twelfth—that you must on no account open, or it will cost you your head." She then went away. The king's son, whilst remaining in the palace, began to wonder what there could be in the twelfth cellar, and soon commenced opening one cellar after the other. When he came to the twelfth he would not at first open it, but again began to wonder very much why he was forbidden to go into it. "What *can* be in this cellar?" he exclaimed to himself. At last he opened it. In the middle of the cellar lay a big barrel with an open bunghole, but bound fast round with three iron hoops. Out of the barrel came a voice, saying, "For God's sake, my brother—I am dying with thirst—please give me a cup of water." Then the king's son took a cup and filled it with water, and emptied it into the barrel. Immediately he had done so one of the hoops burst asunder. Again came the voice from the barrel, "For God's sake, my brother—I am dying of thirst—please give me a cup of water."

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