

Boots, Who Made The Princess Say, 'That's A Story'

by Sir George Webbe Dasent
from *Popular Tales from the Norse*

Once on a time there was a king who had a daughter, and she was such a dreadful story-teller that the like of her was not to be found far or near. So the king gave out, that if any one could tell such a string of lies, as would get her to say, 'That's a story', he should have her to wife, and half the kingdom besides. Well, many came, as you may fancy, to try their luck, for every one would have been very glad to have the Princess, to say nothing of the kingdom; but they all cut a sorry figure, for the Princess was so given to story-telling, that all their lies went in at one ear and out of the other. Among the rest came three brothers to try their luck, and the two elder went first, but they fared no better than those who had gone before them. Last of all the third, Boots, set off and found the Princess in the farm-yard.

'Good-morning', he said, 'and thank you for nothing.'

'Good-morning', said she, 'and the same to you.'

Then she went on:

'You haven't such a fine farm-yard as ours, I'll be bound; for when two shepherds stand, one at each end of it, and blow their ram's horns, the one can't hear the other.'

'Haven't we though!' answered Boots; 'ours is far bigger; for when a cow begins to go with calf at one end of it, she doesn't get to the other end before the time to drop her calf is come.'

'I dare say!' said the Princess. 'Well, but you haven't such a big ox, after all, as ours yonder; for when two men sit one on each horn, they can't touch each other with a twenty-foot rule.'

'Stuff!' said Boots; 'is that all? why, we have an ox who is so big, that when two men sit, one on each horn, and each blows his great mountain-trumpet, they can't hear one another.'

'I dare say!' said the Princess; 'but you haven't so much milk as we, I'll be bound; for we milk our kine into great pails, and carry them in-doors, and empty them into great tubs, and so we make great, great cheeses.'

'Oh! you do, do you?' said Boots. 'Well, we milk ours into great tubs, and then we put them in carts and drive them in-doors, and then we turn them out into great brewing vats, and so we make cheeses as big as a great house. We had, too a dun mare to tread the cheese well together when it was making; but once she tumbled down into the cheese, and we lost her; and after we had eaten at this cheese seven years, we came upon a great dun mare, alive and kicking. Well, once after that I was going to drive this mare to the mill, and her back-bone snapped in two; but I wasn't put out, not I, for I took a spruce sapling, and put it into her for a back-bone, and she had no other back-bone all the while we had her. But the sapling grew up into such a tall tree, that I climbed right up to heaven by it, and when I got there, I saw the Virgin Mary sitting and spinning the foam of the sea into pig's-bristle ropes; but just then the spruce-fir broke short off, and I couldn't get down again; so the Virgin Mary let me down by one of the ropes, and down I slipped straight into a fox's hole, and who should sit there but my mother and your father cobbling shoes; and just as I stepped in, my mother gave your father such a box on the ear, that it made his whiskers curl.'

'That's a story!' said the Princess; 'my father never did any such thing in all his born days!'

So Boots got the Princess to wife, and half the kingdom besides.