

## Little Annie The Goose-Girl

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

Once on a time there was a King who had so many geese he was forced to have a lassie to tend them and watch them; her name was Annie, and so they called her 'Annie the Goose-girl'. Now you must know there was a King's son from England who went out to woo; and as he came along Ann sat herself down in his way.

'Sitting all alone there, you little Annie?' said the King's son.

'Yes', said little Annie, 'here I sit and put stitch to stitch and patch on patch. I'm waiting to-day for the King's son from England.'

'Him you mustn't look to have', said the Prince.

'Nay, but if I'm to have him', said little Annie, 'have him I shall, after all.'

And now limners were sent out into all lands and realms to take the likenesses of the fairest Princesses, and the Prince was to choose between them. So he thought so much of one of them, that he set out to seek her, and wanted to wed her, and he was glad and happy when he got her for his sweetheart.

But now I must tell you this Prince had a stone with him which he laid by his bedside, and that stone knew everything, and when the Princess came little Annie told her, if so be she'd had a sweetheart before, or didn't feel herself quite free from anything which she didn't wish the Prince to know, she'd better not step on that stone which lay by the bedside.

'If you do, it will tell him all about you', said little Annie.

So when the Princess heard that she was dreadfully downcast, and she fell upon the thought to ask Annie if she would get into bed that night in her stead and lie down by the Prince's side; and then when he was sound asleep, Annie should get out and the Princess should get in, and

so when he woke up in the morning he would find the right bride by his side.

So they did that, and when Annie the goose-girl came and stepped upon the stone the Prince asked:

'Who is this that steps into my bed?'

'A maid pure and bright', said the stone, and so they lay down to sleep; but when the night wore on the Princess came and lay down in Annie's stead.

But next morning, when they were to get up, the Prince asked the stone again:

'Who is this that steps out of my bed?'

'One that has had three bairns', said the stone. When the Prince heard that he wouldn't have her, you may know very well; and so he packed her off home again, and took another sweetheart.

But as he went to see her, little Annie went and sat down in his way again.

'Sitting all alone there, little Annie, the goose-girl', said the Prince.

'Yes, here I sit, and put stitch to stitch, and patch on patch; for I'm waiting to-day for the king's son from England', said Annie.

'Oh! you mustn't look to have him', said the king's son.

'Nay, but if I'm to have him, have him I shall, after all'; that was what Annie thought.

Well, it was the same story over again with the Prince; only this time, when his bride got up in the morning, the stone said she'd had six bairns.

So the Prince wouldn't have her either, but sent her about her business; but still he thought he'd try once more if he couldn't find one who was pure and spotless; and he sought far and wide in many lands,

till at last he found one he thought he might trust. But when he went to see her, little Annie the goose-girl had put herself in his way again.

'Sitting all alone there, you little Annie, the goose-girl', said the Prince.

'Yes, here I sit, and put stitch to stitch, and patch on patch; for I'm waiting to-day for the king's son from England', said Annie.

'Him you mustn't look to have', said the Prince.

'Nay, but if I'm to have him, have him I shall, after all', said little Annie.

So when the Princess came, little Annie the goose-girl told her the same as she had told the other two, if she'd had any sweetheart before, or if there was anything else she didn't wish the Prince to know, she mustn't tread on the stone that the Prince had put at his bedside; for, said she:

'It tells him everything.'

The Princess got very red and downcast when she heard that, for she was just as naughty as the others, and asked Annie if she would go in her stead and lie down with the Prince that night; and when he was sound asleep, she would come and take her place, and then he would have the right bride by his side when it was light next morning.

Yes! they did that. And when little Annie the goose-girl came and stepped upon the stone, the Prince asked:

'Who is this that steps into my bed.'

'A maid pure and bright', said the stone; and so they lay down to rest.

Farther on in the night the Prince put a ring on Annie's finger, and it fitted so tight she couldn't get it off again; for the Prince saw well enough there was something wrong, and so he wished to have a mark by which he might know the right woman again.

Well, when the Prince had gone off to sleep, the Princess came and drove Annie away to the pigsty, and lay down in her place. Next morning, when they were to get up, the Prince asked:

'Who is this that steps out of my bed?'

'One that's had nine bairns', said the stone.

When the Prince heard that he drove her away at once, for he was in an awful rage; and then he asked the stone how it all was with these Princesses who had stepped on it, for he couldn't understand it at all, he said.

So the stone told him how they had cheated him, and sent little Annie the goose-girl to him in their stead.

But as the Prince wished to have no mistake about it, he went down to her where she sat tending her geese, for he wanted to see if she had the ring too, and he thought, 'if she has it, 'twere best to take her at once for my queen'.

So when he got down he saw in a moment that she had tied a bit of rag round one of her fingers, and so he asked her why it was tied up.

'Oh! I've cut myself so badly', said little Annie the goose-girl.

So he must and would see the finger, but Annie wouldn't take the rag off. Then he caught hold of the finger; but Annie, she tried to pull it from him, and so between them the rag came off, and then he knew his ring.

So he took her up to the palace, and gave her much fine clothes and attire, and after that they held their wedding feast; and so little Annie the goose-girl came to have the king of England's son for her husband after all, just because it was written that she should have him.