

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **Golden Mary and Pitch Mary**



Once upon a time there was a widow who had two daughters, her own daughter and a step-daughter; both were called Mary. Her own daughter was neither pious nor good, but the stepdaughter, conversely, was a modest, demure girl who nevertheless had to endure untold insults and slights from her mother and sister. Yet she was always affable, did the kitchen chores without

wearying, and only at times did she weep secretly in her bedroom, when her mother and sister had been particularly unjust to her. However, she always soon regained her cheerfulness and lively spirits, and she would say to herself, "Be at peace, the good Lord is sure to help you." Then she diligently did her work, making everything nice and clean. To her mother's mind, she never worked enough; one day she was even told, "Mary, I can't keep you at home any longer, you work little and eat much, and your mother did not leave you any fortune, nor did your father, it is all mine, and I can't and won't support you any longer; therefore, you must go away and seek service with a gentleman." And she baked a cake of milk and ashes, filled a little jug with water, gave these to poor Mary, and turned her out the house.

Mary was sorely distressed at this hard-hearted treatment; yet she strode spiritedly through the fields and meadows, thinking: "There is bound to be someone who will engage you as a maid, and strangers may be kinder than your own mother." When she became hungry, she sat down in

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the grass, took out her ash-cake and drank from her little jug, and many birds flapped by and pecked at her cake; and she poured water into her hand and let the lively birds drink. And then, without her noticing it, her ash-cake turned into a tart, her water into exquisite wine. Fortified and glad of heart, poor Mary walked on, and she came, as it was growing dark, to a strangely built house with two gates before it, one of which looked black as pitch while the other shone with pure gold. Mary humbly passed through the less lovely gate into the courtyard and knocked at the front door. A man with a dreadfully savage appearance opened the door and brusquely asked what she wanted. Trembling, she said, "I only wished to ask if you might perhaps be so kind as to accommodate me for the night?" and the man growled, "Come in!" She followed him and trembled all the more when she could see and hear nothing in the room but cats and dogs and their abominable howling. Apart from the wild Torschman (such as the name of this being), there was no one else in the entire house.

Now Torschman growled to Mary, "Whom will you sleep with, with me or with cats and dogs?" Mary said, "With cats and dogs." But she had to sleep right next to him, and he gave her a lovely soft bed, so Mary had a sound and splendid sleep. In the morning Torschman growled, "Whom will you breakfast with, with me or with cats and dogs?" She said, "With cats and dogs." Then she had to drink with him, coffee and sweet cream. When Mary was ready to depart, Torschman growled once more, "Which gate will you go out by, the Golden Gate or the Pitch Gate?" and she said, "The Pitch Gate." Then she had to go out by the golden one, and as she passed through, Torschman sat on top and shook the gate so strongly that it

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swayed, and Mary was covered from top to toe with the gold that fell down on her from the Golden Gate.

Now she went back home, and when she entered the parental house her hens, which she had always fed, came joyfully flying and running towards her, and the cockerel crowed, "Cock-a-doodle-do, here comes Golden Mary! Cock-a-doodle-do!" And her mother came down the stairs and curtsied so reverently to the golden lady, as though she were a Princess who was paying her the honour of a visit. But Mary said, "Dear mother, do you really not know me any longer? Why, it's me, Mary!"

Now her sister also appeared, quite astonished and lost in wonder like the mother, and they were both filled with envy; and Mary had to relate the wondrous adventure that had befallen her, and how she had come into the gold.

Her mother now received her well, and treated her better than before, and Mary was honoured and loved by all; and she soon found herself a worthy young man, who took her home as his wife and lived with her in perfect happiness.

But envy grew in the other Mary's heart, and she resolved that she too would go abroad and return covered with gold. Her mother gave her a sweet cake and wine to take on the journey, and when Mary partook of them and birds came flying up to join the feast, she angrily chased them away. But her cake changed, without her noticing it, into ashes, and her wine into cloudy water. In the evening, Mary likewise came to Torschman's gates; she walked proudly in by the golden one and knocked at the front door. When Torschman opened and asked what she wanted, she pertly

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said, “Well, I want to pass the night here.” And he growled, “Come in!” Then he asked her, “Whom will you sleep with, with me or with the cats and dogs?” She quickly said, “With you, Mr. Torschman!” But he took her to the room where the cats and dogs slept and locked her in. The next morning, Mary’s face was horribly scratched and bitten. Torschman growled again, “Whom will you drink coffee with, with me or with cats and dogs?” – “Why, with you,” she said, and then she had to drink with the cats and dogs. Now she wanted to be off. Torschman growled once more, “Which gate will you go out by, the Golden Gate or the Pitch Gate?” and she said, “By the Golden Gate, naturally!” But it was immediately locked and she had to go out by the Pitch Gate, and Torschman sat on top of it, jerking and jolting the gate so that it tottered, and so much pitch fell down over Mary that she was covered up to the ears.



Now when Mary returned home, full of fury at her ugly appearance, the clucking cockerel crowed at her, “Cock-a-doodle-doo, here comes Pitch Mary! Cock-a-doodle-doo!” And her mother turned from her in abhorrence and could no longer let her ugly daughter be seen by anyone; and so she paid a heavy price for being so greedy for gold.