

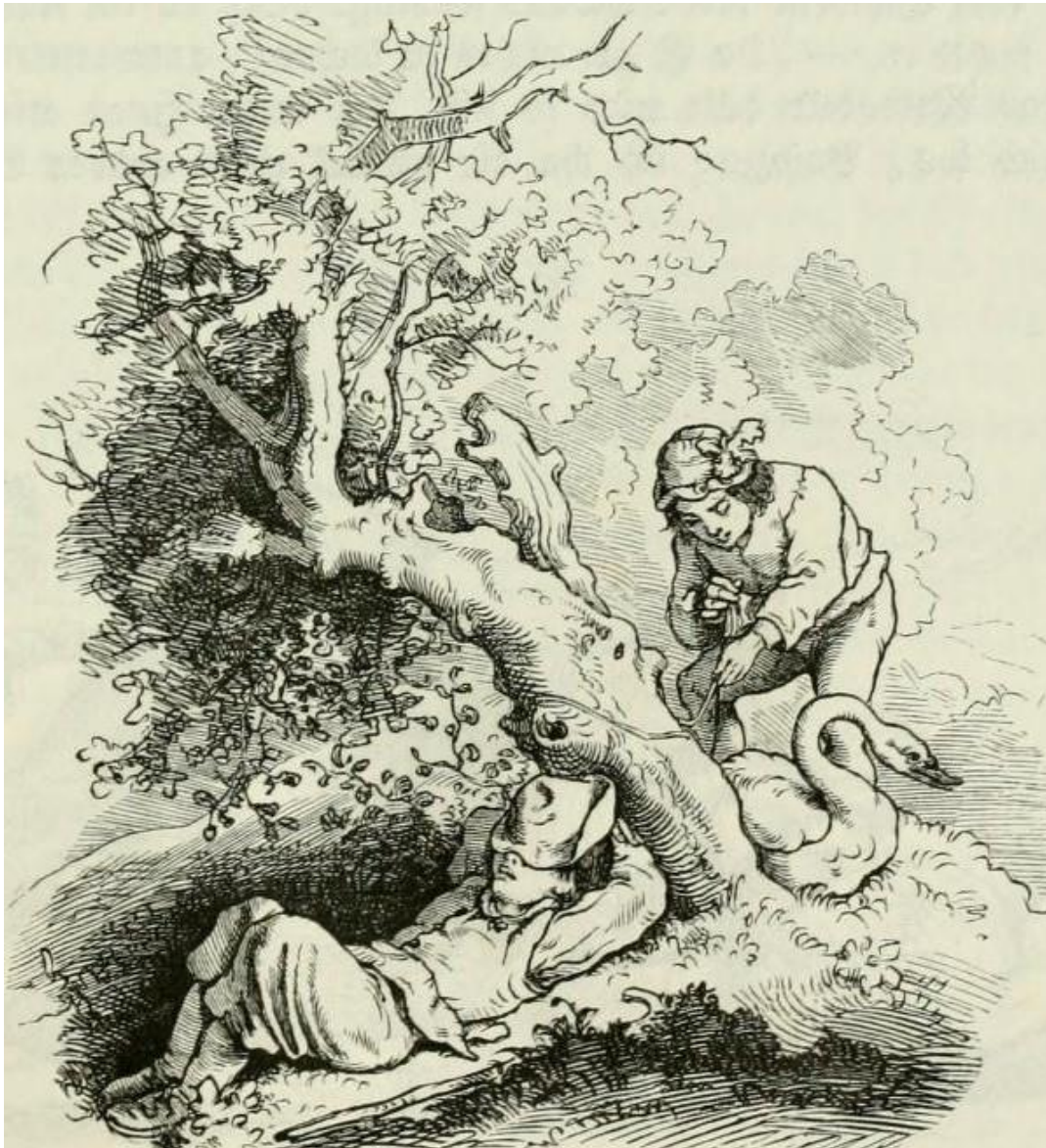
The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **Swan, Stick On!**

Once upon a time there were three brothers, the eldest of whom was called Jacob, the second Friedrich, and the third and youngest Gottfried. The youngest one was the butt of his brothers' teasing and the usual deflector of their ill-humour. Whenever anything crossed their wishes, Gottfried had to pay for it, and he had to put up with all this because he had a puny physique and could not defend himself against his stronger brothers. It made his life a misery, and he thought night and day about ways of making his fate more bearable. One day when he was in the forest to collect wood, and bitterly weeping, a little old woman walked up to him and asked him the reason for his distress, and he confided his troubles to her. "Well, my boy," the little woman then said, "is the world not big? Why don't you seek your fortune elsewhere?" Gottfried took these words to heart, and early one morning he left his parental home and set out on his way into the wide



world to, as the little woman had said, seek his fortune. But the parting from the place where he had been born, and had at least spent a happy childhood, grieved him to the heart, and he sat down on a hillside to take

one last good look at his home village. Behold, the little woman was standing behind him, and clapping him on the back, she said: "You've done well, my boy! But what will you do now?" Gottfried now thought for the first time about what he was going to do. Up to that moment, he had thought that fortune would just fall from the sky into his lap. The little woman may have guessed his thoughts: she said with a grin, "I'll tell you what you should do. Why? Because I'm fond of you, and because I believe that you won't forget me when you're sitting in the lap of Lady Luckfortune." Gottfried solemnly promised that he would not, and the old woman continued, "This evening, when the sun sets, go to the large pear-tree which stands at the crossroads there. Under it a man will be lying asleep, while a large, lovely swan will be tied to the tree; take care not to wake the man up – and that is why you must go just when the sun is setting – but untie the swan and take it away with you. People will be infatuated with its beautiful feathers and you may allow them to pluck one out. But when the swan is touched it will clang, and if you then say, 'Swan, stick on!' then the hand of the person touching it will stick fast, and it will not come unstuck until you tap it with this little stick, which I make you a present of herewith. And when you have caught a brave train of human birds, then lead them straight onwards. You will come to a large city, and a King's daughter lives there who has never laughed in her life. If you can bring her to laugh, your fortune is made; but do not forget me then, my boy!" Gottfried made his promise once more, and punctually with the sunset he was at the designated tree. The man lay there asleep, and a large, lovely swan was tied to the tree with a string. Gottfried bravely untied the bird and took it away without the man waking up.



Now it so happened that Gottfried, with his swan, passed by a building-site where several men with hitched-up breeches were kneading clay; they admired the bird's beautiful feathers, and a forward boy, who was covered all over with clay, said out loud: "Oh, what I'd give to have one of those feathers." – "Pull yourself one out!" Gottfried said pleasantly; the boy grasped the bird's tail, the swan clanged, "Swan – stick on!" said Gottfried, and the boy could not free himself, try as he might. The others laughed all the more, the more the boy yelled, until a maid came running over from a nearby stream, where she had been washing with her skirts gathered up

high. She took pity on the boy and reached him her hand to help him break free. The swan clanged, "Swan, stick on!" said Gottfried, and the maid was likewise caught. When Gottfried had gone some distance with his catch, he met a chimney-sweeper who laughed at the peculiar couple and asked the maid what she was up to. "Oh Hans, my dearest," the maid miserably replied, "pray give me your hand, and free me from this infernal boy." – "Well, if that's all there's to be done!" laughed the chimney-sweeper, and he gave the maid his hand, the bird clanged, "Swan, stick on!" said Gottfried, and the black man was likewise bewitched. Now they came to a village where a fair was being held at that time; a company of tightrope walkers were giving performances, and the clown was in the middle of his foolish antics. His jaw dropped when he saw the strange trefoil that was clinging to the swan's tail. "Have you become a fool, Blackie?" he laughed. "It's no laughing-matter at all!" replied the chimney-sweep. "This wench is gripping me so tightly that my hand feels nailed fast. Help to free me, Clown; one day I'll return you the favour." The Clown grasped the black man's outstretched hand, the bird clanged, "Swan, stick on!" said Gottfried, and the clown became the fourth member of the league. Now in the foremost row of the spectators was the pompous, portly village magistrate, who put on a very serious look and was greatly annoyed at this apparition, for the devil seemed to be in it. So far did his zeal go that he seized the clown by his free hand to tear him away and deliver him up to the bailiff; the bird clanged, "Swan, stick on!" said Gottfried, and the magistrate shared the fate of his precursors. The magistrate's wife, a long, scrawny spindle of a woman, was appalled at her husband's mishap and pulled with might and

main at his free arm, the bird clanged, “Swan, stick on!” said Gottfried, and the poor magistrate’s wife, scream though she might, had to follow along. From that time on, no one else felt a desire to augment the company.



Gottfried could now see the towers of the capital before him, when a wondrous equipage came in his direction, in which there sat a beautiful young – but serious – lady. But when she caught sight of the colourful procession, she burst out into peals of laughter, and her servants laughed with her. “The King’s daughter has laughed!” everyone cried with joy. She alighted, inspected the matter more closely, and laughed more and more at the capers the spellbound figures were cutting. The coach had to turn around and it travelled slowly, beside Gottfried, back to the city. When the King heard the tidings that his daughter had laughed, he was absolutely delighted, and he himself looked closely at Gottfried, his swan, and his extraordinary entourage, and he could not help laughing until his eyes were brimming with tears. “You foolish fellow,” he said to Gottfried, “do you know what I have promised to the man who makes my daughter laugh?” – “No,”

said Gottfried. – “Then I’ll tell you,” the King replied. “A thousand golden guilders or a handsome estate. Choose between the two.” Gottfried decided in favour of the estate. Then he touched the boy, the maid, the chimney sweeper, the clown, the magistrate, and the magistrate’s wife, with his stick; and when they felt themselves to be free, they ran away as if all the devils in Hell were hot on their heels, and this gave rise to a new burst of inextinguishable laughter. Now, the King’s daughter was moved to stroke the beautiful swan and admire its plumage. The bird clanged, “Swan, stick on!” said Gottfried, and in this way he won the Princess. The swan then rose up into the air and disappeared into the blue horizon. Gottfried now received the present of a duchy; but he remembered the little old woman to whom he owed his good fortune, and he appointed her as stewardess to him and his chosen bride in their majestic royal castle.