

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Kitten and the Knitting-Needles**



Once upon a time there was an old woman who went into the forest to gather wood. As she was returning home with her load she saw a sick kitten lying behind a fence and mewling piteously. The poor woman compassionately took it up in her apron and carried it home. On the way her two children came to meet her, and when they

saw that their mother was carrying something, they asked: “Mother, what are you carrying?” and they wanted the kitten right away; but the compassionate woman did not give her children the kitten for fear they would torment it, laying it instead on a soft bed of old clothes at home and giving it milk to drink. When the kitten had refreshed itself and returned to health, it was suddenly up and away. Some time later, the poor woman went into the forest once more, and as she was returning home with her load she came again to the place where the sick kitten had been lying. A very noble lady was standing there; she beckoned the poor woman over to her and threw five knitting-needles into her apron. The woman did not really know what she should make of this, and the peculiar gift seemed to her to be of very little value; but she took the knitting-needles, and showed them to her children, and that evening she laid the five knitting-needles on the table. But when the woman rose from bed the next morning a pair of newly-knitted stockings were lying on the table. The poor woman was surprised beyond measure and the next evening she laid the needles on the table again – and the following morning new stockings were lying there.

Now she realised that these industrious needles had been given her as a reward for her compassion for the sick kitten, and so she let them knit every night until there were enough stockings for her and her children. After that she sold stockings and had enough to live on for the rest of her days.