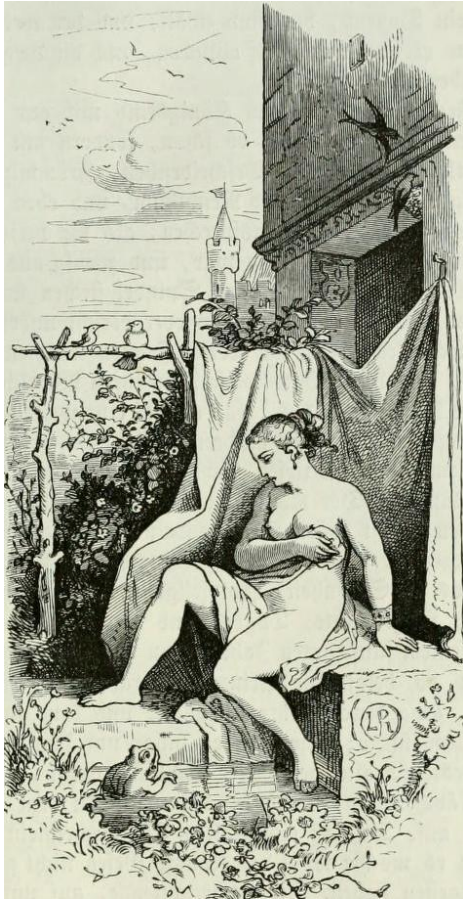


The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **Thornrose**



Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen who had no children and wished for a child every single day. At one time it happened that the Queen was bathing and, being all alone, she sighed, "Oh, if only I had a child!" Then a frog hopped out of the water and said, "What you wish for shall be granted you!" And after that the Queen had a little daughter who was pretty beyond compare, and the King took the utmost delight in the fulfilment of his dearest wish, and he ordained a great feast to which he invited all of his friends. Now there also lived in the land Wise

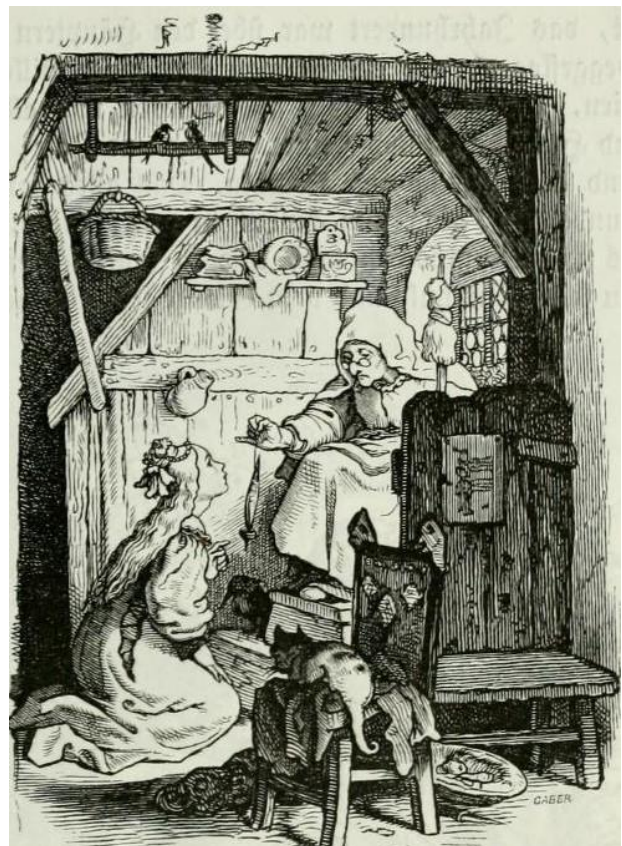
Women who were endowed with magical and miraculous powers and enjoyed the great reverence of all the people; they too were invited by the King and were to eat off golden plates. But at that time kings did not have as many bowls and plates as they do today, and this King had only a dozen, or twelve of them, and there were thirteen Wise Women, so he could invite only twelve, and the thirteenth remained uninvited, which she took ill.

The Wise Women endowed the royal child with the most exquisite attributes: not beauty, for she possessed that already, but kindness, cheerfulness, grace, gentleness, modesty, piousness, demureness, virute, sincerity, understanding, and wealth; and the twelfth Wise Woman was just about to speak her wish when the thirteenth one, who had not been invited, walked into the room and angrily cried out: "Fifteen years from now the

King's daughter shall prick herself on a spindle and fall down dead!" With these words the wicked sorceress disappeared and the others stood paralysed with horror, for the Wise Women utter no idle words. It was fortunate that the twelfth Wise Woman had not yet spoken her wish. She could not alter a threat that a Wise Woman had made, but she could give it a mitigatory turn, so she cried, "The King's daughter shall only fall into a deep sleep which shall last a hundred years and no longer." The King at once issued a government mandate throughout the land, by virtue of which all spindles were to be abolished and spinning-wheels introduced instead.

In the meantime, the beautiful king's daughter grew up to be a young lady who had no equal for beauty, sweetness, congeniality, gentleness, humility, modesty, kind-heartedness, virtue, and understanding, and so she entered her fifteenth year, loved – indeed, adored – by all who knew her.

And then the Princess was seized with sudden a desire to look around the castle a little, and passing through several chambers, she came to a flight of stairs which led up to an old tower; she climbed up these and came to a low chamber door which had an old, rusty key in its lock, and being as curious as very young girls tend to be, the Princess turned the key and the door opened straightaway. There sat an ancient



spinning-woman, busily spinning with a spindle; she probably had not heard or read the King's law, or had forgotten it long since. As it danced around and whirled up and down, the spindle gave the young king's daughter much pleasure; wanting to spin herself, she made a grab at it and pricked herself, for this was the very day on which the enraged Wise Woman's prophecy was to be fulfilled. And the king's daughter fell down in a sleep. And the same sleep also came over the King and the Queen and the entire castle. It must have been pretty boring there! The whole household fell asleep, from the major-domo to the kitchen-lad whose hair the cook was that very moment tousling because of a blunder, ready to give him a box on the ear; and the cook and the waiter, the lady-in-waiting and the chambermaid, the whole kit and caboodle – the dog and the cat, why, the pigeons and sparrows on the roof, the peacocks and parrots, and even the flies on the wall – they all slept. And the fire on the range died down and fell asleep, and the wind also died down, and there was not a peep to be heard, not even the nibbling of a mouse anywhere in the castle, for the mice too were asleep. And no more people came into the enchanted slumbering chateau, around which a mighty hedge of thorns grew up, a few feet higher every year, until it had topped the highest tower so that not even the flag nor the weathercock could be seen any longer, and it was so thick that no living soul could work his way through it. And gradually all remembrance of the castle was lost, and there remained only a legend, which ran that behind the thorns was a castle in which *Thornrose*, the enchanted Princess, was sleeping; how long she had been, how long she would be, no one knew. From time to time, King's sons did come and try to force their way through

the hedge, but it was far too thick for them to succeed; they remained hopelessly entangled in the thorns and perished dismally.

And now a hundred years had passed, and the time had come for Thornrose to awake, although no one knew this for certain; and another prince came, and he heard the tale of the sleeping Thornrose from the mouth of an old man who assured him of its truth, for his father and great-grandfather had often told him about it, and the old man had to take the King's son to the notorious hedge of thorns. And that happened precisely a hundred years to the day on which Thornrose had fallen into her enchanted sleep. And the hedge of thorns was covered all over with roses, which had not been the case in living memory; and the King's son could walk freely through the hedge, no thorn touched his clothes, but the hedge closed behind him as he passed. And then he found everything intact; no wind had blown, no rain had dampened, the century had flown over the heads of the slumberers as softly as a swan over a placid lake full of dreaming water-lilies. They were sleeping still, all the flies and all the mice; they were sleeping, cock and hen, cat and dog, maid and lady's maid, chamberlain and page, and King and Queen as well. The prince observed all this in great amazement, then he went up into the tower and came into the chamber where sweet Thornrose was lying, and sleeping so softly, sublimely encompassed with the halo of her innocence and the radiance of her beauty. Then the prince bent down and kissed Thornrose, and she instantly opened her eyes. The King's son told her all that had come to pass and led her down into the castle. Then everything awoke, King and Queen, dwarf and lady's-maid, dogs and horses, fire and water, wind and

weathercock, and the cook gave the kitchen-boy the clip round the ears which he had been owing him for a hundred years, and everything was back to normal again; and a magnificent wedding was arranged, namely that of Thornrose to the prince who had delivered her from her slumber, and they lived together happy and contented until the end of their days.

