

Cudgel, Bestir Yourself!

Brothers Grimm

Slavic

Advanced
9 min read

A cobbler was busying himself on Saturday with mending old shoes, that he might be able to go to church on Sunday. He worked till late in the evening, and, having finished his work, early in the morning dressed himself, and took his book to service. In church he heard this doctrine, that if any one dedicates his property to the church, God will recompense him a hundredfold in another form. And as he was poor, he therefore determined to sell his cottage and goods and take the whole price to the priest at the church. He went home and told his wife of his intentions; and in a few days the money was in the hands of the parson.

But day passed after day, and nothing was to be seen of a recompense. At last, when hunger sorely tried the cobbler, he dressed himself like an old beggar and went to seek for the Lord God. After wandering a couple of days he met with an old shepherd, who was pasturing a large flock of lambs. And as he was very hungry, he made up his mind to go up to the old shepherd, and ask him to give him a little to eat out of his dinner-basket. During the meal he related all that he had done, and how it was then going with him.

The old shepherd compassionated the poor cobbler, and gave him a lamb, which scattered ducats at every call: 'Lamb, shake yourself!' but gave it him under the condition, that in one village, through which he was obliged to pass, he was not to enter the house of his old gossip. He laid the lamb on his shoulder with great joy, thanked the old man for it, and started with speed on his way home to rejoice his wife and children. When he got behind the hill, he began to distrust the words of the old shepherd, for he could not get it into his head that an ordinary lamb would scatter ducats. Wishing, therefore, to assure himself of their truth, he placed the lamb

on the ground and uttered the old man's words: 'Lamb, shake yourself!' and when at the selfsame moment he espied ducats round the lamb's feet, he considered himself the most fortunate man in the whole world.

Without delay he put the lamb on his back, and went on towards home. But when he went past his gossip's tavern, she besought him to pay her a visit, for they had not seen each other for a very long time. The cobbler at first hesitated a little, but wishing to show that he had ducats in his pocket, and that he had met with such good fortune, he went into the tavern; and, after first giving into her charge his present from the old man, with these words, But don't say to him, "Lamb, shake yourself!" went to the table and drank off a noggin of brandy. But his gossip, a knavish old woman, bethought herself at once that there must be some secret lying in these words. She, therefore, took the lamb into another room, and when she was there by herself, said to the lamb: 'Lamb, shake yourself!' when she saw that he scattered ducats she began to consider how to cheat her gossip.

After a short time she determined to make the cobbler drunk, to detain him all night at her house, and next day, early, to give him instead of his lamb another like it out of her own flock; which was effected according to her intention. Well, early in the morning the cobbler took the lamb on his shoulder and now hastened straight to his wife and children, and tossed them, as they wept, a couple of ducats, that his wife might get a good meal ready. His wife could not wonder enough whence her little husband had got so much money, but she did not venture to question him. After the meal the cobbler put the lamb on the table, called his children, that they might enjoy with him the rolling ducats, and shouted: 'Lamb, shake yourself!' But the lamb stood as if he were made of wood, and never even moved his head. The children, who had eaten their fill, began to laugh, and the wife thought that her husband was not quite right in his head. The cobbler, angry that his wish had not come to pass, repeated once more the old man's words, but this time, too, without effect, therefore he pushed the lamb off the table. So long as the ducats held out, there was content in the home; but as soon as they began to run short in the cottage, his wife began to reproach her husband for doing no work, and not troubling himself about a livelihood.

So nothing again remained for the cobbler but, stick in hand, to go to look for the old man. He knew very well what a bad welcome he would receive from him, but what was to be done? However, the old man had compassion on the poor family, and this time gave him a tablecloth, which at every summons: 'Tablecloth, spread yourself!' spread itself of its own accord, and on it stood most excellent food and drink; but under the condition that he didn't go into his gossip's house. The cobbler, well content with the present, thanked the old man and moved towards home. In a short time he was behind the hill, sat down upon the ground, and, not

from curiosity but from hunger, gave the word of command to the tablecloth to spread itself; for his inside was croaking.

When, after eating his fill, he went past the tavern, his old gossip was waiting for him in front of the door; she begged him in the kindest terms not to pass her tavern, adding the proverb: 'Whoever passes a tavern sprains his foot.' The cobbler wavered long, but at last went in and entrusted her with the table-cloth with these words: 'Dear gossip, don't say, "Table-cloth, spread yourself!"'

The crafty woman gave him brandy in welcome, not for money; therefore, her gossip tossed off noggin after noggin, till there came a dizziness in his head. Then his gossip did the same with the tablecloth as with the lamb. The cobbler came to his wife and children, placed the tablecloth on the table and cried: 'Tablecloth, spread yourself!' But the tablecloth didn't stir, and the cobbler began to despair and to revile the old woman, his gossip. He returned again to the old man, begged pardon of him on his knees for not fulfilling the condition that time also, and prayed him, nevertheless, to have compassion on him and to be his preserver once more. The old man for a long time refused, but at last gave him a cudgel with a silver mounting set with precious stones, and ordered him this time to visit his gossip, and take note of these words: 'Cudgel, bestir yourself!' The cobbler, seized with new joy, thanked the old man a hundred times, and made the more haste towards his wife and children. Still, when behind the hill, he was curious to know what the cudgel meant, and wishing to satisfy himself, said: 'Cudgel, bestir yourself!'

In a moment there stood before him a couple of stout fellows, who began to thrash him mercilessly. The cobbler, seized by cruel terror, did not know how to order them to cease beating him; at last, when already well beaten, he cried out: 'Cudgel, leave off!' Instantly the fellows disappeared and the cudgel stood before him. 'You're good, you're good!' said the cobbler, getting up from the ground, 'you'll help me to those former gifts.'

When he arrived at the village, where his gossip lived, he stepped into her house and made himself at home as with an old acquaintance. She was very glad to see him, for she thought she would again make a good profit, entertained him well, and afterwards began to inquire whether he hadn't something for her to take charge of. Then the cobbler gave up to her his cudgel with the request not to say: 'Cudgel, bestir yourself!' The old woman laughed in her sleeve at the simpleton, thinking to herself, He wouldn't tell me without cause what I'm not to say!' She went at once with the cudgel into the other room, and scarcely had she crossed the threshold, when she cried out impatiently: 'Cudgel, bestir yourself!' Immediately the two fellows with cudgels began to beat her, and she lost all self-possession. At her piercing shrieks the host darted up to help her, when, hey ho! he got it

too.

The cobbler all the time kept calling out: 'Go it, cudgel! go it! till they give me back my lamb and my tablecloth!' Then nothing remained to his gossip but to give up his property to him. She ordered the lamb and tablecloth to be brought. As soon as the cobbler had satisfied himself that this was really done, he shouted 'Cudgel, leave off!' and went with the three gifts as quick as he could to his wife and children. Then there was great joy, for they had money and victuals in abundance; and did not withal forget God and other people, but assisted every poor person.

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