

Doctor All-Wise

Folk-Lore And Legends: German

German

Intermediate
5 min read

There was a poor peasant, named Crab, who once drove two oxen, with a load of wood, into the city, and there sold it for two dollars to a doctor. The doctor counted out the money to him as he sat at dinner, and the peasant, seeing how well he fared, yearned to live like him, and would needs be a doctor too. He stood a little while in thought, and at last asked if he could not become a doctor.

“Oh yes,” said the doctor, “that may be easily managed. In the first place you must purchase an A, B, C book, only taking care that it is one that has got in the front of it a picture of a cock crowing. Then sell your cart and oxen, and buy with the money clothes, and all the other things needful. Thirdly, and lastly, have a sign painted with the words, ‘I am Doctor All-Wise,’ and have it nailed up before the door of your house.”

The peasant did exactly as he had been told; and after he had doctored a little while, it chanced that a certain nobleman was robbed of a large sum of money. Some one told him that there lived in the village hard by a Doctor All-Wise, who was sure to be able to tell him where his money had gone. The nobleman at once ordered his carriage to be got ready and rode into the city, and having come to the doctor, asked him if he was Dr. All-Wise.

“Oh yes,” answered he, “I am Doctor All-Wise, sure enough.”

“Will you go with me, then,” said the nobleman, “and get me back my money?”

“To be sure I will,” said the doctor; “but my wife Grethel must go with me.”

The nobleman was pleased to hear this, made them both get into the carriage with him, and away they all rode together. When they arrived at the nobleman’s house dinner was already prepared, and he desired the doctor to sit down with him.

“My wife Grethel, too,” said the doctor.

As soon as the first servant brought in the first dish, which was some great delicacy, the doctor nudged his wife, and said—

“Grethel, that is the first,” meaning the first dish.

The servant overheard his remark, and thought he meant to say he was the first thief, which was actually the case, so he was sore troubled, and said to his comrades—

“The doctor knows everything. Things will certainly fall out ill, for he said I was the first thief.”

The second servant would not believe what he said, but at last he was obliged, for when he carried the second dish into the room, the doctor remarked to his wife—

“Grethel, that is the second.”

The second servant was now as much frightened as the first, and was pleased to leave the apartment. The third served no better, for the doctor said—

“Grethel, that is the third.”

Now the fourth carried in a dish which had a cover on it, and the nobleman desired the doctor to show his skill by guessing what was under the cover. Now it was a crab. The doctor looked at the dish, and then at the cover, and could not at all divine what they contained, nor how to get out of the scrape. At length he said, half to himself and half aloud—

“Alas! poor crab!”

When the nobleman heard this, he cried out—

“You have guessed it, and now I am sure you will know where my money is.”

The servant was greatly troubled at this, and he winked to the doctor to follow him out of the room, and no sooner did he do so than the whole four who had stolen the gold stood before him, and said that they would give it up instantly, and give him a good sum to boot, provided he would not betray them, for if he did their necks would pay for it. The doctor promised, and they conducted him to the place where the gold lay concealed. The doctor was well pleased to see it, and went back to the nobleman, and said—

“My lord, I will now search in my book and discover where the money is.”

Now the fifth servant had crept into an oven to hear what the doctor said. He sat for some time turning over the leaves of his A, B, C book, looking for the picture of the crowing cock, and as he did not find it readily, he exclaimed—

“I know you are in here, and you must come out.”

Then the man in the oven, thinking the doctor spoke of him, jumped out in a great fright, saying—

“The man knows everything.”

Then Doctor All-Wise showed the nobleman where the gold was hidden, but he said nothing as to who stole it. So he received a great reward from all parties, and became a very famous man.

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