



I Know What I Have Learned

Andrew Lang's Fairy Books

Danish

Easy
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There was once a man who had three daughters, and they were all married to trolls, who lived underground. One day the man thought that he would pay them a visit, and his wife gave him some dry bread to eat by the way. After he had walked some distance he grew both tired and hungry, so he sat down on the east side of a mound and began to eat his dry bread. The mound then opened, and his youngest daughter came out of it, and said, 'Why, father! why are you not coming in to see me?'

'Oh,' said he, 'if I had known that you lived here, and had seen any entrance, I would have come in.'

Then he entered the mound along with her.

The troll came home soon after this, and his wife told him that her father was come, and asked him to go and buy some beef to make broth with. 'We can get it easier than that!' said the troll.

He fixed an iron spike into one of the beams of the roof, and ran his head against this till he had knocked several large pieces off his head. He was just as well as ever after doing this, and they got their broth without further trouble.

The troll then gave the old man a sackful of money, and laden with this he betook himself homewards.

When he came near his home he remembered that he had a cow about to calve, so he laid down the money on the ground, ran home as fast as he could, and asked his wife whether the cow had calved yet.

'What kind of a hurry is this to come home in?' said she. 'No, the cow has not calved yet.'

‘Then you must come out and help me in with a sackful of money,’ said the man.

‘A sackful of money?’ cried his wife.

‘Yes, a sackful of money,’ said he. ‘Is that so very wonderful?’

His wife did not believe very much what he told her, but she humoured him, and went out with him.

When they came to the spot where he had left it there was no money there; a thief had come along and stolen it.

His wife then grew angry and scolded him heartily.

‘Well, well!’ said he, ‘hang the money! I know what I have learned.’

‘What have you learned?’ said she.

‘Ah! I know that,’ said the man.

After some time had passed the man had a mind to visit his second eldest daughter. His wife again gave him some dry bread to eat, and when he grew tired and hungry he sat down on the east side of a mound and began to eat it. As he sat there his daughter came up out of the mound, and invited him to come inside, which he did very willingly.

Soon after this the troll came home. It was dark by that time, and his wife bade him go and buy some candles.

‘Oh, we shall soon get a light,’ said the troll. With that he dipped his fingers into the fire, and they then gave light without being burned in the least.

The old man got two sacks of money here, and plodded away homewards with these. When he was very nearly home he again thought of the cow that was with calf, so he laid down the money, ran home, and asked his wife whether the cow had calved yet.

‘Whatever is the matter with you?’ said she. ‘You come hurrying as if the whole house was about to fall. You may set your mind at rest: the cow has not calved yet.’

The man now asked her to come and help him home with the two sacks of money. She did not believe him very much, but he continued to assure her that it was quite true, till at last she gave in and went with him. When they came to the spot there had again been a thief there and taken the money. It was no wonder that the woman was angry about this, but the man only said, ‘Ah, if you only knew what I have learned.’

A third time the man set out—to visit his eldest daughter. When he came to a mound he sat down on the east side of it and ate the dry bread which his wife had given him to take with him. The daughter then came out of the mound and invited her father to come inside.

In a little the troll came home, and his wife asked him to go and buy some fish.

'We can get them much more easily than that,' said the troll. 'Give me your dough trough and your ladle.'

They seated themselves in the trough, and rowed out on the lake which was beside the mound. When they had got out a little way the troll said to his wife, 'Are my eyes green?'

'No, not yet,' said she.

He rowed on a little further and asked again, 'Are my eyes not green yet?'

'Yes,' said his wife, 'they are green now.'

Then the troll sprang into the water and ladled up so many fish that in a short time the trough could hold no more. They then rowed home again, and had a good meal off the fish.

The old man now got three sacks full of money, and set off home with them. When he was almost home the cow again came into his head, and he laid down the money. This time, however, he took his wooden shoes and laid them above the money, thinking that no one would take it after that. Then he ran home and asked his wife whether the cow had calved. It had not, and she scolded him again for behaving in this way, but in the end he persuaded her to go with him to help him with the three sacks of money.

When they came to the spot they found only the wooden shoes, for a thief had come along in the meantime and taken all the money. The woman was very angry, and broke out upon her husband; but he took it all very quietly, and only said, 'Hang the money! I know what I have learned.'

'What have you learned I should like to know?' said his wife.

'You will see that yet,' said the man.

One day his wife took a fancy for broth, and said to him, 'Oh, go to the village, and buy a piece of beef to make broth.'

'There's no need of that,' said he; 'we can get it an easier way.' With that he drove a spike into a beam, and ran his head against it, and in consequence had to lie in bed for a long time afterwards.

After he had recovered from this his wife asked him one day to go and buy candles, as they had none.

'No,' he said, 'there's no need for that;' and he stuck his hand into the fire. This also made him take to bed for a good while.

When he had got better again his wife one day wanted fish, and asked him to go and buy some. The man, however, wished again to show what he had learned, so he asked her to come along with him and bring her dough trough and a ladle. They both seated themselves in this, and rowed upon the lake. When they had got out a little way the man said, 'Are my eyes green?'

'No,' said his wife; 'why should they be?'

They rowed a little further out, and he asked again, 'Are my eyes not green yet?'

'What nonsense is this?' said she; 'why should they be green?'

'Oh, my dear,' said he, 'can't you just say that they are green?'

'Very well,' said she, 'they are green.'

As soon as he heard this he sprang out into the water with the ladle for the fishes, but he just got leave to stay there with them!

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