

# *The Three Fools*

Folk-Lore And Legends: English

English

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*Easy*  
*5 min read*

There was once a good-looking girl, the daughter of well-off country folk, who was loved by an honest young fellow named John. He courted her for a long time, and at last got her and her parents to consent to his marrying her, which was to come off in a few weeks' time.

One day as the girl's father was working in his garden he sat down to rest himself by the well, and, looking in, and seeing how deep it was, he fell a-thinking.

"If Jane had a child," said he to himself, "who knows but that one day it might play about here and fall in and be killed?"

The thought of such a thing filled him with sorrow, and he sat crying into the well for some time until his wife came to him.

"What is the matter?" asked she. "What are you crying for?"

Then the man told her his thoughts—

"If Jane marries and has a child," said he, "who knows but it might play about here and some day fall into the well and be killed?"

“Alack!” cried the woman, “I never thought of that before. It is, indeed, possible.”

So she sat down and wept with her husband.

As neither of them came to the house the daughter shortly came to look for them, and when she found them sitting crying into the well—

“What is the matter?” asked she. “Why do you weep?”

So her father told her of the thought that had struck him.

“Yes,” said she, “it might happen.”

So she too sat down with her father and mother, and wept into the well.

They had sat there a good while when John comes to them.

“What has made you so sad?” asked he.

So the father told him what had occurred, and said that he should be afraid to let him have his daughter seeing her child might fall into the well.

“You are three fools,” said the young man, when he had heard him to an end, and leaving them, he thought over whether he should try to get Jane for his wife or not. At length he decided that he would marry her if he could find three people more foolish than her and her father and mother. He put on his boots and went out.

“I will walk till I wear these boots out,” said he, “and if I find three more foolish people before I am barefoot, I will marry her.”

So he went on, and walked very far till he came to a barn, at the door of which stood a man with a shovel in his hands. He seemed to be working very hard, shovelling the air in at the door.

“What are you doing?” asked John.

“I am shovelling in the sunbeams,” replied the man, “to ripen the corn.”

“Why don’t you have the corn out in the sun for it to ripen it?” asked John.

“Good,” said the man. “Why, I never thought of that! Good luck to you, for you have saved me many a weary day’s work.”

“That’s fool number one,” said John, and went on.

He travelled a long way, until one day he came to a cottage, against the wall of it was placed a ladder, and a man was trying to pull a cow up it by means of a rope, one end of which was round the cow’s neck.

“What are you about?” asked John.

“Why,” replied the man, “I want the cow up on the roof to eat off that fine tuft of grass you see growing there.”

“Why don’t you cut the grass and give it to the cow?” asked John.

“Why, now, I never thought of that!” answered the man. “So I will, of course, and many thanks, for many a good cow have I killed in trying to get it up there.”

“That’s fool number two,” said John to himself.

He walked on a long way, thinking there were more fools in the world than he had thought, and wondering what would be the next one he should meet. He had to wait a long time, however, and to walk very far, and his boots were almost worn out before he found another.

One day, however, he came to a field, in the middle of which he saw a pair of trousers standing up, being held up by sticks. A man was running about them and jumping over and over them.

“Hullo!” cried John. “What are you about?”

“Why,” said the man, “what need is there to ask? Don’t you see I want to get the trousers on?” so saying he took two or three more runs and jumps, but always jumped either to this side or that of the trousers.

“Why don’t you take the trousers and draw them on?” asked John.

“Good,” said the man. “Why, I never thought of it! Many thanks. I only wish you had come before, for I have lost a great deal of time in trying to jump into them.”

“That,” said John, “is fool number three.”

So, as his boots were not yet quite worn out, he returned to his home and went again to ask Jane of her father and mother. At last they gave her to him, and they lived very happily together, for John had a rail put round the well and the child did not fall into it.

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