

Whippety Stourie

Folk-Lore And Legends: Scotland

Scottish

Intermediate
4 min read

There was once a gentleman that lived in a very grand house, and he married a young lady that had been delicately brought up. In her husband's house she found everything that was fine—fine tables and chairs, fine looking-glasses, and fine curtains; but then her husband expected her to be able to spin twelve hanks o' thread every day, besides attending to her house; and, to tell the even-down truth, the lady could not spin a bit. This made her husband glunchy with her, and, before a month had passed, she found hersel' very unhappy.

One day the husband gaed away upon a journey, after telling her that he expected her, before his return, to have not only learned to spin, but to have spun a hundred hanks o' thread. Quite downcast, she took a walk along the hillside, till she cam' to a big flat stane, and there she sat down and grat. By and by she heard a strain o' fine sma' music, coming as it were frae aneath the stane, and, on turning it up, she saw a cave below, where there were sitting six wee ladies in green gowns, ilk ane o' them spinning on a little wheel, and singing,

“Little kens my dame at hame

That Whippety Stourie is my name.”

The lady walked into the cave, and was kindly asked by the wee bodies to take a chair and sit down, while they still continued their spinning. She observed that ilk ane's mouth was thrawn away to ae side, but she didna venture to speer the reason. They asked why she looked so unhappy, and she telt them that it was she was expected by her husband to be a good spinner, when the plain truth was that she could not spin at all, and found herself quite unable for it, having been so delicately brought up; neither was there any need for it, as her

husband was a rich man.

“Oh, is that a’?” said the little wifies, speaking out of their cheeks alike.

“Yes, and is it not a very good a’ too?” said the lady, her heart like to burst wi’ distress.

“We could easily quit ye o’ that trouble,” said the wee women. “Just ask us a’ to dinner for the day when your husband is to come back. We’ll then let you see how we’ll manage him.”

So the lady asked them all to dine with herself and her husband, on the day when he was to come back.

When the gudeman came hame, he found the house so occupied with preparations for dinner, that he had nae time to ask his wife about her thread; and, before ever he had ance spoken to her on the subject, the company was announced at the hall door. The six ladies all came in a coach-and-six, and were as fine as princesses, but still wore their gowns of green. The gentleman was very polite, and showed them up the stair with a pair of wax candles in his hand. And so they all sat down to dinner, and conversation went on very pleasantly, till at length the husband, becoming familiar with them, said—

“Ladies, if it be not an uncivil question, I should like to know how it happens that all your mouths are turned away to one side?”

“Oh,” said ilk ane at ance, “it’s with our constant spin-spin-spinning.”

“Is that the case?” cried the gentleman; “then, John, Tam, and Dick, fie, go haste and burn every rock, and reel, and spinning-wheel in the house, for I’ll not have my wife to spoil her bonnie face with spin-spin-spinning.”

And so the lady lived happily with her gudeman all the rest of her days.

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