

times he wept in silence—a thing which astonished them very much, for no other frogs could weep—and then he was very clumsy at catching flies, and was grown quite starved and thin.

Again, Hans Fingerhut said to himself, "I know the song of the stream," and immediately the elf was beside him. "What, then, is the stream song?" he said. "More than ever I doubt myself, for I am very tired," said Hans humbly, "but it seems now to me that the stream-song is this, 'My way is slow and crooked and hard to go. The grey stones and the reeds impede me. The sun dries me up. The cattle come down and trample in me and fill me with mud. The millers dam me and turn me and disturb me with their eternal wheels. I have need to do something to keep my heart up against all these things. I sing gladly, therefore, as the weary weaver may sing to cheer himself at his loom.'" "You have wandered farther away from the stream song," said the elf; "you must wait yet till you find it out. Why how thin you are, poor Hans Fingerhut," he added quite kindly, and, waving his wand, brought up from the earth a host of worms, which Hans devoured with hungry rapidity.

Once more, after many days, Hans Fingerhut said to himself, "I know the song of the stream," and the little elf said, "What then is the stream song?" And he answered more humbly than ever, "The world is wretched and men are wretched and I wretcheder than all. Alas! it seems to me now that the stream song is not joyous at all, but very patient and sad. It seems to me to say, 'The stream course is long and weary, and I have to go on and on and on, no rest, or quiet forever; but yet there is no use in fretting, so I sing, not angrily, but sadly and sweetly, as the elves of the hill do on summer evenings under their mounds, making beautiful, hopeless music. Those who imagine my songs to be joyous only think so because they themselves for the time are joyous.'" "Nay, Hans Fingerhut, you are farther from the stream song than ever," said the elf, and vanished; not, however, before he had refreshed poor Hans with a larger feast of flies and worms than ever.

Hans Fingerhut sat beside the stream again for many days, utterly weary and wretched, and wished that he might die.

He took no more heed of the cranes and scarcely ever looked for a fly or a worm, for he could make nothing of the stream song, and it went round and round in his head till he thought he must go mad. He had no heart left even to bellow.

At last he determined to go back up the stream to the place where he first became a frog, and see if he could not make something of it in the coolness and stillness of the forest. It took him many days to make the journey, he was grown so weak and tired. At last one moonlit night he came to the bank where he had flung stones into the stream, and in his envious rage pelted the clear curling water. As he sat on the bank with his big ugly head fallen down between his shoulders he thought it was marvelously beautiful in the moonlight; and the murmur of the water, mingled with the sigh of the midges, seemed to him the loveliest song he had ever heard; neither merry nor sad, but happy and peaceful. Then he wept, and the tears ran down over a stone into a dark eddy, and gathered against a small jutting ledge. And Hans did not see for a long time that from each tear drop sprang a delicate little fairy no larger than a gnat, and that they formed a ring on the stream, shining in the moonlight, and that the ring grew ever wider and wider as the drops ran down. At last he heaved a great sob and two specially large tears, trickling down and joining together, passed out into the middle of the ring and became a fairy much larger and even more beautiful than the rest. Hans started and looked down wonderingly into the glimmering ring and heard a sweet small voice come up from the shining water. What it said was this: "Poor Hans Fingerhut, you have endured enough and are very weary. Shall we sing you the song of the stream in your own mortal tongue." Hans Fingerhut's eyes looked down now bright and wet with joy and gratitude, and he tried to smile, forgetting that he had a frog's mouth, which is not made to smile, so he contented himself with saying, "Ah, I must die soon if I do not hear the stream song."

And the fairy ring widened till it touched either bank, and began to go round with a motion so soft and delicate, and each link was so small and beautiful that Hans would have been entranced and stupified with wonder and delight had his