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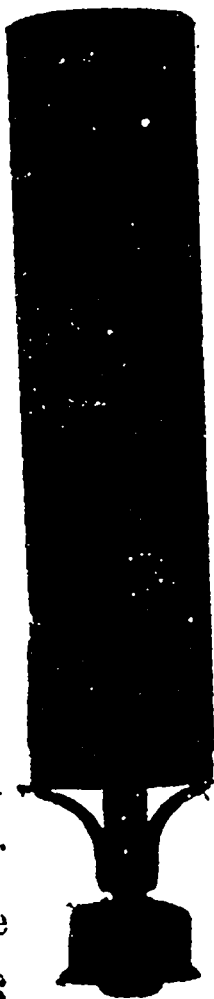
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**THE ENCHANTED LADY OF THE  
MOUNTAIN CASTLE.**

Once there was a young peasant girl who was the handsomest maiden in all the country round, but she was wretchedly poor in everything except good blood. Her cheeks were as red as two peonies, and one day when she cut her hand with the sickle it seemed as if the blood would never stop flowing. Fortunately the shepherd's house was not far off, and the shepherd was at home. He was a man who understood more about the art of healing than ten city doctors. He repeated a charm, and, as an extra precaution, stuck a plaster over the wound. Then it stopped bleeding, and of course it was the charm that did it. Three days afterward the beautiful girl took her apron to the brook to wash out the drops of blood which had fallen on it. The water came down from a wooded hill, which was crowned with an old ruined castle, and not far from its source formed a wide, deep basin, on whose shores grew willows and alder bushes. The maiden knelt down by the edge of the water and began to work without looking up. But after a while she chanced to raise her eyes, and to her astonishment she saw that she was not alone. Opposite her, on the other side of the brook, knelt a beautiful, pale woman, dressed in pure white, who was also trying to wash some blood-stained linen. But as often as she took the garment out of the stream, the drops rolled off as from the feathers of a swan; the cloth remained dry, and the stains as bright a crimson as before. The maiden looked with amazement at the strange washerwoman, and scarcely dared to breathe. At last the pale lady saw that her work was useless. Sadly she looked at the bloody garment, and said half aloud:

"My veil I have washed for three hundred years,  
But as bloody as ever it still appears."

Then the maiden was seized with terror; she jumped up and ran in wild haste away from the uncanny washerwoman and back to the village. In the village lived an old wise-woman who could give advice about all sorts of things. After the Angelus, the young girl went to her and told her what had happened.

"That was the enchanted lady of the mountain-castle," said the old woman, and then she related what she knew of her history. "Many years ago a knight lived up there in the castle, and he had a wife who was beautiful beyond all compare, but likewise proud and vain. And because she prized beauty above everything else, she had recourse to witchcraft, and committed a horrible deed. When her little child was born she stabbed it through the heart and bathed herself in the warm blood. By this means she expected to win eternal youth and imperishable beauty. As the penalty for her crime she finds no rest in the grave, but has to wander about in the ruins of the old castle. The huntsmen and wood cutters often see her there as she goes about wailing and wringing her hands. The long veil which floats down from her head is dotted with red pinks; in reality they are drops of blood. And when the day on which she committed the horrible crime comes around, she goes down to the water in the forest to wash the blood-stains from her veil, but she never has succeeded and never will. They say besides that she guards a treasure, which lies buried in the old castle, and who knows, my child, but it might have fallen to your lot, if you had held your ground?"

The young girl listened to the old woman with awe. But in spite of her fear she ventured the next day to go to the brook again, where the ghostly washerwoman had appeared to her, but the pale lady did not come. Indeed the old woman spoke truly when she said the enchanted one appeared by the water only on the anniversary of her evil deed. So the girl took notice of the exact day and hour and waited patiently a whole year long. When the year had passed away and the day had come back again, the courageous maiden went with a bundle of washing on her head to the place where the spell-bound lady of the castle had appeared. She took the precaution to hide a little wooden cross in her bodice as a charm against evil spirits. But the nearer she came to the brook, the more her footsteps faltered, and her heart beat louder and louder, and when she really saw the enchanted washerwoman by the edge of the water, she came very near turning back. But the pale lady gave her a look so inexpressibly sad, that the young girl overcame her fears and lingered.

"My veil I have washed for three hundred years,  
But as bloody as ever it still appears."

murmured the unhappy woman, and she rubbed and rinsed the bloody linen while she groaned and sighed. Then the young girl took heart and said: "In the name of the Lord, give me the cloth!" The pale lady looked up with delight and handed the veil to the maiden. And lo, beneath the hands of the virgin, the red stains disappeared, and the linen became as white and clean as newly fallen snow. The bright tears rolled down the pale face of the spell-bound lady; she took the proffered veil and beckoned to the maiden with her white hand. Like a will-o'-the-wisp she glided over the ground, swerving now to the right, now the left among the fir trees. From time to time she turned her head to see whether the maiden was following her. She had grasped her little cross and walked bravely behind her weird leader, who went toward the ruined castle. In an underground vault, whose roof had fallen in, the pale lady checked her footsteps and pointed to a stone, which was set into the floor. The maiden raised the stone with her strong arm, but the next moment she started back with horror. In the hole stood a kettle filled with gold pieces and costly ornaments, but on the top of it lay a dead child with a bloody wound in its breast. The young girl was about to run away, but when she saw how the pale lady wrung her hands in deep distress, she remained where she was, and laid the wooden cross she carried in her hand on the dead child's breast. Then the lady in white folded her hands and kept her head low. She grew paler and paler