

little keen calm blue eyes, a soft yellow beard that reached to his waist, and long yellow hair that hung and curled in delicate fringes over the great green water-lily mantle.

The elf looked very sternly at Hans Fingerhut. "Wretched mortal," he said, "you have disturbed my beautiful stream, because it retains forever the peace and gladness which you by your own fault have lost; because it sings to you, as you once sang imperfectly in your youth; because it teaches you a wonderful lesson, which you are now too blind and degraded to understand. In your songs long ago you interpreted the song of the stream more than once, but not rightly. Do you know it now?" "No," answered Hans Fingerhut "I have no heart nowadays to interpret anything but what is dark and dismal." "Then," said the elf, "I will turn you into a frog and you must remain a frog until you find out the meaning of the stream-song." So saying he pricked the poet again with the end of the thistle-staff and Hans Fingerhut sank down into a great frog, with webbed feet, wide ugly mouth, and staring eyes.

The elf was gone and for many hours Hans sat on the bank of the stream utterly stunned and wretched, he felt himself so clumsy and ugly, and more than ever useless. The grass, which a few hours ago he had brushed aside with his strong feet, now towered high above his head, and the thick weeds hung so close and rank around and above him that he could scarcely think of penetrating them. At last, however, he grew very hungry and fell to snapping at the flies and mosquitoes. Presently as the evening drew on he heard the innumerable voices of the frogs, at first sharp and fitful and at last swelling into a steady thunder far away down the stream. Finally he jumped into the stream, and all that night journeyed down with the curling water to a great marsh, where thousands of the other frogs were congregated. The stream flowed by itself through the flat watery waste, and Hans, knowing that he must discover the meaning of its song, kept generally near to its bank.

For many days he sat among the long coarse grasses, listening intently to the ripple in the reeds, snapping now and then at the gnats and flies, and keeping a vigilant lookout for the long-legged cranes that waded sometimes in the

shallows or passed low over the marshes with wide heavy wings, or sometimes perched themselves on the limbs of dead trees and peered remorselessly down into the deep grasses. At times he grew fierce and restless, and jumping away into the pools outdid all the other frogs in the marsh in the depth and harshness of his discordant bellowings. Here it was just as it had been before with him. The thick grass teased and impeded him, flies were hard to catch, and the long-billed cranes haunted him perpetually. There was no satisfaction in life anywhere, so he lifted up his discordant voice and reviled the marsh and the cranes and the frogs, and, when he was tired, went back and listened wearily to the mysterious song of the stream.

One day he said to himself, "I know the song of the stream," and instantly the little elf appeared beside him, and pricked him with his thistle-wand. "What then is the song of the stream?" he said. Hans Fingerhut answered very humbly "I am very weary and confused and can hardly grasp the meaning of anything, but it seems to me that the water says this: "I see the green earth round me, and the blue sky above me, and the sweet stars at night. The wind murmurs in the trees and many little birds sing—more than I can count. The voice of the frogs and the sigh of the gnats, the call of the water hen and the chatter of the wild goose are pleasant. All these things and many others are joyous; why should I be sad? Because everything is glad so am I glad." "That is good," said the elf, "but it is not the song of the stream: you must find out the stream song." But before he vanished the little elf, seeing how pinched and hungry Hans looked, waved his wand and brought out of the grasses a swarm of rich plump gnats, so thick that Hans had no difficulty in catching two or three of them at a time, and so enjoyed the first square meal he had had since he became a frog.

Many days Hans sat beside the stream, either listening and thinking or rending the drowsy air with his lonely and cheerless bellowings. The other frogs would have nothing to do with him; nay, even sat round sometimes and abused him. For there was something uncanny about Hans Fingerhut. He talked often to himself in a tongue unknown to them. Some-