

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 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, 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 around sometimes and abused him, for there was something uncanny about Hans Fingerhut. He talked often to himself in a tongue

unknown to them. Sometimes 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 more wretched 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, 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 wretched, and wished that he might die. He took no more heed to 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 moonlight night he came to the bank where he had flung stones in 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