



## TWO HANDS AND GRANNY

*A New Year's Fairy Story*



(Mary Lowe Dickinson, in the 'Christian Herald'.)

Once upon a time a little boy lived in the Thuringer Wald, alone with his grandmother, and she was very old and very poor. They had a little hut, very brown from the weather, and plenty of wood for the fire in a huge stone chimney. This fire was not to warm them only, though Ulrich, the little boy, used to like to lie on a bear-skin before it and thrust his brown, bare feet so near it that they tingled with the heat. The fire was to keep



'SHE POINTS TO THE DOOR OF THE HUT'

the pot boiling that swung by a hook above the flame. It was a very jolly pot, round and black and shiny, and it did its best to please all the senses of the boy. It always looked kindly at him when he came in cold from gathering fuel in the forest; it tried to sing to him, and succeeded in humming and sputtering and bubbling quite a tune. Sometimes the cover bobbed up and down, and kept time to the tune, which seemed to say:

'Heigho ho! got a good supper! Sup, sup—got a good supper!' And when its song was true, it pleased Ulrich's sense of taste as well as that of sight and smell, and many a savory stew it gave him made of wild rabbit's flesh; and always it bubbled and sputtered and sang:

'Porridge, porridge! there's a little more porridge, even when they had no meat.'

But there came a day, it was the last day of the year, when the pot bubbled, and scolded, and fussed, and Ulrich thought as he came in wet and hungry, that it was trying to say:

'Something very good, something very good, when in truth it was sighing, 'Nothing very good, nothing very good,' all the while. Then Ulrich peeped in, and lo! there was nothing at all in the pot but water.

'Is there no meal in the chest, Granny?

'Not a handful, Ulrich.'

'And is there no money in the bag, Granny?

'Not a groat, Ulrich. The carpet-weaver did not pay me for the last rug I made.'

'I will go down the mountain and ask him,' said Ulrich, putting on his sheep-skin coat.

'Not to-night, Ulrich,' said Granny. 'The storm is too wild; the stream will be like a torrent. I should be too anxious about you, and you must wait till the morning.'

'But you have no supper, Granny.'

'There is left half a loaf, and there is milk

from the goat. It is enough, and if the storm continues the fairies will bring us enough to last till it goes by.'

Ulrich laughed as he took off his coat and threw himself before the fire. 'I should like to see the fairies once, Granny. You have always been telling me about them, but I think the only fairies that ever helped us are three, and I know their names.'

'What are they?' asked Granny, pleased to divert him from his hunger.

'Right Hand, left Hand, and Granny. The third fairy is the best of all,' and he smiled up into the kind old face, as he went to and fro, laying the cloth as neatly as if they had a feast instead of a bit of bread.

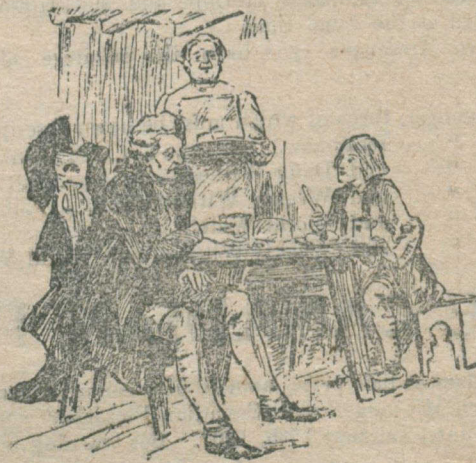
'But the Granny would have been a poor enough fairy if it had not been for your own two young, strong hands. Never mind, boy, some day those two fairies will take care of the old one.'

'That they shall,' said Ulrich, sipping his goat's milk and leaving most of the bread.

'Eat, boy, eat!' said the old woman, pushing the loaf toward him.

'Not I, Granny. Do I need bread to sleep on? To-morrow I go down the mountain, and I shall need it then for strength,' and he put more logs upon the fire, and lay down on the hearth to watch the flames and the shadow, as he liked to do before he went to bed.

As he lay there Granny went to sleep and began to snore; the fire began to fade, and the room to grow dark, when suddenly Ulrich's attention was drawn to the pot, which gently swung above the dying coals. As he gazed he saw the lid gently lifted, and two shining eyes peered at him from within. Too frightened to speak, he stared while the eyes twinkled kindly, and the pot-lid lifted itself and rose till it rested an inch or two above the rim. When it suddenly looked no longer like a rim, but like a hat, which made a sort of background for a woman's lovely head—the head to which the shining eyes belonged, and



'I AM A RICH MERCHANT,' ULRICH, HE SAID.

which rose higher and higher, bearing the cover with it into the air. After this head came, smooth, white arms, not yellow and wrinkled, and scrawny and begrimed with work like Granny's, but beautiful arms and white hands, that took the poker from the corner, and he saw it change under her touch into a silvery wand, with which she pointed to the door of the hut.

So bewildered and delighted was the little mountaineer with the delightful vision that he would not turn his head to see to what she pointed with the wand, but he held his

breath, and bent his attention to hear what she seemed to be saying, for her rosy lips kept smiling and moving, as if in speech.

At last he drew nearer. The round, black pot was now all hidden by the gray, mist-like drapery that wrapped the lovely figure, while golden slippers shone through the gray ashes on the hearth. As he crept near, he distinctly heard a sweet voice say:

'I am queen of good fairies, and I like the



'THE SNOW-COVERED FIGURE OF A MAN'

two fairies that you use to keep you on in life. Right Hand and Left Hand are strong, good fairies, and, both together, they can do wonderful work for me; for all my fairies work to help themselves, and then to help all others who are in trouble or pain. Will you let your two hands work for me?' and Ulrich, who had never dreamed of anything so lovely in his life as this beautiful figure and face, stretched out both his hands as if to offer them to the service of his Queen.

'Remember, then, that the best way to serve me and yourself is never to lose a chance to serve others,' and, suddenly lifting her wand and pointing to the door of the hut, she said:

'Open! Open the door!'

Springing forward suddenly to obey her, Ulrich awoke with his hand upon the latch. He had been dreaming, but again through his head rang that cry:

'Open, for pity's sake, open the door.'

He threw it back, and there staggered, fainting, across the threshold, the snow-covered figure of a man. Ulrich helped him to the fire, took off his cloak, brushed the snow from his hair, and hurried to bring him the cup of milk and the last morsel of bread. Soop the traveller was sufficiently recovered to explain that pressing business had taken him over the mountain, but that the bridge was destroyed, over the swollen current, and he had lost himself in the snow. 'In trying to find another place to cross, I saw the light through your window,' he said, 'and I made my way to your step, where I should have frozen to death if you had not heard me beg you to open the door. I called a great many times.

'I was dreaming,' said Ulrich, 'and I heard your voice in my dreams.'