

CINDERELLA

By E. Almond Withrow

WHY try to nationalize the legend of Cinderella, when ages before France or Germany existed as such, the origin of that charming tale, like that of "Blue-beard" and all the oldest fairy-tales, was lost in the mists of mythology?

They were, in intention, not nursery rhymes, nor skits to please a court, but verbal embodiments of great truths, to be known and understood by those seeking the spirit and not the letter. Practically every nation, aboriginal or civilized, has had some variant of the Cinderella story, which, in its simplest sense, symbolizes the phrase, "Let there be light." Out of darkness, latency or potentiality comes light, activity or manifestation; thus the black dress mentioned in some of the forms of this story, or the soot from the cinders, only hides for a time the potential brightness or spirituality which is later symbolized in the wonderful gold and silver robes in which Cinderella's great beauty was most manifest. Thus every part of every variation of the legend has its spiritual meaning.

Work, understanding and humility result in ability, intelligence and power. Consciousness of degradation implies consciousness of divinity, and knowledge brings understanding, or a regaining of the slipper—the golden light of intelligence upon the foot, foundation or fundamental principles. Sometimes the slipper is silver, sometimes crystal, but always, in every land where the idea has had expression, it is of the material deemed the most beautiful and worthy.

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The German version is not called Cinderella, which is a name originating in the Latin provinces, but it is Aschen-puttel or Aschen-brodel, the servant or scullion.

Grimm says nothing of a "coach and four," nor of a "fairy god-mother," but makes Aschen-puttel seek her own mother's grave, where in tears her earnest prayers are answered, and she is given all she desires by the dove who flies to her from the tree above her head.

The two sisters symbolize Pride and Selfishness, but Cinderella, the Celestial Spirit, gives her services for nothing and willingly performs the most menial of tasks with patience, humility, courage and grace. In another variation of the same story, a king has three daughters, each of whom he questions as to how much she loves him; Cinderella says she loves her father like Salt, which she is sometimes called, and which was anciently the symbol for wisdom.

The legends are all quaintly and in a most complicated manner identified with those of Mare, Maya, Mary, and the other variants of the Sea or Wisdom myths. Cinderella is known in some places as Maria Wood, as Maria Wainscot, as Lada, Preciosa, and again, as the Hearth-cat or as Lucrezia the housekeeper, as she serves others willingly and unselfishly, thus shedding Light, Order or Wisdom on all.

Bailey, in his "Lost Language of Symbolism," says: "The ancients conceived a primeval and self-existent Mother of all Wisdom, who figures in mythology as the Magna Mater, the Bona Dea, the All-