

Tale 1

Title: "The Partnership of the Thief and the Liar," from *The Grey Fairy Book*

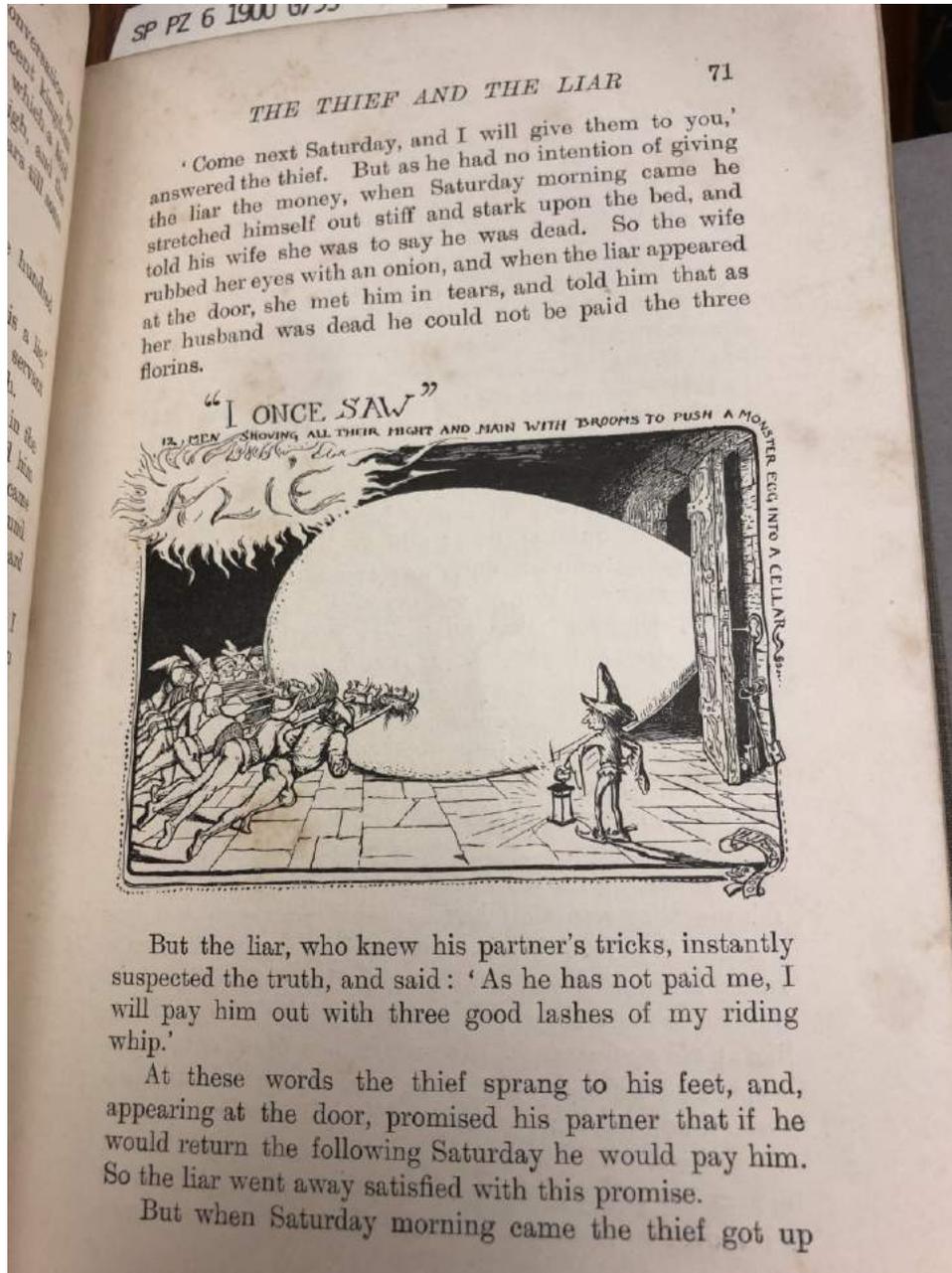
Author: Andrew Lang

Place of Publication and Publisher: New York; Longmans, Green and Co. (original branch in London)

Publication Date: 1900

UBC Library Call Number: PZ6 1900 .G739

UBC Library Permalink: <http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=545229>



Tale 2

Title: "The Little Mouse, The Little Bird, and The Sausage," from *The Donkey Cabbages and Other Tales*

Author: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Place of Publication and Publisher: London; G. Routledge and Sons

Publication Date: 1879 (tentative?)

UBC Library Call Number: PZ6 1879 G745

UBC Library Permalink: <http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=549411>



THE LITTLE MOUSE, THE LITTLE BIRD,
AND THE SAUSAGE.

ONCE upon a time a Mouse, a Bird, and a Sausage went to housekeeping together, and agreed so well that they accumulated wealth fast. It was the duty of the Bird to fetch wood, of the Mouse to draw water and make the fire, and of the Sausage to cook.

They who are prosperous are for ever hankering after something new and thus one day the Bird,

Tale 3

Title: "The Exceptional Tadpole," from *Wymps and Other Fairy Tales*

Author: Evelyn Sharp

Place of Publication and Publisher: London and New York; John Lane, The Bodley Head;
printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.

Publication Date: 1897

UBC Library Call Number: PZ6 1897 .S537

UBC Library Permalink: <http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=9850411>



Tale 4

Title: *The Second Froggy Fairy Book*

Author: Anthony J. Drexel Biddle

Place of Publication and Publisher: London, Gay and Bird; Philadelphia and New York, D. Biddle

Publication Date: 1900

UBC Library Call Number: PZ6 1900 B544

UBC Library Permalink: <http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=194833>

Under the Water Sky

and frogs. As the guests included among them *real* frogs, it was in some instances difficult to distinguish the real from the "pretended."

Light for the entertainment shone from countless, pink, fairy lamps, ranged round about on spreading mushroom tables.

"Toadstools were formerly used for tables," said the boy, "but now we have the proper furniture. Froggies were sometimes starved by the Hop-toad King and put down here, when they would eat the toadstools, mistaking them for mushrooms, and die. Toadstools are poisonous, you know, while mushrooms are fine eating."

The music was furnished by the frog orchestra, which occupied a gallery on one side of the room.

Indeed, Froggy the Fiddler was the first to welcome Elsie to the ball. When he saw her come in, he hopped right over the gallery railing onto the floor, and hurried to meet her.

Elsie was very glad to see him, and the boy said :





"THEY'VE BEEN ROBBING A SWAN'S NEST," FROGGY SAID.

Tale 5

Title: "The Leaping Match," from *Danish Fairy Tales and Legends*

Author: Hans Christian Andersen

Place of Publication and Publisher: London; Bliss, Sands

Publication Date: 1897

UBC Library Call Number: PZ6 1897 .A523

UBC Library Permalink: <http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=1083474>



. . . . all at once he made a little side-long jump into the lap of the Princess,

(facing page 257)

Rationale

There is no absolute theme that unifies all my chosen tales, but they do share similarities within smaller cliques. I chose the first two tales – “The Thief and the Liar” and “The Little Mouse, The Little Bird, and The Sausage” – almost purely based on the singular image each tale sported; the plots were admittedly secondary considerations, and I was lucky that both had unique storylines that complimented my appreciation of the illustrations. The images catered perfectly to my sense of humour; the ridiculousness of little men with fluttery broomsticks trying to shove an oversized egg (or as they call it, a “monster egg” (Lang 71)) into an obviously too-small cellar was hard to not chuckle at. Similarly, when I saw the face of the sausage in “The Little Mouse” I almost guffawed; it is not often a sausage is a character in a fairy tale, and certainly not an anthropomorphized one with agency and the ability of speech. The illustrator’s choice to make the sausage so obnoxiously large, and then jam it (with its leering countenance) between the two smaller animals was surreal in its composition – and it was the exact kind of absurdity I found entertaining.

There is something in the constitution of the egg and the sausage where when one stares at them for a prolonged time they naturally become funny (one would be less likely to laugh by staring at a closed laptop, for example) – never mind an oversized or anthropomorphized variation. Indeed, the bizarreness of the egg and the sausage is enough to give the tales distinction, and yet they take on another layer of personality in the unconventionalities of their plots. “The Thief and the Liar” is surprising in its lack of a uniform directive; while it starts with a familiar formula of fantastical occurrences (the liar’s tales) and repetitious deeds (the process of tricking the kings), the clean escalation and outcome that typically follow instead devolve into a chaotic narrative with abrupt plot points (for example, the arbitrary inclusion of the robbers in

the last few lines) and an unsatisfying end.

While frustrating, what is intriguing is that the story seems to resist its own categorization as such through these manoeuvres: its confusing interludes makes it seem like a recount of an everyday situation rather than a fairy tale. Near the end there are no definitive plot markers, and people act in the ways they do because they can, and because they are bound by no moral guideline or requirement to present a clean ending for a story. A jarring contrast to its fairy tale-esque beginnings, the tale forcibly brings the reader into an amoral reality by its end, and its resistance to a straightforward interpretation only adds to the reality fairy tales typically purport to escape. In contrast to the amorality of “The Thief and the Liar,” “The Little Mouse” is notable in the startlingly morbid way it delivers its moral (through the grisly depictions of the characters’ demise – scalded, eaten, and drowned (Grimm 92-94)). Overall, the unconventional content, juxtaposed with the ridiculousness of the images, make for an interesting composition of the overall tales.

The rest of the tales all involve frogs in one form or another.¹ “The Exceptional Tadpole” drew me because the illustration’s bold lines and solid colouring style gave an effect of stained glass. I thought it would be an encouraging little tale based on its name – and I ended with such a vehement dislike of the story I chose it for my collection out of pure spite. Certainly, it would not be hard to draw eco-critical or post-colonial readings, or to detect tenets of white saviourism in the princess’ interactions with the tadpole. She captures the tadpole, along with other animals, from their habitats in the belief that she is giving them a better life. The princess’ action, which shatters the animals’ lives, is done not only because of ignorance, but also of a self-serving need to perform an artificial “kindness” to satisfy her own vanity, and fantasy of being a benevolent

¹ Frogs are underappreciated in their versatility as story characters; they can be comedic, villainous masterminds, kings and princes, musicians, guides, clumsy lovable oafs, and more. Frankly, I like frogs.

benefactor. The tadpole – the small, black creature with an array of subservient quotes (“I [would be] your humble slave” (Sharp 126)), and its displays of gross deference to the princess, raises eyebrows in its depiction as it swims lovingly around her “white hand” (Sharp 121). The language of “exceptionality,” which describes the tadpole with an intelligence and a capability of the human (Western) language remarkable for its kind, is also a long-standing standard in colonial narratives. I do not deny that this reading is from pure instinctive reaction, and might serve better arguments in a separate piece; nevertheless, the actions of the princess are not without parallels to the colonialism and racist dehumanization of her time, and I would keep the book just so I can tell my future children to never be like the princess within its pages.

I chose the next tale for its adorable title – *The Second Froggy Fairy Book* – and for the frogs within its pages (for there are few things more endearing than frogs blowing on reed instruments and singing in choirs). I am particularly fond of the image where the mice rob a swan’s nest, because I appreciate the creativity of the mice’s pilfering method as a fellow artist (admittedly, with a jealous moment of “Why did I not think of that?”); more importantly, the image features a dapper frog in a tailcoat suit (and that is all the reason one really needs). The tale also strikes me as a less obtrusive version of *Alice in Wonderland*. *Alice*, while vibrantly imaginative, had never struck me as a tale for relaxation. The characters in *Wonderland* eluded expectations in their originality, and because of their unpredictability I was always wary whenever Alice encountered a new personage – *Wonderland* was bizarre and captivating, but also vaguely threatening and not necessarily safe. There is a sharpness in *Alice* that is diluted in *The Second Froggy Fairy Book*; in the latter, I feel no pronounced unpredictability with its characters, and I appreciate the tale for its balance between conventionality and imagination.²

² In her adventure, Alice often inadvertently intrudes upon a scene, and constantly gives an impression as the disrupting object, or the odd-one-out (which adds to the feeling of sharpness and disjunction in the story). Elsie (the

For a conclusion, I chose “The Leaping Match” to end the collection on a chipper note. It is a story of a whimsical competition that not only offers amusement in the tactics of its competitors, but also shows the intelligence of the frog without those demeaning accompaniments in “The Exceptional Tadpole.” The abundant flowers (including the touches of the floral wreaths around the dog’s neck and on the princess’ head) give a bright whimsicality to the image, and the fat frog perched in the middle of it all completes the picture. So, the rationale is quite simple – the joy! The joy of frogs!

protagonist in *The Second Froggy Fairy Book*), by comparison, seems more integrated into the story as a whole – whether it be her mannerisms, her commentaries (which are less impertinent than some of Alice’s), or even her outfit made of flowers, which blends her into her surroundings.