

THE THREE PRINCESSES IN THE BLUE MOUNTAIN

**From East of the Sun and West of the Moon - old Tales from the North
by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe**

When he had gone a bit it began to grow light around him, and before long he saw a golden sun rising in the sky and everything around him became as bright and beautiful as if in a fairy world.

First he came to some cattle, which were so fat that their hides glistened a long way off, and when he had got past them he came to a fine, big palace. He walked through many rooms without meeting anybody. At last he heard the hum of a spinning wheel, and when he entered the room he found the eldest Princess sitting there spinning copper yarn; the room and everything in it was of brightly polished copper.

"Oh, dear; oh, dear! what are Christian people doing here?" said the Princess. "Heaven preserve you! what do you want?"

"I want to set you free and get you out of the mountain," said the soldier.

"Pray do not stay. If the troll comes home he will put an end to you at once; he has three heads," said she.

"I do not care if he has four," said the soldier. "I am here, and here I shall remain."

"Well, if you will be so headstrong, I must see if I can help you," said the Princess.

She then told him to creep behind the big brewing vat which stood in the front hall; meanwhile she would receive the troll and scratch his heads till he went to sleep.

"And when I go out and call the hens you must make haste and come in," she said. "But you must first try if you can swing the sword which is lying on the table." No, it was too heavy, he could not even move it. He had then to take a strengthening draught from the horn, which hung behind the door; after that he was just able to stir it, so he took another draught, and then he could lift it. At last he took a right, big draught, and he could swing the sword as easily as anything.

All at once the troll came home; he walked so heavily that the palace shook.

"Ugh, ugh! I smell Christian flesh and blood in my house," said he.

"Yes," answered the _Princess_, "a raven flew past here just now, and in his beak he had a human bone, which he dropped down the chimney; I threw it out and swept and cleaned up after it, but I suppose it still smells."

"So it does," said the troll.

"But come and lie down and I'll scratch your heads," said the Princess; "the smell will be gone by the time you wake."

The troll was quite willing, and before long he fell asleep and began snoring. When she saw he was sleeping soundly, she placed some stools and cushions under his heads and went to call the hens. The soldier then stole into the room with the sword, and with one blow cut all the three heads off the troll.

The Princess was as pleased as a fiddler, and went with the soldier to her sisters, so that he could also set them free. First of all they went across a courtyard and then through many long rooms till they came to a big door.

"Here you must enter: here she is," said the Princess. When he opened the door he found himself in a large hall, where everything was of pure silver; there sat the second sister at a silver spinning-wheel.

"Oh, dear; oh, dear!" she said. "What do you want here?"

"I want to set you free from the troll," said the soldier.

"Pray do not stay, but go," said the Princess. "If he finds you here he will take your life on the spot."

"That would be awkward--that is if I don't take his first," said the soldier.

"Well, since you will stay," she said, "you will have to creep behind the big brewing-vat in the front hall. But you must make haste and come as soon as you hear me calling the hens."

First of all he had to try if he was able to swing the troll's sword, which lay on the table; it was much larger and heavier than the first one; he was hardly able to

move it. He then took three draughts from the horn and he could then lift it, and when he had taken three more he could handle it as if it were a rolling pin.

Shortly afterwards he heard a heavy, rumbling noise that was quite terrible, and directly afterwards a troll with six heads came in.

"Ugh, ugh!" he said as soon as he got his noses inside the door. "I smell Christian blood and bone in my house."

"Yes, just think! A raven came flying past here with a thigh-bone, which he dropped down the chimney," said the Princess. "I threw it out, but the raven brought it back again. At last I got rid of it and made haste to clean the room, but I suppose the smell is not quite gone," she said.

"No, I can smell it well," said the troll; but he was tired and put his heads in the Princess's lap, and she went on scratching them till they all fell a-snoring. Then she called the hens, and the soldier came and cut off all the six heads as if they were set on cabbage stalks.

She was no less glad than her elder sister, as you may imagine, and danced and sang; but in the midst of their joy they remembered their youngest sister. They went with the soldier across a large courtyard, and, after walking through many, many rooms, he came to the hall of gold where the third sister was.

She sat at a golden spinning-wheel spinning gold yarn, and the room from ceiling to floor glistened and glittered till it hurt one's eyes.