

## Boots And The Troll

by Sir George Webbe Dasent  
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Once on a time there was a poor man who had three sons. When he died, the two elder set off into the world to try their luck, but the youngest they wouldn't have with them at any price.

'As for you', they said, 'you're fit for nothing but to sit and poke about in the ashes.'

So the two went off and got places at a palace--the one under the coachman, and the other under the gardener. But Boots, he set off too, and took with him a great kneading-trough, which was the only thing his parents left behind them, but which the other two would not bother themselves with. It was heavy to carry, but he did not like to leave it behind, and so, after he had trudged a bit, he too came to the palace, and asked for a place. So they told him they did not want him, but he begged so prettily that at last he got leave to be in the kitchen, and carry in wood and water for the kitchen maid. He was quick and ready, and in a little while every one liked him; but the two others were dull, and so they got more kicks than halfpence, and grew quite envious of Boots, when they saw how much better he got on.

Just opposite the palace, across a lake, lived a Troll, who had seven silver ducks which swam on the lake, so that they could be seen from the palace. These the king had often longed for; and so the two elder brothers told the coachman:

'If our brother only chose, he has said he could easily get the king those seven silver ducks.'

You may fancy it wasn't long before the coachman told this to the king; and the king called Boots before him, and said:

'Your brothers say you can get me the silver ducks; so now go and fetch them.'

'I'm sure I never thought or said anything of the kind,' said the lad.

'You did say so, and you shall fetch them', said the king, who would hold his own.

'Well! well!' said the lad; 'needs must, I suppose; but give me a bushel of rye, and a bushel of wheat, and I'll try what I can do.'

So he got the rye and the wheat, and put them into the kneading-trough he had brought with him from home, got in, and rowed across the lake. When he reached the other side he began to walk along the shore, and to sprinkle and strew the grain, and at last he coaxed the ducks into his kneading-trough, and rowed back as fast as ever he could.

When he got half over, the Troll came out of his house, and set eyes on him.

'HALLOA!' roared out the Troll; 'is it you that has gone off with my seven silver ducks.'

'AYE! AYE!' said the lad.

'Shall you be back soon?' asked the Troll.

'Very likely', said the lad.

So when he got back to the king, with the seven silver ducks, he was more liked than ever, and even the king was pleased to say, 'Well done!' But at this his brothers grew more and more spiteful and envious; and so they went and told the coachman that their brother had said, if he chose, he was man enough to get the king the Troll's bed-quilt, which had a gold patch and a silver patch, and a silver patch and a gold patch; and this time, too, the coachman was not slow in telling all this to the king. So the king said to the lad, how his brothers had said he was good to steal the Troll's bed-quilt, with gold and silver patches; so now he must go and do it, or lose his life.

Boots answered, he had never thought or said any such thing; but when he found there was no help for it, he begged for three days to think over the matter.

So when the three days were gone, he rowed over in his kneading-trough, and went spying about. At last he saw those in the Troll's cave

come out and hang the quilt out to air, and as soon as ever they had gone back into the face of the rock, Boots pulled the quilt down, and rowed away with it as fast as he could.

And when he was half across, out came the Troll and set eyes on him, and roared out:

'HALLOA! Is it you who took my seven silver ducks?'

'AYE! AYE!' said the lad.

'And now, have you taken my bed-quilt, with silver patches and gold patches, and gold patches and silver patches?'

'Aye! aye!' said the lad.

'Shall you come back again?'

'Very likely', said the lad.

But when he got back with the gold and silver patchwork quilt, every one was fonder of him than ever, and he was made the king's body-servant.

At this, the other two were still more vexed, and, to be revenged, they went and told the coachman:

'Now, our brother has said, he is man enough to get the king the gold harp which the Troll has, and that harp is of such a kind, that all who listen when it is played grow glad, however sad they may be.'

Yes! the coachman went and told the king, and he said to the lad:

'If you have said this, you shall do it. If you do it, you shall have the Princess and half the kingdom. If you don't, you shall lose your life.'

'I'm sure I never thought or said anything of the kind', said the lad; 'but if there's no help for it, I may as well try; but I must have six days to think about it.'

Yes! he might have six days, but when they were over, he must set out.

Then he took a tenpenny nail, a birch-pin, and a waxen taper-end in his pocket, and rowed across, and walked up and down before the Troll's cave, looking stealthily about him. So when the Troll came out, he saw him at once.

'HO, HO!' roared the Troll; 'is it you who took my seven silver ducks?'

'AYE! AYE!' said the lad.

'And it is you who took my bed-quilt, with the gold and silver patches?' asked the Troll.

'Aye! aye!' said the lad.

So the Troll caught hold of him at once, and took him off into the cave in the face of the rock.

'Now, daughter dear', said the Troll, 'I've caught the fellow who stole the silver ducks and my bed-quilt, with gold and silver patches; put him into the fattening coop, and when he's fat, we'll kill him, and make a feast for our friends.'

She was willing enough, and put him at once into the fattening coop, and there he stayed eight days, fed on the best, both in meat and drink, and as much as he could cram. So, when the eight days were over, the Troll said to his daughter to go down and cut him in his little finger, that they might see if he were fat. Down she came to the coop.

'Out with your little finger!' she said.

But Boots stuck out his tenpenny nail, and she cut at it.

'Nay! nay! he's as hard as iron still', said the Troll's daughter, when she got back to her father; 'we can't take him yet.'

After another eight days the same thing happened, and this time Boots stuck out his birchen pin.

'Well, he's a little better', she said, when she got back to the Troll; 'but still he'll be as hard as wood to chew.'

But when another eight days were gone, the Troll told his daughter to go down and see if he wasn't fat now.

'Out with your little finger', said the Troll's daughter, when she reached the coop, and this time Boots stuck out the taper end.

'Now he'll do nicely', she said.

'Will he?' said the Troll. 'Well, then, I'll just set off and ask the guests; meantime you must kill him, and roast half and boil half.'

So when the Troll had been gone a little while, the daughter began to sharpen a great long knife.

'Is that what you're going to kill me with?' asked the lad.

'Yes it is,' said she.

'But it isn't sharp', said the lad. 'Just let me sharpen it for you, and then you'll find it easier work to kill me.'

So she let him have the knife, and he began to rub and sharpen it on the whetstone.

'Just let me try it on one of your hair plaits; I think it's about right now.'

So he got leave to do that; but at the same time that he grasped the plait of hair, he pulled back her head, and at one gash, cut off the Troll's daughter's head; and half of her he roasted and half of her he boiled, and served it all up.

After that he dressed himself in her clothes, and sat away in the corner.

So when the Troll came home with his guests, he called out to his daughter--for he thought all the time it was his daughter--to come and take a snack.

'No, thank you', said the lad, 'I don't care for food, I'm so sad and downcast.'

'Oh!' said the Troll, 'if that's all, you know the cure; take the harp, and play a tune on it.'

'Yes!' said the lad; 'but where has it got to; I can't find it.'

'Why, you know well enough', said the Troll; 'you used it last; where should it be but over the door yonder?'

The lad did not wait to be told twice; he took down the harp, and went in and out playing tunes; but, all at once he shoved off the kneading-trough, jumped into it, and rowed off, so that the foam flew around the trough.

After a while the Troll thought his daughter was a long while gone, and went out to see what ailed her; and then he saw the lad in the trough, far, far out on the lake.

'HALLOA! Is it you', he roared, 'that took my seven silver ducks?'

'AYE, AYE!' said the lad.

'Is it you that took my bed-quilt, with the gold and silver patches.'

'Yes!' said the lad.

'And now you have taken off my gold harp?' screamed the Troll.

'Yes!' said the lad; 'I've got it, sure enough.'

'And haven't I eaten you up after all, then?'

'No, no! 'twas your own daughter you ate', answered the lad.

But when the Troll heard that, he was so sorry, he burst; and then Boots rowed back, and took a whole heap of gold and silver with him, as much as the trough could carry. And so, when he came to the palace with the gold harp, he got the Princess and half the kingdom, as the king had promised him; and, as for his brothers, he treated them well, for he thought they had only wished his good when they said what they had said.