

## **Dapplegrim**

by Sir George Webbe Dasent  
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Once on a time there was a rich couple who had twelve sons; but the youngest when he was grown up, said he wouldn't stay any longer at home, but be off into the world to try his luck. His father and mother said he did very well at home, and had better stay where he was. But no, he couldn't rest; away he must and would go. So at last they gave him leave. And when he had walked a good bit, he came to a king's palace, where he asked for a place, and got it.

Now the daughter of the king of that land had been carried off into the hill by a Troll, and the king had no other children; so he and all his land were in great grief and sorrow, and the king gave his word that any one who could set her free should have the Princess and half the kingdom. But there was no one who could do it, though many tried.

So when the lad had been there a year or so, he longed to go home again and see his father and mother, and back he went, but when he got home his father and mother were dead, and his brothers had shared all that the old people owned between them, and so there was nothing left for the lad.

'Shan't I have anything at all, then, out of father's and mother's goods?' said the lad.

'Who could tell you were still alive, when you went gadding and wandering about so long?' said his brothers. 'But all the same; there are twelve mares up on the hill which we haven't yet shared among us; if you choose to take them for your share, you're quite welcome.'

Yes! the lad was quite content; so he thanked his brothers, and went at once up on the hill, where the twelve mares were out at grass. And when he got up there and found them, each of them had a foal at her side, and one of them had besides, along with her, a big dapple-gray foal, which was so sleek that the sun shone from its coat.

'A fine fellow you are, my little foal', said the lad.

'Yes', said the foal; 'but if you'll only kill all the other foals, so that I may run and suck all the mares one year more, you'll see how big and sleek I'll be then.'

Yes! the lad was ready to do that; so he killed all those twelve foals, and went home again.

So when he came back the next year to look after his foal and mares, the foal was so fat and sleek, that the sun shone from its coat, and it had grown so big, the lad had hard work to mount it. As for the mares, they had each of them another foal.

'Well, it's quite plain I lost nothing by letting you suck all my twelve mares', said the lad to the yearling, 'but now you're big enough to come along with me.'

'No', said the colt, 'I must bide here a year longer; and now kill all the twelve foals, that I may suck all the mares this year too, and you'll see how big and sleek I'll be by summer.'

Yes! the lad did that; and next year when he went up on the hill to look after his colt and the mares, each mare had her foal, but the dapple colt was so tall the lad couldn't reach up to his crest when he wanted to feel how fat he was; and so sleek he was too, that his coat glistened in the sunshine.

'Big and beautiful you were last year, my colt', said the lad, 'but this year you're far grander. There's no such horse in the king's stable. But now you must come along with me.'

'No', said Dapple again, 'I must stay here one year more. Kill the twelve foals as before, that I may suck the mares the whole year, and then just come and look at me when the summer comes.'

Yes! the lad did that; he killed the foals, and went away home.

But when he went up next year to look after Dapple and the mares, he was quite astonished. So tall, and stout, and sturdy, he never thought a horse could be; for Dapple had to lie down on all fours before the lad could bestride him, and it was hard work to get up even then, although he lay flat; and his coat was so smooth and sleek, the sunbeams shone from it as from a looking-glass.

This time Dapple was willing enough to follow the lad, so he jumped up on his back, and when he came riding home to his brothers, they all clapped their hands and crossed themselves, for such a horse they had never heard of nor seen before.

'If you will only get me the best shoes you can for my horse, and the grandest saddle and bridle that are to be found', said the lad, 'you may have my twelve mares that graze up on the hill yonder, and their twelve foals into the bargain.' For you must know that this year too every mare had her foal.

Yes, his brothers were ready to do that, and so the lad got such strong shoes under his horse, that the stones flew high aloft as he rode away across the hills; and he had a golden saddle and a golden bridle, which gleamed and glistened a long way off.

'Now we're off to the king's palace', said Dapplegrim--that was his name; 'but mind you ask the king for a good stable and good fodder for me.'

Yes! the lad said he would mind; he'd be sure not to forget; and when he rode off from his brothers' house, you may be sure it wasn't long, with such a horse under him, before he got to the king's palace.

When he came there the king was standing on the steps, and stared and stared at the man who came riding along.

'Nay, nay!', said he, 'such a man and such a horse I never yet saw in all my life.'

But when the lad asked if he could get a place in the king's household, the king was so glad he was ready to jump and dance as he stood on the steps.

Well, they said, perhaps he might get a place there.

'Aye', said the lad, 'but I must have good stable-room for my horse, and fodder that one can trust.'

Yes! he should have meadow-hay and oats, as much as Dapple could cram, and all the other knights had to lead their horses out of the stable that Dapplegrim might stand alone, and have it all to himself.

But it wasn't long before all the others in the king's household began to be jealous of the lad, and there was no end to the bad things they would have done to him, if they had only dared. At last they thought of telling the king he had said he was man enough to set the king's daughter free--whom the Troll had long since carried away into the hill--if he only chose. The king called the lad before him, and said he had heard the lad said he was good to do so and so; so now he must go and do it. If he did it, he knew how the king had promised his daughter and half the kingdom, and that promise would be faithfully kept; if he didn't, he should be killed.

The lad kept on saying he never said any such thing; but it was no good--the king wouldn't even listen to him; and so the end of it was he was forced to say he'd go and try.

So he went into the stable, down in the mouth and heavy-hearted, and then Dapplegrim asked him at once why he was in such dumps.

Then the lad told him all, and how he couldn't tell which way to turn:

'For as for setting the Princess free, that's downright stuff.'

'Oh! but it might be done, perhaps', said Dapplegrim. 'I'll help you through; but you must first have me well shod. You must go and ask for ten pound of iron and twelve pound of steel for the shoes, and one smith to hammer and another to hold.'

Yes, the lad did that, and got for answer 'Yes!' He got both the iron and the steel, and the smiths, and so Dapplegrim was shod both strong and well, and off went the lad from the court-yard in a cloud of dust.

But when he came to the hill into which the Princess had been carried, the pinch was how to get up the steep wall of rock where the Troll's cave was, in which the Princess had been hid. For you must know the hill stood straight up and down right on end, as upright as a house-wall, and as smooth as a sheet of glass.

The first time the lad went at it he got a little way up; but then Dapple's fore-legs slipped, and down they went again, with a sound like thunder on the hill.

The second time he rode at it he got some way further up; but then one fore-leg slipped, and down they went with a crash like a landslip.

But the third time Dapple said:

'Now we must show our mettle'; and went at it again till the stones flew heaven-high about them, and so they got up.

Then the lad rode right into the cave at full speed, and caught up the Princess, and threw her over his saddle-bow and out and down again before the Troll had time even to get on his legs; and so the Princess was freed.

When the lad came back to the palace, the king was both happy and glad to get his daughter back; that you may well believe; but somehow or other, though I don't know how, the others about the court had so brought it about that the king was angry with the lad after all.

'Thanks you shall have for freeing my Princess', said he to the lad, when he brought the Princess into the hall, and made his bow.

'She ought to be mine as well as yours; for you're a word-fast man, I hope', said the lad.

'Aye, aye!' said the king, 'have her you shall, since I said it; but first of all, you must make the sun shine into my palace hall.'

Now, you must know there was a high steep ridge of rock close outside the windows, which threw such a shade over the hall that never a sunbeam shone into it.

'That wasn't in our bargain', answered the lad; 'but I see this is past praying against; I must e'en go and try my luck, for the Princess I must and will have.'

So down he went to Dapple, and told him what the king wanted, and Dapplegrim thought it might easily be done, but first of all he must be new shod; and for that ten pound of iron, and twelve pound of steel

besides, were needed, and two smiths, one to hammer and the other to hold, and then they'd soon get the sun to shine into the palace hall.

So when the lad asked for all these things, he got them at once--the king couldn't say nay for very shame; and so Dapplegrim got new shoes, and such shoes! Then the lad jumped upon his back, and off they went again; and for every leap that Dapplegrim gave, down sank the ridge fifteen ells into the earth, and so they went on till there was nothing left of the ridge for the king to see.

When the lad got back to the king's palace, he asked the king if the Princess were not his now; for now no one could say that the sun didn't shine into the hall. But then the others set the king's back up again, and he answered the lad should have her of course, he had never thought of anything else; but first of all he must get as grand a horse for the bride to ride on to church as the bridegroom had himself.

The lad said the king hadn't spoken a word about this before, and that he thought he had now fairly earned the Princess; but the king held to his own; and more, if the lad couldn't do that he should lose his life; that was what the king said. So the lad went down to the stable in doleful dumps, as you may well fancy, and there he told Dapplegrim all about it; how the king had laid that task on him, to find the bride as good a horse as the bridegroom had himself, else he would lose his life.

'But that's not so easy', he said, 'for your match isn't to be found in the wide world.'

'Oh yes, I have a match', said Dapplegrim; 'but 't isn't so easy to find him, for he abides in Hell. Still we'll try. And now you must go up to the king and ask for new shoes for me, ten pound of iron, and twelve pound of steel; and two smiths, one to hammer and one to hold; and mind you see that the points and ends of these shoes are sharp; and twelve sacks of rye, and twelve sacks of barley, and twelve slaughtered oxen, we must have with us; and mind, we must have the twelve ox-hides, with twelve hundred spikes driven into each; and, let me see, a big tar-barrel--that's all we want.'

So the lad went up to the king and asked for all that Dapplegrim had said, and the king again thought he couldn't say nay, for shame's sake, and so the lad got all he wanted.

Well, he jumped up on Dapplegrim's back, and rode away from the palace, and when he had ridden far far over hill and heath, Dapple asked:

'Do you hear anything?'

'Yes, I hear an awful hissing and rustling up in the air,' said the lad; 'I think I'm getting afraid.'

'That's all the wild birds that fly through the wood. They are sent to stop us; but just cut a hole in the corn-sacks, and then they'll have so much to do with the corn, they'll forget us quite.'

Yes! the lad did that; he cut holes in the corn-sacks, so that the rye and barley ran out on all sides. Then all the wild birds that were in the wood came flying round them so thick that the sunbeams grew dark; but as soon as they saw the corn, they couldn't keep to their purpose, but flew down and began to pick and scratch at the rye and barley, and after that they began to fight among themselves. As for Dapplegrim and the lad, they forgot all about them, and did them no harm.

So the lad rode on and on--far far over mountain and dale, over sand-hills and moor. Then Dapplegrim began to prick up his ears again, and at last he asked the lad if he heard anything?

'Yes! now I hear such an ugly roaring and howling in the wood all round, it makes me quite afraid.'

'Ah!' said Dapplegrim, 'that's all the wild beasts that range through the wood, and they're sent out to stop us. But just cast out the twelve carcasses of the oxen, that will give them enough to do, and so they'll forget us outright.'

Yes! the lad cast out the carcasses, and then all the wild beasts in the wood, both bears, and wolves, and lions--all fell beasts of all kinds--came after them. But when they saw the carcasses, they began to fight for them among themselves till blood flowed in streams; but Dapplegrim and the lad they quite forgot.

So the lad rode far away, and they changed the landscape many many times, for Dapplegrim didn't let the grass grow under him, as you may fancy. At last Dapple gave a great neigh.

'Do you hear anything?' he said.

'Yes, I hear something like a colt neighing loud, a long long way off', answered the lad.

'That's a full-grown colt then', said Dapplegrim, 'if we hear him neigh so loud such a long way off.'

After that they travelled a good bit, changing the landscape once or twice, maybe. Then Dapplegrim gave another neigh.

'Now listen, and tell me if you hear anything', he said.

'Yes, now I hear a neigh like a full-grown horse', answered the lad.

'Aye! aye!' said Dapplegrim, 'you'll hear him once again soon, and then you'll hear he's got a voice of his own.'

So they travelled on and on, and changed the landscape once or twice, perhaps, and then Dapplegrim neighed the third time; but before he could ask the lad if he heard anything, something gave such a neigh across the heathy hill-side, the lad thought hill and rock would surely be rent asunder.

'Now, he's here!' said Dapplegrim; 'make haste, now, and throw the ox hides, with the spikes in them, over me, and throw down the tar-barrel on the plain; then climb up into that great spruce-fir yonder. When it comes fire will flash out of both nostrils, and then the tar-barrel will catch fire. Now, mind what I say. If the flame rises, I win; if it falls, I lose; but if you see me winning take and cast the bridle--you must take it off me--over its head, and then it will be tame enough.'

So just as the lad had done throwing the ox hides, with the spikes, over Dapplegrim, and had cast down the tar-barrel on the plain, and had got well up into the spruce-fir, up galloped a horse, with fire flashing out of his nostrils, and the flame caught the tar-barrel at once. Then Dapplegrim and the strange horse began to fight till the stones



flew heaven high. They fought and bit, and kicked, both with fore-feet and hind-feet, and sometimes the lad could see them, and sometimes he couldn't; but at last the flame began to rise; for wherever the strange horse kicked or bit, he met the spiked hides, and at last he had to yield. When the lad saw that, he wasn't long in getting down from the tree, and in throwing the bridle over its head, and then it was so tame you could hold it with a pack-thread.

And what do you think? that horse was dappled too, and so like Dapplegrim, you couldn't tell which was which. Then the lad bestrode the new Dapple he had broken, and rode home to the palace, and old Dapplegrim ran loose by his side. So when he got home, there stood the king out in the yard.

'Can you tell me now', said the lad, 'which is the horse I have caught and broken, and which is the one I had before. If you can't, I think your daughter is fairly mine.'

Then the king went and looked at both Dapples, high and low, before and behind, but there wasn't a hair on one which wasn't on the other as well. 'No', said the king, 'that I can't; and since you've got my daughter such a grand horse for her wedding, you shall have her with all my heart. But still, we'll have one trial more, just to see whether you're fated to have her. First, she shall hide herself twice, and then you shall hide yourself twice. If you can find out her hiding-place, and she can't find out yours, why then you're fated to have her, and so you shall have her.'

'That's not in the bargain either', said the lad; 'but we must just try, since it must be so'; and so the Princess went off to hide herself first.

So she turned herself into a duck, and lay swimming on a pond that was close to the palace. But the lad only ran down to the stable, and asked Dapplegrim what she had done with herself.

'Oh, you only need to take your gun', said Dapplegrim, 'and go down to the brink of the pond, and aim at the duck which lies swimming about there, and she'll soon show herself.'

So the lad snatched up his gun and ran off to the pond. 'I'll just take a pop at this duck', he said, and began to aim at it.

'Nay, nay, dear friend, don't shoot. It's I', said the Princess.

So he had found her once.

The second time the Princess turned herself into a loaf of bread, and laid herself on the table among four other loaves; and so like was she to the others, no one could say which was which.

But the lad went again down to the stable to Dapplegrim, and said how the Princess had hidden herself again, and he couldn't tell at all what had become of her.

'Oh, just take and sharpen a good bread-knife', said Dapplegrim, 'and do as if you were going to cut in two the third loaf on the left hand of those four loaves which are lying on the dresser in the king's kitchen, and you'll find her soon enough.'

Yes! he was down in the kitchen in no time, and began to sharpen the biggest bread-knife he could lay hands on; then he caught hold of the third loaf on the left hand, and put the knife to it, as though he was going to cut it in two. 'I'll just have a slice off this loaf', he said,

'Nay, dear friend', said the Princess, 'don't cut. It's I' So he had found her twice.

Then he was to go and hide; but he and Dapplegrim had settled it all so well beforehand, it wasn't easy to find him. First he turned himself into a tick, and hid himself in Dapplegrim's left nostril; and the Princess went about hunting him everywhere, high and low; at last she wanted to go into Dapplegrim's stall, but he began to bite and kick, so that she daren't go near him, and so she couldn't find the lad.

'Well', she said, 'since I can't find you, you must show where you are yourself'; and in a trice the lad stood there on the stable floor.

The second time Dapplegrim told him again what to do; and then he turned himself into a clod of earth, and stuck himself between Dapple's hoof and shoe on the near forefoot. So the Princess hunted up and down, out and in, everywhere; at last she came into the stable, and wanted to go into Dapplegrim's loose-box. This time he let her come up to him, and she pried high and low, but under his hoofs she

couldn't come, for he stood firm as a rock on his feet, and so she couldn't find the lad.

'Well; you must just show yourself, for I'm sure I can't find you', said the Princess, and as she spoke the lad stood by her side on the stable floor.

'Now you are mine indeed', said the lad; 'for now you can see I'm fated to have you.' This he said both to the father and daughter.

'Yes; it is so fated', said the king; 'so it must be.' Then they got ready the wedding in right down earnest, and lost no time about it; and the lad got on Dapplegrim, and the Princess on Dapplegrim's match, and then you may fancy they were not long on their way to the church.