

The Little Child And The Pumpkin Tree

by Sir George Webbe Dasent
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There was once a poor widow who had six children. One day when she was going out to look for something to eat, for she was very poor, she met an old man sitting by the river side. He said to her 'Good morning.'

And she answered, 'Good morning, father.'

He said to her, 'Will you wash my head?'

She said she would, so she washed it, and when she was going away, he gave her a 'stampee'[A small coin], and told her to go a certain distance, and she would see a large tree full of pumpkins; she was then to dig a hole at the root of the tree and bury the money, and when she had done so, she was to call for as many pumpkins as she liked, and she should have them.

So the woman went, and did as she was told, and she called for six pumpkins, one for each child, and six came down, and she carried them home; and now they always had pumpkins enough to eat, for whenever they wanted any, the woman had only to go to the tree and call, and they had as many as they liked. One morning when she got up, she found a little baby before the door, so she took it up and carried it in, and took care of it. Every day she went out, but in the morning she boiled enough pumpkins to serve the children all day. One day when she came back she found the food was all gone, so she scolded her children, and beat them for eating it all up. They told her they had not taken any--that it was the baby--but she would not believe them, and said, 'How could a little baby get up and help itself'; but the children still persisted it was the baby. So one day when she was going out, she put some pumpkin in a calabash, and set a trap over it. When she was gone the baby got up as usual to eat the food, and got its head fastened in the trap, so that it could not get out, and began knocking its head about and crying out, 'Oh! do loose me, for that woman will kill me when she comes back.' When the woman came in, she found the baby fastened in the trap, so she beat it well,

and turned it out of doors, and begged her children's pardon for having wronged them.

Then after she turned the baby out, he changed into a great big man, and went to the river, where he saw the old man sitting by the river side, who asked him to wash his head, as he had asked the poor woman, but the man said:

'No, he would not wash his dirty head', and so he wished the old man 'good bye'.

Then the old man asked him if he would like to have a pumpkin, to which he said 'yes', and the old man told him to go on till he saw a large tree with plenty of pumpkins on it, and then he must ask for one. So he went on till he got to the tree, and the pumpkins looked so nice he could not be satisfied with one, so he called out, 'Ten pumpkins come down', and the ten pumpkins fell and crushed him.