

The Miller's Wife on the Wisper



In the valley through which the Wisper stream flows, there once stood a mill, and the miller's wife was a young, light-headed woman. One day she thought she heard a voice whispering in her ear, which seemed to tell her to go up the Kammer mountain where she would find treasure, the key being hidden in a chest in the tower.

The miller's wife looked around herself in terror, but perceiving no one, she felt sure that some kind of invisible spirit had spoken to her. The next day, as she was washing clothes in the stream, the same low voice whispered in her ear: "Go to the tower and take possession of the treasure. The key is hidden in a black chest." The woman hastily left her washing and ran to tell her husband of the wonderful words which had sounded in her ear. But the miller scolded her for a foolish woman to listen to such sounds, and then declared jokingly that surer treasures lay in his sacks of flour than in the black chest.

But the words remained steadfastly fixed in the woman's head, and sounded more and more tempting to her. At last she determined to satisfy her curiosity, and one day, the miller having gone away to bring a load of

flour to Lorch, his wife set off from the mill, taking her baby in her arm, and made her way towards the mountain. But on arriving at the tower, she began to feel a little scared. Already regretting her determination, she was just about to turn home when the whispering voice again sounded in her ear. This time it told her that she need fear nothing, only she must not speak one syllable, and the treasure would surely be hers.

So the woman boldly entered the vault of the tower, having first set her baby on the grass outside. She then went to look for the chest. It stood deep down in the vault, right where the voice had told her, and the key was lying in the exact place that she sought it. Picking it up she unlocked the huge trunk and having raised the heavy oak lid, she was amazed to find a heap of shining gold before her.

The woman plunged her eager hands into the chest, but as she was doing so, her baby boy outside uttered an anxious little cry, "Mamma, Mamma!" He had seen a snake crawling near in the grass. The woman turned round and called out angrily, "What is the matter, child?" But no sooner had she uttered these words, than a loud peal of thunder was heard. The woman was violently thrown to the ground, and an awful voice sounded mournfully through the vault, "Woe to you for having spoken. Another hundred years I must remain undelivered! Woe to you and to me!"

When the miller returned home, he found his wife gone, and the servant informed him that he had seen her going up the Kammer mountain with her child on her arm. A strange foreboding seized the poor miller, and with hasty steps he hurried off to the mountain. All was silent there, not a sound was heard around the old castle. His little boy was sitting in the grass playing with the flowers and stretched out his arms joyfully to his father. As the miller rushed to the child, he heard a low moan in the vault of the tower, and looking in horrified, he saw his wife lying on the ground.

A broken-hearted man returned to the mill, and for three days the mill-wheel stood still. They carried the miller's wife to the churchyard at Lorch, and since then no one has ever dared to look for the treasure in the tower.