

The Magic Fiddle

A peasant once worked for a landowner. He used to look after the cattle, which he pastured in some woods. One day he took some hemp and began to braid a whip with three strands. Misery approached him and said, "What are you braiding?"

"I'm making some twine because I'm going to hang all the Miseries in the world." Thereupon misery said to him, "Woe is me! What do you want me to pay you so that you won't hang us all?"

And the man, who had noticed that Misery was carrying a fine fiddle and a pair of shoes, replied, "Give me that fiddle and those shoes and I won't do it."

So Misery gave him the objects and told him, "When you begin to play the fiddle, everything will start to dance, whether man or beast. And besides that, when you put on these shoes, you will become invisible."

The peasant continued to herd the cattle, driving them out into the pasture. Then he sat himself down on a hillock and commenced to play the fiddle. All the cattle sprang forward and started to dance round him, believe it or not! Then he led the cattle home and his master asked him, "Why are all the cattle in such a sweat?"

"I don't know," he replied.

The next day he led the cattle again to pasture but his master quickly followed him, in order to discover what was happening to the cattle. He hid himself at the edge of the woods in some bramble bushes. Meanwhile the peasant herded the cattle then sat himself down on the hillock.

No sooner had he begun to play than the cattle sprang forward to dance. And his master, too, started to dance in the bushes and in so doing cut himself badly and tore his clothes. Afterwards,

the servant stopped playing and led the cattle homewards. As for the master, he returned home alone and didn't show himself to the servant. When he arrived home he told his wife how well the servant could play. Thereupon the woman said, "Well, how about playing for me? I'd like to dance a little, too."

And the master replied, "As for me, I don't want to dance! Tie me to the grinding mill to prevent me from doing so."

The servant commenced playing and the wife started to dance round the room. The master also sprang up and danced with the grinding mill until they were almost dashed to bits.

Then the landowner wrote a letter to all the villages that there lived such and such a musician who, when he began to play everyone was forced to dance. To the master came lords from all over the place and he commanded the servant to play. When he did so they started to dance until the very walls almost collapsed. Then the servant stopped and the lords condemned him to be sent to the gallows to be hanged for his playing. They thereupon led him under the gallows but he pleaded with them saying, "Give me my fiddle and let me die with it."

They gave him his fiddle and he began to play and once more the lords started to dance around the gallows. The peasant quickly took his shoes out of the bag and put them on his feet and suddenly became invisible and so no one ever saw him again.