



Stories From Around the World

The Toy Goose



Danish Folktale

Many Years Ago ...

A Flea, a Grasshopper, and a Toy-goose once wanted to see which of them could jump highest, and so they invited the whole world and everybody else who would like to come, to see the frolic.



When the three met together in the room, everyone thought they were remarkable jumpers.

"Well, I'll give my daughter to the one who jumps highest!" said the king; "for it would not be fair to let these people jump for nothing!"



The first one to step forward was the Flea; he had such perfect manners and bowed on every side, for he had noble blood in his veins, and more than that, he associated only with human beings, which makes a great difference.



Then came the Grasshopper; he was certainly very much larger, however, he carried himself well, and wore the green uniform he was born with. Moreover, as he said, he belonged to a very old family in the land of Egypt, and was well thought of there at home.



The fact was, when he was brought out of the fields he was put in a house, three storeys high, all made of court-cards with the coloured side turned in; both doors and windows were cut out in the waist of the Queen of Hearts.



"I sing so well," he said "that sixteen native crickets who had chirped since they were born, and still had no house of cards to live in, grew thinner than they were before out of vexation when they heard of me."



The Toy-geese said nothing; and people thought it was because he knew all the more; the house-dog sniffed at him with his nose, and assured them the Toy-geese was of good family.



The old councillor, who had three orders given him for holding his tongue, said that the Toy-geese was a prophet; for one could see on his back if there would be a severe or mild winter, and that was more than one could see on the back of the man who writes the almanacs.



"Well, I shall say nothing," said the king,
"however I have my own opinion."



The trial was to take place at once, so the Flea jumped first. He jumped so high that nobody could see where he went to; so they said he had not jumped at all; which was shameful.



The Grasshopper jumped only half as high; but he jumped right into the king's face, which, the king said was most unpleasant.



The Toy-geese stood still for a long time, thinking to himself; at last the people believed he would not jump at all.



"I only hope he is not ill," said the house-dog; when, pop! he made a side jump right into the lap of the princess, who was sitting on a little golden stool close by.



"Then the king said, "There is nothing above my daughter; therefore he has made the highest jump that can be made: to do this, one must have a good mind and the Toy-goose has shown that he has a good mind. He has a mind of his own!"



And so he won the princess.



"It's all the same to me, she may have the old Toy-goose, for all I care," said the Flea. "I jumped the highest; but, in this world a fine appearance is what people look at nowadays."

The Flea then went into a foreign land and enlisted, where it is said, he was killed.



The Grasshopper sat on a green bank, and thought on worldly things; and he said, "Yes, a fine appearance is everything—a fine appearance is what people care about."

And then he began chirping his melancholy song from which we have taken this story; and which may or may not be true, although it is printed.

The End





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