**Little Saddle Girl**

**Greece**

There were once three sisters spinning flax, and they said, "Whosever spindle falls, let us kill her and eat her."

The mother's spindle fell, and they left her alone.

Again they sat down to spin, and again the mother's spindle fell, and again and yet again.

"Ah, well!" said they, "let us eat her now!"

"No!" said the youngest, "do not eat her; eat me, if flesh you will have."

But they would not; and two of them killed their mother and cooked her for eating.

When they had sat down to make a meal of her, they said to the youngest, "Come and eat too!"

But she refused, and sat down on a saddle which the fowls were covering with filth, and wept, and upbraided them.

Many a time they said to her, "Come and eat!" but she would not; and when they had done eating, they all went away.

Then the youngest, whom they called Little Saddle Girl, gathered all the bones together and buried them underneath the grate, and smoked them every day with incense for forty days; and after the forty days were out, she went to take them away and put them in another place. And when she lifted up the stone, she was astonished at the rays of light which it sent forth, and raiment was found there, like unto the heavens and the stars, the spring with its flowers, the sea with its waves; and many coins of every kind; and she left them where she found them.

Afterwards her sisters came and found her sitting on the saddle, and jeered at her. On Sunday her sisters went to church; then she, too, arose; she washed and attired herself, putting on the garment that was as the heavens with the stars, and went to church, taking with her a few gold pieces in her purse. When she went into the church all the people were amazed, and could not gaze upon her by reason of the brightness of her garments. When she left the church, the people followed her to see whither she went. Then she filled her hand with money from her bag and cast it in the way, and so she kept throwing it down all the way she went, so that they might not get near her. Then the crowd scrambled for the coins, and left her alone. And straightway she went into her house, and changed her clothes, and put on her old things, and sat down upon the saddle.

Her sisters came home from church and said to her, "Where are you, wretch? Come and let us tell you how there came into the church a maiden more glorious than the sun, who had such garments on as you could not look on, so brightly did they gleam and shine, and she strewed money on the way! Look, see what a lot we have picked up! Why did not you come too? Worse luck to you!"

"You are welcome to what you picked up; I don't want it," said she.

Next Sunday they went to church again, and she did the same. Then they went another Sunday, and just as she was flinging the money, she lost her shoe among the crowd, and left it behind her.

Now the king's son was following her, but could not catch her, and only found her shoe. Then said he to himself, "Whose ever foot this shoe exactly fits, without being either too large or too small, I will take her for my wife."

And he went to all the women he knew and tried it on, but could not manage to fit it. Then her sisters came to her and spoke as follows to her, "You go and try; perhaps it will fit you!"

"Get away with you!" said she. "Do you think he will put the shoe on me, and get it covered with filth? Do not make fun of me."

The prince had taken all the houses in turn, and so he came at length to the house of Little Saddle Girl, and his servants told her to come and try on the shoe.

"Do not make fun of me," she says.

However she went down, and when the prince saw her, he knew the shoe was hers, and said to her, "Do you try on the shoe."

And with the greatest ease she put it on, and it fitted her.

Then said the prince to her, "I will take you to wife."

"Do not make fun of me," she answered, "so may your youth be happy!"

"Nay, but I will marry you," said he, and he took her and made her his wife.

Then she put on her fairest robes. When a little child was born to her, the sisters came to see it. And when she was helpless and alone they took her and put her into a chest, and carried her off and threw her into a river, and the river cast her forth upon a desert.

There was a half-witted old woman there, and when she saw the chest, she thought to cut it up [for firewood] and took it away for that purpose. And when she had broken it open, and saw someone alive in it, she got up and made off.

So the princess was left alone, and heard the wolves howling, and the swine and the lions, and she sat and wept and prayed to God, "Oh God, give me a little hole in the ground that I may hide my head in it, and not hear the wild beasts," and he gave her one.

Again she said, "Oh God, give me one a little larger, that I may get in up to my waist."

And he gave her one. And she besought him again a third time, and he gave her a cabin with all that she wanted in it; and there she dwelt, and whatever she said, her bidding was done forthwith.

For instance, when she wanted to eat, she would say, "Come, table with all that is wanted! Come food! Come spoons and forks, and all things needful," and straightway they all got ready, and when she finished the would ask, "Are you all there?" and they would answer, "We are."

One day the prince came into the wilderness to hunt, and seeing the cabin he went to find out who was inside; and when he got there he knocked at the door.

And she saw him and knew him from afar, and said, "Who is knocking at the door?"

"It is I, let me in," said he.

"Open, doors!" said she, and in a twinkling the doors opened and he entered. He went upstairs and found her seated on a chair.

"Good day to you," said he.

"Welcome!" said she, and straightway all that was in the room cried out, "Welcome!"

"Come chair!" she cried, and one came at once.

"Sit down," she said to him and down he sat. And when she had asked him the reason of his coming, she bade him stay and dine, and afterwards depart.

He agreed, and straightway she gave her orders: "Come table with all the covers," and forthwith they presented themselves, and he was sore amazed.

"Come basin," she cried. "Come jug, pour water for us to wash! Come food in ten courses!" and immediately all that she ordered made its appearance.

Afterwards when the meal was ended, the prince tried to hide a spoon, and put it into his shoe; and when they rose from table, she said "Table, have you all your covers?"

"Yes I have." "Spoons, are you all there?"

"All," they said, except one which said "I am in the prince's shoe."

Then she cried again, as though she had not heard, "Are you all there, spoons and forks?"

And as soon as the prince heard her he got rid of it on the sly and blushed.

And she said to him "Why did you blush? Don't be afraid. I am your wife."

Then she told him how she got there and how she fared. And they hugged and kissed each other, and she ordered the house to move and it did move. And when they came near the town all the world came out to see them. Then the prince gave orders for his wife's sisters to be brought before him, and they brought them and he hewed them in pieces. And so henceforward they lived happily, and may we live more happily still.