

THE INTERPRETATION OF FAIRY TALES

A lecture given by Rudolf Steiner Berlin, December, 1908

The subject of today's lecture is a kind of principle or rule for the explanation of fairy tales and legends. In a wider sense this principle can be extended to the world of myths, and we propose in a few words to indicate how this can be done. Naturally it is impossible in one hour to specify exactly how one should satisfy a young child with the fairy story itself and then later, when the child is older, with the explanation of it; but perhaps this may be done as a continuation of today's lecture. I would now rather try to make clear to you what should exist in the soul of one who wishes to explain such stories, and what he ought to know.

The first thing to which we must closely adhere when relating fairy tales, legends, or myths is that we must certainly know more than we are able to say, indeed, a great deal more; and secondly, we should be willing to draw the sources of our explanation from anthroposophical wisdom; that is to say we must not introduce into the fairy tales just anything that may occur to us, but must be willing to recognize anthroposophical wisdom as such, and then try and permeate the fairy tales therewith. I do not say that everyone will succeed at once. But if we begin, by building along these lines we shall of ourselves soon find the right meaning. What is built out of a good foundation will work out all right, but where it is not so built it follows that all manner of things can be construed into it. We speak both for those who are narrating and also for those to be instructed. Examples of the clearest possible kind will be given, relating to the matter in hand. The first fairy tale we have to treat should be related in the following manner: —

Once upon a time it happened—where did it happen?—or the question might be asked: Where did it not happen?—there was once a tailor's apprentice. He had only one penny left in his pocket, and with this penny in his pocket he felt driven to wander forth. He soon became hungry, but with his penny he could only afford to buy some porridge. When the porridge was placed before him a swarm of flies flew into it and when he had finished his meal the plate was covered with buzzing flies. He struck the plate once or twice with his hand, counting how many he had killed, and found it amounted to a hundred. So he got a writing tablet from the innkeeper and wrote on it: "He killed a hundred at one blow!" And having hung the tablet on his back he went his way. As he passed a king's palace the king was looking out and seeing someone passing who had something written on his back he sent his servant down to see what the writing was. The servant went and saw it was: He killed a hundred at one blow!—and he told the king this. "Ho!" said the king to himself, "That is someone of whom I can make use!" and he sent down and had him brought in. "I can make use of you," said the king to the apprentice, "will you enter my service?" "Yes", said the other, "I will willingly enter your service, if you will give me a fitting reward, but what that is I shall tell you later." "Very well," said the king, "I shall reward you handsomely if you keep to what you have promised. You shall eat and drink well, as long as you like. After that, you must also do me a service, equal to your strength. Every year a number of bears come to my country and do fearful damage. They are so strong that no one can kill them. You will of course be able to kill them, if you live up to the statement on your tablet." Then the apprentice said: "Certainly I will do this; but till the bears come I must ask for as much to eat and drink as I want." For the apprentice said to himself: "If I cannot slay the bears, and they kill me, I shall at least have eaten and drunk well." And so it went for awhile.

When the time came and the bears were due to appear he arranged as follows: he went into the kitchen and there set up a little table and left the door wide open; on the table he placed all manner of things that bears like to eat and drink—honey and suchlike; then he hid himself. The bears came along, ate and drank till they were gorged and then lay down there. Then he cut off the head of each bear and in this manner killed them all. When the king law this he asked: "Now how did you do it?" And the apprentice said: "I simply made the bears leap over the edge of the sword and then cut off each one's head!" The king was very credulous and said: "If you have done that you can render me an even greater service. Every year great strong giants come to our country; no one can kill them or drive them away; perhaps you can." The tailor replied: "Yes, I will do it, if

afterwards you will give me your daughter to wife.” Now it was very important to the king to have the giants driven away, and so he promised; and things again went well with the tailor.

When the time came for the giants to appear, he again took all manner of things that giants like to eat and drink, and went to meet them. On the way he added to the rest a piece of cheese and a lark, and then with all his many things and the piece of cheese and the lark he met the giants. The giants said: We have come again to wrestle with the strongest; no one has overcome us!” Then said the apprentice: “I will wrestle with you!” “It will go badly with you!” thought the giant. The tailor said: “Show me your strength and what you can do!” The giant took a stone and pulverized it between his fingers. He then took a bow and arrow and shot the arrow so high into the air that it did not come down for a long time. “If you want to see my strength, if you want to wrestle with me, you must be able to do something more than that,” said the giant. The tailor’s apprentice then took a small stone, and covered it secretly with a little cheese, so that when he pressed it between his fingers the cheese spurted out milk. Then he said to the giants; “I can press liquid out of a stone and that you cannot do!” It made a great impression on the giants that he could do something different from them. Then he also took a bow and arrow, but when he shot, unobserved by them, he let loose the lark, which flew up and did not return. So he said to the giants: “Your arrow came down again, but I shot so high that mine never returned to earth again!” The giants were astonished to find anyone stronger than themselves and said to him, “Will you be our comrade?” He agreed.

Certainly he was but small, but for all that he would be a good addition, so they took him into their company and he stayed a while with them. But it was galling to them that there should be anyone stronger than themselves, and once when he lay awake in bed he overheard them arranging to kill him. Therefore he made preparations. He prepared a big meal with the things that he had brought with him. The giants ate and drank all they could until they were gorged. Still they were determined to kill him. So he took a pig’s bladder and filled it with blood, fastened it on his head and went to bed with it on. The giant who had been chosen to kill him came and stabbed it, and when the blood ran out they were delighted, for now, they thought, they were rid of him, and they lay down and slept. But he got out of bed and killed one giant after another as they slept. Then he went to the king and related how he had slain one giant after the other.

The king kept his word and gave him his daughter for a wife, and the tailor was married to the king’s daughter. The king marveled greatly at his son-in-law’s strength, but neither the king nor his daughter knew who this man really was: whether a tailor or a king’s son, they did not know it then; and if they have not found it out since they do not know it now.

That is one of the fairy tales that we want to examine on principle. But before we go into the subject let us place another beside it, for if you collect fairy tales, from whatever period or people, fairy tales that are real fairy tales, you will find that certain basic ideas run through them all. I must call your attention to the fact that the giants were overcome by cunning. Now make a plunge through the centuries and in the Odyssey recall Odysseus and the giant Polyphemus. And let us place another fairy tale side by side with this one.

Once upon a time it happened—now where was it? Well, where then exactly did it not happen? There was a king who was so beloved of his people that he was always hearing the wish expressed around him that he should take a wife as good and noble as himself. It was difficult for him to find anyone that he could believe to be as suitable as he wished for his people. Now he had an old friend, a poor forester who lived simply and contentedly in the forest and who was very wise. He might very easily have been rich, for the king would willingly have given him everything, but the forester wished to remain poor and retain his wisdom. So the king now went to his friend the forester and asked his advice. The latter gave him a branch of rosemary, saying: “Take care of this; the maiden before whom it bends is the maiden you ought to marry.” So the very next day the king had a number of damsels brought before him. He had pearls spread out before them, and every girl’s name was written on the table in pearls; then he made it known that the maiden before whom the branch bent should be his bride; the others would only get the pearls. So he went round with the branch of rosemary, but it did not move. It bent before no one. The girls were given their pearls and went away. The second day the same

thing was arranged, and again the same thing happened, and likewise on the third day. The next night, while the king slept, he heard something tapping at the window. It proved to be a little golden bird; it said to him: "You do not know it but twice you have done me a great service; I will also do you a service. As soon as day breaks, get up, take your branch of rosemary and follow me. I will lead you to a place where you will find a horse; it has a silver arrow sticking in its body; you must pull it out, and the horse will lead you to where you will find your bride."

The next morning the king went out and followed the little gold bird until they came to a horse that was very weak and ill, and that said: "A witch has shot an arrow into my body!" The king pulled the arrow out of the horse and the weak animal was transformed into a wonderful swift horse. The king mounted it, waving the rosemary, and the little gold bird flew on in front of the king on his magic horse. At last they reached a castle made of glass; long before they reached it they heard a buzzing and a buzzing and a buzzing, and when the king entered with the branch of rosemary and the little gold bird, he saw another king standing, there, fashioned entirely of glass; and in the stomach of the glass king was an enormous blue-bottle fly; it was this blue-bottle fly that made the buzzing, and it was trying to work its way out. The king asked the glass king what it all meant. "Well," said the latter, "just look towards the sofa: there sits my queen in a pink silk gown, and the secret of it all you will soon discover. The web that has been spun around the queen has just been torn by a hedge of thorns, and will soon be quite torn off her. Then there will come a wicked spider to spin a new web around the queen, and while I am bewitched here in a glass body my wife will be enmeshed by the spider's web. We have already been imprisoned here for several hundred years, and must remain here until we are released."

Presently the wicked spider appeared, and spun her web around the queen, but while the spider was at work the magic horse came along and wanted to kill the spider. He was just about to put his hoof on her when the buzzing blue-bottle, which had worked its way out, came to the help of the spider, but the magic horse killed them both. Then instantly the glass king was turned into a human king. The hedge of thorns was changed into a charming maiden. The queen was freed from the cobweb, and the glass king related how it had all come about: —

As soon as he became a king he had had to suffer from the persecutions of a wicked witch who lived in a forest on the confines of his domain. The witch wanted him to marry her daughter, but as he had already chosen his spouse from a neighboring fairy castle, the witch swore to be revenged on him; she changed him into a glass king and her daughter into a blue bottle fly, who gnawed at his stomach. The queen was tormented by the witch, who changed herself into a wicked spider and spun a cobweb around the queen; the damsel was changed into a thorn-bush, and her horse was shot at by the witch, whose arrow remained in its body. Now everything had come right through the horse being freed and being able to free the others. Then the king asked the former glass king where he could find a suitable wife. The latter showed him the way to the neighboring fairy castle. The little gold bird flew on in front and when they came to the castle they found a lily. The branch of rosemary led them straight to it, and bent before the lily, and at the same moment the lily was changed into a wonderfully beautiful maiden who had also been bewitched; for the queen of the neighboring castle was her sister. Now she was released owing to what had just taken place. The king took her back to his home, the wedding was celebrated, and they lived in great happiness, both themselves and their people. They lived for a long time. No one knows how long; but if they have not since disappeared or died, they must be still living now.

Here we have another fairy story that contains other elements. The first habit we most drop, if we wish to understand the meaning of true fairy tales or myths, is to regard them as being derived from popular imagination; they are never that.

The first starting point of all true fairy tales lies in time immemorial; in times when those who had not yet attained to intellectual powers possessed a partially developed clairvoyance, which was the remains of a primeval clairvoyance. Those who had preserved this kind of clairvoyance were for a long time in conditions

between sleeping and waking, when they actually experienced the spiritual vision in many different forms. This was not like our present dreaming. Today a dream has, for most people, something of a chaotic nature, but in those olden times persons with the old clairvoyance experienced something consecutive and so regular that the experiences were the same or typically alike with different persons. What, then, really happened to people in these intermediate states between waking and sleeping?

When people are in their physical bodies they perceive the world around them with their physical organs of perception; but behind that is the spiritual world. In these intermediate states it was as if a veil were lifted from man (the veil of the physical world), and the spiritual world became visible; everything that was in the spiritual world stood related to that which was in the innermost of man. It is the same in the physical world; man cannot see colors with the ear or hear tones with the eye. The outer accords with the inner. The external senses were silent in such intermediate states; while that which was within the soul became active. As the eye and the ears are connected with the surrounding world, so in these intermediate states the different parts of the human astral body were connected with the surrounding world. When the outer senses are silenced the soul comes to life.

We have, to begin with, three members of the soul: the sentient soul, the intellectual soul and the spiritual soul. As the eye and the ear have their different relations to the surrounding world, so have these three members of the human soul their quite distinct relations to the surrounding world. In such intermediate states man becomes aware of one or other part of the spiritual surroundings, according to the part of his soul which is directed to those surroundings. If we suppose that the sentient soul is especially directed to the spiritual surroundings, man sees all those spiritual beings in his surroundings that are inwardly connected with the ordinary forces of nature and live in the elements of nature. He does not himself see the play of the nature forces, but he sees that which lives in the play of the nature forces, in the wind, and the water, and other phenomena of nature. The beings that manifest themselves there are perceived by man through his sentient soul. When the sentient soul is specially active it is exactly as if man were still living at the time when neither his intellectual soul nor his spirit-soul had yet been developed; he is transported back and sees his surroundings as he did in old times; just as he saw them when he did not know how to use his intellectual and spiritual soul. In those olden times he was in very close touch with all the forces of nature, and was still bound up with them. He was a being consisting only of physical body, etheric body, astral body and sentient soul; and thus proceeded to people the world. He himself could then do the same as every being around him who lives in the lower nature forces can do now. They appear to him as the expression of that which he once was, when in the howling wind-storm men could tear up trees, when they could control the weather, the mist and the rain. The beings around him appear to him as he himself once was in the past, when he had the strength of a giant, because he had not withdrawn himself from the nature forces. The figures that thus appeared to him were the facsimiles of his own former figure, men of immense strength. These are the "giants." Man in one of these intermediate states sees giants as real figures, representing a quite definite kind of being; men possessed of a giant force. The giants are stupid, because they belong to a time when men could not use the intellectual soul; they are strong, but stupid.

Now let us ask what the intellectual soul can see in such intermediate states. It can see that things were fashioned in accordance with a certain wisdom. Through that which is the giant in man, through strength, everything was fashioned. Through the intellectual soul, man, when he lives in this intermediate state, sees beings around him who bring wisdom into everything, who regulate everything wisely. Whereas the giants are generally seen in male form, he sees in the pictures of the intellectual soul constructive female beings who bring wisdom into the fabric of the world. These are the "wise women" who are at the back of all formed things and who themselves construct everything. In these figures he continually sees himself as he was when he had an intellectual soul, but as yet no spirit-soul. They are the wise rulers at the back of things. And, because he sees himself intimately related to them, he often feels, when in such an intermediate state— "What I see there as the wise female beings is something really related to me." Therefore, we often see the idea of sisters arising when these female beings appear.

Now there is something else that man experiences in his soul when in this state of consciousness, which can only be very inwardly comprehended. In such a condition of soul he is withdrawn from ordinary physical perception, and now says to himself: "What I see in my soul is contained in what I see by day—in my intellectual soul. But when I see it by day it is exactly reversed." When man in the intermediate state remembers the impressions of the day they appear to him the reverse of what he experienced as the varied fleeting forms of his astral system. When he recalls the impressions of the day he seems to see standing before him stiff figures which are really the subtle etheric forms behind ordinary realities.

The things belonging to the day appear as if they had their real being bewitched within them. Wherever a plant or being appears that is bewitched it has happened in this manner: Man sees the substance of a wise being behind the physical apparition and he remembers: "Yes, by day that is only a plant; it is separated from my intellectual soul, so that I cannot really reach it by day." When a man feels this difference between the objects by day and that which is behind them—for example, the perception of the lily by day and that which is behind it—the form, which is related to his own intellectual soul—he feels the longing of the intellectual soul to unite itself with that which is behind the lily by day, as a kind of marriage, a growing together of the form seen by night with the form of the lily seen by day.

The spirit-soul originated in man at a time when he was far removed from the nature-forces, when he could no longer look into the secrets of being. That which the spiritual is able to do is far removed from those strong forces which we have already described. Shrewdness, skill of aptitude is the quality of the spirit-soul, but this is far removed from strength or any great power. Through the spirit-soul we see those spiritual beings who have remained beyond at the stage at which man was when he had only the sheath of the ego. Man sees these beings as living; they can do very little, their powers are small; and as man sees their forms in pictures they reveal their real nature as dwarfs. In the intermediate periods when man is free from his sense perceptions the whole kingdom that stands behind sense-perception is peopled with such forms. And when, during man's "higher moments" he feels himself to be in this connection with the spiritual world, the outer events of life appear to him as they are in reality, as an image of their whole relation to the spiritual world. If he is particularly shrewd in life in a dry and prosaic way, but yet realizes the relationship to the spiritual realities, especially in the conditions wherein men can still know a little of spiritual truths, the following may happen to him: —

Suppose he is a somewhat thoughtful man and observes that certain people are shrewd, and in all sorts of cunning ways overcome the rough forces that otherwise dominate life, he says to himself: "What actually happens in life is that the rough *forces* are overcome by the results of man's shrewdness. And, moreover, to those powers behind us which are related to us and have caused a force within us to rise to consciousness, he owes the rough forces that were part of us when at the stage of the giants." The incidents of his inner life appear to man as the reflected pictures of the events of the outer world that have now withdrawn, but are still to be perceived in the spiritual world. In the spiritual world are reflected the struggles of those beings who, though weaker in bodily strength, are in consequence stronger in spiritual strength. Whenever the overcoming of the rough forces or the giants appears in fairy tales it is founded on the perception in such an intermediate state. Man wishes to gain a clear insight about himself; he has lost sight of the spiritual world, but he says to himself: "I can gain a clear insight when I am in such an intermediate state. Then I shall be so wise that intelligence and shrewdness will gain the victory over the rough forces!" Then appear the powers that are indeed in the spiritual world and that correspond to our powers of intelligence. They appear and act, and enlighten man as to what happens in the spiritual world. He then relates what has happened in the spiritual world, and must relate it in such a way, that he says: "What I have seen and related happened once upon a time, and is still happening behind the world of sense, in the spiritual world, where there are different conditions of life." It may be that every time he has seen it under such conditions, the event is already past, together with the conditions which made such an action possible. Yet it may still be there. The point is, whether anyone entering an intermediate state observes it. It is neither here nor there, but everywhere, where there is anyone who can observe it. Therefore, every orthodox fairy tale begins with:—

"Once upon a time it happened—where, then, was it? Yes, where indeed was it not?" That is the correct beginning of a fairy tale, and every fairy tale must end with—"I once saw this; and if what happened in the spiritual world did not succumb to death, if it is not dead, it must still be alive to-day."

That is precisely the way in which every fairy tale should be related. The proper atmosphere is created, if the fairy tale always begins and ends in this manner.

Suppose someone, like the king in the second fairy tale, has to find a wife. He tries to find a being who represents to him as nearly as possible, in the human world, man's archetype in the spiritual world, as shown through the wise rulings of those powers who can be recognized by means of the intellectual soul. In the outer world it cannot be found; therefore, we must make the outer man subject to the inner man. On the physical plane man is subject to error; therefore, he must allow the deeper power to rule if he wishes to find such a thing, and even today he can do this if he transposes himself into the intermediate state and brings himself into relation with the forces that rule there. But those persons who are bearers of these powers today, live in retirement, where they are not distracted by the great events of life. Therefore, the king must go to his friend the hermit, who is poor and lives alone, but who knows the secrets of the forces binding man to the spiritual world and who can give to the king the branch of rosemary. The king cannot find through any organization, that which can only be determined by his archetype in the spiritual world. So he dreams at first that the golden bird comes, and he remains on in a sort of dream-waking condition. In this state, through the clear vision which one has in the spiritual world, he experiences all that I have shown, and gradually he comes to find out from those powers striving against human purity and human greatness, the pure capacity for happiness in man, which has been preserved even to our day. None of the powers that today are bound-up with the physical world can take him there; only such a power as appears to him when the intellectual soul, or rather the inner strength of the soul, is directed to the spiritual world. Here there appear to him, in pictures, forms such as the "magic horse." But this horse is only the shadow picture in the physical world of what stands behind it in the spiritual world. Those harmful forces that are to be found embodied in the physical world have struck the arrow into the body of the horse. The moment the soul is freed from these forces the powers which enable the king to judge the circumstances are aroused; so, if he does not look solely on the outer he will find what is suitable for him. With ordinary understanding he could go far in the world and would find people here and everywhere, but he would pass by the wife that he seeks, because he would not in the least understand the conditions that come into consideration here or how to regard them. The earlier conditions, those he is looking for, are there, maintained, but are distorted by the outer physical world, where most things indeed appear changed. In the physical world, we have not, as a matter of fact, the forces in their reality. But in the transformed glass king, that being who can show him where he should seek for his wife appears to him in its true character. The glass king has become transformed through the opposing forces of the outer world; and these forces assert themselves through that which absolutely entangles man in the conditions of the outer world. The glass king is at first quite enmeshed in outer world conditions; and this makes him different inwardly from what he really might have been. Man has in his Karma or destiny things really like a wrong—an evil blue-bottle. All this, which is at the bottom of the truth of things, is shown in pictures. One must picture the whole situation; how that which lies behind physical phenomena can be found in the forces that were awakened in the king. When the forces of his soul are awakened within him and he directs them aright the king finds that which was hidden by the outer physical forces—his bride.

A betrothal, or any such external event, is depicted that does not occur in ordinary circumstances but in circumstances where someone comes in contact with a leader of souls, who awakens the deeper forces within him, as the hermit did in the king. Man is led thereby to the forces which make everything in the physical world appear unreal for a time, but which he needs if it is to be made possible for him to observe the truth. Thus we see how, though apparently outer circumstances are the cause, other states of consciousness are present calling forth the real faculty of seership.

Every fairy tale can really be explained in this way; but it must be explained from the spiritual reality at the back of the whole world of fairy stories. Everything that occurs in a fairy story, even the individual features,

can be gradually discovered and elucidated. For example, the mysterious connection between the living perceptive forces and the hidden forces of ordinary life are visible if one looks within. This is wonderfully symbolized in the contact of the golden bird with the lily. Delicate, high spiritual forces are indeed latent in the lily, but they only appear when they have been aroused by the golden bird.

The established belief that everything around us is bewitched spiritual truth, and that man attains truth when he breaks the spell, is the basis of the realm of fairy tales. Truly we must be quite clear that a fairy tale is primarily the account of an astral event, but by constant repetition (for men have an extraordinary talent for changing things) minor details become altered. When we collect fairy tales as related by the people, we certainly have the remnants of an ancient picture seen astrally, but certain details may have been altered in the meanwhile; and a mistake can easily be made in explaining additional features as spiritual, whereas in a proper explanation of fairy tales it should always be recognized that we must go back to the archetype and identify it. Everything corresponds to such astral events.

The question may arise whether man has the same form today as he had in those earlier times, which are still the content of the spiritual experiences of the intermediate states. The answer is in the negative. Man has passed through very different forms and has only now evolved to his present one. But that which man has overcome, which he has cast forth, that too appears in a quite distinct external form. Man, in order to alienate himself from his giant power, had to cast forth the giant shapes and overcome them, improving his forces and raising them to the intellectual soul and the spiritual soul. There are beings, however, who have remained behind at the stage of the crude forces. Whenever something evil appears which has to be overcome, but which has remained stationary, on the astral plane, it always appears as a dragon or similar being; this is none other than the grotesque form, changed in the spiritual world, of that which man had to change and throw out of himself. Here, too, we must be clear that this corresponds to a quite distinct fact.

Now, in conclusion, I should like to relate another fairy tale for you to think out for yourselves. It will contain the divers motifs with which, as we have seen, man comes into touch on the astral plane. If you apply what I have said to this rather complicated fairy tale, you will almost be able to find the clues for yourselves. This fairy tale is a sort of synthesis, a bringing together of the most varied inter-playing forces.

It happened once upon a time—where, then, was it? It might have happened anywhere—where did it not happen?—There lived an old king, who had three sons and three daughters. When he was about to die, he said to his three sons: "Give my three daughters to whomsoever first asks for them in marriage, that they may not remain single. That is my first instruction. The second is that you should not visit a certain place, particularly at night!" And he showed the spot under a poplar tree in the woods. After the king died the sons endeavored to carry out his instructions. On the first evening someone shouted through the window, asking them to give him a king's daughter. The brothers did so, and threw one sister out of the window. The second evening someone again shouted in at the window asking that they should give him a king's daughter, and the brothers threw the second sister out of the window. In the same way on the third evening this happened again; the brothers threw the third sister out of the window. They were then alone. But now they were curious to know what were the circumstances connected with the poplar tree. So they went out one evening and sat under the poplar tree, lighted a fire, and fell asleep. The eldest was to keep watch. While he walked backwards and forwards, armed with his sword, he saw something eating the fire; on looking closer he saw it was a three-headed dragon. He then fought the three-headed dragon; he vanquished and buried him, but said nothing about it to his brothers, and in the morning they went home. The next evening they went out again, lighted a fire, and lay down beside it. This time the second brother had to keep watch. Soon he saw something eating the fire, and on looking closer saw it was a six-headed dragon. He fought the six-headed dragon, vanquished and buried him, but said nothing about it, and the others thought nothing had happened; and the next morning they went home. The third night the same thing happened: they lighted a fire, and the youngest brother had to keep watch. Almost as soon as the others were asleep, whilst he was walking up and down carrying his sword, he saw something eating the fire. He looked closer and hesitated a little, thus losing time. Then he began to fight the dragon, which was a nine-headed one; but by the time he had finally vanquished him the fire had gone out. Now he did

not want to surprise the others, so set about finding a light. He saw a little light between the twigs, which he managed to get, but it was not enough. Then he saw something fighting in the air, and asked what it was, and the fighting-beings replied: "We are the sun and the dawn, we are fighting for the day." So he loosened a cord which fastened up his garments and tied the sun and the dawn together, so that day might not begin. Then he went further to fetch light and fire, and came to a spot where three giants slept by a mighty fire. He took some of the fire, but as he tried to step over one of the giants some fire fell on the giant and woke him. The giant seized him with his hand, showed him to the others and said; "Look at the midge I have caught!" The king's son was greatly upset, for the giants wanted to kill him, but first struck a bargain with him, as they wanted something. They wanted to get hold of the king's three daughters but there was a dog and a chicken making such a noise that they could not get to them. The king's son promised to help them, and so the giants let him go free. A ball of thread was attached to him and the king's son went forward, carrying the ball of thread. It was arranged that every time he pulled the thread one of the giants should follow. He soon came to a river he could not cross. (All this time the brothers still slept.) He pulled the thread and one of the giants came and threw the trunk of a tree over the river so that he was able to cross it. Here he came to the king's palace, where he expected to find the sisters. He went in and entered one of the rooms. There he saw one of the sisters. She lay on a copper bed and had a little gold ring on her finger. This he took off and put on his own finger, and went on. Then he came to a second room where lay the second sister on a silver bed; she, too, had a little gold ring on her finger, which he took off and put on his own. Then he came to the third room, where the third sister lay on a golden bed, and he also put on her golden ring. Then he looked about him and discovered a very small opening which was the entrance to the castle. So he pulled the thread and the first giant tried to get through the door, while his head was through the door, but his body outside, the king's son quickly cut off his head. He did the same with the second giant and the third, and so he killed them all. Then he went back to his brothers, after he had first unbound the sun and the dawn. They looked at each other and said: "Oh! What a long night!" "Yes," he said, "it was a long night!" But like the others, he said nothing further, and they all went home.

Some time after this the brothers wanted to marry, and the youngest brother told the others he knew where there were a king's three daughters, and led them to the castle. The three brothers married, the youngest marrying the most beautiful one, and one who had lain on the golden bed. The youngest was his father-in-law's heir, and had therefore to live in a foreign land. After a time he wished to visit his native land and to take his wife with him. But his father-in-law said to him; "If you set forth on this journey your wife will be taken from you at the border, and perhaps you may never see her again!" They wanted to go, however, so they set out and took thirty giants to protect them. But when they came to the border the wife was torn away as if by an unknown power. He went back and asked his father-in-law where he could find his wife again. The father-in-law said to him: "If you find her at all it will only be in the White Country." So he set out to find his wife. But he did not know at all where the road to the White Country was. At last he came to a castle, and determined to ask the way to the White Country. On entering he met the lady of the castle, and saw that she was one of his own sisters whom her brothers had thrown out of the window. He asked for her husband, who was called in, and lo! he was a four-headed dragon! They asked him the way to the White Country, but he asserted that he did not know where the White Country was, but that his animals might know. The animals were called in, but none knew the road to the White Country. So the king's son went on and came to a second castle. There he found the second of his sisters. He asked for her husband, and he was called in. He was an eight-headed dragon, and he, too, knew nothing of a white land. "Perhaps," said he, "the animals might know." The animals were again called in, but none knew the way to the White Country, and so the king's son had to go on. After a time he came to a third castle, and there he found his third sister. He told her what he wanted, and she answered him very sadly. Her husband, a twelve-headed dragon was called in, and asked about the White Country, but he said he knew nothing of it, but it might be that one of his animals did. The animals were therefore called in, but none of them knew the White Country. At the very last came a lame wolf. "Yes," said he, "I once came to such a land; there I was wounded, and am now lame for evermore. I know the White Country; unfortunately for me, I know it." Said the king's son: "I want to be taken there." But the wolf would not go, even though they promised him whole herds of sheep. At last he was persuaded to guide the king's son as far as a hill from which he could see the White Country. They came to this hill, and the lame wolf left him there. The king's son found a spring from which he drank and felt greatly refreshed by the water. Then a

woman came by, whom he recognized at once as his captured wife, and she also recognizing him, immediately said to him: "You cannot carry me off yet, for if you do the magician who imprisons me here as his wife will at once bring me back on his magic horse. It flies through the air as quickly as thought." Whereupon the king's son said: "What, then shall we do?" She answered: "There is only one way; we must have a swifter horse. Go to the old woman who lives on the border. Hire yourself out to her as a servant, she will set you hard tasks, but you will soon find out how to accomplish them. You must demand as wages the youngest foal, and a saddle. Say to the old woman: "I want the old saddle that lies over there on the ground, covered with dirt. Thirdly, you will demand a very old bridle." With these instructions the king's son went on his way and came to a stream. As he rested beside it he saw a fish lying on the bank. The fish begged him—"Take me and throw me back into the water; you will be doing me a great kindness!" He did so, and while he was doing it the fish gave him a whistle, and said to him: "If you ever want anything, just whistle, and I will do you a service." He took the little whistle and went on.

After a while he met an ant, who was pursued by her enemy, a spider. He freed her, and in return the ant gave him a small whistle, and told him that if he were ever in trouble and whistled, help would be sent him. He took it and went on his way. Soon he met a wounded fox, who had a silver arrow stuck in him. The fox said: "If you will draw out the arrow, and give me some herb roots for my *wound*, I will help you if ever you are in a great difficulty." The king's son did this, and the fox also gave him a whistle. With these three whistles in his possession the king's son went to the old woman who lived on the border. He told her he wished to hire himself to her as a serving man. "That you may," said she, "but service with me is very hard, so far no one has been able to stand it." Saying this she led him out into a field where ninety-nine men were hanging. "All these men hired themselves out to me, but none could stand my service. If you still wish to come and are also not able to stand it you may be the hundredth." However, he entered her service for a year. How in that district a year has only three days. On the first day the old woman made him a soup that sent people to sleep, and then she sent him away with three horses. Having taken the soup he soon fell asleep, and when he awoke the three horses were gone. He bethought himself of the three whistles; he took the first one out and whistled. There was a kind of spring at that spot, and three gold fish came swimming along. As soon as he touched them they turned into three horses, and so he brought the horses back to the old woman. She herself had changed the horses into the gold fish. When she saw him return with the horses she so lost her temper that she threw herself from side to side with rage.

The next day the old woman again made him a sleepy soup, and sent him away with the horses. The soup again sent him to sleep, and when he awoke the horses had disappeared. Then he whistled with the second whistle, and three gold ants instantly appeared. As soon as he touched them there were his three horses again, which he brought back to the old woman. Then the old woman was quite wild, because she herself had enchanted the horses, and she railed against the horses. But the king's son was saved. The third day the old woman said to herself: "I must set about; this much more cunningly." She again made him a sleepy soup, and sent him out with the horses. When the soup had sent him to sleep she changed the horses into three golden eggs, which she placed under her own seat and sat herself on them. When the king's son awoke, the horses were gone, and so he whistled on the third whistle. Now just imagine how cleverly things happened; the fox came by! He said; "This time the task is a little more difficult, but we shall manage it. I shall go to the hen-yard and make, a great commotion there. The old woman will spring up and go out, and at that moment you will touch the eggs and they will be changed." And so it happened. The fox went to the farmyard and made a disturbance, and, as the old woman sprang up and ran out the king's son touched the eggs; and when she came back there were the three horses! The old woman was now obliged to say to the king's son: "What will you have for your reward?" She expected he would want something very special. But he said: "I only want the foal that was born last night, the old saddle over there covered with dirt, and an old bridle." These she gave him. The foal was so small he had to carry it on his back. When evening came the little foal said: "Now you can sleep while I go to a spring and drink." Next morning it returned, and could already gallop with gigantic rapidity. The second night the same thing happened, and the third day it led him to the place where his wife was banished. His wife was then placed on the little horse—and this is the point that proves conclusively to anyone who understands the occult origin of fairy tales—Then said the king's son: "At any rate we shall travel through the air." The wife

answered: "With the swiftness of thought!" Now when the magician who had imprisoned her noticed this, he mounted his magic horse to hurry after them. The horse asked him: "At what rate shall we travel through the air?" And he replied: "With the swiftness of will or of thought!" He rushed after them, getting nearer—and when he was quite near the magic horse told the one in front of him to stop. "I will only stop when you are quite close," was the answer. At the same moment the magic horse reared, threw the robber off, then he joined the little horse, and so the queen was freed. The king's son was now able to go back with his wife, and they lived again in their own country. And if the event has not faded away they still live there to-day.

That is another somewhat more complicated fairy tale that contains the most varied features. Until the time comes when we can say more in explanation of this fairy tale, we must just let it penetrate our souls in order to decipher the different features that here harmonize so wonderfully. Of course, all that has been brought in through tradition must naturally be sifted out from it. But you will be able to find the threads for everything if you follow the lines of the principle depicted here; the dragon-theme; the theme of the three sisters who were thrown out of the window; the theme of the conquest of the dragons at the fire; the theme of cleverness; the marriage theme (the intellectual soul, with the outer world); and once again in a unique manner the theme of the cleverness of the magic forces. Then Nemesis—Karma—Destiny—appears in a wonderful way when the king's son again meets his sisters. The three brothers had thrown out their higher sisterly nature—hence the death of the dragons at the fire, and so on.

Such fairy tales are the experiences of certain individuals among people who are in such intermediate states. The great popular myths of the gods are also representations of that which the initiates experience on the astral and higher planes. Fairy tales stand in relation to the great popular myths of the gods in the following manner: The great popular myths can be understood when we realize the great comprehensive circumstances of the Cosmos which underlie them; and fairy tales can be understood when we realize that the different scenes and pictures are nothing but the repetition of astral events. In remote times of antiquity all men had astral experiences. They became fewer and fewer. One man told them to another, the other took it up, and so the fairy tales were carried from place to place. They appeared in the most varied languages, and we can note the similarity of the fairy tale treasures the whole world over, if we can unveil the astral events that serve as their basis. Any sensible man who travels about can even now easily find the last remnants of atavistic clairvoyance. Somewhere he may meet a man who relates what he has seen in the astral world as his own personal experience. Such a man in travelling about the country will hear fairy tales told by those who still possess a presentiment of the real-truth. In this way they have been inscribed in our literature; thus did the brothers Grimm collect their fairy tales, and in like manner others have collected them, who were mostly not clairvoyant themselves, but got them second, third, or even tenth hand, so that they encountered, them in a very mutilated form. But the time when men were still in this close touch with the spiritual world is approaching its twilight. Men are withdrawing more and more from the spiritual world; atavistic clairvoyance is becoming rarer and rarer at least, what may be called healthy clairvoyance; and true clairvoyance tends more and more to be attainable only through training; so that in time to come most people who know anything of the matter will say of that which people saw in ancient times; "Once upon a time old people related this or that from their astral experiences. Where was it then? It might have been anywhere."

Nowadays, however, we can very seldom find anyone who can relate things from a genuine source; and it will be said of fairy tale experiences—"They happened once upon a time, and if they are not dead, these fairy-tale experiences still live." But for most people, who are inwardly entangled on the physical plane, they have long since been dead.