

THREE MEN OF GOTHAM

There is a town in England called Go-tham, and many merry stories are told of the queer people who used to live there.

One day two men of Go-tham met on a bridge. Hodge was coming from the market, and Peter was going to the market.

"Where are you going?" said Hodge.

"I am going to the market to buy sheep," said Peter.

"Buy sheep?" said Hodge. "And which way will you bring them home?"

"I shall bring them over this bridge," said Peter.

"No, you shall not," said Hodge.

"Yes, but I will," said Peter.

"You shall not," said Hodge.

"I will," said Peter.

Then they beat with their sticks on the ground as though there had been a hundred sheep between them.

"Take care!" cried Peter. "Look out that my sheep don't jump on the bridge."

"I care not where they jump," said Hodge; "but they shall not go over it."

"But they shall," said Peter.

"Have a care," said Hodge; "for if you say too much, I will put my fingers in your mouth."

"Will you?" said Peter.

Just then another man of Gotham came from the market with a sack of meal on his horse. He heard his neighbors quarrel about sheep; but he could see no sheep between them, and so he stopped and spoke to them.

"Ah, you foolish fellows!" he cried. "It is strange that you will never learn wisdom.—Come here, Peter, and help me lay my sack on my shoulder."

Peter did so, and the man carried his meal to the side of the bridge.

"Now look at me," he said, "and learn a lesson." And he opened the mouth of the sack, and poured all the meal into the river.

"Now, neighbors," he said, "can you tell how much meal is in my sack?"

"There is none at all!" cried Hodge and Peter together.

"You are right," said the man; "and you that stand here and quarrel about nothing, have no more sense in your heads than I have meal in my sack!"

OTHER WISE MEN OF GOTHAM

One day, news was brought to Gotham that the king was coming that way, and that he would pass through the town. This did not please the men of Gotham at all. They hated the king, for they knew that he was a cruel, bad man. If he came to their town, they would have to find food and lodg-ing for him and his men; and if he saw anything that pleased him, he would be sure to take it for his own. What should they do?

They met together to talk the matter over.

"Let us chop down the big trees in the woods, so that they will block up all the roads that lead into the town," said one of the wise men.

"Good!" said all the rest.

So they went out with their axes, and soon all the roads and paths to the town were filled with logs and brush. The king's horse-men would have a hard time of it getting into Gotham. They would either have to make a new road, or give up the plan al-to-geth-er, and go on to some other place.

When the king came, and saw that the road had been blocked up, he was very angry.

"Who chopped those trees down in my way?" he asked of two country lads that were passing by.

"The men of Gotham," said the lads.

"Well," said the king, "go and tell the men of Gotham that I shall send my sher-iff into their town, and have all their noses cut off."

The two lads ran to the town as fast as they could, and made known what the king had said.

Every-body was in great fright. The men ran from house to house, carrying the news, and asking one another what they should do.

"Our wits have kept the king out of the town," said one; "and so now our wits must save our noses."

"True, true!" said the others. "But what shall we do?"

Then one, whose name was Dobbin, and who was thought to be the wisest of them all, said, "Let me tell you something. Many a man has been punished because he was wise, but I have never heard of any one being harmed because he was a fool. So, when the king's sher-iff comes, let us all act like fools."

"Good, good!" cried the others. "We will all act like fools."

It was no easy thing for the king's men to open the roads; and while they were doing it, the king grew tired of waiting, and went back to London. But very early one morning, the sheriff with a party of fierce soldiers rode through the woods, and between the fields, toward Gotham. Just before they reached the town, they saw a queer sight. The old men were rolling big stones up the hill, and all the young men were looking on, and grunting very loudly.

The sheriff stopped his horses, and asked what they were doing.

"We are rolling stones up-hill to make the sun rise," said one of the old men.

"You foolish fellow!" said the sheriff. "Don't you know that the sun will rise without any help?"

"Ah! will it?" said the old man. "Well, I never thought of that. How wise you are!"

"And what are *you* doing?" said the sheriff to the young men.

"Oh, we do the grunting while our fathers do the working," they answered.

"I see," said the sheriff. "Well, that is the way the world goes every-where." And he rode on toward the town.

He soon came to a field where a number of men were building a stone wall.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Why, master," they answered, "there is a cuck-oo in this field, and we are building a wall around it so as to keep the bird from straying away."

"You foolish fellows!" said the sheriff. "Don't you know that the bird will fly over the top of your wall, no matter how high you build it?"

"Why, no," they said. "We never thought of that. How very wise you are!"

The sheriff next met a man who was carrying a door on his back.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"I have just started on a long jour-ney," said the man.

"But why do you carry that door?" asked the sheriff.

"I left my money at home."

"Then why didn't you leave the door at home too?"

"I was afraid of thieves; and you see, if I have the door with me, they can't break it open and get in."

"You foolish fellow!" said the sheriff. "It would be safer to leave the door at home, and carry the money with you."

"Ah, would it, though?" said the man. "Now, I never thought of that. You are the wisest man that I ever saw."

Then the sheriff rode on with his men; but every one that they met was doing some silly thing.

"Truly I believe that the people of Gotham are all fools," said one of the horsemen.

"That is true," said another. "It would be a shame to harm such simple people."

"Let us ride back to London, and tell the king all about them," said the sheriff.

"Yes, let us do so," said the horsemen.

So they went back, and told the king that Gotham was a town of fools; and the king laughed, and said that if that was the case, he would not harm them, but would let them keep their noses.

POCAHONTAS

There was once a very brave man whose name was John Smith. He came to this country many years ago, when there were great woods everywhere, and many wild beasts and Indians. Many tales are told of his ad-ven-tures, some of them true and some of them untrue. The most famous of all these is the fol-low-ing:—

One day when Smith was in the woods, some Indians came upon him, and made him their pris-on-er. They led him to their king, and in a short time they made ready to put him to death.

A large stone was brought in, and Smith was made to lie down with his head on it. Then two tall Indians with big clubs in their hands came forward. The king and all his great men stood around to see. The Indians raised their clubs. In another moment they would fall on Smith's head.

But just then a little Indian girl rushed in. She was the daugh-ter of the king, and her name was Po-ca-hon'tas. She ran and threw herself between Smith and the up-lift-ed clubs. She clasped Smith's head with her arms. She laid her own head upon his.

"O father!" she cried, "spare this man's life. I am sure he has done you no harm, and we ought to be his friends."

The men with the clubs could not strike, for they did not want to hurt the child. The king at first did not know what to do. Then he spoke to some of his war-riors, and they lifted Smith from the ground. They untied the cords from his wrists and feet, and set him free.

The next day the king sent Smith home; and several Indians went with him to protect him from harm.

After that, as long as she lived, Po-ca-hon-tas was the friend of the white men, and she did a great many things to help them.

Sources:

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