

TRACE

**Traditional Children's Stories for a Common
Future**

The Grateful Creatures



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Once a father had three sons - two wise ones, whereas the third was a blockhead (a fool). The father sent his sons to earn some money by working. He gave to each son a wicker basket with provision during the travel, and so they walked and walked, until they felt a need for lunch.

The wise brothers said: -Should we each eat one's own ration as if we had quarrelled? Let's eat the younger brother's ration first, to make his burden lighter.

So they had a meal and travelled on, until they wanted to eat dinner. Now each of the clever brothers ate from his own basket and did not give anything to the younger brother - the blockhead. The younger brother claimed:

- Brothers, I want to eat, too!

- But has anybody told you to devour your bread so quickly? - they retorted.

The poor chap had to walk on with an empty stomach. When the snack was eaten, everyone again continued walking until it was time for supper. The clever brothers ate food each from his own basket and gave nothing to the blockhead.

The younger brother claimed:

- Brothers, I want to eat, too!

- Have you got a hole in your basket, so all your food has spilled? - they again retorted.

The poor chap had to go to sleep without supper and quite hungry.

He woke up in the morning and saw - the wise brothers had gone away, leaving him alone in the forest. What was he to do now? So he decided to start walking and follow the direction to the sun - maybe he would find the right way. He walked and walked, till he noticed a big ant-hill on top of which the wind had dropped a thick tree. The ants with woeful voices asked him to help and remove the tree. The blockhead climbed under the tree, pushed with all his might - and the tree rolled away!

- Thank you, thank you! -the ants exclaimed. - In hard times we will help you!

He walked on, and all of sudden he heard the bees buzzing woefully and asking for help.

The blockhead took a look - there was a bear climbing into the tree to get some honey. As he flung his quite empty basket against the bear, he managed to hit the beast directly on the nose. The bear was so frightened that he fell down and took to his heels.

- Thank you, thank you! - the bees exclaimed. - In hard times we will help you!

The blockhead walked on, and now he heard the plaintive croaking of the raven. Looking closer, he saw - the raven's young offspring had fallen out of the nest. The blockhead took up the little raven and placed it in the nest.

- Thank you, thank you! - the old raven exclaimed. - In hard times I will help you!

The blockhead continued his travel, until he saw a great manor. He decided to find a job with the lord of the manor. The lord stated:

- I'll give you three tasks to do, if you accomplish them, you will receive a full pouch of golden coins, but if not - you will be skinned alive!

The blockhead thought: "I have to try it anyway, because my father expects me returning home with profit."

In the evening the landlord stated:

- Tonight you have to transport all my grain into the house, to thresh it at one go, and all the grain must be winnowed.

The blockhead sat down on the threshold of the threshing barn and sighed heavily.

How can one do so big amount of work? Then, out of the blue, the ant approached him:

- What are you worried about, laddie, what has happened?

The boy explained, that he must gather in all grain and thresh it during one night.

But the ant calmed him down:

- Do not worry at all, we will surely gather it in and thresh it.

A great multitude of ants arrived, they dragged and threshed, dragged and threshed, and by the dawn all work was completed, the grain was threshed and collected in big heaps.

In the morning the landlord was shrugging his shoulders - who can imagine such wonder?

But in the evening he gave another task to the blockhead:

- Tonight you have to build a wax church on this hill.

The blockhead sat down at the hillside and sighed heavily. Then, out of the blue, the bee approached him:

- "What are you worried about, laddie, what has happened?"

The boy explained, what a great task must be completed during one night.

But the bee calmed him down:

- Do not worry at all, we shall build the church.

A great number of bees arrived flying, with great vigour they started to build the church, and by the daybreak a magnificent building was standing on the hilltop. The landlord came in the morning and clapped his hands in wonder. But in the evening he gave another task to the blockhead:

- "A golden cock must be placed on the spire of the wax church."

The blockhead sat down at the church door and sighed heavily. Then, out of the blue, the raven approached him:

- "What are you worried about, laddie, what has happened?"

The boy explained everything - a golden cock must be placed on the church spire.

But the raven calmed him down: - "Do not worry at all, this task also can be accomplished. Now sit down on my back, we shall fly to the devil's castle."

The blockhead sat down on raven's back and in no time they had reached the devil's castle.

The raven dashed in through the window and grabbed the golden cock. But he could not carry double on his back, therefore they had to run on foot. Having heard the noise, the devils started to chase them. The devils nearly managed to catch them, but the raven cast down a small drop of water out of his wing, and now a large lake emerged on the ground. While the devils ran to fetch boats, they had already moved a distance away. But the devils would not leave them at peace, soon they were at the heels of the fugitives again.

Now the raven dropped a grain of sand from his other wing, and immediately a great mountain was created. While devils were running to fetch shovels, they already were a distance away. But the devils did not let them go, soon they were at their heels again. Then the raven threw down one feather, and a thick forest was created. While the devils run to fetch axes, they were already in the manor and put the golden cock on the church spire.

In the morning, the landlord was very surprised and started singing praises of the blockhead's great accomplishments. He entreated the young man to remain at the manor and take landlord's daughter as his wife. But the blockhead would not agree - the lord's stock will not give up their whims - so he took the earned money and went home to his father.

When he arrived home, the clever brothers were already there. They had told all sorts of nonsense to their father - as if they had been searching for their brother everywhere and therefore could not look for employment. But when the father got to know the whole truth, he got very angry, turned the clever brothers out of the house and told them to go and learn trade skills. But he and the younger son lived a happy life at home.