

Toads and Diamonds by Charles Perrault.

Once upon a time a widow had two daughters. The eldest was so much like her in the face and in the mood that whoever saw her, saw her mother. They were both so unpleasant and so proud that nobody could live with them. The youngest, who was the spitting image of her father for the sweetness and honesty, was one the most beautiful girls ever seen. As people love their own likeness, this mother loved her eldest daughter, and at the same time hated the youngest one – she made her eat in the kitchen and work continually.

Added to other things, this poor child had to draw water twice a day a mile and a half far from home and she had to bring back a large pitcher full of water. One day, as she was at this fountain, a poor woman went towards her who begged her some water.

“Of course, my dear” this pretty girl said ; and rinsing immediately the pitcher, she drew water from the best place of the fountain and gave it to her, lifting the pitcher so that the poor woman could drink more easily.

The good woman, having drunk, told her: “You are so pretty, so good and so honest that I can’t help giving you a gift (because she was a fairy, who had taken the appearance of a poor country woman to see how honest she was). “I give you a gift” the fairy continued “at every word you speak, a flower or a precious stone will go out of your mouth.”

When this beautiful girl came back home, her mother scolded her for staying so long at the fountain.”

“I beg your pardon, mother” the poor girl said “for not hurrying”. And when saying these words, two roses, two pearls and two diamonds came out of her mouth.

“What do I see? The mother said astonished. “I think I see pearls and diamonds spring out of her mouth! Where do they come from, my daughter? (It was the first time that she had called her, daughter). The poor child told naively her story, throwing a lot of diamonds.

“In good faith” the mother said” I must send my eldest. Well, Fanchon, see what is springing out of your sister’s mouth when she speaks. Wouldn’t you like to have the same gift? You have nothing else to do but go to the fountain, draw water and give it, kindly, if a poor woman asks you some.

“It would be a very fine sight indeed” the ill-tempered said “ to see me draw water”. “You must go” the mother answered “and now”.

She went there grumbling all the way, taking with her the best silver pitcher.

She was no sooner at the fountain that she saw coming out of the woods a lady wonderfully dressed who asked her to drink: she was the same fairy who appeared to her sister, but she had taken the air and dress of a princess to see how far this girl’s rudeness would go.

“Have I come here” the rude and proud girl asked “to give you water? – Have I brought this silver pitcher especially for your lady? However you can drink if you fancy”.

“You are not honest” the fairy added without getting angry. “Since you are not so helpful, I will give you a gift. Every word you will speak, a snake or a toad will spring out of your mouth”.

When her mother saw her coming back, she cried out: “Well daughter?”

“Well mother?” the rude answered, throwing out of her mouth two snakes and 2 toads.

“My god!” The mother cried “What do I see there?” it is her sister who is the cause. She will pay for it.”



Drawing by Gaetan (not finished yet!!)

And immediately she ran to punch her. The poor child fled away and went to hide in the forest.

The king's son, who was coming back from hunting, met her, and seeing her so pretty, asked her what she did there alone and why she was crying.

"Alas, Sir, my mother has turned me out of doors."

The King's son, who saw five or six pearls and as many diamonds springing out of her mouth, asked her where they came from. She told him the whole story.

The king's son fell in love with her, and, thinking such gift was worth more than any marriage, conducted her to the palace of the King his father and there he married her.

As for her eldest sister, she made her so hated that her mother turned her off and the unfortunate girl, having run a good while, without finding anyone to take her, died in a corner of the forest.

Moral

Diamonds and gold coins may
Work some wonders in their way;
But a gentle word is worth
More than all the gems on earth.