

*The Folktale - Stith Thompson p 61*

The tales of helpful horses have a tendency to merge into one another in many of their details, sometimes in the way in which the magic horse is acquired, sometimes in the remarkable deeds accomplished. Nevertheless, the separate tales are unmistakable entities. This confusion of parts is seen with especial clearness in the tale of the Princess on the Glass Mountain (Type 530). In its best known form the tale is about a poor peasant who has three sons of whom the youngest is considered a good for nothing. Every morning the peasant finds that his meadow has been grazed bare by horses. He sends his sons out to keep watch. The two elder go to sleep, and the grass continues to be eaten down. The youngest remains awake and succeeds in catching the horse. He hides the horse, cares for it, and rides it.

The king offers his daughter in marriage to the man who can ride up to her on top of a glass mountain. Although all suitors have failed to do so, the hero succeeds and receives from the princess at the summit a token which he later presents and by means of which he receives her in marriage.(17)

This story is clearly divided into the two parts mentioned above, the acquisition of the horse and the marvelous deed. Sometimes instead of the watching for the devastating animal, the hero may take care of his Bocks at night so as to keep them from wandering over into the possessions of an ogre or troll. The animals do so in spite of his watching, and he overcomes the troll when he goes after the animals. He finds the magic horses among the troll's possessions. This introduction would seem to have been borrowed from the tale of The Dragon Fighter (Type 300). In a third type of introduction the sons must keep watch over the body of their dead father.

The second part of the tale also displays considerable variety. Instead of to the glass mountain the riding may be to the top of a tall building, three-storied or four-storied. Sometimes the magic horse must jump over a wide excavation or ditch; sometimes, as in the last two stories we have noticed, he helps his master to victory in a tournament; and sometimes he wins a race, it may be with the princess herself.

The tale is well-distributed over Europe, particularly northern and eastern, and it is found in the Caucasus and the Near East. One version is reported from Burma. The last word on this tale has certainly not been written. Dr. Boberg's study is far from adequate, since it is based upon less than half of the available material. Her analysis of the story into "oikotypes," each characteristic of a certain linguistic area, is unconvincing, as Professor Krohn clearly shows. On the other hand, Krohn's conclusion that the tale originated in India and reached Europe at a relatively late period by way of Asia Minor is at least problematical, in view of the fact that only one version has been reported from India.

(17). See Inger Margrethe Boberg, "*Prinsessen pa Glasbjaerget*," *Danske Studier*, 1928, pp. 16-53. Discussed by Krohn, *Übersicht*, pp. 96-99. For a later study by Dr. Boberg see *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Märchens*, II, 627. For a very ancient analogue of the idea of reaching the princess on a height, see p. 274, below.