

Stith Thompson - The Folktale - p 82

A third tale of skill recounts the accomplishments of The Three Doctors (Type 660), who show their extraordinary ability in surgery. One of them removes one of his eyes, another removes his heart, and the third a hand. They are to replace these members without injury the next morning. The story does not turn out as happily as the other tales of skill, for during the night the severed members are eaten and animal members are brought in to act as substitutes. In this way one of the doctors acquires a cat's eye which sees best at night, another one is given a thief's hand which makes him want to steal, and the third is given a hog's heart, so that he is impelled to root in the ground. This tale likewise is apparently literary in origin, since it is told in the Middle Ages in the *Gesta Romanorum* and was reworked in the sixteenth century by Hans Sachs. As an oral anecdote it is popular in the Baltic states and is told throughout Scandinavia, in Ireland, Flanders, Germany, Russia, and Hungary. It seems not to be known in the Romance countries nor to have traveled outside of Europe.

All three of these tales of marvelous skill appear to belong to literature rather than to folklore, though all of them have been taken over by the tellers of oral tales.