

### C. BANISHED WIFE OR MAIDEN

The same hostile forces which frequently bring about the replacement of the true bride by the false are often responsible for the invention of slanders or for other machinations which result in the banishment of an innocent wife or maiden. Four popular and widely distributed tales have this central motivation, and still others have developed in particular areas.(22) This theme of the banished wife was popular in the literature of the Middle Ages, and sometimes appeared in forms very close to those found in oral tradition today (23)

Most closely related to the tragic story of Constance, as Chaucer has made it known to the literary world, are The Maiden Without Hands (Type 706) and The Three Golden Sons (Type 707). These two tales have in common the motif of the wife who is accused of giving birth to animals or monsters The Maiden Without Hands always begins by telling how the heroine has her hands cut off and is abandoned to her fate. The reasons for this cruel punishment differ widely as the tale is followed from one area to another. It may be because she refuses to marry her father, (24) or because her father sold her to the devil (S211), or because, in spite of his commands, she has persisted in praying, or because of the jealousies and slanders of her mother-in-law or sister-in-law. Whether she is abandoned in the woods or on the sea, she is observed by a king (25) who takes her home and marries her in spite of her mutilation. For the second time, she is cast forth with her newborn children because one of her relatives has changed a letter announcing their birth, so as to make the message announce the birth of monsters. This central incident will be familiar to all readers of *The Man of Law's Tale*. The way in which the heroine has her hands restored and is eventually reunited to her husband is handled with considerable variety, both in written and oral versions. Sometimes also, as in Chaucer, there is reduplication of the banishment.

The literary treatment of this general theme begins as early as the year 1200 in southern England. Between that time and the seventeenth century it received not fewer than seventeen distinct literary handlings,(26) including those in Chaucer and Gower and in the romance of *Emare*. With slight variations, it appears in the *Thousand and One Nights* from which it has entered the Arabic oral tradition. Basile tells the story in his *Pentamerone* and it forms the subject of a special group of south Slavic folksongs. (27) Whatever may be the relation of the oral tale to the well-known literary treatments, there can be no doubt as to the popularity of the theme among unlettered storytellers. Few collections of any extent in all of Europe from Ireland to eastern Russia fail to have this story. It is known in the Near East and in central Africa, but has not been noted in the tales of India or lands beyond. In America it has not only been taken over by the Micmac and Wyandot Indians but has been carried by the French to Missouri and by Cape Verde Islanders o Massachusetts. It has reached Brazil and Chile in South America. The oral ale is so popular and so widely distributed that it deserves more study than t has yet received.

Even more popular is the other tale of the calumniated wife, The Three Golden Sons (Type 707). Though no adequate investigation has been given to this story, it is clear that it is one of the eight or ten best known plots in the world. A cursory examination of easily available reference works shows 414 versions, an indication that a thorough search might bring to light several hundred more. These are found in practically every European tale collection. In Asia they have been reported from almost every quarter of Siberia, from the Near East, and from India. It is well established in all parts of Africa. In America three traditions are represented: the French among the French Canadians and the

Thompson River Indians, the Portuguese in Brazil and among the Cape Verde Islanders in Massachusetts, and the Spanish among the Tepecano Indians of Mexico and in the white tradition of Chile.(28) It does not seem to have a long literary history, since the oldest version appeared in the sixteenth century in Straparola's *Nights*. In the early eighteenth, Madame d'Aulnoy and Galland both published it, the former using a talc based upon Straparola and the latter reporting one which he had heard in Arabic. The story would seem to belong almost entirely to folklore rather than to literature. Its distribution would suggest European origin, though a thorough study might conceivably show that the dissemination was in the other direction.

Over the entire area the story appears with considerable uniformity. As *The Maiden Without Hands*, the king marries a girl whom he happens meet. Here, however, we usually have three girls who make their boias as to what would happen if they should marry the king. The king overhears the youngest of the girls say that if she were the queen she would be triplets with golden hair, a chain around their necks, and a star on their foreheads. After the king has taken her as wife her sisters plot against her. They substitute a dog for the newborn children and accuse the wife of giving birth to the dog. The children are thrown into a stream, but they are rescued sometimes by a miller or a fisherman. The wife is imprisoned, (29) or banished. After the children have grown up, the eldest one sets out on a quest. The reason for his undertaking the quest varies much in the different versions. He may go out to try to find his father or to seek the speaking bird, the singing tree and the water of life.(30) On his quest the eldest brother fails and is transformed into a marble column. The second brother has the same experience and it remains for the youngest (sometimes a sister) to rescue them. The kindness and consideration of the latter secures the help of an old woman, and eventually the disenchantment of the brothers and the possession of the magic bird and the magic objects. When all have returned from the quest, the king's attention is attracted by means of the magic objects, and the bird of truth reveals to him the whole story. The children and wife are restored and the sisters-in-law punished.

(22). The whole subject of the outcast child, including both banished daughters and banished sons, has been discussed in some detail by E. S. Hartland (*Folk-Lore Journal*, IV, 308). He makes the following divisions:

- (1) the King Lear type, dealing with the adventures of the king's three daughters;
- (2) the value of salt type, concerned only with the adventures of the youngest daughter;
- (3) the Joseph type, in which a boy or girl is banished because of dreams of future greatness.

The fourth and fifth types record the career of an only son who has fallen without reasonable cause under his father's anger. Of these types, the third will be discussed in section IX, p. 138, below. The fourth and fifth are represented by Types 671 and 517.

(23). An excellent discussion of this whole cycle of literary tales is found in Margaret Schlauch's *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens* (New York, 1927).

(24). An incident which we shall find in Type 510B.

(25). See Motif N711 and all its subdivisions for references to other tales in which this incident appears.

(26). For a listing of these, see Bolte-Polivka, I, 298ff. The whole tale has been studied by Däumling (Studie über den Typus des Mädchens ohne Hände, München, 1912) and the Comte du Puymaigrac (Revue d'histoire des religions, Sept.-Oct., 1884; summarized in Mélusine, II, 309).

(27). For these, see Bolte-Polivka, I, 306.

(28). For a study of the Chilean versions of the tale, see Rodolfo Lenz, "Un Grupo de Consejas Chilenas, Estudio de Novelística comparada" (Santiago, 1912); see also Espinosa, Journal of American Folklore, XXVII,

(29). In some versions the wife may be thrown into a stream and transformed. as in The Black and the White Bride (Type 403).

(30). In connection with the quest, the story frequently shows the influence of The Three Hairs from the Devil's Beard (Type 461).

(31). The oldest known version of this story, that in Straparola's Nights is a thorough amalgamation of the two tales.