

Stith Thompson - The Folktale - p 77-78

We have already encountered several magic animals, aside from the many helpful beasts which assist in the action of folktales. The hen that lays golden eggs, in Jack and the Beanstalk, and the horse or donkey which drops gold for its master are but two of these. Perhaps most surprising of all magic animals is the half-chick. Because he appears so frequently in French tales, he is usually known by his French title, Demi-coq (Type 715). The very fact of his being only a half animal has caused the tellers of this tale to permit themselves the greatest extravagances of invention. Two children are left a cock as their only inheritance. They divide it by cutting it in two. One of them receives the help of a fairy godmother who makes the half-cock magic. Demi-coq now sets out on his adventures. He first wishes to recover some borrowed money. Under his wings, or elsewhere in his body, he takes with him some robbers, two foxes, and a stream of water. When he goes to the castle and demands the money, he is imprisoned with the hens, but the foxes eat them up. Likewise in the stable, the robbers steal the horses. When he is to be burned, the stream puts out the fire. He is finally given the money. The story usually ends with the discomfiting of the king. When, in spite of all his tricks, Demi-coq is eaten by the king, he keeps crowing from the king's body.

This story has been studied, as far as the western European versions are concerned, by Ralph S. Boggs.⁽¹²⁾ His conclusion is that the center of the development is Castile and that the tale spread from there throughout France and was carried to various parts of South America—Brazil, Chili, and Argentina—by Portuguese and Spanish settlers, and to the Cochiti Indians of New Mexico and to Missouri by the Spanish and French, respectively. In the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the story appeared twice, once in France and once in Spain. It is referred to in a play published in France in 1759. Boggs is of the opinion that the Spanish tale given literary treatment in the early nineteenth century by Fernan Caballero has been of primary importance in the development of this story in southwest Europe. This tale is, however, not confined to that area, but, with some variations, is found throughout most of the continent and as far east as India. It is very unevenly distributed. No versions have been reported from the British Isles, from Germany, or Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, the Finns possess nearly a hundred, and it is popular in Estonia and Russia. As a supplement to Boggs's study, a treatment of the tale in the other areas would be illuminating.

(12). The Halfchick. Tale in Spain and France.