

The Leprechaun

by William Allingham

Little Cowboy, what have you heard,
Up on the lonely rath's green mound?
Only the plaintive yellow bird
Sighing in sultry fields around,
Chary, chary, chary, chee-ee!—
Only the grasshopper and the bee?—
 'Tip-tap, rip-rap,
 Tick-a-tack-too!

Scarlet leather, sewn together,
This will make a shoe.
Left, right, pull it tight;
Summer days are warm;
Underground in winter,
Laughing at the storm!'
Lay your ear close to the hill.
Do you not catch the tiny clamour,
Busy click of an elfin hammer,
Voice of the Leprechaun singing shrill
As he merrily plies his trade?
 He's a span
 And a quarter in height.
Get him in sight, hold him tight,
 And you're a made
 Man!

You watch your cattle the summer day,
Sup on potatoes, sleep in the hay;
How would you like to roll in your carriage,
Look for a duchess's daughter in marriage?
Seize the Shoemaker—then you may!
 'Big boots a-hunting,
 Sandals in the hall,
 White for a wedding-feast,
 Pink for a ball.
 This way, that way,
 So we make a shoe;
 Getting rich every stitch,
 Tick-tack-too!'

Nine-and-ninety treasure-crocks
This keen miser-fairy hath,
Hid in mountains, woods, and rocks,
Ruin and round-tow'r, cave and rath,
And where the cormorants build;
From times of old
 Guarded by him;
 Each of them fill'd
 Full to the brim
 With gold!

I caught him at work one day, myself,
In the castle-ditch where foxglove grows,—
A wrinkled, wizen'd, and bearded Elf,
Spectacles stuck on his pointed nose,
Silver buckles to his hose,
Leather apron—shoe in his lap—
 'Rip-rap, tip-tap,
 Tick-tack-too!
 (A grasshopper on my cap!
 Away the moth flew!)
 Buskins for a fairy prince,
 Brogues for his son,—
 Pay me well, pay me well,
 When the job is done!'

The rogue was mine, beyond a doubt.
I stared at him; he stared at me;
'Servant, Sir!' 'Humph!' says he,
And pull'd a snuff-box out.
He took a long pinch, look'd better pleased,
The queer little Leprechaun;
Offer'd the box with a whimsical grace,—
Pouf! he flung the dust in my face,
And while I sneezed,
 Was gone!