

## The Three Sillies

Once upon a time, when folk were not so wise as they are nowadays, there lived a farmer and his wife who had one daughter. Now every evening a young squire would stroll over to see her and stop to supper in the farmhouse, and every evening the daughter would go down into the cellar to draw the cider for supper.

So one evening in the cellar, she happened to look up at the ceiling, and she saw a big wooden mallet stuck in one of the beams. She had never noticed it before, and at once, she began thinking how dangerous it was to have the mallet just there.

“For,” thought she, “supposing him and me was married, and supposing we was to have a son, and supposing he were to grow up to be a man, and supposing he were to come down to draw cider like as I’m doing, and supposing the mallet were to fall on his head and kill him, how dreadful it would be!”

And with that she began to cry. And she cried and cried.

Now, upstairs, they began to wonder why she was so long; so her mother went down to the cellar and found her, crying ever so hard, and the cider running all over the floor.

“Mercy me!” cried her mother, “Whatever is the matter?”

“O mother!” says she between her sobs, “It’s that horrid mallet. Supposing him and me was married, and supposing we was to have a son, and supposing he was to grow up to be a man, and supposing he was to come down to draw cider like as I’m doing, and supposing the mallet were to fall on his head and kill him, how dreadful it would be!”

“Dear heart!” said the mother, seating herself beside her daughter and beginning to cry, “How dreadful it would be!”

So they both sat a-crying.

Now after a time, the farmer found them seated side by side, crying hard, and the cider running all over the floor.

“Zounds!” says he, “Whatever is the matter?”

“Just look at that horrid mallet up there, father,” moaned the mother. “Supposing our daughter was to marry her sweetheart, and supposing they was to have a son, and supposing he was to grow to man’s estate, and supposing he was to come down to draw cider like as we’re doing, and supposing that there mallet was to fall on his head and kill him, how dreadful it would be!”

“Dreadful indeed!” said the father and started a-crying too.

Upstairs, the young squire lost patience and went into the cellar. And there he found them seated side by side a-crying, with their feet all a-wash in cider. So the first thing he did was to turn off the tap.

Then he said: “What are you three after?”

When they all three told him, the young squire burst out a-laughing. At last, he reached up to the old mallet and pulled it out, and put it safe on the floor, and said, “Never have I met with three such sillies as you. So I shall start on my travels, and if I can find three bigger sillies than you three, then I’ll come back and be married—not otherwise.”

So he wished them good-bye. One day, he came upon an old woman’s cottage that had some grass growing on the thatched roof, and the old woman was trying her best to cudgel her cow into going up a ladder to eat the grass.

At last the young squire said, “It would be easier if you went up the ladder, cut the grass, and threw it down for the cow to eat.”

Says the old woman, “I’ll tie a rope round her neck. She can’t fall off the roof without my knowing it. So mind your own business, young sir.”

The old woman tied a rope round its neck, passed the rope down the chimney, and fastened t'other end to her wrist.

The young squire went on his way. But later he found that the cow had fallen off the roof and got strangled by the rope round its neck, while the weight of the cow had pulled the old woman by her wrist up the chimney, where she had got stuck half way and been smothered by the soot!

"That is one bigger silly," quoth the young squire. "So now for two more!"

Late one night at a little inn, he had to share a room with another traveler. Next morning, when they were dressing, what does the stranger do but carefully hang his breeches on the knobs of the tallboy!

"What are you doing?" asks young squire.

"I'm putting on my breeches," says the stranger; and with that, he goes to the other end of the room, takes a little run, and tried to jump into the breeches.

The stranger said, "It takes me the best part of an hour every morning before I get them on. How do you manage yours?"

Then young squire showed him how to put on his breeches. "So that," quoth young squire to himself, "is a second bigger silly."

But he traveled until one bright night, he saw round a pond a great crowd of villagers.

"What is the matter?" cried young squire.

"Aye! Matter enough," says they. "Can't 'ee see moon's fallen into the pond, an' we can't get her out nohow."

Then the young squire bade them look up over their heads where the moon was riding broad and full, but they wouldn't.

So the young squire said to himself, "I'll just go back and marry the farmer's daughter. She is no sillier than the rest."

So they were married, and if they didn't live happy ever after, that has nothing to do with the story of the three sillies.