

Alfred Tennyson (1809-92)

3 *The Goose*

I knew an old wife lean and poor,
Her rags scarce held together;
There strode a stranger to the door,
And it was windy weather.

He held a goose upon his arm, 5
He utter'd rhyme and reason,
'Here, take the goose, and keep you warm,
It is a stormy season.'

She caught the white goose by the leg,
A goose — 'twas no great matter. 10
The goose let fall a golden egg
With cackle and with clatter.

She dropt the goose, and caught the pelf,
And ran to tell her neighbours;
And bless'd herself, and cursed herself, 15
And rested from her labours.

And feeding high, and living soft,
Grew plump and able-bodied;
Until the grave churchwarden doff'd,
The parson smirk'd and nodded. 20

So sitting, served by man and maid,
She felt her heart grow prouder:
But ah! the more the white goose laid
It clack'd and cackled louder.

It clutter'd here, it chuckled there; 25
It stirr'd the old wife's mettle:
She shifted in her elbow-chair,
And hurl'd the pan and kettle.

‘A quinsy choke thy cursed note!’
Then wax’d her anger stronger. 30
‘Go, take the goose, and wring her throat,
I will not bear it longer.’

Then yelp’d the cur, and yawl’d the cat;
Ran Gaffer, stumbled Gammer.
The goose flew this way and flew that, 35
And fill’d the house with clamour.

As head and heels upon the floor
They flounder’d all together,
There strode a stranger to the door,
And it was windy weather: 40

He took the goose upon his arm,
He utter’d words of scorning;
‘So keep you cold, or keep you warm,
It is a stormy morning.’

The wild wind rang from park and plain, 45
And round the attics rumbled,
Till all the tables danced again,
And half the chimneys tumbled.

The glass blew in, the fire blew out,
The blast was hard and harder. 50
Her cap blew off, her gown blew up,
And a whirlwind clear’d the larder:

And while on all sides breaking loose
Her household fled the danger,
Quoth she, ‘The Devil take the goose, 55
And God forget the stranger!’

1842

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