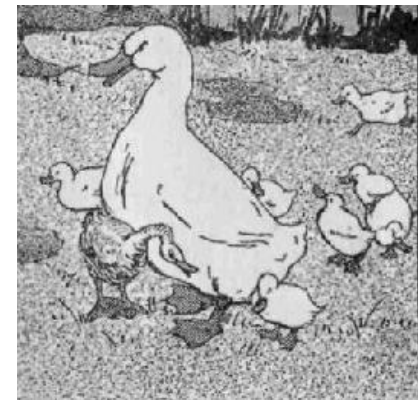




THE UGLY DUCKLING



The other swans swam around him to welcome him.

Some little children came into the garden with corn and other grains which they threw into the water. The smallest one cried, “Oh, see! there is a new swan, and it is more beautiful than any of the others.”

The ugly duckling was shy and at first hid his head under his wing. Then he felt so happy that he raised his neck and said, “I never dreamed of so much happiness when I was an ugly duckling.”

By Hans Christian Andersen



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Tale of Old

Editor: Jennifer Robinson

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The Ugly Duckling/Hans Christian Anderson

Summary: A young duckling feels ugly because he looks different from the other ducks.

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It was a cruel, hard winter, and he nearly froze. At last the warm sun began to shine, and the larks to sing. The duckling flapped his wings and found that they were strong. Away he flew over the meadows and fields.

Soon he found himself in a beautiful garden where the apple trees were in full bloom. The long branches of the willow trees hung over the shores of the lake. Just in front of him he saw three beautiful white swans swimming lightly over the water.

“I will fly to those beautiful birds,” he said. “They will kill me because I am so ugly; but it is all the same. It is better to be killed by them than to be bitten by the ducks and pecked by the hens.”

So he flew into the water and swam towards the beautiful birds. They saw the duckling and came sailing down toward him. He bowed his head saying, “Kill me, oh, kill me.”

But what was this he saw in the clear water? It was his own image, and lo! he was no longer a clumsy dark-gray bird. Now he was a swan! A beautiful white swan.

It doesn't matter if one was born in a duck yard, if one is a swan.

The ugly duckling felt quite strange, and he gave such a loud cry that he frightened himself. He could not forget those beautiful happy birds. He knew not where they had gone, but he wished he could have gone with them.

The winter grew cold—very cold. The duckling swam about in the water to keep from freezing, but every night the hole in which he swam became smaller and smaller. At last he was frozen fast in the ice.

Early the next morning a farmer found the duckling and took him to the farmhouse. There in a warm room the duckling came to himself again. The children wished to play with him, but he was afraid of them.

In his terror he fluttered into the milk pan and splashed the milk about the room. The woman clapped her hands at him. That frightened him still more. He flew into the butter tub and then into the meal barrel.

How he did look then! The children laughed and screamed. The woman chased him with the fire tongs. The door stood open, and the duckling slipped out into the snow.

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It was summer. The country was pretty then. The cornfields were waving yellow and the wheat was golden. The oats were still green, and the hay was stacked in the meadows.

Beyond the fields great forests and ponds of water could be seen.

In the sunniest spot of all stood an old farmhouse. It had with deep canals around it.

At the water's edge grew great trees. It was just as wild there as in the deepest wood.

In this snug place sat a duck upon her nest. She was waiting for her chicks to hatch.

At last one eggshell after another began to crack. From each little egg came “Cheep! cheep!” Then a little duckling's head popped out.

“Quack, quack!” said the duck. All the babies quacked too. Then they looked all around. The mother let them look as much as they liked, for green is good for the eyes.

“How big the world is!” said all the little ducklings.

“Do you think this is all the world?” asked the mother. “It stretches a long way on the other side of the garden and on to the parson's field. I have never even been so far as that.”

“I hope you are all out,” she said. “No, not all. That large egg is still unbroken. I am really tired of sitting so long.” Then the duck sat down again.

“Well, how goes it?” asked an old duck who had come to pay her a visit.

“There is one large egg that is taking a long time to hatch,” said the mother. “But you must look at the ducklings. They are the finest I have ever seen; they are all just like their father.”

“Let me look at the egg which will not hatch,” said the old duck. “You may be sure that it is a turkey's egg. I was once cheated in that way. Oh,

and her hen. The old woman could not see well, and she thought he was a fat duck. She kept him three weeks, hoping that she would get some duck eggs. But the ugly duckling did not lay.

After a while the fresh air and sunshine streamed in at the open door. The duckling longed to be out on the water. The cat and the hen laughed when he told them of his wish.

“You must be crazy,” said the hen. “I do not wish to swim. The cat does not; and I am sure our mistress does not.”

“You do not understand me,” said the duckling. “I will go out into the wide world.”

“Yes, do go,” said the hen.

And the duckling went away. He swam on the water and dived, but still all the animals passed him by because he was so ugly. The poor duckling was lonesome.

Now the winter came, and soon it was very cold. Snow and sleet fell, and the ugly duckling had a very unhappy time.

One evening a whole flock of handsome white birds rose out of the bushes. They were swans. They gave a strange cry, and spreading their great wings, flew away to warmer lands and open lakes.

And they did make themselves at home—all but the poor ugly duckling. His life was made quite miserable.

The ducks bit him, and the hens pecked him. So it went on the first day and each day it grew worse.

The poor duckling was very unhappy. At last he could stand it no longer, and he ran away. As he flew over the fence, he frightened the little birds on the bushes.

“That is because I am so ugly,” thought the duckling.

He flew on until he came to a meadow where some wild ducks lived. They laughed at him and swam away from him.

Some wild geese came by, and they laughed at the duckling, too. Just then some guns went bang! bang! The hunters were all around.

The hunting dogs came splash! into the swamp. One dashed close to the duckling. The dog looked at him and went on.

“Well, I can be thankful for that,” sighed he. “I am so ugly that even the dog will not bite me.”

When all was quiet, the duckling started out again. A storm was raging, and he found shelter in a poor hut. Here lived an old woman with her cat

you will have a great deal of trouble, for a turkey will not go into the water. Yes, that's a turkey's egg. Leave it alone and teach the other children to swim.”

“No, I will sit on it a little longer,” said the mother duck.

“Just as you please,” said the old duck, and she went away.

At last the large egg cracked. “Cheep! cheep!” said the young one, and tumbled out. How large it was! How ugly it was!

“I wonder if it can be a turkey chick,” said the mother. “Well, we shall see when we go to the pond. It must go into the water, even if I have to push it in myself.”

Next day the mother duck and all her little ones went down to the water. Splash! She jumped in, and all the ducklings went in, too. They swam about very easily, and the ugly duckling swam with them.

“No, it is not a turkey,” said the mother duck. “See how well he can use his legs. He is my own child! And he is not so very ugly either.”

Then she took her family into the duck yard. As they went along, she told the ducklings how to act.

“Keep close to me, so that no one can step on you,” she said. “Come; now, don't turn your toes in. A well-brought-up duck turns its toes out, just like father and mother.

“Bow your heads before that old duck yonder. She is the grandest duck here. One can tell that by the red rag around her leg.”

“That's a great honor, the greatest honor a duck can have. It shows that the mistress doesn't want to lose her. Now bend your necks and say 'Quack!'”

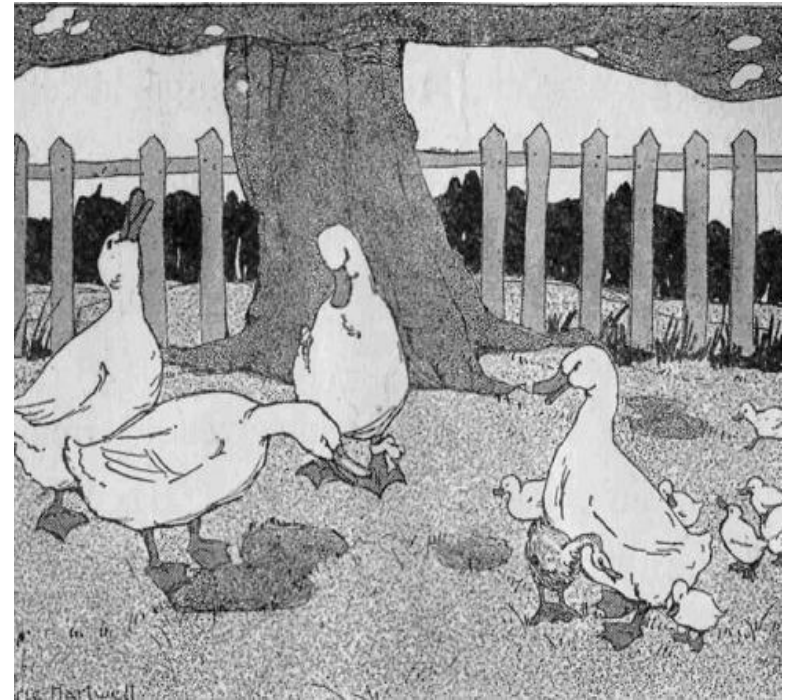
They did so, but the other ducks did not seem glad to see them.

“Look!” they cried. “Here comes another brood. As if there were not enough of us already. And oh, dear, how ugly that large one is! We won't stand him.”

Then one of the ducks flew at the ugly duckling and bit him in the neck.

“Let him alone,” said the mother; “he is doing no harm.”

“Perhaps not,” said the duck who had bitten the poor duckling, “but he is too ugly to stay here. He must be driven out.”



“Those are pretty children that the mother has,” said the old duck with the rag around her leg. “They are all pretty but that one. What a pity!”

“Yes,” replied the mother duck, “he is not handsome, but he is good-tempered, and he swims as well as any of the others. I think he will grow to be pretty. Perhaps he stayed too long in the egg.”

“Well, make yourselves at home,” said the old duck. “If you find an eel's head, you may bring it to me.”