



NUTCRACKER
AND MOUSE-KING

E. T. A. Hoffmann

NUTCRACKER AND MOUSE-KING

[Nutcracker and Mouse-King](#)

[Christmas Eve](#)

[The Gifts](#)

[The Favorite](#)

[Wonders upon Wonders](#)

[The Battle](#)

[The Sickness](#)

[The Story of the Hard Nut](#)

[The Story of the Hard Nut Continued](#)

[Conclusion of the Story of the Hard Nut](#)

[The Uncle and Nephew](#)

[The Victory](#)

[The Puppet Kingdom](#)

[The Capital](#)

[The Conclusion](#)

[Copyright](#)

NUTCRACKER AND MOUSE-KING

E. T. A. Hoffmann



THE NUT-CRACKER

CHRISTMAS EVE

During the long, long clay of the twenty-fourth of December, the children of Doctor Stahlbaum were not permitted to enter the parlor, much less the adjoining drawing-room. Frederic and Maria sat nestled together in a corner of the back chamber; dusky twilight had come on, and they felt quite gloomy and fearful, for, as was commonly the case on this day, no light was brought in to them. Fred, in great secrecy, and in a whisper, informed his little sister (she was only just seven years old), that ever since morning he had heard a rustling and a rattling, and now and then a gentle knocking, in the forbidden chambers. Not long ago also he had seen a little dark man, with a large chest under his arm, gliding softly through the entry, but he knew very well that it was nobody but Godfather Drosselmeier. Upon this Maria clapped her little hands together for joy, and exclaimed, " Ah, what beautiful things has Godfather Drosselmeier made for us this time!"

Counsellar Drosselmeier was not a very handsome man; he was small and thin, had many wrinkles in his face, over his right eye he had a large black patch, and he was without hair, for which reason he wore a very nice white wig ; this was made of glass however, and was a very ingenious piece of work. The Godfather himself was very ingenious also, he understood all about clocks and watches, and could even make them. Accordingly, when any one of the beautiful clocks in Doctor Stahlbaum's house was sick, and could not sing, Godfather Drosselmeier would have to attend it. He would then take off his glass wig, pull off his brown coat, put on a blue apron, and pierce the clock with sharp-pointed instruments, which usually caused little Maria a great deal of anxiety. But it did the clock no harm ; on the contrary, it became quite lively again, and began at once right merrily to rattle,

and to strike, and to sing, so that it was a pleasure to all who heard it. Whenever he came, he always brought some-thing pretty in his pocket for the children, sometimes a little man who moved his eyes and made a bow, at others, a box, from which a little bird hopped out when it was opened—sometimes one thing, sometimes another.

When Christmas Eve came, he had always a beautiful piece of work prepared for them, which had cost him a great deal of trouble, and on this account it was always carefully preserved by their parents, after he had given it to them.

"Ah, what beautiful present has Godfather Drosselmeier made for us this time ! " exclaimed Maria. It was Fred's opinion that this time it could be nothing else than a castle, in which all kinds of fine soldiers marched up and down and went through their exercises; then other soldiers would come, and try to break into the castle, but the soldiers within would fire off their cannon very bravely, until all roared and cracked again." No, no," cried Maria, interrupting him, " Godfather Drosselmeier has told me of a lovely garden where there is a great lake, upon which beautiful swans swim about, with golden collars around their necks, and sing their sweetest songs. Then there comes a little girl out of the garden down along the lake, and coaxes the swans to the shore, and feeds them with sweet cake."

" Swans never eat cake," interrupted Fred, somewhat roughly, " and even Godfather Drosselmeier himself can't make a whole garden. After all, we have little good of his playthings ;they are all taken right away from us again. I like what Papa and Mamma give us much better, for we can keep their presents for ourselves, and do as we please with them." The children now began once more to guess what it could be this time. Maria thought that Miss Trutchen (her great doll) was growing very old, for she fell almost every moment upon the floor, and more awkwardly than ever, which could not happen without

leaving sad marks upon her face, and as to neatness in dress, this was now altogether out of the question with her. Scolding did not help the matter in the least. Frederic declared, on the other hand, that a bay horse was wanting in his stable, and his troops were very deficient in cavalry, as his Papa very well knew.

By this time it had become quite dark. Frederic and Maria sat close together, and did not venture again to speak a word. It seemed now as if soft wings rustled around them, and very distant, but sweet music was heard at intervals. At this moment a shrill sound broke upon their ears—kling, ling—kling, ling—the doors flew wide open, and such a dazzling light broke out from the great chamber, that with the loud exclamation, " Ah ! ah! the children stood fixed at the threshold. But Papa and Mamma stepped to the door, took them by the hand, and said, " Come, come, dear children, and see what Christmas has brought you this year."

THE GIFTS

Kind reader, or listener, whatever may be your name, whether Frank, Robert, Henry,—Anna or Maria, I beg you to call to mind the table covered with your last Christmas gifts, as in their newest gloss they first appeared to your delighted vision. You will then "be able to imagine the astonishment of the children, as they stood with sparkling eyes, unable to utter a word, for joy at the sight before them. At last Maria called out with a deep sigh, " Ah, how beautiful! ah, how beautiful!" and Frederic gave two or three leaps in the air higher than he had ever done before. The children must have been very obedient and good children during the past year, for never on any Christmas Eve before, had so many beautiful things been given to them. A tall Fir tree stood in the middle of the room, covered with gold and silver apples, while sugar almonds, comfits, lemon drops, and every kind of confectionery, hung like buds and blossoms upon all its branches. But the greatest beauty about this wonderful tree, was the many little lights that sparkled amid its dark boughs, which like stars illuminated its treasures, or like friendly eyes seemed to invite the children to partake of its blossoms and fruit.

The table under the tree shone and flushed with a thousand different colors—ah, what beautiful things were there ! who can describe them? Maria spied the prettiest dolls, a tea set, all kinds of nice little furniture, and what eclipsed all the rest, a silk dress tastefully ornamented with gay ribbons, which hung upon a frame before her eyes, so that she could view it one very side. This she did too, and exclaimed over and over again, " Ah, the sweet—ah, the dear, dear frock ! and may I put it on ? yes, yes—may I really, though, wear it ?"