

## GLIMPSE

### The Happy-Ending Society

Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J.

Each day lately I have read one fairytale from the brothers Grimm. There have been the usual more familiar stories of Cinderella, Rapunzel and Hansel and Gretel. There are many others less known, but almost all are violent. There are cutting-off of heads, abandonment of children, boilings of nasty parents and changing of good persons into frogs. One-a-day seems bad enough for me.

Good things do happen, kings and princes find locked-up beautiful princesses and there are all kinds of the good triumphing over the bad. The bad themselves get their proper reward of death and destruction. Then I listen to the local, national and world news and it is not exactly news, but the old tales redone with gun and bombs rather than swords and trances. There are good things happening too. There are savings from drownings, pourings out of care in times of disasters. I personally am dedicated to the peaceful resolve for everything. My first and greatest English literature teacher in the Jesuits, Fr. Len Waters, S.J., (God rest him) told me early that I was a charter member of the Happy-Ending and Silver-Lining Society. I loved the poems which had lots of "daisies", "purple patches" and "a good moral" at the end. He showed me I was a "hopeless romantic" meaning I tended to easily overlook the limitations of reality. When he told me that, I didn't realize that he was not offering me a personal affirmation. He quickly dispossessed me of that positive feeling. Ah, the slings and arrows of outrageous self-knowledge.

So there are these old-told tales by the Grimm boys which in fact are quite grim, pardon the pun. That adjective has no real relationship with the authors. I digress. In reading these tales I find myself reflecting on the variety of stories, real and romantic from my own life, past and present. I have figuratively cut off heads of some whom I judged as nasty and unworthy of my further interest. I have frozen a few frog-persons with disinterestedness. I have pickled a few by leaving them in their own sour vinegar. Now remember, all the time, I am a nice guy. I am still a helpful romantic. I do tend to avoid the limitations of my reality,

but not so much those of others. I have hope for them if they seem to me to be trying to resolve into my Happy-Ending Society.

I am similar to the Fairytales which are written for children to scare them into being good I guess. Like the tales, each of us is a contradiction. We are adults trying to return to a "becoming like little children" about whom Jesus spoke. Little children and big adults are of very good stories and yet experience can change us into harsh, grumpy, devious hunters and slayers. So is there a happy ending to this unromantic rambling?

I can finish one tale, close the book, smile and say that I am glad the Wicked Witch got baked up good by Gretel. I can smile at how my day-dreams fashion themselves in having everything turn out all right for me and others perhaps as well. I do spend time praying however and that is not a romantic event. Jesus is not a gallant prince saving me from the terrors caused by others or by my very own self. Jesus does not transform us from our frogginess or our self-imprisonment. Prayer is not the resolution of unsightly or painful reality. Prayer invites each of us to keep reading our stories, with all the elements of our lives. Our stories are of our own creation, still being created. We can be abandoned, mistreated, reduced to being what we are not. We can live as if in a terrible story meant to scare us. Jesus comes, not to solve us, but to save us from abandoning ourselves and our story. Many stories do not have happy endings and are without any silver linings. We live into the final chapter about which we have only faith accompanied by human doubts. Prayer encourages us to keep reading. It is only a glimpse, we are all finding we are princesses and princes.