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THE DREAMS THAT BECAME FAIRY TALES By Winona MacMullan

Once upon a time, in the village of Odense, Denmark, a little boy was born. His name was Hans Christian Andersen. His father was a poor shoemaker and his mother earned extra money by doing laundry. Hans dreamed the dreams that became the fairy tales of today. "I think I will be famous some day," he told his father. "Nothing is more unlikely," his father answered.

But no one knew what lay ahead for the homely boy with the big nose and clumsy hands and feet. His eyes were sad eyes that saw a story in every broken bottle and bent toy.

While he was still a little boy his father went away to war and died soon after he returned. When Mrs. Andersen married again his stepfather called Hans' dreams nonsense. Because he made puppets and wrote plays for them, he insisted that Hans become a tailor.

"Such a waste of time, when you ought to be learning something useful," he scolded. Instead of doing as his stepfather wanted, Hans bundled up some patched clothing, took a few shillings and set out for the beautiful and exciting city of Copenhagen. He was sure there was a more exciting life in the world outside.

Without training or experience he could not find work. When he danced, people laughed at his clumsiness. When he tried to act they ridiculed his clothing. But once when he sang for some children Professor Siboni offered to give him singing lessons. It was the happiest time of his life, but his operatic career ended soon when a stubborn cold reduced his voice to an ugly croak.

But Hans made many friends and even a princess gave him money for food and clothes, but instead he bought books and theater tickets. When he wrote a play it was returned with a note: "Your manuscript shows a want of elementary education on every page." His tragedies and romances were poorly written but showed a glitter of gold in the trash. Finally his friends set up an educational fund and he enrolled in a government school. Now he began to write about the world about him. Children loved his stories and gathered about his knees, begging: "Tell us another story, Hans."

One of his longer stories, "Youthful Attempts," sold only seventeen copies, the rest were used for wrapping groceries. When Hans was thirty, a booklet called "Fairy Tales Told for Children" was printed. He could tell a story so vividly that one could hear the tin soldiers marching and feel the cold that chilled the little match girl.

A new book appeared every Christmas for many years; tales that were funny and forlorn, fanciful and gay, ironic and tender. Though the children loved them, they often contained a deeper message. Stories like "The Emperor's New Clothes", "The Princess and the Pea", and "The Little Match Girl" contain a wealth of charm and humor that delight, teach and entertain at the same time.

Fame had finally come to the clumsy village lad. He was entertained by kings and decorated with their highest honors. In his autobiography he wrote: "My life has been a fairy tale, rich and wonderful."

Fifty years after leaving his birthplace he returned in triumph. "The Ugly Duckling" was truly the story of his life, for he became rich and famous after years of poverty and struggle. His God-given talent for amusing children and adults have made his stories long-remembered.

In New York's Central Park a statue has been erected by the Danish American Woman's Association. It commemorated the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his birth in 1805. Now children can once more climb upon Hans Christian Andersen's lap!

DACHSHUND
By Ethel E. Mann
(illustration #1)

My little dog, Fritz is as sleek as a fiddle;

His legs are so short that he sags in the middle.

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