



THE BAKER BOYS AND THE BEES

Long years ago many cities had great stone walls around them. The walls were built to keep out enemies, for in those old days cities often went to war with one another. The city of Andernach had around it one of these great walls.

There was only one gateway into the city, and this gateway was guarded by strong iron doors. Just behind the doors lived a gatekeeper, who did nothing but open and shut the gates. He watched them well. No one could come in who was not friendly to the city.

The gates were not opened very often. Some days they were not opened at all. So the gatekeeper had much spare time. "I am very fond of honey," thought he. "I think I will buy a few hives of bees. I can place the hives on the top of the wall. There nobody will trouble them." Soon there were rows of beehives on the top of the wall over the gate.

It happened that, not far away, there was another walled city, named Lintz. The people of Lintz were the enemies of the people of Andernach. They were always watching each other, and fought when they could get a chance.

Now the people of Lintz planned to attack and capture the city of Andernach. They called their wisest men together to see how the attack should be made. Many plans were talked over.

At length an old man said, "Men of Lintz, you know that the men of Andernach are lazy. They like to lie late in their beds. If we attack the city at sunrise, we shall capture it before they can get their eyes open."

This plan seemed wise to the people of Lintz, and in army was soon ready to march against the city of Andernach. One dark night the army crept softly toward the walls of the sleeping city.

II. The only people who rose early in Andernach were the bakers. They had to have fresh bread ready for breakfast.

After their work was done the bakers used to have a morning nap, but the baker boys had to stay awake and watch the loaves of bread.

Two of these boys, named Hans and Fritz, were fast friends and were always together.

One morning, just at sunrise, Hans said to Fritz, "Let us creep upon the wall over the gatekeeper's house. I think we can find some honey. The old gatekeeper is asleep; he will not hear us."

The two boys crept softly up the stairs. They soon reached the top of the wall.

"Did you hear that noise?" whispered Fritz.

"Yes, it must be the old gatekeeper," said Hans, in a low voice.

"No, it seems to come from over the wall," said Fritz.

The two boys crawled to the edge of the wall and carefully looked over. There stood the army of Lintz. A ladder was placed against the wall. The soldiers would soon mount over the gate into the city. What was to be done?

There was no time to wake the people. What could two boys do against an army?

In an instant Fritz thought of the beehives. Ah, the bees were awake if the people were not! Each boy seized a hive and bore it carefully to the edge of the wall.

Then with a strong push down tumbled hives, honey, and bees upon the heads of the enemy. Such buzzing, such stinging, such shouting as arose!

The boys ran down the stairs to the city hall. The old bell ringer was aroused by the cries. Soon the wild clang of the bell awoke the people of Andernach.

Armed men ran to the city gate, but the bees had done their work well. There was no need for soldiers. The army of Lintz was running away.

Over the great gate the people of Andernach placed a statue of the two baker boys whose quick wit had saved the city.

German Folk Tale

