

The Windmill

Hans Christian Andersen

On the hill there stood a windmill stately to look at and very proud of itself.

"But I'm not proud at all," it said, "though I'm much enlightened, outside and inside. On the outside I have the sun and moon, and for inward use, too; and I also have wax candles, oil lamps, and tallow candles. Yes, I daresay I'm enlightened. I'm a thinking individual and so well built that I'm a pleasure to look at. I have a good windpipe in my chest, and I have four wings placed upon my head, just under my hat. Even the birds have only two wings and have to carry them on their backs. I'm a Dutchman by birth - you can tell that from my figure - a Flying Dutchman! People call them supernatural beings, I know, and yet I'm quite natural. There's a gallery round my stomach, and a dwelling place underneath it; that's where my thoughts live. My strongest thought, who rules and governs, is called by the other thoughts: 'The Millers.' He knows what he wants, and rules over the flour and the oats; but he has a mate, too, who calls herself 'Mother.' She is my real heart. She doesn't run around awkwardly; she knows what she wants and what she can do. She's as gentle as the wind and as strong as a tempest; she knows how to lead up to a thing carefully but get her own way. She is my softer side, and the father is my harder; they are two and yet one; and each calls the other 'My better half.'

"These two have youngsters, little thoughts that will grow up, and these little ones make a lot of noise.

"The other day I wisely let the father and his helpers examine my throat and the hole in my chest. I wanted to know what was wrong, for something was wrong, and when you're out of order it's well to look into yourself. The youngsters made a tremendous racket, which was very annoying to me; for, remember, on the top hill where I stand I am in the limelight, and one is judged accordingly. The youngest one jumped up into my hat and shouted so up there that it tickled me. Yes, I know those little thoughts will grow up. Out in the world thoughts come, too, but they're not my sort; as far as I can see, I cannot make out anything like me. Those wingless houses, that can't make a noise in their throats, have thoughts, too, and these sometimes come to my thoughts, and make love to them, as people call it. Yes, it's very strange, but there are many strange things. Some change has come over me, or inside me, something is different in the working of the mill. It seems as if the one half, the father, has altered and got an even gentler and more affectionate mate - young and good as before, but more tender and gentle through the course of time. The bitter has somehow passed away, and everything is much more pleasant.

"The days pass, and the days come, always forward to brightness and happiness, until the day comes when it will be all over with me and yet not entirely over. I'll have to be torn down so that I can be built up again, new and better; I shall cease, but I'll still live! Become a different being, and yet be the same! Enlightened as I am with sun, moon, wax, oil, and tallow, I still find that difficult to understand. My old timbers and brickwork will rise again from the dust!

"I hope I'll be able to keep my old thoughts, the Miller, the mother, the great ones and little ones - the family, as I call all that great and little company of thoughts; because I cannot do without them.

"And I must also remain *myself*, with my throat in my chest, wings on my head, and the balcony around my waist; otherwise I wouldn't know myself, and other people wouldn't know me and say, "There's the Mill on the hill, a proud sight to see, and yet not proud at all!"

That's what the Mill said. It said a great many more things, too, but that's the most

important part of it.

And the days came and the days passed, and yesterday was the last day. Then the Mill caught fire. The flames shot up: they whipped in; they whipped out; they licked beams and planks and ate them up. The Mill disappeared, and only a heap of ashes remained. The smoke rose from the embers until the wind carried it away.

Whatever had been alive in the Mill still remained; nothing happened to any of them; indeed, they gained by it.

The Miller's family - one soul, many thoughts, and yet only one thought - got a new, a beautiful mill, a mill they could be very proud of. It looked exactly like the old one, and people said, "Why, there's the Mill on the hill, a proud sight to see!"

But this Mill was better arranged, much more up to date than the other one, for there is always some progress. The old timber, which had become damp and worm-eaten, now was dust and ashes. The body of the Mill did not actually rise out of the dust, as it had believed it would do; it had taken the thought literally, and not everything is supposed to be taken literally.