**Ashepattle and his goodly crew.**

**By P. C. Asbjörnsen**

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**ONCE upon a time there was a king, and this king had heard about a ship which went just as fast by land as by water; and as he wished to have one like it, he promised his daughter and half the kingdom to anyone who could build one for him. And this was given out at every church all over the country. There were many who tried, as you can imagine; for they thought it would be a nice thing to have half the kingdom, and the princess wouldn't be a bad thing into the bargain. But they all fared badly. Now there were three brothers, who lived far away on the borders of a forest; the eldest was called Peter, the second Paul, and the youngest Espen Ashiepattle, because he always sat in the hearth, raking and digging in the ashes. It so happened that Ashiepattle was at church on the Sunday when the proclamation about the ship, which the king wanted, was read. When he came home amid told his family, Peter, the eldest, asked his mother to get some food ready for him, for now he was going away to try if he could build the ship and win the princess and half the kingdom. When the bag was ready lie set out. On the way he met an old man who was very crooked and decrepit.**

**"Where are you going?" said the man. "I'm going into the forest to make a trough for my father. He doesn't like to eat at table in our company," said Peter. "Trough it shall he!" said the man. "What have you got in that bag of yours?" he added. "Stones," said Peter. "Stones it shall be," said the man. Peter then went into the forest and began to cut and chop away at the trees and work away as hard as he could, but in spite of all his cutting and chopping he could only turn out troughs. Toward dinner time he wanted something to eat and opened his bag. But there was not a crumb of food in it. As he had nothing to live upon, and as he did not turn out anything but troughs, he became tired of the work, took his ax and bag on his shoulder, and went home to his mother. Paul then wanted to set out to try his luck at building the ship and winning the princess and half the kingdom. He asked his mother for provisions, and when the bag was ready he threw it over his shoulder and went on his way to the forest. On the road he met the old man, who was very crooked and decrepit.**

**"Where are you going?" said the man. "Oh, I am going into the forest to make a trough for our sucking pig," said Paul. "Pig trough it shall be," said the man. "What have you got in that bag of yours?" added the man. "Stones," said Paul. "Stones it shall be," said the man. Paul then began felling trees and working away as hard as he could, but no matter how he cut and how he worked he could only turn out pig troughs. He did not give in, however, but worked away till far into the afternoon before he thought of taking any food; then all at once he became hungry and opened his bag, but not a crumb could he find. Paul became so angry he turned the bag inside out and struck it against the stump of a tree; then lie took his ax, went out of the forest, and set off homeward. As soon as Paul returned, Ashiepattle wanted to set out and asked his mother for a bag of food. "Perhaps I can manage to build the ship and win the princess and half the kingdom," said he.**

**"Well, I never heard the like," said his mother. "Are you likely to win the princess, you, who never do anything but root and dig in the ashes? No, you shan't have any bag with food!" Ashiepattle did not give in, however, but he prayed and begged till he got leave to go. He did not get any food, not he; but he stole a couple of oatmeal cakes and some flat beer and set out. When he had walked a while he met the same old man, who was so crooked and tattered and decrepit. "'Where are you going?" said the man. "Oh, I was going into the forest to try if it were possible to build a ship which can go as fast by land as by water," said Ashiepattle, "for the king has given out that anyone who can build such a ship shall have the princess and half the kingdom." "What have you got in that bag of yours?" said the man. "Not much worth talking about; there ought to be a little food in it," answered Ashiepattle. "If you'll give me a little of it I'll help you, said the man. "With all my heart," said Ashiepattle, "but there is nothing but some oatmeal cakes and a drop of flat beer."**

### It didn't matter what it was, the man said; if he only got some of it he would be sure to help Ashiepattle. When they came up to an old oak in the wood the man said to the lad, "Now you must cut off a chip and then put it back again in exactly the same place, and when you have done that you can lie down and go to sleep." Ashiepattle did as he was told and then lay down to sleep, and in his sleep lie thought he heard somebody cutting and hammering and sawing and carpentering, but he could not wake up till the man called him; then the ship stood quite finished by the side of the oak. "Now you must go on board and everyone you meet you must take with you," said the man. Espen Ashiepattle thanked him for the ship, said he would do so, and then sailed away. When he had sailed some distance he came to a long, thin tramp, who was lying near some rocks, eating stones. "What sort of a fellow are you, that you lie there eating stones?" asked Ashiepattle. The tramp said he was so fond of meat he could never get enough, therefore he was obliged to eat stones. And then he asked if he might go with him in the ship.

### "If you want to go with us, you must make haste and get on board," said Ashiepattle. Yes, that he would, but he must take with him some large stones for food. When they had sailed some distance they met one who was lying on the side of a sunny hill, sucking at a bung. "Who are you," said Ashiepattle, "and what is the good of lying there sucking that bung?" "Oh, when one hasn't got the barrel, one must be satisfied with the bung," said the man. "I'm always so thirsty, I can never get enough beer and wine." And then he asked for leave to go with him in the ship. "If you want to go with me you must make haste and get on board," said Ashiepattle. Yes, that he would. And so he went on board and took the bung with him to allay his thirst. When they had sailed a while again they met one who was lying with his ear to the ground, listening. "Who are you, and what is the good of lying there on the ground listening?" said Ashiepattle.

### "I'm listening to the grass, for I have such good ears that I can hear the grass growing," said the man. And then he asked leave to go with him in the ship. Ashiepattle could not say nay to that, so he said: "If you want to go with me, you must make haste and get on board." Yes, the man would. And he also went on board. When they had sailed some distance they came to one who was standing taking aim with a gun. "Who are you, and what is the good of standing there aiming like that?" asked Ashiepattle. So the man said: "I have such good eyes that I can hit anything, right to the end of the world." And then he asked for leave to go with him in the ship. "If you want to go with me, you must make haste and get on board," said Ashiepattle. Yes, that he would. And he went on board. When they had sailed some distance again they came to one who was hopping and limping about on one leg, and on the other he had seven ton weights. "Who are you, said Ashiepattle, "and what is the good of hopping and limping about on one leg with seven ton weights on the other?"

### "I am so light," said the man, "that if I walked on both my legs I should get to the end of the world in less than five minutes." And then he asked for leave to go with him in the ship. "If you want to go with us, you must make haste and get on board," said Ashiepattle. Yes, that he would. And so he joined Ashiepattle and his crew on the ship. When they had sailed on some distance they met one who was standing holding his hand to his mouth. "Who are you?" said Ashiepattle, "and what is the good of standing there, holding your mouth like that?" "Oh, I have seven summers and fifteen winters in my body," said the man; "so I think I ought to keep my mouth shut, for if they get out all at the same time they would finish off the world altogether." And then he asked for leave to go with him in the ship. "If you want to go with us you must make haste and get on board," said Ashiepattle. Yes, that he would, and then he joined the others on the ship. When they had sailed a long time they came to the king's palace.

### Ashiepattle went straight in to the king and said the ship stood ready in the courtyard outside; and now he wanted the princess, as the king had promised. The king did not like this very much, for Ashiepattle did not cut a very fine figure; he was black and sooty, and the king did not care to give his daughter to such a tramp, so he told Ashiepattle that he would have to wait a little. "But you can have her all the same, if by this time to-morrow you can empty my storehouse of three hundred barrels of meat," said the king. "I suppose I must try," said Ashiepattle; "but perhaps you don't mind my taking one of my crew with me?" "Yes, you can do that, and take all six if you like," said the king, for he was quite sure that even if Ashiepattle took six hundred with him, it would be impossible. So Ashiepattle took with him the one who ate stones and always hungered after meat. When they came next morning and opened the storehouse they found he had eaten all the meat, except six small legs of mutton, one for each of his companions. Ashiepattle then went to the king and said the storehouse was empty, and he supposed he could now have the princess.

### The king went into the storehouse and, sure enough, it was quite empty; but Ashiepattle was still black and sooty, and the king thought it was really too bad that such a tramp should have his daughter. So he said he had a cellar full of beer and old wine, three hundred barrels of each kind, which he would have him drink first. "I don't mind your having my daughter if you can drink them up by this time to-morrow," said the king. "I suppose I must try," said Ashiepattle, "but perhaps you don't mind my taking one of my crew with me?" "Yes, you may do that," said the king, for he was quite sure there was too much beer and wine even for all seven of them. Ashiepattle took with him the one who was always sucking the bung and was always thirsty; and the king then shut them down in the cellar. There the thirsty one drank barrel after barrel, as long as there was any left, but in the last barrel he left a couple of pints to each of his companions. In the morning the cellar was opened and Ashiepattle went at once to the king and said he had finished the beer and wine, and now he supposed he could have the princess as the king had promised.

### "Well, I must first go down to the cellar and see," said the king, for he could not believe it; but when he got there he found nothing but empty barrels. But Ashiepattle was both black and sooty and the king thought it wouldn't do for him to have such a son in law. So he said that if Ashiepattle could get water from the end of the world in ten minutes for the princess's tea, he could have both her and half the kingdom; for he thought that task would be quite impossible. "I suppose I must try," said Ashiepattle, and sent for the one of his crew who jumped about on one leg and had seven ton weights on the other, and told him he must take off the weights and use his legs as quickly as he could, for he must have water from the end of the world for the princess's tea in ten minutes. So he took off the weights, got a bucket, and set off, and the next moment he was out of sight. But they waited and waited and still he did not return. At last it wanted but three minutes to the time and the king became as pleased as if he had won a big wager.

### Then Ashiepattle called the one who could hear the grass grow and told him to listen and find out what had become of their companion. "He has fallen asleep at the well"," said he who could hear the grass grow; "I can hear him snoring, and a troll is scratching his head." Ashiepattle then called the one who could shoot to the end of the world and told him to send a bullet into the troll; he did so and hit the troll right in the eye. The troll gave such a yell that he woke the man who had come to fetch the water for the tea, and when he returned to the palace there was still one minute left out of the ten. Ashiepattle went straight to the king and said: "Here is the water;" and now he supposed he could have the princess, for surely the king would not make any more fuss about it now. But the king thought that Ashiepattle was just as black and sooty as ever, and did not like to have him for a son-in-law; so he said he had three hundred fathoms of wood with which he was going to dry corn in the bakehouse, and he wouldn't mind Ashiepattle having his daughter if he would first sit in the bakehouse and burn all the wood; he should then have the princess, and that without fail.

### "I suppose I must try," said Ashiepattle; "but perhaps you don't mind my taking one of my crew with me?" "Oh, no, you can take all six," said the king, for he thought it would be warm enough for all of them. Ashiepattle took with him the one who had fifteen winters and seven summers in his body, and in the evening he went across to the bakehouse: but the king had piled up so much wood on the fire that you might almost have melted iron in the room. They could not get out of it, for no sooner were they inside than the king fastened the bolt and put a couple of padlocks on the door besides. Ashiepattle then said to his companion: "You had better let out six or seven winters, so that we may get something like summer weather here." They were then just able to exist, but during the night it got cold again and Ashiepattle then told the man to let out a couple of summers, and so they slept far into the next day. But when they heard the king outside Ashiepattle said: "You must let out a couple more winters, but you must manage it so that the last winter you let out strikes the king right in the face."

### He did so, and when the king opened the door, expecting to find Ashiepattle and his companion burned to cinders, he saw them huddling together and shivering with cold till their teeth chattered. The same instant Ashiepattle's companion with the fifteen winters in his body let loose the last one right in the king's face, which swelled up into a big chilblain. "Can I have the princess now?" asked Ashiepattle "Yes, take her and keep her and the kingdom into the bargain," said the king, who dared not refuse any longer. And so the wedding took place and they feasted and made merry and fired off guns and powder. While the people were running about searching for wadding for their guns, they took me instead, gave me some porridge in a bottle and some milk in a basket, and fired me right across here, so that I could tell you how it all happened.

* The end