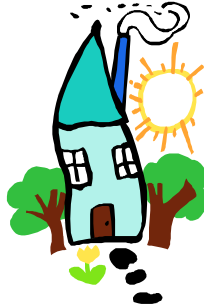


Folk Tales

The Story of Ivan



Ivan and his wife lived in a cottage in the country and they were very poor. Ivan could not get a job nearby so one day he kissed his wife goodbye and set off to find work somewhere else. After many days, he came to a farm. The farmer agreed to give him work and also somewhere to live.



After one year, the farmer asked Ivan whether he wanted to be paid in money or with good advice. Ivan said he would like to be paid with good advice. He worked for three years for the farmer, and at the end of each year the

farmer always asked the same thing and Ivan always gave the same reply. Each time the farmer would give him good advice instead of wages.

The advice the farmer gave him after the third year was, "It is always best to be honest."

By this time, Ivan decided he had been away long enough, and although he still had no money, he said goodbye to the farmer and set off home. Before he left, the farmer gave him a cake to take with him.

When Ivan arrived home, his wife came running towards him.

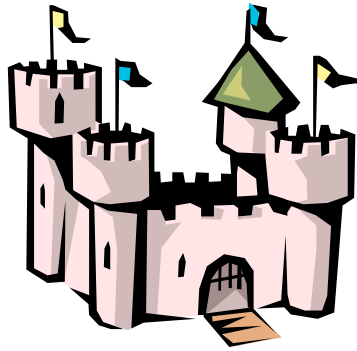


"I found a bag somebody dropped on the road," she said. "When I opened it, I found it was full of gold coins! I think it must belong to the lord who lives in the castle."

Ivan remembered the advice the farmer had given him about how it is always best to be honest.

“We must return it to the lord,” he said to his wife, and she agreed.

They went to the castle and gave the bag of gold to a servant, telling him to give it to his master.



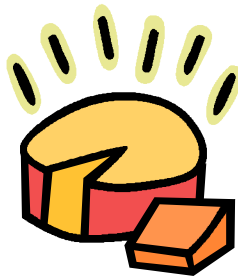
The next day, the lord happened to ride passed Ivan’s little cottage, and Ivan’s wife asked if he had received his bag of gold coins safely. He looked surprised.

“No,” he said, “I haven’t seen it.” And he knew the servant must have stolen it. When he returned to the castle, he ordered the servant to leave.

“I don’t want anyone who is dishonest working for me,” he said.

Then he went to Ivan and asked if he would like the servant’s job. Ivan was delighted and he and his wife went to live in the castle.

They were sitting round the kitchen table that evening feeling very happy, when Ivan remembered the cake the farmer had given him. He cut a piece of the cake – and inside found three gold coins, one for every year he had worked on the farm.



“...ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: ‘This man is unquestionably a Bahá’i....’ ”

(Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, no. 35)