

## 35. The King of the Golden River

### Part II

South-West Wind was true to his word. He did not return to Treasure Valley after that night. Neither did any other wind. So, there was no rain. Nothing grew in Treasure Valley any more. The brothers made no more profits.

The wicked brothers then began to make money by selling gold. They melted in a furnace, the gold articles they had. They mixed a lot of copper in it and sold the mix as pure gold. Again, they made poor Gluck work in a furnace while they spent the money on themselves.

Soon, all the gold in the house was spent. Only one thing was left – a beautiful golden mug that belonged to Gluck. Gluck’s uncle had given it to him when he was a baby. Gluck used to drink both milk and water from it. A strange, bearded face was delicately carved on the mug. Gluck was very fond of the mug. He did not want to part with it. But his wicked brothers only laughed at him and threw the mug in the furnace. They asked Gluck to pour the gold when the mug was melted and went out on some wicked enterprise.

Sadly, Gluck sat down to watch over the mug being melted. But strangely, after some time, he began to hear a voice singing from the furnace. He lifted the lid of the crucible and what did he see - the face of his old bearded friend, on top of the melted gold !

“Come, Gluck, my boy,” said the voice from the crucible. “Pour me out. I am too hot.”

Gluck was too astonished. But he took hold of the crucible and tilted it to pour the gold. Instead of gold, a golden dwarf came out of the pot. His was the face carved on Gluck’s mug.

“Pray, Sir,” said Gluck, rather hesitatingly, “were you my mug ?”



“I am the King of what you call the Golden River,” the golden dwarf told him. He added that another stronger king had turned him into a mug by magic. Gluck had freed him from that enchantment.

The golden dwarf went on to say that he had seen how kind Gluck was, and how wicked and cruel his brothers were. Then he told Gluck a secret. If anyone poured three drops of holy water into the river, where it started on the mountain top, the river would turn to gold for that person. A person could try this only once. And if anyone put unholy water in the river, he would be turned into a black stone. So saying, the dwarf jumped back into the furnace and disappeared.

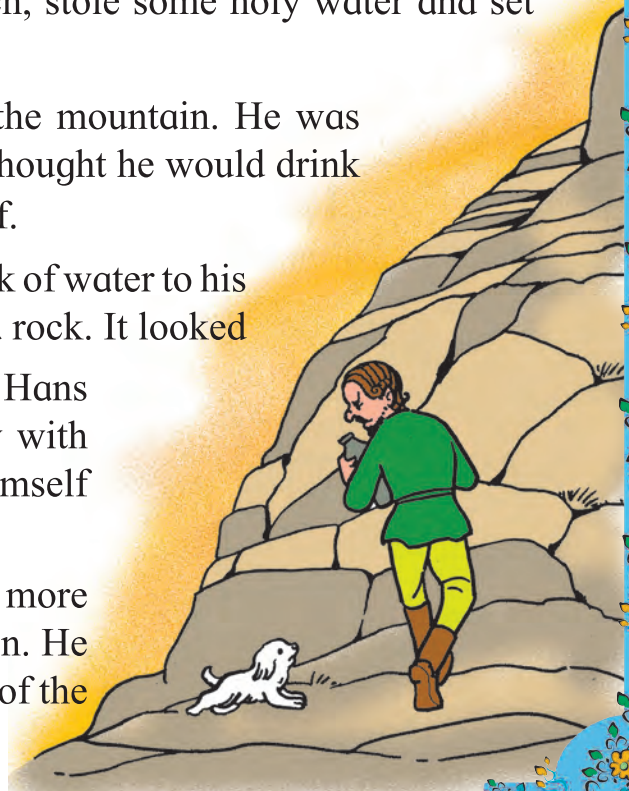
When Gluck told this to his brothers, they did not believe him at first, and beat him. But Gluck stuck to his story. So, at last, they believed him and began to fight over who should have the first chance to go to the Golden River. They fought so much that the police came to see what had happened. Hans ran away when the police came, but Schwartz was caught and put in prison.

Hans was happy that Schwartz was in prison. The very next morning, he went to the church, stole some holy water and set off for the mountain.

It was not easy to climb the mountain. He was tired and thirsty. Soon, Hans thought he would drink some of the holy water himself.

Just as Hans raised the flask of water to his lips, he saw a little puppy on a rock. It looked as if it was dying of thirst. Hans only pushed the animal away with his foot, drank some water himself and passed on.

The climb now became more difficult. Hans felt thirsty again. He was going to drink some more of the



water when he saw a little child on a rock ahead of him. The child was lying lifeless, its lips parched and burning. Ignoring the child, Hans drank some more water himself and passed on.

The climb had now become very very difficult. Somehow, Hans reached the top of the mountain from where the Golden River sprang. A faint cry fell on his ears. Then he saw a weak old man stretched on a rock. "Water," the man said, "Water ! I am dying !"

"I have no water for you," replied Hans. He jumped over the old man's body and ran to the river. The sun was about to set. The river shone golden in the light of the setting sun. Hans threw the flask of holy water into the river. But alas ! the river did not turn to gold. Instead, there was only a Black Stone where Hans stood.

When Schwartz returned from prison, he took some of Gluck's money and bought some holy water from a bad priest; and set out for the Golden River.

While climbing the mountain, Schwartz, too, saw the fair child dying of thirst and passed on without giving him water.

As he had climbed a little higher, he saw his own brother Hans stretched on a rock, asking for water. But the wicked Schwartz only

laughed aloud and went on without giving him any water. Alas, when he cast the flask into the stream, he, too, was turned to stone.



Gluck waited and waited for his brothers but they did not return. At last, he decided to visit the Golden River himself. He went to a good priest who willingly gave him some holy water.

Gluck was young and small and he, too found the climb very difficult.

After he had climbed for an hour or so, he became very thirsty. He was about to drink some water, when, like his brothers, he saw an old man.



The old man walked towards Gluck, leaning on a staff and asked for some water. Gluck saw that the old man was pale, tired and thirsty. So he gave him the bottle of water. The old man drank up nearly two-thirds of the water. Then he returned the bottle and wished Gluck well.

Gluck did not have any water himself. But as he went on, his path became easier. After climbing for a long time, when he became thirsty, he saw the small child. Gluck was sorry for him and gave him some water. The child began to smile, got up, and ran down the hill.

Now, only a few drops of water were left in the bottle. When Gluck came close to the mountain top, he was very thirsty himself. Just then, he saw the poor little pup that was dying of thirst. "I must help it now," thought Gluck. "Otherwise it may be too late." So he poured the remaining drops into the little dog's mouth !

The dog sprang up, and in his place stood the King of the Golden River. He was very pleased with Gluck. The King put in Gluck's bottle, some dewdrops from the petals of a lily. Then he told Gluck to cast it into the leaping river.

Gluck did so, but the river did not turn to gold. However, it changed its course and began to flow through the Treasure Valley, making it rich and fertile once again. Gluck lived in the valley, helping the poor and the needy. His barns were always full of corn and he never lacked for money.

– *Simplified from 'The King of the Golden River'*  
by John Ruskin

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- **enterprise** : activity, business.
  - **crucible** : a container in which something is heated to a high temperature.
  - **tilted** : moved into a position where one side is higher than the other.
  - **pray** : please.
  - **dwarf** : an imaginary creature that looks like a small man.
  - **enchantment** : effect of magic.
  - **parched** : very dry.
  - **staff** : a long thick stick.
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**Things to do :**

1. Describe the following in short :
  - (a) Treasure Valley
  - (b) South-West Wind, Esquire.
  - (c) The Black Brothers
  - (d) Gluck
  - (e) The golden mug.
2. Which of the characters in the story do you like the most ?  
If you could meet that character in person, what questions would you ask ?
3. Which of the events in the story do you like the most ?  
Write about that event in a few lines.
4. Form a group. As a group activity, dramatize any one event in the story.  
Read aloud in your group, the playlet / conversation you have written.
5. Read aloud any paragraph from the story.
6. Discuss the following questions in the class, by forming groups.

(a)  
Was the South-  
West Wind, a  
kind person ?

(b)  
Why did the King  
of the Golden  
River tell Gluck  
a secret ?

(c)  
Why did Gluck  
decide to go to  
the top of the  
mountain ?

7. Make a list of your favourite stories.