

FOLK-TALES FROM MANY LANDS

by

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CONTENTS

<u>THE GIANT'S STAIRS</u>	<i>Irish</i>	1
<u>CINDER JACK</u>	<i>Magyar</i>	12
<u>TIEN NU</u>	<i>Chinese</i>	23
<u>BOTTLE HILL</u>	<i>Irish</i>	34
<u>THE LION AND THE JACKAL</u>	<i>Hottentot</i>	46
<u>THE THREE DOGS</u>	<i>Swedish</i>	57
<u>THE PROUD SENESCHAL</u>	<i>Roman</i>	71
<u>THE FORTUNATE STUDENT</u>	<i>Magyar</i>	81
<u>GUNGA AND CUNGA</u>	<i>Oriental</i>	94
<u>WISE JUDGEMENT</u>	<i>Bohemian</i>	105
<u>WHIPPETY STOURIE</u>	<i>Scottish</i>	116
<u>THE WHITE DOVE</u>	<i>Portuguese</i>	126
<u>BEETLE</u>	<i>Russian</i>	136
<u>THE SNUFF BOX</u>	<i>Basque</i>	148
<u>THE CROCODILE AND THE MONKEY</u>	<i>Oriental</i>	159

FOLK-TALES FROM MANY LANDS

The Giant's Stairs

AN IRISH LEGEND

Near the cliff of Carrigmahon on the Irish coast are huge rocks piled up one above another which are known as the Giant's Stairs, because that is what they look like.

The story runs that the giant Mahon MacMahon lived in a cave somewhere hidden among the rocks, that he had climbed up there when the Giants were banished from the country, and had remained hidden there ever since.

Many years ago there lived in that district a man called Maurice Ronayne. He and his wife had a fine house and plenty of money. Their dearest treasure, though, was their young son Philip. But when he was just seven years old Philip Ronayne disappeared quite suddenly.

No one knew what had befallen him and no trace of him was to be found anywhere, though his parents searched the whole country-side.

Weeks, months, years went by, but nothing was heard of his fate, and at last his mother and father gave up all hope.

They thought the boy must have wandered away, and perhaps fallen off the cliffs into the sea. They had offered such big rewards that they felt certain if he had been stolen away they would have heard something from his captors. It was a terrible grief to them, for he was their only child, and a clever, lively and affectionate boy.

Not far from their house there lived a blacksmith called Robin Kelly.

He was a very clever man at his trade and made excellent ploughshares, but he was clever in another way too. He was very good at telling people what their dreams meant, and when any person had a queer dream he or she would say, "I must go and see what Robin says to that." Robin was always ready with an explanation; and people said his explanations were always quite satisfactory.

One night, just seven years after Philip Ronayne had disappeared, Robin himself had a queer dream. He dreamt he saw the boy riding a white horse, and that the boy told him he had been spirited away to the home of the Giant Mahon MacMahon in the rocks, and had served him as a page ever since. He said that his seven years of service were now over, and that Robin could release him if he were bold and determined.

Then Robin, still in his sleep, asked the boy how he was to know that all this was not merely a dream.

"Take this for a sign," said the boy. And as he said these words his white horse struck out with one of his legs and gave Robin a kick on the forehead. Such a hard kick it was that Robin, thinking his head must be split open, woke up yelling with pain and fright.

And then he knew that it had not been a mere dream, for on his forehead was the red mark of a horse's hoof. He was very much disturbed and puzzled by this strange thing, and found it much harder to tell what his own dream meant than he had ever found it to tell other folk about theirs.

Like everyone else in that part of the country, Robin knew the tale of the giant Mahon MacMahon, and many a time had he rowed round the foot of the great rocks and wondered whether it was indeed true that the old giant still lived in the cave hidden away up there. He told no one of his dream, but the more he thought about it the more anxious he became to try and do something to test the truth of it. If indeed Philip Ronayne had been spirited away to the giant's cave and had been able to tell him of it in a dream, he felt he must make some sort of attempt to get him back.

So one evening he set off on the adventure. But he decided to take a ploughshare with him, for he was a strong man, and a ploughshare might be useful as a weapon if there should be any difficulty about getting the boy away.

He borrowed a boat from a friend, Tom Clancy, and Tom, whom he now told about his dream, offered to go with him and help row the boat to the bottom of the Giant's Stairs.

It was said that the entrance to the cave could be seen only at midnight, but Robin was so anxious to be there in plenty of time that he and Tom were at the foot of the rocks long before that hour.

He looked carefully up and down the cliff trying to see if he could spy anything that looked in the least like an entrance to a passage in the rocks, but no such thing could he see.

He began to think he had come on a foolish errand and his friend seemed to think so too, for he suggested that they should row back home.

But Robin was determined to wait till midnight. And, sure enough, as that hour drew near they saw a faint light coming from the rocks at a spot almost level with the water. The light grew brighter, and then they saw a great porch big enough for a horse and cart to go through.

They rowed to the place, and Robin, grasping his ploughshare firmly, stepped out of the boat on to the rocky stairs which led up to the porch.

Fear gripped his heart when he stood within it, for it was a most extraordinary place. The rocks all round him had the queerest shapes. Some of them were like strange animals which appeared to be about to clutch him, others were like monstrous heads with wild eyes and grinning mouths, grimacing and leering. And they seemed to change from one thing to another as he looked at them.

He was pretty well frightened, I can tell you. But he was determined to go forward with his adventure, though it took all the courage he possessed to go on through the passage which opened out of the porch. As he started along the passage there was a mighty noise behind him and he felt that the mouth of the cave had closed again. He did not look back, but pressed onward as fast as he could, for the passage was narrow and winding, and there was so little light that he had to feel his way.

And now he suddenly became aware of a tiny glimmer of light ahead of him, growing brighter and brighter as he drew nearer to it. And very soon he found himself standing at the entrance to an immense room in the rock, with a great table, also of rock, in the middle of it. And over the table hung a single lamp, from which had come the light he had seen. Sitting round the table was a company of giants, who seemed to be made of rock, too, so stiff and stony and silent were they.

At the head of the table sat the biggest of them all, with his long white beard grown right into the rocky table.

When he saw this huge old giant Robin knew at once that here was indeed Mahon MacMahon himself, and his knees shook under him. But he grasped his ploughshare tightly and stood his ground.

And when Mahon MacMahon's glance fell upon Robin he instantly jumped up from his seat, and so sudden and strong was the jerk with which he did this that he tore his beard out of the rock table, so that the table was broken into fragments.

"What are you seeking here?" he asked, and his voice was like thunder in the mountains.

"I have come to seek young Philip Ronayne," said Robin. "He has been in your service for seven years, and his time is up."

"And who sent you on this errand?" asked Mahon MacMahon.

"No one sent me," said Robin cautiously. "I have come of my own accord."

"So be it," said the giant. "You can have him if you can pick him out from my company of pages. But if you fail to do so, the penalty will be death. Do you still wish to seek him? There is yet time for you to return home in safety."

But Robin was a brave man and he felt that there was no turning back now that he had gone so far; so he told the giant that he was willing to accept his conditions.

MacMahon then bade Robin follow him, and led the way into an even greater room, brilliantly lighted up. And in this room there were hundreds of handsome boys, all apparently of the same age, dressed in green, and all their clothes exactly alike.

"Here you see all my pages," said the giant, "and among them is Philip Ronayne. If you can pick him out from among the rest you may take him away with you, but if you do not choose aright you will never leave this place alive."

Poor Robin knew not what to do. He did not remember young Philip very well, for you will remember it was seven years since the boy had been stolen away, and among all the hundreds of other boys it seemed impossible that he should find him.

He walked through the great hall trying to appear unconcerned, and beside him stalked Mahon MacMahon, towering high above him, his great beard sweeping over his huge chest.

When they had walked almost to the end of the hall, Robin thought that perhaps it would be as well to try and put his companion into a good humour by making polite conversation. So he remarked that it was quite wonderful to see how well the boys looked, considering that they had been shut up for so long a time away from fresh air and sun. They must be very well looked after, he thought.

The giant smiled a grim smile and thanked Robin for his very kind remarks. Indeed, he was so pleased, he said, at such a very flattering opinion of his treatment of the boys that he would like to shake hands with his visitor.

But when Robin saw the enormous hand which the giant held out, he felt nervous at the idea of shaking it, so he held out his ploughshare instead. MacMahon seized it and twisted the iron round and round in his fingers just as if it had been a piece of twine. And when the boys saw him do this they burst into a loud shout of laughter.

But Robin, who was watching everything with the closest attention, noticed that there was one among them who did not shout with the rest, but stood staring in front of him, silent and motionless.

Instantly Robin stepped forward and put his hand on this boy's shoulder.

"Let me live or die for it," he said, "but this and no other is Philip Ronayne."

Then a great shout rose from all the others.

"Philip Ronayne it is," they cried. "Farewell, Philip, happy Philip Ronayne."

There was a terrific crashing noise and the place was plunged into utter darkness. But Robin kept his grasp on the boy's shoulder, and the next thing he knew was that he was lying on the top of the cliff with Philip in his arms, while the sun was just rising over the edge of the horizon.

You may guess what excitement and what rejoicing there was at Ronayne's Court when Robin arrived there with the heir, safe and sound. For Tom Clancy, after waiting anxiously at the foot of the cliff for an hour and more, had at last decided it was useless to wait longer and so had rowed back home and had reported that the quest had been a failure, and that Robin was assuredly lost for ever.

The odd thing was that Philip looked not a day older than he did at the time of his disappearance, in spite of his seven years' absence.

Equally odd was it that he could remember nothing at all about those seven years and of what had befallen him during that long time; it seemed to him as though it was but yesterday that he had left his father and mother, and it was very strange to him that everyone should look older, and that many of his old playmates were now almost grown up.

Robin was handsomely rewarded for his courage and cleverness and never wanted for anything to the end of his days.

Philip Ronayne grew up to be a fine man and lived to a great age. It is said that he was very clever at working in brass and iron, and this was held to be due to the seven years he had served with Mahon MacMahon in his dwelling behind the Giant's Stairs.



Cinder Jack

A MAGYAR FOLK-TALE

There once lived a peasant farmer who had three sons. The two older ones were sturdy young men who made themselves useful about the place. But the youngest one never did much work. A good-natured lad, quiet and dreamy, he spent a great many hours sitting by the hearth among the cinders gazing into the fire. His brothers despised him, and his father, too, thought very little of his capabilities.

"Cinder Jack will never do me any credit," he said—for that was the name by which the boy was always known.

The farmer had a fine vineyard, and one morning, when the grapes were ripening, he sent his eldest son to guard it. The mother had baked the son a fine cake with raisins in it for his lunch, and at noon he sat down beside a spring of water in the midst of the vineyard and started cheerfully to eat the good cake. And as he sat there enjoying it, he heard a rustling sound in the grass, and presently a large frog appeared on the ground in front of him.

"Will you give me a share of your cake?" said the frog, looking up at him with its goggle eyes.

"What impudence," said the young man. "Be off, or I may do you some harm," and he picked up a stone.

The frog said no more, but went hop, hop, hopping away through the grass and disappeared.

Very soon the young lad fell fast asleep. When he woke up he found that a portion of the vineyard had been laid waste. The vines had been torn down, and many of the bunches of grapes lay strewn about. It was just as though some wild creatures had got into the place and trampled everything down, but though he looked to north, south, east, and west, no such creatures were within sight.

When he arrived home and told his story, his father was very angry.

"It is a sad thing if I cannot trust you to perform so simple a task as that of guarding my vineyard," he said.

So next day he sent his second son.

The second son also took with him one of his mother's good cakes, and, like his brother, sat down in the heat of midday beside the spring and began to eat. And everything happened exactly as it had done to his brother on the previous day. He heard a sound of rustling in the grass, and a frog appeared on the ground before him.

"Will you give me a share of your cake?" said the frog.

"Indeed, I will do no such thing," said the second son. "What next, I wonder? Be off at once, or it will be the worse for you."

The frog said no more, but went hop, hop, hopping away through the grass.

And presently the second son fell fast asleep. When he woke up he found that another and larger portion of the vineyard had been laid waste. Again, it was as though wild creatures had come in and trampled the vines underfoot. But nothing of them was to be seen far or near, neither to north, south, east, or west. Again the father was very angry when he heard what had happened.

"It seems my second son is as great a simpleton as my first," he said. "It is indeed a sad thing to think that neither of them is capable of guarding my vineyard."

Then Cinder Jack, who had heard all this, rose from his place by the hearth.

"Let me go to-morrow, Father," he said. "I will take care of your vineyard."

His father and his brothers laughed aloud at the idea that Jack might succeed where the two others had failed. But Jack begged to be allowed to go, and at last his father consented to let him try.

He had a cake, too, but not such a big one as those which had been given to his brothers. He always came off the worst

when there were good things going.

Once again the frog appeared by the spring and asked for some cake, but this time it did not meet with a refusal. Jack willingly gave it a generous share, in spite of the fact that the cake was scarcely large enough to satisfy his own hunger.

When they had both finished eating, the frog gave the lad three rods. One was of copper, one of silver, and one of gold. He told him that if he waited for a short time three horses would appear, one of copper, one of silver, and one of gold, and that the three horses would rage round the vineyard and try to trample down the vines and lay waste the whole place. Nevertheless he was not to be frightened, but to beat the horses with the rods. They would then become quite tame and gentle and willing to serve him, and would appear, ready to do whatever service he required of them, should he summon them at any time.

All this happened just as the frog had said. The horses appeared and were subdued by means of the three rods, so that no further harm came to the vineyard, which from that day onward flourished amazingly and produced a fine harvest of grapes.

Cinder Jack spoke no word to anyone of all this that had happened, but took up his old place at the corner of the hearth.

A little later on the king of that country had a pole made of a tall fir tree erected in the market-square in front of the church. And at the very top of the pole there was fastened a bough of copper-coloured rosemary; and the king caused it to be known by proclamation that if any man could take so high a jump on his horse as to be able to pluck down the rosemary bough, that man should have the princess, his daughter, to wife.

From all parts of the kingdom came gallant knights to try their fortune, but there was not one among them all who could take so high a jump as to be able to reach the top of the pole. But, late in the day, when all the rest had tried and failed, there appeared a knight, all clad in mail of copper, riding upon a fine copper horse, and with his visor down so that his face could not be seen.

He seemed to have no difficulty in making his horse take the necessary jump, and, having snatched down the rosemary branch, he rode swiftly away without taking heed of any one present.

The two brothers had been in the great crowd assembled in the marketplace, and when they got home they told Cinder Jack all that they had seen and heard.

"I saw it all much better than you did," replied their brother.

"But how could that be?" said the brothers.

"I climbed to the top of the high fence," said Cinder Jack, "and from there I saw everything."

Then the two brothers had the high fence pulled down, so that Cinder Jack should not be able to climb up it again.

A week later the king had a still higher pole set up in the market-square, and right at the top was placed a silver apple. And the king made it known far and wide that he who took so high a leap on his horse as to be able to fetch down the apple, should have his daughter to wife and a chest full of money to her dowry.

Once again many knights came riding on their fine horses in the hope of winning the hand of the princess, for she was famed throughout the land for her beauty and her amiability. But there was no knight among them all whose horse could jump so high. Only at the very end there came a knight in silver armour riding upon a splendid silver horse.

And the horse made a great leap up into the air, so that the knight was able to snatch the silver apple from the top of the pole and bear it away with him. He rode off with it without exchanging so much as a greeting with anyone present, and his visor was let down so that none could see his face.

When the two brothers came home they had much to say about the mysterious knight, and about all that they had seen.

"I saw it all much better than you," said Cinder Jack.

"How could that be?" said his brothers.

"I climbed up onto the top of the pigsty," said Jack. "From there I had a fine view."

So then the two brothers pulled down the pigsty.

Very soon after this the king had a third pole erected in the market-square. And this pole was even higher than the other two. And at the very top of the pole there was fastened a silken scarf all embroidered with gold, so that it shone and glittered in the sun.

And the king caused it to be proclaimed far and wide throughout his kingdom that he who could take so high a jump upon his horse as to be able to snatch down the scarf should have not only the hand of the princess, his daughter, but also a chest full of money and a great castle to her dowry.

Over a hundred knights came, a fine and gallant company, but not one was able to reach the scarf. But when all had tried and failed, a knight in golden armour and mounted upon a magnificent golden horse came riding into the market-square, and with a great bound his horse carried him right up to the top of the pole and he bore off the silken scarf and rode away with it. But no one knew who he was, for his visor was down.

The two brothers were filled with excitement. Like everyone else, they were sure that the copper knight, the silver knight, and the knight of gold were one and the same person. But when they started telling Cinder Jack all that they had seen and heard he interrupted them.

"I saw everything far better than you," he said.

"But how could that be?" said the brothers. "We pulled down the fence and the pigsty. There was nothing left for you to climb upon."

"Indeed there was," said Cinder Jack, "I climbed up on to the top of the house."

So then the two brothers pulled down the roof of the house, and if it had been rainy weather I know not what they would have done, for a house without a roof is but a poor shelter.

But a few days later the king sent out a proclamation to say that if the knight who had borne off the copper rosemary bough, the silver apple, and the gold-embroidered scarf would make himself known within three days he should have the hand of the princess, his daughter, and half the kingdom to her dowry.

And each day a great crowd assembled in the market-square and waited for the knight to appear.

On the first day and on the second day they waited in vain. But on the third day at the hour of noon there was heard a sound of hoofs coming up the street that led into the market-square. And all the people made way as the golden knight came riding along on his great golden horse.

And everyone shouted and waved, and the great bell in the church tower began ringing all by itself, for there was no one to pull the rope.

And the knight rode three times around the square, and it was seen that he carried before him on his saddle the bough of rosemary, and in his hand the silver apple, and that the gold-embroidered scarf was floating from his golden helmet.

And when he had ridden round the square for the third time he pulled up his horse before the dais on which sat the king and his daughter, and there he at last lifted his visor so that everyone could see his face. And who should it be but Cinder Jack!

You can imagine how astonished everyone was, especially Jack's two brothers, who could hardly believe their own eyes.

But he bore them no grudge and even promised them to build up the fence, the pigsty and the roof of the house; which promise he later on faithfully carried out.

And he married the princess, and proved so wise and good that upon the king's death he was chosen by all the people to rule over the whole kingdom, and for aught I know to the contrary he is ruling there at this very day.

Tien Nu

A CHINESE TALE

Far away in China, in a place called Taon-Lin Hsien, in the province of Changtch, there is a fine temple dedicated to the great religious teacher, Buddha.

Buddha, as you probably know, was an Indian Prince who lived a long time ago—six hundred years before Christ. He gave up his life to religion and to meditation and to leading people to the love of God and the love of goodness. People followed his teaching in many lands, and still do so to-day.

This particular temple is a very fine one, with a beautiful wooden roof shaped like a tent, as are the roofs of all Buddhist temples, and just within the door, grotesque carved figures and a carved stone screen.

The grotesque figures are put there to frighten the devil if he chances to take a peep in at the door, and the carved stone screen is to prevent him from coming in if he should have a mind so to do.

He is supposed to be able to walk only straight forward, so that he would be quite unable to get round a screen placed in that position.

But the greatest pride of the temple is its beautiful figure of Buddha himself. It is a very fine one, made of a mixture of metals in which there is both gold and silver. He sits there, gentle and thoughtful, in the attitude in which he is always represented, with his hands folded in front of him; and the people who come to the temple put flowers into the folded hands.

But if you were to look at this figure carefully, you would notice a very curious thing about it. Just over the Buddha's heart there is to be seen a small coin, firmly embedded in the metal, but quite separate and distinct from the rest. It is the little coin known as a 'cash' and is the least valuable of any Chinese coin. It is square in shape and has a hole in the middle. These little coins are threaded on to strings for convenience and it takes hundreds of them to make up the value of a crown.

There is a story attached to this little coin so strangely placed, and the story was told to me by a friend who spent many years in those parts of the world.

Here it is.

Many, many years ago there was no statue of Buddha in the temple at Taon-Lin Hsien, but there came a time when the abbot in charge decided that this was a very regrettable state of affairs and one which could and must be remedied. So he summoned all the other brethren and told them that he had determined that a statue should be erected in the temple. And when they asked how this was to be done, for there were no funds for the purpose, he told them that he had decided to send out all the younger priests to collect precious metal wherever they could from the people who dwelt in the country round about.

There were many rich men in the neighbourhood and he felt confident that they would give gladly of their treasure in order that it might be melted down to make a beautiful metal figure of the great teacher to whom they owed so much and whom they so greatly loved and revered. If all gave according to their means the thing would be done; and how glorious it would be to have in their temple a beautiful figure to which all would have contributed!

The priests received the suggestion with enthusiasm, and the younger men set off with carts and sacks to collect the necessary material.

Now in the house of a rich lady in the neighbourhood there lived a humble little slave-girl named Tien Nu, which means the Girl from Heaven. She was little more than a child, but ever since she had been old enough to run about she had had to work.

She had no possessions at all—nothing but the simple clothes provided by her employers. But one day when she was out upon some errand, she happened to find in the street a single cash. This was a most wonderful find. She picked it up delightedly and put it in her shoe.

It made her feel tremendously proud and happy to think that she had something of her very, very own—a tiny treasure with which she could do exactly as she liked. Life seemed quite different now that she had the little coin in her shoe.

Then, one day, as she was busy sweeping the floor of one of the rooms, a young priest arrived at the house with his little handcart. He was one of those who had been sent out to collect money for the image of Buddha. He was shown into one of the reception rooms, where he was very well received by the mistress of the house. Little Tien Nu peeped round one of the screens and heard all about his errand, and she saw how her mistress brought out her treasure of gold and silver and bronze and gave of it to the priest. Then she slipped softly out into the courtyard, where he was presently busy loading it on to his handcart.

When it was all packed in, a goodly load, for her mistress's husband was rich and had given generously, she came shyly forward, and in her outstretched hand she held her precious little coin.

"Here is something for the statue of the great lord Buddha," she said.

The priest turned and looked at her and then at the coin in her palm.

Then he shook his head.

"That is no use to me," he said. "One cash! It is not worth taking."

And he seized the handles of his cart and set off, eager to show the abbot and the other priests the marvellous load of treasure which he had collected. But the little slave-girl stood silently and sadly in the middle of the courtyard with her coin still in her hand.

At last she slipped it back into her shoe and returned sorrowfully to her work. Her heart was heavy; she would so have loved to give something towards the making of the figure of the dear lord Buddha, who loved simple folk and was kind to the poor and the humble.

But the priest had refused it, and he must certainly know best what would be pleasing to his master. It was terribly disappointing.

At last all the treasure had been collected from the neighbourhood—a mighty store, more than anyone had hoped for, and the time had come for the statue to be made.

The metal was all melted down in an enormous vat and then poured into a great mould, which had been most carefully prepared.

But when the metal had cooled and the mould was broken open with great ceremony, the statue which came out was an ugly, misshapen, distorted thing.

Everyone was horrified. It was a dreadful thing that anyone occupied in so sacred and solemn a task as the casting of a statue of great Buddha should have been so inattentive and careless as to cause a mishap of this kind.

The abbot was greatly perturbed.

"The statue must, of course, be melted down and recast," he said. "This time I myself will superintend every detail of the work. It is a disgrace to the whole community that such a thing should have happened in our midst. I cannot think how it could have occurred."

The statue was melted down. The abbot superintended the process of making a new one, as he had determined. He was most thorough about it; not the smallest fraction of the work was done without his personal supervision; not the tiniest detail escaped his attention.

This time, surely, nothing could have gone wrong; this time they would have their image completely flawless.

But alas! When the metal had once again cooled and the mould was removed, the image which came to light was just the same as the previous one—ugly and distorted.

Now the abbot was a man full of wisdom and piety, and when he saw what had happened he withdrew from the rest and spent several hours in prayer and meditation. He then called to him all the priests and teachers connected with the temple

and told them the result of his meditations.

"There has been some wrong thing done in the collection of the material for our image," he said. "This wrong must be put right. I know not where the fault lies, but I am determined to find out. I want every one of you who went out to collect treasure to give me an exact account of all his doings while on that quest. Nothing must be omitted; everything must be recounted down to the very smallest detail. The great lord Buddha has keen eyes."

So one by one the priests were called upon to give an account of the way in which they had acquired the precious metal which they had brought in. They were one and all very conscientious and earnest over their narrative; everyone was most anxious to see the dreadful matter put right. But there seemed nothing which would account for the disaster; all had been done correctly and reverently.

At last it came to the turn of the youngest priest of all, the one who had been to the house of the mistress of Tien Nu.

He told the full story of his collection of precious metals. He told it with eagerness, for he had been the most successful of all the collectors and had brought in a larger quantity of valuable material than any of the rest. And at the end of all he related the incident of the little slave-girl and her tiny coin. He smiled as he told it; he thought it was amusing that the child should have offered her absurd little cash.

But the face of the abbot changed as he listened to that part of the young priest's tale. He no longer looked perplexed and puzzled; his expression was now one of anger.

"Now we know whence came the wrong," he said, when the tale was finished. "You have done a thing of the greatest unkindness—a thing which our gentle master would never for one moment have countenanced. I am both ashamed and grieved that a member of our holy order should have behaved in a manner so contrary to his teachings."

The young priest hung his head.

"What shall I do to make amends?" he said.

"You must go back at once to the house where the little slave-girl lives," said the abbot, "and you must take with you three of the most important members of our order. And with them standing by as witnesses you must ask pardon of the little girl and inquire humbly whether she is perchance still willing to give you her contribution, since the lord Buddha is waiting for it and his statue cannot be completed without it."

The young priest set out at once, taking with him the three most important dignitaries of the temple, as the abbot had required, and a beautiful little casket of gold in which to place the little slave-girl's offering. But when they arrived at the house where she lived and she was summoned to appear, she came forth all trembling and dismayed; she could not imagine what these grand folk could possibly want of her, and was afraid she might unknowingly have done something amiss.

But when she heard why they had come she was overjoyed. To think that after all her treasure was to go towards the making of the image of lord Buddha! What a wonderful thing. She took it eagerly from her shoe and handed it to the priest, who knelt humbly to receive it.

She was rather puzzled by the solemn speeches made by the young priest and by the presence of his three companions, but it did not trouble her much; her heart was so filled with happiness that there was room in it for little else.

As soon as the priests returned the work of making the image was started yet once again, and the little coin carefully added to the great vat of metal. And this time, when the casting was completed and the mould was broken away, the great image of Buddha came out flawlessly beautiful. But over his heart, as you heard at the beginning of this tale, was the tiny cash contributed by the little slave-girl, Tien Nu.

Bottle Hill

AN IRISH LEGEND

There once lived in Ireland, not very far from a little place called Mallow, a farmer named Mick Purcell. He was very poor indeed. He had six children, but not one of them was old enough to help him on the farm, and although his wife Molly worked hard all day long looking after the children and the chickens, doing the cooking, and milking Sally, the cow, they found it very difficult to make enough money to pay their rent.

Then came a bad year. Everything went wrong. Blight got into the oats, the pig took ill with measles, the chickens died of the pip, and Patsy, the eldest boy, fell off the apple tree and broke his arm, so that the doctor had to be called in to come and set it.

So what with one thing and another poor Mick and his wife couldn't save anything at all towards the rent; two quarters were due and they began to fear that they would be turned out of their little farm. They were in great distress.

They sold the pig—but the pig was in such poor condition after having had measles that it fetched only a very small sum of money. When that was gone, there was nothing left but the cow. It was a dreadful thing to have to sell her, for she provided milk for the children, and they needed it badly. However, anything was better than being turned out of the house, so they decided that on the next fair day Mick was to drive the cow into the town of Cork, thirteen miles away, and sell her for what she would fetch.

Mick was very mournful about it, but his wife did her best to cheer him up.

God had looked after them so far, she said, and she was sure He would not desert them now.

So Micky set off one Monday morning early to drive the cow into Cork. His wife told him to be sure to get as much money as possible, and not to sell her to the first bidder, and he started along the road at five o'clock in the morning so as not to arrive late at the fair.

And when he passed by the old Abbey of Mourne with the early sun shining aslant on its grey walls he thought of the tales that were told of the fairy treasure hidden somewhere beneath the hill on which it stood, and he wished with all his heart that some of that fairy treasure were his.

It was a lonely road, and he met not a soul. The only sound to be heard was that of the birds singing their early morning songs and the soft rustling of the trees in the early morning wind, and the steady clop-clop of Sally's feet and his own along the road.

And when he had gone nearly half-way he came to the top of the long hill which is now known as Bottle Hill, though at that time it had a different name. And there he was overtaken by a man. It was rather strange, for Mick had heard no footfall behind him and only became aware of the man when he found him walking by his side on the road.

He said good morning politely, and Mick said good morning in return. The man was an odd-looking creature, rather small, with a yellowish, wrinkled face like the inside of a dried-up walnut. His hair was white and he had a funny little red nose, and his sharp eyes darted here and there and seemed to miss nothing. Mick thought he had never in his life seen eyes so bright and quick. They made him feel a bit uncomfortable. Indeed there was something rather queer altogether about this little man. He had a great cloak wrapped about him so that nothing could be seen of his legs or his body, and he had a strange way of seeming to glide over the ground instead of stepping along as other people do.

Micky hurried his pace a little, driving Sally along more quickly, but his queer neighbour kept up with him.

Micky grew hot and cold by turns, and he felt his knees trembling under him. He dare not cross himself, as he would have liked to do, for fear the little man might be offended; but he said a prayer silently in his heart and kept on steadily along the rough road.

And then, all of a sudden, the little man began to speak in a squeaky high voice which made Micky more frightened than ever.

"Where are you going with your cow?" asked the little man.

Micky replied that he was going to the fair at Cork to sell her.

"Will you sell her to me?" asked the stranger.

Micky was in a fix. He didn't at all want to sell the cow to this queer creature, but on the other hand he was afraid to refuse.

So he asked what the little man would give him. His companion pulled a bottle from under his cloak, and said that he would give the bottle for the cow. Frightened as he was, Micky could not help laughing at this proposal.

"You can laugh as much as you like," said the little man, "but this bottle is worth far more than any money you would get at the fair for your cow. You'll be making a great mistake if you don't have it."

Micky held out stoutly. He didn't want the bottle. It was money he needed. Besides, what would Molly say if he came home without the cow and with nothing but an empty bottle in exchange for her? He was sure he would never dare face her.

They went on side by side along the road and the queer little man kept on persuading him to give him his cow for the bottle.

At length he said: "For the last time, Mick Purcell, will you take this bottle? I tell you you'll never be sorry. Your cow may die before you get to the fair, and then you'll have nothing?"

Now when Mick heard the man call him by his name he began to think there must be some mystery or magic about the whole business, and in the end he allowed himself to be persuaded, and said he would agree to the exchange.

The queer old man then explained to him with great care what to do with the bottle when he got home. He was to take no notice if his wife was annoyed, but was to keep quite quiet and to tell her to tidy the room and lay the table neatly with a clean cloth. Then he was to put the bottle on the floor and say: "Bottle, do your duty," and wait and see what happened.

So Mick set off home again with his bottle, but his heart was heavy, as the matter did not seem very satisfactory. The old man started off with the cow in the opposite direction, but when Mick turned to look after him, neither he nor the cow was anywhere to be seen. It was just as if they had vanished into the ground!

Molly was sitting over the peat fire when Mick returned and was much astonished to see him back so early, for she knew it was a long way to Cork.

Had he sold the cow on the way, she asked. Yes, he had, said Mick, with downcast eyes. But when she learned that all he had brought back was an empty bottle she was very angry indeed and tried to get hold of the bottle to throw at her husband's head. But he managed to keep it in his grasp and to calm her down. Then he told her all about his strange adventure, and soon Molly herself began to think there was perhaps some fairy magic in the bottle.

So she tidied up the hearth and spread a clean cloth on the table. Mick put the bottle on the ground, and said: "Bottle, do your duty," as he had been told. And instantly two tiny little men sprang from the bottle, and in less than a minute they had covered the table with dishes of gold and silver with all sorts of good things to eat on them. Then the two little men disappeared into the bottle again, and it appeared once more to be empty. And Mick and Molly and the children all sat down to a splendid meal.

They wondered whether the dishes would disappear when the meal was over, but no such thing! They all remained on the table. So Molly cleaned them and put them away and the next day Mick took them to Cork and sold them and bought a horse and cart, clothes for the children and for Molly, and many other things.

Every evening the same thing happened, and Mick grew richer and richer. But he and his wife told nobody about the bottle; they thought it wiser to keep it a secret.

But their landlord was determined to find out how it was they had grown so rich, for Mick spent his money freely and the landlord knew he couldn't have made it all out of the farm.

He kept worrying and worrying Mick about it, and at last Mick told him the story of the bottle.

And now the landlord began persuading Mick in and out of season to let him have the bottle, but Mick stoutly refused.

At last the landlord offered to let Mick have the farm for his very own with no more rent to pay. This Mick could not resist, and as he had a nice sum of money in the bank and now would have no rent to pay he felt he could afford to give up the bottle.

But alas and alas, he thought the money would last for ever, and spent it like water, and like water it all ran away, so that before many months had gone by they were as poor as they had been before.

And at last they had no more money to buy food and only one cow left; in fact they were in about the same position as they had been before they had the magic bottle.

So once again Micky set off for Cork to sell the cow, not without a secret hope that he might meet the queer old man again and get another bottle.

And—would you believe it?—when he came to the same spot, there was the strange creature by the roadside, actually waiting for him, so it seemed.

So Mick poured out his tale and begged for another bottle in place of the one he had given away.

And the queer old man gave him another in exchange for the cow.

Micky was delighted, and thanked his odd friend over and over again.

And when he got home at night his wife laid the table as before and swept the house as before. But when he said: "Bottle, do your duty," there jumped out of it two great men with stout cudgels, who beat poor Mick and his wife and children until they were half dead. Then they jumped back into the bottle, which seemed once more to be empty.

As soon as Mick had recovered he thought hard for some time, then leaving his wife to look after the children, he went off to his landlord's house.

The landlord was giving a big party, but he came out to speak to Mick.

When Mick told him he had another bottle, the landlord took him into the great hall where all his guests were feasting.

He told Mick to make the bottle work, and when the word of command was given, out jumped the two great men again and started hitting about at all the guests.

They all tumbled over one another in their efforts to get out of the way, and the landlord yelled to Mick to take his terrible bottle away and put a stop to the mischief it was doing.

"I'll take it away if I can have the old one too," said Mick.

"Take them both," said the landlord. "I want to see no more of you and your bottles."

So Mick put the two bottles into his pockets, and as he did so the two great men jumped back into the one out of which they had come.

He hurried off home, greatly delighted, and you may be sure that the second bottle was put away on a high shelf, well out of the way in an outhouse.

But the first bottle continued to work for him and his family for many years, and he grew rich and prosperous.

But one day when Mick and his wife were both out, there came to the door a man who told the maid he was a rag-and-bone merchant. He asked if she had any empty bottles to sell.

She knew nothing about the magic bottles, for the matter had always been kept secret.

The man promised her sixpence each for any empty bottles she could find, and after a good hunt she found the one in the outhouse and the other one high up on top of the dresser. As soon as she brought them out he seized them from her, gave

her a bright shilling, and then, so she declared, vanished into the ground.

There is no doubt it was the same strange person who gave Mick the bottles to begin with. At any rate they were gone and were never seen again. But Mick had learned his lesson and was now careful not to spend more than he could afford, so that he and his family lived in comfort to the end of their days. And now you know why that piece of road is known to this day as Bottle Hill.



The Lion and the Jackal

A HOTTENTOT TALE

Once upon a time there was a big, big lion. He was not so big as an elephant, not even so big as a camel, but he was big all the same. He was strong, too, and fierce, with a great thick mane and a tail with a tuft at the end of it. I think perhaps he didn't have a very good brain, but you can't have everything, can you now?

Not far from Big Lion there lived a little jackal. He was very little. Not so little as a rabbit, of course, and nothing like so little as a mouse, but quite small compared with the lion.

He wasn't particularly strong and he wasn't so very, very brave, but he was cunning and clever. He was a good deal cleverer than the lion. It's very useful sometimes to be clever when you are not very big or particularly strong. When you have read this story you will see what I mean by that.

One day when Big Lion was out walking he met Little Jackal.

"Good morning, friend," said Big Lion.

"Good morning, my lord," answered Little Jackal very politely. "I hope your lordship's beautiful wife and charming family are all quite well."

Big Lion thought this very thoughtful of Little Jackal, and so he asked him whether he would care to go hunting with him.

Little Jackal said he felt much flattered by the proposal and would be very pleased indeed to go hunting with Big Lion, for he thought that with the help of such a very powerful creature he would come in for a fine lot of food for himself and his family.

But a slight disappointment awaited him, for Big Lion explained that if they killed a large antelope he would claim it, but if they killed a small one it was to be Little Jackal's.

"Certainly, certainly," said Little Jackal politely; but he wasn't, as I said before, very pleased with the arrangement and decided in his heart to get the better of Big Lion before the day was out.

So they hunted together all the day, and in the afternoon they killed a big eland.

"I should like you to run round with that to my wife and child," said Big Lion. "I will continue to hunt by myself until you return."

"By all means," said Little Jackal. But as soon as the lion's back was turned he sneaked quietly off in the direction of his own home.

"Big Lion is very much mistaken if he thinks I shall take meat round to his home when my own children are hungry," said Little Jackal, as he trotted along to his home. It was on the top of a rock, so high that you had to call for a rope to be let down before you could get up to it.

Big Lion went on hunting by himself while Little Jackal was away, but he caught nothing further. By the time Little Jackal returned it was too dark to hunt any more, so the two parted.

But when Big Lion arrived home he found his wife waiting anxiously for him at the entrance to his home.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" she said, when she saw him coming along empty-handed; "have you brought us no supper? It was bad enough having to go without our dinner, but now it looks as though we shall have to go to bed hungry."

Big Lion was very much surprised.

"Didn't Little Jackal bring you food at dinner-time?" he said.

"No such thing," said his wife. "We are dying of hunger."

So Big Lion went off post-haste to the home of Little Jackal. But he had no means of getting up the rock, so he sat down by the stream which ran at the foot of the rock and waited and waited. And before very long Little Jackal came down to the stream for a drink. But when he saw Big Lion sitting there in the dusk with his whiskers bristling and his eyes gleaming and his tail thump-thumping on the ground with rage, Little Jackal ran away as fast as ever he could run.

He ran till he came to a hole in the ground beneath a tree and darted into it for safety, for he knew that Big Lion was too big to get inside it. But Big Lion was close behind him, so close that he managed to get hold of Little Jackal's tail, which was, of course, the last thing to disappear into the hole.

He put his paw very firmly down on the tail and Little Jackal could not move.

"Now I've got you," said Big Lion.

"Got me? What do you mean?" said Jackal's voice from inside the hole.

"Got you by the tail," said Big Lion.

"That's not my tail," said Little Jackal; "that's a bit of the root of the tree you've got hold of."

"It feels like tail," said Big Lion. "How can I be sure that it isn't tail?"

"That's easy enough," said Little Jackal. "Go and find a stone and then come back and give it a good bang. If it's my tail it will bleed."

Big Lion thought this was quite a good idea, so he set off to find a stone.

But as soon as his tail was free Little Jackal went farther down into the hole, so that when Big Lion got back there was nothing of him to be seen at all!

After waiting for some time Big Lion went off home. But he was very cross indeed, for he and his wife and their child had all to go hungry to bed that night. The next day Big Lion came again to look for Little Jackal, and this time he came suddenly upon him as he sat dozing under the shade of a bush.

Little Jackal saw that he would not have time to get away, but his mind worked very quickly.

"Hush, hush," he said, when Big Lion was almost upon him; "Hush! Don't make a sound. There's a great big bush-buck just on the other side of that rock. I've been watching here for ages. I'm so glad you've come in time to help. Wait here while I go round to the other side and drive him towards you."

So Big Lion stood and waited.

He waited and waited. But no bush-buck appeared, and no Little Jackal appeared. He had run back to his home as quickly as his legs would carry him.

And after some time Big Lion began to realize that he had been fooled again, and went back home more determined than ever to catch Little Jackal sooner or later.

But as time went on he began to feel less vexed about all this, for although he wasn't very clever he was not the sort of creature to bear malice, and Little Jackal was quite an amusing companion.

So one day he asked Little Jackal whether he would go hunting with him again.

Little Jackal felt very flattered.

"He can't do without me," he said to his wife.

"He's rather a nice old dear," said Mrs. Jackal. "Don't you go spoiling everything by being too smart."

So Little Jackal and Big Lion went off hunting again. Before long they killed an ox.

"I will stay here and keep watch over the carcass," said Big Lion, "while you take away the pieces of flesh," and he gave him a nice piece of the breast to take to Mrs. Lion.

But as soon as Little Jackal got out of sight of Big Lion he paused and had a look at the piece of meat.

"That would make a lovely dinner for my wife and children," he said to himself. "The next piece will do for Mrs. Lion."

So he trotted off to his own home with the piece of breast. On his return Big Lion was waiting to give him another piece of meat, but this time it was a nasty, scraggy bit of shin.

"The mean old thing," said Little Jackal to himself, "a nice dinner that would have been for my wife and children!" and he set off with it to the home of Big Lion.

But when Mrs. Lion saw the nasty piece of shin she was very angry.

"What do you mean by bringing me a piece like this?" she said. "My husband knows very well that I never touch shin. Take that to your own wife and bring me a better piece. This will do very well for her."

Little Jackal was so angry when he heard this that he seized hold of the piece of shin, gave Mrs. Lion a bang in the face with it, and then threw it into the bushes.

When he got back to where Big Lion was waiting he found that he had another piece of breast ready for him to take.

"My wife will have finished the other bit by now," he said, "so you can run along with this."

But again Little Jackal decided to take it to his own wife, and so again Mrs. Lion waited in vain for dinner for herself and her child, while Mrs. Jackal and her little ones had a feast such as did not come their way many days in the year, I can tell you.

But when Big Lion reached home in the evening he found his wife in a furious rage.

"Was it you," she asked, "who sent Little Jackal to beat me and your child? And was it you who sent me a piece of shin for my dinner when you know perfectly well that I should never dream of touching such a thing?"

Big Lion was very angry indeed when he realized that Little Jackal had again cheated him, and he was determined that this time he would catch Little Jackal and pay him out. But Little Jackal was very careful to keep out of his way, and he was such a cunning fellow that several weeks went by without Big Lion getting so much as a sight of him.

But at the end of that time there was held a big council of all the animals, and Big Lion presided over it, for he was the chief of all the beasts.

Little Jackal wanted very much to go to the council, for he was inquisitive as well as cunning and he hated to be left out of anything that was going on. But he was frightened to show himself, and his wife tried to persuade him to stay at home.

"Big Lion will eat you up," she said, "and then what will become of me and the children?"

But Little Jackal thought and thought until he thought of a plan. He got wax from the bees and made himself a pair of horns of it, and he stuck the horns on to his head and then came and showed himself to his wife. And his wife didn't know him but took him for a stranger, and, as for his children, they all ran away and hid.

So Little Jackal went off in glee to the meeting. Nobody knew him. They thought he was a distinguished stranger and made room for him by the fire.

But the fire was warm and the meeting was long, and before it was over Little Jackal had fallen fast asleep. And the heat of the fire gradually melted the wax horns. And when it was time to go home Big Lion came closer to the fire to warm himself before starting and saw that the stranger was none other than that wicked Little Jackal for whom he had been looking for such a long time. But just as Big Lion was about to pounce on him Little Jackal woke up, and he was so quick that he managed to escape and rush off to his home.

Big Lion went after him, but Little Jackal arrived first, and Mrs. Jackal, who was on the look out for him, let down the rope when she saw him coming and pulled him up just in time.

And Little Jackal stood on the top of the rock and said rude things to Big Lion.

"Who are you and what is your name and whose son are you and where do you come from and whom do you want and what do you want him for?" he said, all in one breath.

"I want *you*," said Big Lion. "Let down the rope and I will tell you what I want you for."

Then Little Jackal let down the rope. But the rope was made of mouse-skins, and when Big Lion was half-way up, it came in two, and he fell down and broke his neck and was killed. And that was the end of him, and that is the end of the story.

The Three Dogs

A SWEDISH FOLK-TALE

There was once upon a time a king who had travelled in many lands, and on one of his journeys he met a fair lady whom he married and brought home with him. And before long a little daughter was born to them, and there was great rejoicing, for they were both much loved by the people of their land. But on the very day that the child was born a queer old dame appeared at the palace and asked to see the king. And when she came into his presence she warned him never to let the child go out of doors until she was fifteen years old, for if she did, the giants of the mountains would carry her off.

The king took heed of the words of the old dame and gave orders that the child was to be kept indoors.

Before long a second daughter was born, and again the old dame came and gave the same warning. Then there came a third daughter, and everything happened as it had done before. The king and queen were much troubled about this matter, but they gave strict orders that the three princesses were to be kept within the palace, and they waited with what patience they could muster until they should be old enough to go out. The three girls grew up to be very beautiful, but when the eldest was within a month of her fifteenth birthday the king had to go away to war.

While he was gone the three princesses were sitting at their window one spring morning, looking out at the flowers in the garden, where the sun was shining brightly. They wanted so much to go out that at last they ran downstairs to the little doorway which opened into the garden. At every door a guard was always stationed, with instructions on no account to let the princesses out, but they coaxed and pleaded until the man at this door, who did not know the reason for his orders, let them out into the garden.

For a short time they played happily among the flowers, but soon a cloud of mist came down and wrapped itself about them, then rose into the air, bearing them with it.

Messengers were sent out north, south, east, and west, but they could hear nothing of the three princesses. When the king came home from the war he had to be told of the dreadful thing that had happened, and sorrowful indeed were he and his queen, alone in their great palace without their lovely daughters.

The king made it known throughout the land that anyone who brought back the princesses should have one of them for his wife, and half the kingdom for her dowry.

Whereupon many young men set off on the quest, among others, two young princes from neighbouring countries to whose ears the story had come. They started off well armed, on fine horses, for they were rich and powerful, but they were rather foolish and very conceited and set off boasting that they would soon return with the princesses and claim their reward.

In the same country, but a long way from the chief town, there lived, in a little cottage in a wood, a poor woman with her son. The son spent his time looking after three pigs, which were all they possessed. He was a good lad—brave, too, and strong. While he wandered about the forest with the pigs he used to play sweet airs on a little wooden flute which he had made for himself.

One day, as he sat playing his pipe in the wood, there came along an old, old man with a fine big dog.

The boy thought that he would love to have such a dog for company and protection. The old man seemed to be able to read his thoughts, for he offered to give him the dog in return for one of the pigs. This the boy was more than willing to do, and the old man then told him that the dog's name was Holdfast, and that if his master told him to hold a thing fast he would do so, even if it were a great giant.

When the boy got home and told his mother what he had done she was furious, and started beating him with a stick, and would not stop for all his pleading. So then he called his dog, Holdfast, which at once rushed forward and held her fast, though without hurting her. So then she was obliged to give in.

The next day the boy went again to the forest and sat playing on his flute to the dog, which danced away to the tune in the most astonishing way. Soon the old man appeared again, accompanied by another dog, and again an exchange was made, for the boy thought it would be splendid to have two dogs to protect him. This one was called Tear, and the old man said

that when told to do so he would tear even the fiercest giant to bits. The lad's mother was very naturally greatly annoyed again, but she did not beat him this time—she was too much afraid of his two big dogs!

The next day he went again to the woods as usual. Now he had only one pig left, but he had his two big dogs, which now danced together when he played on his flute.

Yet once again the old man appeared, and the third and last pig was exchanged for a third dog. This one was called Sharp-ear, because his hearing was so quick that he could hear everything which was going on for miles and miles around. He could even hear the flowers growing, so quick were his ears, the old man said.

So the boy went home quite contented with his three dogs, and though his mother was ill-pleased—and no wonder! —to find that all her pigs were gone, the boy assured her so earnestly that she should not be the loser by it, that he contrived somewhat to comfort her.

The next day he went out early hunting with his three dogs and came home in the evening heavily laden with game. The day after he told his mother that he was off to seek his fortune, and that he would be back ere long with all she could want to keep her in comfort.

He travelled a long way, and in the depths of a great forest he met once more the old man from whom he had had the dogs.

The old man asked him whither he was going, and when the boy told him he was going to seek his fortune, the old man told him to keep straight on until he came to a royal palace, and that there good fortune awaited him. So the boy kept cheerfully on his way, paying for food and lodging by playing on his flute and making his dogs dance.

At last he came to a big town, and there he saw on the walls a proclamation about the three lost princesses, for in this city was the palace of the king, their father. Remembering what the old man had told him, the boy made his way to the palace where lived the sorrowful king and queen. When he showed the chamberlain how he could make his dogs dance he was allowed to perform before their majesties in the hope that it might distract them. And the king was so much amused at the dancing dogs that he asked the boy what reward he would like. But the boy answered that all he asked was permission to go and seek the lost princesses. The king did not think that so young a lad would have any chance of success, but he would not forbid him to go, and promised that the reward offered should not be refused if he brought back the three maidens.

So the boy set off with his three dogs, and very useful they were on the journey. Sharp-ear always told him what was happening for miles round, Holdfast carried his bundle, and he rode on Tear when he was tired, for Tear was the strongest of the three.

One day Sharp-ear ran to him and told him that they were coming to a big mountain and that he could hear one of the princesses spinning inside it. It belonged to a giant, said Sharp-ear, but the giant was not at home. When they came to the mountain Sharp-ear said that he could hear the golden shoes of the giant's horse ten miles away.

The boy told his dogs to break open the door of the mountain, and there inside sat the lovely princess spinning golden thread.

When she saw the boy she was much surprised, for she had seen no human being for seven years. She begged him to go away, for she knew the giant would kill him when he returned. But the boy would not go. When the giant returned he was furious to find the door broken open, and cried in a voice like thunder: "Who has dared to break open my door?"

"I have," said the boy; "and now I will break you."

Thereupon he set his dogs upon the giant, and they tore him to bits.

Then the boy took the giant's great horse, loaded it with a sack of his treasure, and, lifting the princess on to the saddle, went on his way. After they had travelled for a few days, Sharp-ear came running as before and told the boy that they were again coming to a high mountain, and that he could hear a lady spinning inside it. Again the giant was not at home, but this time he was but eight miles away. Sharp-ear could hear the golden shoes of his horse.

The dogs broke open the door of the mountain as before, and the second princess was rescued. When the giant arrived

the dogs made short work of him, as they had done of his brother, and the boy set the princess on the golden-shod horse beside her sister's steed and they set off once more.

You can imagine how delighted the princesses were to meet after so many years. They came after some days to a third mountain. This time the giant was but five miles off. Inside the mountain sat the third lovely princess weaving cloth of gold. But this time the giant did not shout and bluster when he arrived, for he had heard of the fate of his brothers. He put on a friendly manner and invited the boy to stay and eat. The boy was quite taken in and accepted the invitation, but the princess wept secretly and the dogs seemed to be uneasy. When the meal was over the youth asked if he could have a drink. "Up on the hillside is a spring of sparkling wine," said the giant, "but I have nobody to send to fetch some for us to drink."

"That's all right," said the boy; "one of my dogs will soon fetch some." The giant was delighted, for he very much wanted to get rid of the dogs. Holdfast was given a jug and told to go for the wine. But he went unwillingly. After a time, as he did not come back, the giant suggested that another of the dogs should go to help him, for the jug was a heavy one. This time Tear was sent, but he too went unwillingly and had to be driven off by his master. The princess wept, but the giant rejoiced to see that his plans were going so well. Some time went by. "I don't think much of your dogs," said the giant, "they are not very obedient. I expect they are chasing all over the mountain." The boy was vexed at this and told Sharp-ear to go at once and bring back the other two and the wine. Sharp-ear also went most unwillingly, but his master insisted. But when he got to the mountain-top a high wall immediately sprang up around him, which was what had also happened to the other two. This the giant had done by the power of his magic arts.

And, now that the dogs were out of the way, the giant seized his sword from the wall and told the boy that his last moment had come. The youth was very frightened, but he kept his wits about him.

"I have but one request to make," he said. "Before I die I should like to say one prayer and play a hymn upon my flute."

The giant gave his consent; but as soon as the boy began to play on his flute the giant's magic became powerless, and the dogs, set free, came rushing down the mountain and tore the giant to pieces.

This time the boy found a golden chariot belonging to the giant, and harnessing the horses to this he started off to drive the princesses home.

They did not know how to thank their brave deliverer enough. He was a handsome young fellow, and, as he drove along, his black curls blew out in the wind, and each of the princesses fastened a gold ring from her finger into a lock of his hair. As they drew nearer to their home they met two miserable-looking young men, and the youth stopped the chariot to inquire if he could help them. They turned out to be the two princes who had set out to seek for the princesses. They had been quite unsuccessful and were now in a sorry plight, having spent all their money and wasted all their strength.

So the boy took them up in the chariot, being very sorry for them. But they were cruel and treacherous, for when they heard of the boy's adventures they plotted to do away with him. The dogs were off hunting the woods around, and the princes were able to strangle the boy before he had time to call. They threatened to kill the princesses, too, unless they swore to keep silent, and they drove swiftly away, leaving the boy lying on the path. The princesses were most unhappy, especially the youngest, for she and the boy were in love with one another, and she had promised to marry him.

But very soon the dogs came running up to seek their master, and when they found him they licked his wounds and lay down beside him to keep him warm, so that before long he recovered and was able to go on his way. But when he came to the king's palace he found it full of gay company, feasting and rejoicing, and when he asked the cause of this he learned that that very day the two eldest princesses were to be married to the two princes, who had, of course, told lying tales about their exploits.

But the youngest princess, so he was told, would have nothing to do with the rejoicings, but sat apart and wept continually.

Then the boy asked if he might entertain the company with his dancing dogs, and when he was shown into the great hall all the guests were struck with his handsome looks and manly bearing. But the three princesses, as soon as they saw him, rushed towards him and fell into his arms. Seeing this, the two treacherous princes made a swift exit by the back door and were never heard of again.

If there had been any doubt about the youth's identity it would have been proved by the rings in his hair, but there was none to doubt his tale. And so he married the youngest princess, and in due time, I doubt not, husbands were found for the two others. But the brave lad received great honour, and when the king died was chosen to reign in his stead. The old tale says nothing about his old mother or the dogs, but I think we can be pretty sure that his mother received every possible attention and comfort. As for the dogs, I'm certain they were petted and admired by the whole court, and that when the young king and queen had a family of children, which I'm sure they had, Holdfast, Tear, and Sharp-ear guarded them, and played with them so beautifully that the royal nurses had hardly anything at all to do!



The Proud Seneschal

FROM AN OLD ROMAN STORY

There once lived, in the palace of a great Roman Emperor, many years ago, a seneschal who was very proud and hard-hearted and cared for no one but himself. To the poor he was especially unkind.

Not very far from the Emperor's palace was a great forest, and in this forest were all kinds of wild animals. The seneschal, whose name was Fulgentius, had pits dug in this forest, and had them covered with boughs and leaves in order to catch wild beasts as they roamed about.

And one day he was riding in the forest, and as he rode he said to himself: "Surely there is no person in the whole empire more great and powerful than I am." And while he was thinking this very proud and foolish thought, not looking in the least where he was going, he rode over one of the pits which he himself had ordered to be made and fell into it with his horse.

Inside the pit were three creatures which had fallen in that same morning—a lion, a monkey and a snake.

Fulgentius was very frightened when he found this out, as you can well imagine, and he yelled as hard as he could, hoping to make someone hear, so that he could be pulled out from the pit, for it was quite impossible to climb out.

Now there happened to be in the forest a poor man called Guido. He earned his living by collecting firewood and selling it in the town; and he had a donkey, which used to carry the loads of firewood home for him.

He was not very far away. He heard Fulgentius' call and ran quickly in the direction from which it came, to see what was the matter, for he had no doubt that something very alarming had happened.

Still directed by the noise, he soon came to the top of the pit. It was a deep one, and he could see very little as he peered cautiously over the edge. But Fulgentius could see his head from below, and called out to him that he was down there with a lion, a monkey and a snake.

"Quick! quick! Get me out!" he cried. "I am a rich man, and will make it well worth your while."

"Good sir," said Guido, "I should be glad to help you, but it will take some time, as I shall have to go to the city for a rope. I cannot get you out unless I have one. And if I spend the greater part of the day in doing this I shall not be able to collect any wood to sell, and if I cannot collect any wood, my wife and I will have nothing to eat."

"But if you do this I will make you a rich man," said Fulgentius. "You will no longer need to collect firewood for a living. Only be quick, I beg you!"

So Guido went off to the city as fast as he could, leaving his donkey tied to a tree some little way off. He borrowed a stout rope, and came back again, still in great haste, for he felt sorry for the poor man in the pit and knew he must be having a very anxious time.

He let the rope down into the pit and told Fulgentius to tie it firmly round his waist. But before he had time to do so, the lion leapt forward and managed, with the help of the rope which Guido was pulling from the top, to scramble up and out of the pit. He ran off joyously into the forest.

Guido let down the rope again. This time the monkey, who had, of course, seen the lion's escape, jumped over Fulgentius's head, gave the rope a shake, which is the signal for the person at the top to start pulling, and was very soon up. He never waited to say thank you, but danced away to the forest and back to his home in the tree-tops.

Once more the rope was let down. This time the snake quickly twined itself round it, was drawn up like the others, and glided swiftly away into the depths of the forest.

"Now that the beasts are all gone," called Fulgentius, "you can pull me out, my good man. Quick, quick, I beg you! I am almost dead with anxiety."

He was soon pulled out, and the two men together managed to pull out his horse as well, so the old tale says. But I think

that sounds a very unlikely story; for a horse is a heavy creature, and not nearly so nimble in the matter of climbing as a monkey, a snake, or even a lion.

That's as it may be. At any rate, the story says that the proud seneschal mounted his horse and rode back at once to the palace.

Guido went back to his home. The best part of the day had gone and he had no firewood, but he felt that that mattered not at all, as the rich man whom he had helped had promised him great wealth.

His wife saw him coming, and was very worried when she saw that there was no firewood on the donkey's back. But when he told her what had happened, and how he was to be rewarded with great riches, her spirits soon revived.

She had a little food in the house and a tiny sum of money put by, and they had quite a little feast to celebrate Guido's good luck.

The next morning she saw her husband off to the Emperor's palace. But when he arrived there and enquired for Fulgentius the seneschal, Fulgentius said he knew nothing about the man, that his story was pure fabrication, and ordered that he should be well whipped for his impudence.

The porter carried out the order and gave him such a severe whipping that poor Guido was half dead when it was over. Some kind person employed in the palace who knew Guido sent a message to his wife to tell her of all this, and as soon as she heard the bad news she saddled the donkey and managed to get Guido home on it, for he was quite unable to walk.

He was ill for some time, and their tiny store of money was all spent, but as soon as he was well again he went back to his wood-gathering.

The very first day he entered the forest he saw in the distance, coming along the path, ten donkeys with packs on their backs. Walking by the side of the last one was a lion. And, when he took a good look at the lion, he was sure that it was the same one that he had pulled out of the pit. The lion made him understand, by waving his paw about, that he was to lead the donkeys to his own dwelling.

Guido obeyed him, and when he reached home, still accompanied by the lion, it fawned upon him, wagged its tail as if very pleased, and went leaping back into the forest.

Guido was very puzzled by all this, and caused a notice to be put up in various public places that if anyone had lost some donkeys they should come to him and claim them. But nobody came, and so after a short time he opened the parcels with which the donkeys were loaded and found that they were full of money. The next day he went into the forest again, but forgot to take with him the axe with which he chopped up the wood that he collected. Suddenly, as he stood wondering what to do next, he felt a slight pull on his coat at the back. He turned round quickly, and there was the monkey which he had helped out of the pit. With his teeth and claws the monkey worked hard to help him break up the wood, so that by the evening he had a good load to take home. The next day he went to the forest again, and as he was sitting down preparing his tools before he got to work he saw gliding towards him the big snake which he had also helped out of the pit.

And in its mouth it held a stone of three colours—white, black and red. It opened its mouth and dropped the stone at Guido's feet. Then, as swiftly and softly as it had come, it glided back again into the undergrowth.

Guido took the stone home with him and showed it to a man who had great knowledge of precious stones.

"Not only is this stone valuable on account of its beauty," he said, "but it is of the kind that brings great good fortune to its possessor."

He offered Guido a big price for the stone, but Guido refused. He had had quite a nice sum of money from the lion, and he thought it would be foolish to sell a stone which was to bring him good luck.

The story of the wonderful stone quickly got about, and soon reached the ears of the Emperor, who sent a message to Guido to say that he wished to see it.

So Guido went again to the palace and was admitted to the presence of the Emperor without any trouble.

"I hear you are the possessor of a very marvellous stone," said the Emperor. "I will pay you whatever you ask for it, but

if you refuse to let me have it I shall banish you from my kingdom."

This seemed rather too bad, but emperors are very powerful people, and in those days they were accustomed to having their own way in all things. Poor Guido had no choice, so he suggested a sum of money about double what the stone merchant had offered him.

"That I will pay you gladly," said the Emperor, "if the stone is indeed as wonderful as I have been told."

So Guido took it from a little ivory box in which he kept it, and put it into the hand of the Emperor. The Emperor turned it round and round between his fingers, full of admiration for such a beautiful jewel.

"Tell me," he said, "how a man in your position—for I hear you are a woodcutter—came to have such a wonderful jewel."

Whereupon Guido told the whole story of the accident at the pit, and how he had helped Fulgentius out, and what had happened to him when he came before to the palace in order to claim his reward, and the truly marvellous way in which he had been helped by the grateful lion, the monkey and the snake.

The Emperor listened to him open-eyed; this was indeed a wonderful tale. But he was angry, too, to think that the man had been so shockingly treated by a member of his own court retinue. He sent for Fulgentius.

When Fulgentius saw Guido standing before the Emperor his knees began to shake—and well they might!

"What tale is this I hear of you?" said the Emperor. "I can scarcely believe my ears."

Fulgentius began to stammer out something about the man not speaking the truth.

"Your own guilty appearance would be sufficient to tell me who is speaking the truth," said the Emperor, "but in any case I have here in my own hands what is quite enough proof of Guido's story. I have no words in which to express what I think of you. It is a matter of shame for all men that one man should have shown less gratitude than the wild beasts of the forest. You are not fit to hold any post or to have honours or wealth. Indeed, I do not think you are fit to live."

The Emperor thereupon declared that all Fulgentius' honours were to be taken from him and given to Guido. He would even have had him put to death, but Guido pleaded for him, so he was banished from the kingdom instead.

All the noblemen of the country were much pleased to hear this, and, of course, Guido's own friends—to say nothing of his good wife—were delighted.

He lived many years, and remained to the end kind and honest, as he had always been. But though he rode and walked many times in the forest, he never saw again the lion, the monkey or the snake.



The Fortunate Student

A MAGYAR FOLK-TALE

There was once a poor student who set off during the vacation to go walking about the country, for he was growing tired of book learning and thought he would like to read awhile in the great book of nature for a change.

And one day, as he was walking through a field, he saw on the ground a quantity of peas, which had lain there so long that they were all dried up and cracked. But the young student had been blessed with a father who was a careful and provident man, and he had, therefore, been taught never to throw anything away, no matter of how little value it might seem to be. So he picked up the peas carefully, put them in his pocket, and continued on his journey.

Just as night was falling he came to the place where the king of the country lived.

So he went to the king's palace and enquired whether he could have a night's shelter and a little money to help him on his way.

This was by no means an unusual thing for a student to do: people were glad to give a helping hand to a young fellow who had his way to make in life.

But it so happened that the queen had occasion to pass through the room in which he was being interviewed by the steward, and she was struck by the young man's handsome appearance, by his pleasant voice and his easy, courteous manners.

"I shouldn't wonder," she thought to herself, for she was a romantically minded lady, "I shouldn't wonder if he is a prince in disguise, travelling about the country in search of a wife."

The more she pondered over this the more certain she became that it was so, and, as she happened to have a marriageable daughter, she very soon went so far as to persuade herself that fate had ordained that this young prince was the man whom the princess should wed.

She told all this to her husband, the king, and he, being also romantic—possibly he had caught it from his wife—entirely agreed with her. However, they decided to take all proper precautions, so without saying anything further they told the steward to ask the young man to spend two nights in the palace and then laid their plans accordingly.

They commanded that the bed on which he was to sleep should be rather hard and uncomfortable.

Now everyone knows that a real, true prince cannot sleep at all in an uncomfortable bed, whereas poor students have to put up with whatever is given them; so they felt that if their visitor slept well on the hard bed it would be a positive proof that they were mistaken and that he was not a prince at all.

The bed was made up in one of the rooms of an outbuilding in the grounds of the palace, and a trustworthy servant of the king was ordered to stand concealed outside the window and to look in and see what took place.

The young man was given some supper and then shown to his room. He was tired after his journey and began to undress at once. But, as he threw off his coat, the peas, which were loose in one of his pockets, dropped out and fell upon the floor, many of them rolling under the bed.

Thereupon the student, mindful of his father's teaching, began searching for them, and could not rest until he had found every single one. For hours and hours he went on groping about for the scattered peas, and it was not until dawn began to break that he at last lay down in bed.

The man who was watching outside the window could not make out exactly what he was doing, but he was able to see that the young student did not get to sleep until dawn, and this he reported next morning to the king and queen.

They felt that this was very satisfactory indeed and sent a message to the student to say that they would be very pleased if he would join them at breakfast. He accepted with pleasure, feeling that it was really most polite and kind of them.

"And how did you sleep?" asked the queen, pleasantly.

"Not too well," replied the young man, "but I have only myself to blame for that."

The king and queen exchanged glances when he made this remark, for they felt quite sure that the young man regretted that he had not told them his true rank, as in that case he would have been given a more comfortable bed.

They were by now convinced that he was indeed a prince in disguise, and thence-forward treated him as they felt befitted his noble birth.

The next night he slept in the same room, but the bed was a different one. This time it was the best the palace could afford, with pillows of finest down and the softest of mattresses. Once again the trusted servant was posted by the window, and this time he gave a very different report.

The young man had slept soundly, he said, throughout the night. He had not moved so much as an eyelid.

This was, of course, not to be wondered at, considering how tired he must have been after his lack of sleep the previous night. As for the peas, he had tied them up carefully in a corner of his handkerchief so that there should be no chance of their falling on to the floor again.

The king and queen, being now quite satisfied that the young man was truly a prince in disguise, made much of him, treated him like royalty, and introduced him to their lovely daughter.

The student fell in love with her on the spot, and never attempted to tell them that he was only a poor student, and that he possessed nothing in the world but the clothes he stood up in and a handful of dried peas.

After all, they asked him no questions, so that he had no need to tell them any lies. If they chose to look upon him as a prince, that was their own affair, and he might as well take the good gifts that fortune offered him.

So he married the princess, who was a most charming and beautiful girl and very fond of him, and was persuaded to stay on at the palace, at any rate for one year, so that the king and queen might not feel that they were losing their only daughter too suddenly.

But at the end of the year the king said he thought it was about time that their son-in-law returned to his own home in his own kingdom.

He was now in a very awkward position, for how could he take his wife to a kingdom which did not exist and to a home which he did not possess?

It was all very worrying for the poor young man; but he was fortunately of a happy-go-lucky disposition and decided that he had better say nothing and go through with the matter, trusting that Fate, which had so far befriended him, would continue to do so in the same wonderful way.

After all, should things turn out badly, he could always make his escape and go back to the university, for he had taken the precaution not to throw away his cap and gown.

So he set off with his wife and a fine retinue of servants such as befitted a prince. But he grew more and more nervous as they rode along, and when at last they came to a great forest he slipped quietly away and concealed himself in a deep ditch, where he started to undress, so that he might change into his student's cap and gown, which he had with him in a bundle, and so get away without being noticed.

But all of a sudden he perceived close to him a great dragon, which had been lying asleep under the fern growing in the ditch and had now been awakened by his movements. The young man was rather alarmed, but he remained quite still, feeling that that was the wisest thing to do.

The dragon looked at him drowsily with a few of its eyes, for it had seven heads, and then asked him who he was and what he was doing there. As it seemed to be quite a friendly creature the young man poured forth his tale, adding at the end that he had come to a point where the only thing left for him to do was to run away, much though he hated leaving his charming wife and the many pleasant things which the adventure had brought him. The dragon opened a few more of its eyes and looked at him again.

"There is no need for you to run away," it said. "It would be a great pity to do that. Go back to your wife and continue

your journey. When you come to the edge of the forest you will see before you a great castle, all made of copper, and perched on the top of a goose's egg in such a way that it can turn round and round. That castle belongs to me, and for the present I will lend it to you. But when the castle begins to turn about you must leave at once, for that will be a sign that I am coming back, and should I find you there on my return that will be the end of you."

The student was overjoyed at his good fortune, thanked the dragon warmly for its kindness, and, quickly rejoining his wife and train, rode on with them through the forest without having been missed by anyone. And as they drew near to the edge of the trees, there, sure enough, they saw a splendid copper castle right in front of them, shining in the sun.

"Here is the end of our journey," said the student, and they all rode up to the castle and entered the great gate. Crowds of liveried servants came running forward to receive them, and they found the whole place beautifully furnished with every comfort and luxury that heart could desire.

The student lived there very happily with his wife for the space of two years. He really began to feel as though he were indeed a great prince, and had almost forgotten about the dragon to whom the place belonged. But one day the castle suddenly began to turn, slowly at first, but gradually more and more quickly, so that before long it was fairly whizzing round. When this happened the young man was naturally much distressed, and he went up on to the highest battlements and there wandered about in great grief, wondering what he should do now, for it certainly looked as though his good luck had failed him at last.

But through the window of a room situated in the very topmost turret he saw an old, old woman, with a face as wrinkled as a withered apple. He opened the door of the room and went in.

"Good morning, granny," he said politely.

The old woman looked at him with her sharp eyes, which were marvellously bright for such an old woman.

"What ails Your Majesty?" she asked.

The student thought he might as well tell her, for she had a shrewd and kindly face.

"What ails me, granny, is this," he said. "Everybody believes me to be a great prince, whereas I am truly nothing of the kind." And he told her all his story.

"There's no need for you to be troubled about that," said the old woman when he had finished; "but it is well for you that you have told me the truth. For I would have you know that I am the Queen of Magic, and the dragon with seven heads is my bitterest enemy. Listen attentively to me and I will tell you what you must do. If you follow my instructions faithfully you will have nothing to fear."

She then told him to have a loaf of bread made and to have it baked in the oven seven times, together with other loaves, but to see that this particular loaf was always put into the oven first of all and taken out last. And when all this was completed he was to keep the loaf until the next day and then put it on the ground in front of the castle entrance.

"When the dragon comes," she said, "the magic loaf will be so powerful that the dragon will be conquered by it and will never come here again to trouble you."

The young man thanked the old woman warmly and undertook to do everything just as she had advised.

By the time the loaf had been prepared according to her instructions the night had fallen, but very soon after midnight it was placed outside the gate.

Just as dawn was breaking the dragon came flying up to the castle, breathing out great flames into the fresh morning air. But when it alighted in front of the entrance the loaf began to speak.

"Stop; I am on guard here," it said. "You cannot enter here without my permission, and I will not give you that permission until you have suffered what I have suffered."

"Indeed!" said the dragon. "And what have you suffered, pray?" But though it spoke so confidently it felt very anxious, for it was well aware that it would have to obey, because of the loaf's magic powers, which were far stronger than its own.

Then the loaf related how first of all it had been a seed buried in the cold, dark earth. How it had softened, sprouted and grown up towards the air and daylight. How it had been beaten by the hail and half-drowned by the rain; how it had shivered in the cold wind and been scorched by the burning rays of the sun, and had at last been cut down by sharp blades, tied up with harsh string, threshed with a flail, ground by a stone, kneaded into dough and then baked in an oven longer than any of its companions.

"If you can stand all those things," it said at the end, "I will let you into the castle. But if not, you will have to remain outside."

The dragon knew perfectly well that it could not possibly endure all these things, and it flew into such a fearful rage that it burst.

And so the student was left in possession of the castle and everything that was in it—servants, furniture and great bags of gold and silver in the cellars, enough to keep them all to the end of their days.

But he was both kind and wise, and fortunately was not at all spoiled by his good fortune, so that he lived happily with his wife and looked well after his people. And, later on, when the father and mother of the princess died, they left their kingdom to him and he ruled over it in their stead as well as over his own lands.

"And if I thought I might fare as well as that student," says the narrator of this story, "I would go to college this very minute."



Gunga and Cunga

AN ORIENTAL FOLK-TALE

Many, many years ago there lived in a land called Gujassmunn a Chan (that is, a great ruler) whose name was Gunisschang. In time Gunisschang died and his son Chamuk Sakiktschi was chosen to rule in his place.

In the country of Gujassmunn there lived two men with similar names. One of them, Gunga, was a painter, and the other, Cunga, was a wood-carver. These two men disliked one another very much. But Cunga was a just man, and in spite of his dislike for Gunga he planned no evil against him. "He has done me no harm," he said, "and, therefore, although I dislike the man from the very bottom of my soul, I will not do him any injury." So Cunga did his best to keep out of the way of his enemy lest he should be tempted in an evil moment to do him some harm. Not so Gunga. He was a man of a cunning and wicked heart and spent much time trying to devise some way by which he could get rid of Cunga without danger to himself. And after a good deal of thought he hit upon a plan upon which he immediately acted.

He requested an interview with the Chan, saying that he had news of great importance to impart to him.

So the Chan commanded that the painter should be brought into his presence, and bade him unfold what he had to tell.

"Thy honoured father, O Chan," said Gunga, "was borne after death to the Kingdom of the Tâng-âri" (that is to say, to the world of the spirits), "and last night I received a message from him asking that I would go thither. And thither I went without delay. And when I came thither I found him living there in great magnificence and splendour. And he spoke with me a long time and told me his wishes, and he also gave me this letter which he asked me to deliver into your hands without delay."

Thereupon Gunga produced a letter which he had written himself with great care and cunning, imitating the writing of the late Chan as best he could, and embellishing it with many strange devices such as one might imagine would be used by the inhabitants of the spirit world. And this is what he had written in the letter:

"This letter is addressed by the Chan Gunisschang to his beloved son, the Chan Chamuk Sakiktschi.

"When I departed this life I was carried away to the kingdom of the Tâng-âri. This is a beautiful land, and in it there are many wonderful and interesting things. I am happy and contented and lead a life of ease and leisure. But I am moved by the desire to erect a pagoda in which I can pray and meditate. Though I have searched throughout these realms I have been unable to find a wood-carver to carry out this purpose.

"I pray you, therefore, to send Cunga, the wood-carver, to me, so that he may perform this work, by reason of which he will gain great honour and fame in the spirit-world. I have given to Gunga, the painter, instructions as to how Cunga may come to me here."

When he had finished reading the letter, the Chan Chamuk Sakiktschi was filled with joy and wonderment.

"Indeed it is marvellous news," he said, "to learn that my good father has been borne to the kingdom of the Tâng-âri, and that he lives there in ease and splendour. And glad indeed am I to be able to fulfil his wishes so that he will be able to do what his heart desires."

Thereupon he gave orders that Cunga the wood-carver was to be brought into his presence.

The servants of the Chan went out to seek Cunga and presently brought him to their master.

"I have marvellous good news to tell thee, O Cunga, and great is the good luck that has befallen thee," said the Chan, as Cunga came bowing into his presence. "To-day I have learnt that my late father, Gunisschang, is living in great happiness in the kingdom of the Tâng-âri. He has sent word to me that he is anxious to build a pagoda in which he can pray and meditate, but in all that realm there are no wood-carvers to be found. He asks me, therefore, to send thee thither to him without delay in order that thou mayest immediately set about this work. This is indeed a splendid task that is given thee."

The Chan showed the letter to the wood-carver, but when he had read it, seeing that it was Gunga, the painter, who had

brought the letter to the Chan, he was quite certain that the man was up to some trickery, for he was well aware of his hostile intentions at all times.

He therefore demanded of Gunga what were his instructions as to the journey to the kingdom of the Tâng-âri.

Whereupon Gunga replied: "When thou hast gathered together all thy tools and other things necessary for thy work thou shalt build up a great pile of faggots, and thou shalt mount upon them with songs of gladness and adoration. Then the pile of wood shall be set alight and thou shalt journey forthwith to the kingdom of the Tâng-âri. All this shall be done on the seventh day hence."

Cunga heard all this in silence. Then he bowed low before the Chan. "So be it," he said. "The thing shall be done according to these instructions," and he left the palace. But his heart within him was full of anger, for he was certain that the whole affair was a cunning plot of Gunga's to get rid of him.

When he reached home he told the story to his wife, who was in great distress.

"There is no doubt that this is the evil work of Gunga," said her husband, "but be not unduly distressed, I shall assuredly find some way to make his wicked plans come to naught."

The next day he set busily to work and dug an underground passage leading from his house to the middle of a field which adjoined it. And over the opening he placed a stone and the top of the stone he covered with earth, doing all this latter part by night so that no one should see what he was about. When the seventh day had come the Chan commanded that a great pile of wood should be heaped up in the field of the wood-carver, and Cunga himself helped with the work, even going so far as to choose the spot where he was to have the joy of setting out to the spirits in the kingdom of the Tâng-âri.

And on the evening of the seventh day the Chan said: "The time has now come when Cunga, the wood-carver, shall start on his journey to meet my father, the Chan Gunisschang."

Then, according to his commands, all the people came to the place where the wood was piled up, and placed on it a handful of fat so that the fire should burn up fiercely.

The wood-carver mounted on to the top and began singing songs of gladness and adoration, but he contrived while so doing to make his way to the stone above the opening and to creep into the subterranean passage and so along to his own house.

Gunga, the painter, was exceedingly joyful, and while the fire was raging fiercely he pointed to the smoke and the sparks rising high into the air, saying: "Behold how Cunga, the wood-carver, rises up to heaven."

All the people who had been present went to their homes thinking, "The wood-carver is dead and has now gone to dwell with the Chan in the kingdom of the Tâng-âri."

Cunga remained quietly hidden in his own house for a whole month, letting no one see him. He washed his head in milk every day and kept out of the sun. At the end of the month he put on clothes made of white silk and wrote a letter. He imitated the writing of Gunisschang, just as Gunga had done, and decorated it with scrolls of gold and strange embellishments. And this is what he wrote in the letter: "This letter is addressed by the Chan Gunisschang to his beloved son, the Chan Chamuk Sakiktschi. It is of great comfort to learn that thou rulest thy kingdom justly and peaceably. Cunga, the wood-carver, has completed his work and the work is well done and is pleasing to my eyes. Therefore do I command thee to reward the wood-carver handsomely for all that he has accomplished. It is now necessary that the pagoda should be made beautiful with many paintings. I therefore beg thee to send me the painter Gunga, as thou didst send the wood-carver."

The wood-carver came into the presence of the Chan, taking the letter with him.

The Chan looked at him with great wonder and amazement.

"Is it indeed Cunga," he said, "returned from the land of the Tâng-âri? How comes this?"

Thereupon the wood-carver handed the letter to the Chan, saying:

"It is true that I have been in the kingdom of the Tâng-âri, true is it also that I have now returned again, and with a letter

which thy father has asked me to deliver to thee."

The Chan read the letter and was overjoyed to find that the visit of Cunga to the realm of the Tâng-âri had been so successful, and he gave him many beautiful gifts according to the instructions in the letter.

"I see," he said, "that the Chan, my father, now wishes me to send him a painter in order that the pagoda may be completed." And he sent out his servants to bring Gunga, the painter, into his presence.

When Gunga came into the presence of the Chan, and beheld, to his great astonishment, Cunga, the wood-carver, looking very fine, wearing shining garments of spotless white, and laden with beautiful gifts, his heart turned to water within him, for much he feared that Cunga had discovered his wicked plot and was now about to avenge himself. And he very soon found out that it was indeed so. For the Chan handed to him the letter which the wood-carver had given him, all beautifully embellished and adorned with a great seal hanging from it, and said to him:

"It is now thy turn, O Gunga, to go to my father in the kingdom of the Tâng-âri to complete the beautiful work which was begun by the wood-carver Cunga. At the end of seven days thou shalt depart thither. Thou knowest already the method by which thou shalt go thither, for it was delivered by thy hand when my father sent for thy fellow-craftsman to carve the pagoda.

"Go now, therefore, and take with thee, when the time comes for thy departure, the materials necessary for thy work, also a letter which I will give thee for my father, and gifts which I will prepare in order to show him honour and devotion."

Gunga, the painter, was unable to say aught, for, although he was an evil and a cunning man and had himself thought out the plan for the destruction of Cunga, he was so astonished at this unexpected turn of events that he was unable to think of any way out of his predicament. Neither had he the wit to devise a plan of escape as Cunga had been able to do. And so it came about that on the seventh day a great pile of faggots was heaped up as before, and as before the people came according to the commands of the Chan and put handfuls of fat upon it—so that it might burn quickly. But this time no underground passage was there, no way by which Gunga could avoid his fate. He was obliged to seat himself in the midst of the pile of wood with all his painting implements piled up about him, also a letter from the Chan Chamuk Sakiktschi to his father, together with many fine presents.

And there stood Gunga singing his songs of adoration and gladness. But as the fire grew hotter and hotter the songs grew louder and louder, and soon they were songs no longer, but sounds of terror, until at last he was utterly destroyed.

"He was properly rewarded," is the remark with which the tale ends, as told by the Eastern Chronicler, and I must say I think it did rather serve him right.



Wise Judgment

A TALE FROM BOHEMIA

Long ago there lived a king whose name was Hradibor. He was a wise man and often travelled about his kingdom in disguise in order to learn how his people lived. One day when he was on one of these expeditions he came to a poor cottage in a small village.

He knocked at the door and asked the woman who opened it if he might have a glass of water. She bade him come in and sit down while she fetched fresh water from the well; and he did so. And he learnt that the woman was a widow and that she had twelve daughters.

"Do you mean to say that these twelve girls are all your own daughters?" asked the king.

"Indeed they are," said the woman; "and what to do with them all I do not know."

"When I come again," said the king, "I will take one of them home with me." He gave the woman a gold piece, thanked her courteously for her hospitality, and set out on his way back.

There was great excitement in the cottage after his departure, for the girls all thought he wanted one of them for his wife.

"I shall go," said the eldest. "Everyone knows that it is customary for the eldest daughter to marry first."

But her sisters declared that their visitor was a grand gentleman, and grand gentlemen did not bother about customs. He would certainly choose the one he liked best. They went on chattering and squabbling for a long time, all except the youngest, Libena, for she was only five years old. But she was the prettiest of all the twelve daughters.

At last their mother grew tired of all the chatter and set the girls to work, but it was quite evident what thoughts were still running in their heads, for they all spent quite a lot of time tidying their hair and generally beautifying themselves. They felt that any day the stranger might return and claim one of them for his bride.

And sure enough, at the end of a week, he came back, this time in a fine carriage drawn by two splendid horses. But great was the disappointment of all the elder sisters when he announced that he had decided to take back the youngest of all, little Libena. Even the mother was surprised.

"What do you want with my child?" she said.

The king explained that he had no daughter, only sons, and that he thought it would be an excellent thing for them to be brought up with a little girl whom they could look upon as their sister.

The king had brought with him a purse full of gold pieces, and though Libena's eleven sisters were inclined at first to be vexed and grumpy at his choice, they cheered up when he handed over the gold pieces to their mother, for they knew that that meant an easier time for all of them. So they bade their little sister good-bye and she went off with the king in his fine carriage.

The king had three sons, the youngest of whom was but ten years old, and when their father showed them the new little sister whom he had brought home for them to play with they were all delighted. She was treated just as they were, and everyone looked upon her as a member of the family. Only the coachman who had driven the king's carriage on the day when he went to fetch Libena knew whence she came.

She was charming and beautiful and the three princes loved her dearly. But the tale of her origin gradually spread through the palace, and most of the members of the household staff knew of it, though it was never spoken of before the royal family.

But one day, when Libena was no longer a little girl, but almost grown up, she wanted to go out for a drive, and the youngest prince gave orders that the carriage was to be got ready. The servant to whom the order had been given was a lazy, surly fellow, and as he turned to go he said under his breath:

"What a fuss they make about that girl the king bought. She might be a real princess."

But the young prince had sharp ears and heard what the man said.

"What is that?" he asked. "Princess Libena not our sister?"

The man was frightened, but he had to tell the prince all he knew. The prince told his brothers, and then a difficulty arose, for each one of them at once declared that he wanted to marry Libena! They went to the king and queen and told them what they had heard.

"Don't you like her now that you know who she is?" asked the king.

"Indeed we do," said the princes. "But the difficulty is—we all want to marry her! Will you decide, Sire, which of us has the best right to ask her to be his wife."

The king did not know what to say. At last he suggested that each of the young men should go out and see what wonderful object he could bring back home. The one who brought back the most valuable gift should marry Libena. The three princes agreed and all set out together. But they came across no object which was very interesting or valuable, so at last they all sat down in an inn and decided to separate. At the end of a month they were all to meet there again, bringing their treasures with them.

The eldest prince took the road to the right, and after travelling for some time came to a town, and there, in the marketplace, was an old man in a little carriage. There was a crowd around him and the prince asked the reason for the crowd.

"He wants to sell that little carriage for a thousand pieces of gold," said a man.

The prince pricked up his ears. This sounded interesting.

"And are any of you so foolish as to think of buying it?" he said. "If so, you are as mad as the old man himself."

The people melted away, which was just what the prince desired, and he then asked the old man why he wanted so much for the carriage.

"Because," was the reply, "this little carriage has a mysterious power. If you seat yourself in it you will instantly be conveyed wherever you wish to go."

The prince immediately paid the man what he asked, for he felt that he had indeed found a treasure. He then seated himself in the little carriage and wished himself back at the inn, where he stayed awaiting his brothers' return.

The second brother turned to the left. After travelling for some time he came upon an old man in a village street who was offering a mirror for sale. The prince noticed that people looked at it, asked the price and then passed on. So he, too, asked the price.

"Two thousand pieces of gold," he was told.

"How ridiculous," said the prince.

"Not at all," said the old man, "this is no ordinary mirror. If you hold it in your hand it will show you whatever you ask to see."

The prince took the mirror in his hand and asked it to show him the inn where he had arranged to meet his brothers. Immediately he saw his eldest brother sitting in the inn with an expression of great joy on his face. "He, too, has found a treasure," thought the second one, and, after paying the old man the two thousand pieces of gold, rushed off to join his brother.

The third prince went straight forward, thinking all the time of lovely Libena. And after some days, as he was walking through a small hamlet, he saw an old, old woman with a rosy apple in her hand, which she was trying to sell. But when she said she wanted ten gold pieces for her apple everyone laughed. The prince, however, thought there might be something very special about an apple for which she wanted so much money, and he gave her the gold pieces without questioning her.

"You have done well," she said. "If anyone is dying, this apple will restore him. I have only two more. Would you like to

take all three?"

The prince bought the three apples, very much delighted to have found anything so wonderful, and started back for the inn. When he got there he found his two brothers impatiently awaiting him.

"What have you found?" they asked.

"Three apples," he replied.

They were very contemptuous about this and showed him with pride the little carriage and the magic mirror.

"Let us see what is going on at home," said the youngest prince at once.

But the picture that the mirror showed was a very distressing one. They could see all the servants rushing about with anxious faces as if some great calamity had befallen.

"Someone must be dying or dead," said the princes, and anxiously asked the mirror to show them their mother and father and Libena.

And the mirror showed them all three to be stricken with a terrible illness and on the point of death.

Thereupon the three princes seated themselves at once in the little carriage and told it to take them home. In a very few minutes they arrived at the palace, but only just in time. The youngest prince rushed to the bedside of his mother and father and Libena and gave each of them one of his apples to eat, and, to the relief and joy of everyone, they all showed signs of improvement at once, and in a few hours were quite restored to health.

"You have brought the most wonderful treasure of all," said the king to his youngest son. "Libena is yours, for you have saved her from death."

But the other sons did not agree. After all, they said, their share in the matter was just as important as their brother's. If it had not been for the mirror and the carriage they would in the first place not have known what was happening, and in the second would never have arrived in time.

The king was much perplexed and did not know what to say. In the end he called together all the wisest men in the kingdom and asked them to talk the matter over and decide which of the princes had the best right to claim Libena's hand.

And the wise men came from far and near and settled down to discuss this difficult question. And they talked and talked for days and days and came to no decision. They were in no hurry, for they were very comfortable, the king having seen to it that they were provided with easy chairs and good meals.

The princes grew more and more impatient. It really looked as if the wise men would go on talking until they died. So at last the king announced that any person in his whole kingdom who had a suggestion to offer should have a hearing. And he and the queen and princess Libena sat on a dais to receive those who came, while close beside them sat the three princes, one with his little carriage, one with his mirror, and the third with nothing at all.

All day long people came. One said one thing, one another, but they had no new ideas at all. At last there came an old, old man with long, white hair. He stood quietly in front of the dais and waited until the king told him to speak.

"It is the simplest thing in the world," he said, at last. "The eldest prince has his carriage, the second has his mirror. But the youngest has nothing at all, for his apples were eaten up. So it is fair that the youngest prince should have the maiden for his wife."

Everyone shouted and applauded—everyone, that is to say, except the two eldest princes. But, being good fellows, they decided to make the best of a bad job. So the youngest married Libena, who loved him dearly, and I have no doubt that in the course of time both the other brothers also found wives, and that they all lived happily ever after.

Whippety Stourie

FOUNDED ON AN OLD SCOTTISH TALE OF THAT NAME

Long, long ago, in the days when women spun their own thread, and, sometimes even wove it into stuff on the loom, there lived a man who was very rich and prosperous. But he had had to work hard when he was young and poor, and he had the idea that everybody ought to be able to do useful work.

One day this fine gentleman, whose name was Sir Richard—the king having knighted him on account of his many valorous doings at home and abroad—was out riding on his horse, when he saw over the top of a yew hedge three pretty ladies all playing on a green lawn with a golden ball. And by what he considered a piece of great good luck for him, one of the three threw the ball so high and so far that it flew right over the yew hedge into the lane in which he was riding. So he quickly dismounted from his horse and began searching for the ball. And just as he had found it the gate in the yew hedge opened, and out came the prettiest and youngest of the three maidens, and looked about to see if she might see their lovely plaything.

Sir Richard, with great presence of mind, immediately dropped the ball into the ditch and went on searching, because he hoped that in that way he might see more of the pretty maiden.

She came a few steps down the lane.

"Good day, fair maid," said Sir Richard. "I saw a golden ball fly over the hedge—maybe it belongs to you. I am looking for it here in the ditch."

"That is very kind," said the maiden. "It certainly belongs to me and my sisters, but we would not have you put yourself about for such a trifle."

Sir Richard made a deep bow.

"I cannot easily think of a happier task in the whole world," he said, "than to be of any help to such a lovely lady, but I have no doubt your eyes are quicker than mine. It would be very kind if you would help me in my search."

So the maiden and the knight both searched in the ditch, and presently, for very shame, for he knew where he had dropped it, the knight picked up the ball, wiped it carefully on his silk sleeve, and gave it to the maiden. And as he looked at her again he thought she was the most beautiful lady he had ever seen, and that he would never be satisfied until he had her for his wife. Sir Richard did not even know the name of this lovely maiden whom fate had thrown so fortunately across his path, but he was a determined man and an eager wooer, and when you get these two things together it is not a difficult matter to guess what the end of it will be, for the old proverb is right enough when it says that where there's a will there's a way.

The Lady Barbara found it easy enough to love him, for he was a gallant lover, and at the end of three months the wedding took place. And a fine and handsome wedding it was, as you may guess, and all the gentry from many miles round were bidden to the festivities. But there was not one among all the lovely ladies there to compare with the beautiful bride. Her eyes were as blue as the flower of the flax, and her hair was like a field of buttercups with the sun on them, but loveliest of all was her rosy red mouth, than which, so it was said, there was none more beautiful in the whole country. She brought with her a fine dowry, for her father was a rich man and wished his daughter to be short of nothing that a fair and high-born lady should have.

But one thing that the bridegroom insisted upon was that there should be no linen among her dowry. The father of Lady Barbara, imagining that Sir Richard's fine castle was already well stocked with beautiful linen of every sort, made no serious objection to this, though if her mother had been alive (but she, alas, had been dead for many a long year!) I think she might not have fallen in with this plan quite so readily.

But she took with her many great chests full of beautiful gowns of silk and satin, bonnets and hats with gay feathers on them, laces almost as fine as the web of a spider, bright shawls and lovely jewellery, and many other things befitting a high-born lady.

But, although she found the castle full of fine mirrors and chairs and tables and handsome hangings, there was but little

store of sheets and napkins and linen covers and such things.

And when at the end of a month the Lady Barbara mentioned the matter, her husband, whom she had already discovered to be a determined person, though he was always most loving and affectionate to his beautiful wife, turned and looked at her with a serious gaze.

"There is no linen," said he, "because I have had no wife to spin it as every good wife should, whatever her station in life. Till now you have had nothing to do except enjoy yourself, and glad I have been that it was so, but henceforward I shall expect you to spin twelve hanks of thread a day, my dear, and I know you will do this gladly to please me."

Lady Barbara was aghast; she had never been taught to spin, and she had very little idea as to how to do it.

"I will do my best," she said, for she was of a gentle and amiable disposition, and those were days when wives were supposed to obey their husbands. But she did not get on very well, for spinning is not an easy thing to learn, as anyone who has ever tried to do it knows well.

Her husband was vexed about this. He had set his heart on her spinning the house-linen, and when he found she was getting on so slowly he showed his displeasure, and she was quite unhappy.

Then one day he had to go away on a journey which would keep him away for a week.

Before he started he said he would expect her to have learnt to spin while he was away, and that he hoped to see a large pile of hanks of spun thread on his return home. Then he kissed her on her lovely red mouth and rode off sadly, for he did not know how he would get through a whole week without sight of her.

But when he was gone she wept, for she feared she would never learn to spin, and she went for a walk along the hillside and sat down on a big flat stone and again wept bitterly.

And presently through her weeping she heard sounds of lovely soft music which seemed to come from beneath the stone on which she was sitting. She rose up from her seat, and found it was quite easy to lift the stone. And what do you think she found beneath it? A cave in which sat 'six wee ladies,' so the tale goes, in green dresses, and every one of them spinning away at a tiny spinning wheel, and each singing this queer little rhyme:

Little knows my dame at hame
That Whippety Stourie is my name.

Lady Barbara walked into the cave and the six little ladies very kindly asked her to take a seat while they kept on spinning.

She noticed that each one of them had her mouth all drawn on one side, but of course she said nothing about it as she felt that it would not be polite.

They asked her how it came that such a grand and beautiful lady should look so unhappy, for they could see that she had been crying.

So then she told them that her husband, although he was such a rich man, thought she should be able to spin, but that she had never been brought up to spin and much feared she would never learn; and she also told them about the pile of hanks of spun thread which he expected to see on his return, and that she knew she would never, never get this done.

"And is that all?" said the little green ladies, speaking, as it were, out of their cheeks. (The person who tells this tale should make a crooked mouth when he imitates the green ladies.)

"And don't you think that's a very big all?" said the Lady Barbara, her heart ready to break with grief.

"We can easily get rid of that trouble for you," said the little green ladies. "All you need to do is to ask us to dinner on the day your husband is to come home. You'll see then how we shall manage him."

So the Lady Barbara gladly invited them all six to dine at the castle the day on which her husband was to arrive home.

On the day of his return he found the whole house so busy with preparations for dinner—for Lady Barbara was a good

housekeeper even though she was not able to spin very well—that he never had a moment to ask her about the thread she was supposed to have spun in his absence.

And when the hour for dinner drew near she came in wearing her gown of silk and fur with her golden hair gleaming and her blue eyes shining and her red mouth smiling (for she had the greatest confidence in the powers of the little green ladies), and so the thought of the spun thread went right out of her husband's head and he could think once more of nothing but her graciousness and her beauty.

And in a few minutes the six little ladies arrived in a wonderful little coach with six tiny cream horses. The harness glittered with precious stones and there was a frog for the coachman and a nimble lizard for footman. They themselves were as grand as six princesses, though they were still dressed in green from head to foot.

Sir Richard was very polite indeed to them, helped them out of the carriage while the lizard held the door open, and showed them up the stairs himself with a lighted silver candlestick in each of his hands. And at the top stood his lovely wife waiting to receive them. And in the fine banqueting chamber a splendid dinner was laid out with silver dishes piled up with all the good things you can imagine.

So they all sat down to dinner, and the six little ladies were very bright and talkative, and everything went on swimmingly. But towards the end of the meal, when the host was getting rather lively and beginning to feel really at home with his guests, he said: "Ladies, I hope you will not think it an uncivil question, but I should so much like to know how it has come about that all your mouths are twisted to one side?"

"Oh," said they all together (the teller must remember to speak as before) "that comes from our constant spin-spin-spinning."

"Is that so?" cried Sir Richard, "then John, Tom, and Dick" (these were the serving men) "you go off with all the haste you can and burn up every reel and spinning-wheel in the whole of this place, for I will not have my wife spoil her bonny face with spin-spin-spinning."

And so, ends the tale, the lady lived happily with her gudeman all the rest of her days.

The White Dove

A PORTUGUESE FOLK-TALE

There was once a charming maiden who had a crabbed old uncle for her guardian, for both her parents were dead. He fastened her up in a room at the top of a high tower where she saw no one but the servants who waited on her. But one day, as she sat at the window, a fine young prince came riding by on his white horse and, seeing her sitting at the window, fell in love with her. After that he came every day, and she would lean out of her window and talk to him. And, as she could not get out, they soon discovered a way by which he could come in. She had very long and lovely hair, and she would let down her golden plaits so that with their help he was able to climb up to her window and visit her.

One day an old witch happened to be passing by just as the prince was climbing up, and, as she was a spiteful old creature, she determined to make use of what she had found out.

The very next day she came to the foot of the tower at an earlier hour than that at which the prince usually came, and, imitating the prince's voice, called out to the maiden to let down her hair. When the maiden did so, the witch caught hold of the long plaits and climbed up. She climbed into the room of the princess and told her to have nothing to do with the prince, since he was a false man and a false lover; but, fortunately, the maiden was wise enough to disbelieve her words. When the time drew near for the prince's visit the witch let herself down again and disappeared.

But the maiden told the prince how the witch had entered her room by cunning, and how she had tried to poison her mind against him.

The prince was rather alarmed when he heard this, so the next day he arrived with a carriage-and-pair and a long ladder of rope and persuaded the maiden to run away with him.

She was quite willing to do this, and said good-bye to everything in the tower before she left. But she forgot to say good-bye to the broom. She took with her three gifts which her godmother had given her at her christening: a little bottle of water, a little bag of stones, and a little box of sand.

Soon after they had gone, the old witch returned to the tower and called out to the girl as she had done before. But there was no answer.

"She is sick, she is sick," cried out the chairs and the tables.

But the broom, which was very angry at having been ignored when the maiden left, came to the window and cried out: "It is not true, it is not true. She has gone off with the prince."

When the witch heard this she started running as fast as she could in order to overtake the lovers.

The maiden, who was feeling rather anxious, put her head out of the window and saw the old witch pursuing the carriage. Thereupon she emptied her little box of sand out of the window. Immediately it spread and spread till there was a sandy waste between them and the witch.

But the witch managed to make her way over the sand, though not without great difficulty, and again pursued the carriage.

The maiden, looking out of the window again, saw that she was getting nearer and nearer, so she emptied her little bag of stones on to the road.

Immediately there rose up a huge wall, so high and so thick that you would have thought no one could ever have surmounted it. But the witch managed to get over, though she did not find it very easy.

When the maiden, looking out of the window yet again, saw that the witch had managed to climb over the wall and was once more close behind the carriage, she poured out the water from her bottle.

The water turned into a great rushing river, which ran right across the path of the witch. Now it is a well-known fact that witches cannot cross running water, and so it proved in this case. The witch stood on the farther bank raging and shaking her fists, but she was unable to ford the torrent.

When the carriage arrived at the gates of the city which was the capital of his kingdom, the prince told the maiden that he must go to his palace and announce to his court that he was bringing home his bride. "It would never do," he said, "if you were to enter the palace without being suitably received. In a short time I will come back to you, but meanwhile you must remain hidden away."

A beautiful tree grew near the gates. It stood beside a fountain, and the branches of the tree hung over the basin of the fountain and were reflected in its clear water.

The prince helped the girl to climb up this tree, and left her quite comfortably perched on one of its broad branches, hidden from passers-by, and shaded from the heat of the sun.

Not long after the prince had driven off, a dark-skinned gipsy woman came to the fountain for a jug of water. And, as she bent down to fill her jug, she saw the face of the maiden reflected in the water. She thought it was her own face.

"How lovely I am," she said. "Why should I carry water? I will break my pitcher." And she broke her jug into pieces against the rim of the fountain and went away. But before long she returned with another jug, having thought better of it. Again she looked into the water, and again she saw the same lovely reflection.

"It is true," she said, "I am the loveliest of women. Why should I carry water?" And again she broke her jug against the rim of the fountain and departed. But before long she returned for the third time, and this time she had a tin jug with her. Once more she saw the lovely face in the water, and once more she thought it was her own reflection. But this time she was unable to break the pitcher, as it was made of metal.

This made her very angry. She threw the pitcher away from her. "Lie there," she said; "I will fetch no more water." She did not go away, but stood staring about her. And at last she looked up into the tree. And there she saw the lovely maiden sitting among the branches.

"What are you doing up there all by yourself?" she asked. "Two is company. I will come up and join you." And she climbed up the tree and sat beside the maiden, and inquired how she came to be in such an odd situation.

And the maiden told her how she had escaped from the tower and was waiting for the prince to come back and take her to his palace. And when the gipsy had heard the tale she remarked:

"What beautiful hair you have. Let me undo it and comb it out so that you may look your best at the court of the prince."

But, as she undid the girl's hair, she stuck a long pin into her head; whereupon the girl turned into a white dove, which flew up into the air. But the gipsy girl remained sitting in the tree.

When the prince returned, he was very much astonished to see an ugly, dark-skinned creature sitting among the branches.

"What has happened to you?" he said. "When I left, you were as fair as a lily, but now you are browner than a withered leaf."

"That is your fault," said the gipsy woman. "You left me here for hours in the sun and the sun has burnt my fair skin and made me brown."

The prince was not very happy about this, as he felt sure that this was not the girl whom he had left in the tree. But a promise is a promise, and, moreover, the whole court was waiting to receive him and his bride. There was no other maiden to be seen, so he drove away to his palace with the gipsy girl.

Every day a beautiful white dove would fly into the palace garden, and, sitting on a branch of a flowering tree, would say to the gardener in its soft, cooing voice, "Tell me, gardener, how fares the prince with his brown bride?"

And the gardener would answer, "Not too badly. But what is that to you? Be off, lest harm befall you."

And one day when the gardener met the prince walking in the garden he told him about the white dove and its strange question.

"Snare the dove with a snare of green ribbon," said the prince, "and bring it to me."

So when the dove came the next day the gardener tried to throw the snare of green ribbon about it. But the dove was not

to be caught.

"No, no," it said, "you will not catch me with a silken snare."

When the gardener told his master of his ill success the prince advised him to try a snare of silver. So when the dove came the next morning the gardener attempted to throw a silver snare over it.

But again he was unsuccessful.

"No, no," said the dove. "You will not catch me with a silver snare."

Again the gardener was forced to relate that he had been unsuccessful.

"Try yet once more," said the prince; "but this time let your snare be of gold."

So the gardener made a snare of gold and tried again to catch the white dove. And this time he was successful.

The prince had a lovely cage of fine gold and precious stones made for the white dove, which he kept in his private apartment.

And one day the gipsy woman came into the room and saw him caressing it, and was very angry and jealous.

"I wish you would do away with that bird," she said. "I do not like it." But the prince had grown fond of the pretty, gentle bird and would not hear of such a thing.

And one day as he sat with it on his shoulder and was stroking its head, he came upon the head of a pin hidden among its feathers.

He pulled the pin out of the bird's head, and immediately it turned into the maiden of the tower.

She related to the prince all that had happened to her since he had left her in the tree, and how ill the gipsy woman had used her and how she had deceived him with her false tales.

The prince was most happy to have found his true love again and wanted to punish the gipsy by putting her to death for her wickedness. But the maiden would not have it so, and persuaded him to banish her instead to a far country. This was done, and we will hope that she lived to repent of her wickedness. But the prince and the fair maiden were married at once and lived very happily ever after, of course!



Beetle

A RUSSIAN FOLK-TALE

A poor little man once lived in a Russian village long, long ago, when that country was still governed by a Tsar. He was very small and rather weakly, so that he found it very difficult to get work enough to support himself and his wife. People were inclined to despise him, and in the village where he lived they nicknamed him 'Beetle.'

His wife was a good little soul, but she, too, was not very strong, and as they were no longer quite young they found it more and more difficult to earn enough to provide for even the simplest requirements.

One day the man, who had, by the way, quite a good brain, decided to leave the village and try his luck in a neighbouring one, where he was unknown. "I have a plan in my head," he said to his wife, "whereby I hope to earn a bit of money. I shall set up as a magician, and people will pay me to tell them what they are unable to find out for themselves."

"But how can you possibly do that?" said his wife. "You know nothing at all about magic. Heaven forbid that you should take up with such dangerous matters. No good could come of it."

"Say nothing," said her husband. "You will see what you will see."

So they moved to the other village.

When they had been there but a very short time the Beetle climbed by night into the kitchen of the farmer who lived half-way up the hill. He took a fine piece of linen from the chest and hid it under the straw in the barn. He then crept away home.

The next day there was a great hue and cry.

"My beautiful linen!" lamented the farmer's wife. "Who can have taken it away, and where has the thief hidden it?"

Everyone was talking about the theft; the whole place was agog with it.

Beetle, or Vania, to give him his proper name, had already made known to some of the villagers that he was possessed of magical powers, and when the farmer's wife heard of this she came beseeching him to find out what had become of her linen.

"What will you give me if I find your linen for you?" he asked.

"A sack of flour and a pound of butter," she said.

"I will see what I can do," said Beetle. "Call again in an hour's time."

When the farmer's wife came back he told her that the linen would be found under the straw in the barn. When this proved to be true the farmer's wife was, of course, greatly delighted. Vania got his sack of flour and his pound of butter, and everybody held him to be a very wonderful person.

A little later the big landowner who lived on the edge of the great wood, lost a valuable colt. When, after a good search, it was still nowhere to be found, the landowner's wife suggested that Vania the magician should be called in. "He found the linen that was stolen from Mascha, the farmer's wife," she said. "Why should he not prove equally clever in the matter of the colt?"

Now Vania, as you will doubtless have already guessed, knew very well where the colt was. Had he not himself stolen it away from the stable by night and tied it securely to a tree in an unfrequented part of the forest?

"What will you give me," said he, "if I use my magic powers to discover where your colt is to be found?"

"I will give you a hundred roubles," said the landowner, for he was a rich man and the colt was a valuable one. Whereupon Vania said to him, as he had said to the farmer's wife, that if he would return in an hour's time he would see what could be done.

When the landowner returned, Beetle conducted him to the place in the forest where he had tied up the colt, and duly received the promised reward. Everyone was more than ever impressed by the marvellous powers of Vania the Magician, and his fame spread far and wide.

But his wife was troubled by it. "One day you will find yourself in a hole, my Beetlekin," she said. "This business is making me anxious."

Her husband laughed. "Do not fear, wife," he said. "You may trust your Beetlekin to find a way out."

Not very long after this the Tsar lost his betrothal ring.

It was a very fine ring, of chased gold, set with splendid diamonds, emeralds, and rubies, and the Tsar was very much upset at the loss of it.

By this time the fame of Vania the Magician had spread even to the Tsar's court, and as no one was able to find the ring the Tsar sent two men with a horse and cart to fetch this wonderful person who was reported to be able to find things that were lost or stolen.

And now poor Beetle began to tremble in his shoes.

"I told you," said his wife. "I warned you. The Tsar is a terrible person to have to do with when he is vexed, as he most surely will be when he finds that you are unable to help him in this matter of the ring. Never, never, never shall I see my beloved Beetlekin again." Little Vania did his best to cheer her, but he himself wasn't feeling too happy.

"If you manage to get yourself safely out of this affair, Beetle," he said to himself, "it shall be the last time you ever try to pass yourself off as a magician."

And now behold little Vania arrived at the great palace of the Tsar. He was shown at once into the royal presence.

"I hear you are a great magician," said the Tsar, as Vania bowed low before him. "Can you find my lost ring?"

"I will do my best, great Tsar," said Vania, bowing again, and hoping that the Tsar would not see how his legs were shaking.

"You're not a very big fellow," said the Tsar, "but you'll be shorter by a head to-morrow if you are not able to tell me what has become of that ring. You shall be left in a room all by yourself for the night. That will give you ample time to work out your magic spells. I shall look forward to meeting you in the morning."

Once more Vania bowed almost to the ground, and said that he would get to work on the matter without further delay; but as he hadn't the faintest idea how to set about it, you may imagine with what a heavy heart he left the royal presence.

Now, the people who were responsible for the loss of the ring were a footman, the head cook, and the chief coachman, and when these three heard that a magician had been summoned to the palace to find out what had become of it, they were naturally extremely uneasy. If they were discovered it would mean certain death for all of them; for in those days a few executions more or less meant nothing to a great Tsar.

They made inquiries as to what had happened at the interview, and when they heard that the magician had been given a room in which he was to spend the night working on his magic spells, they decided, after an anxious consultation, to take turns at listening at the keyhole of the room in which he was confined, hoping to learn in this way of any decision to which he might come. If it appeared that he had discovered that they were the thieves, they thought that it would be best to throw themselves upon his mercy, hand the ring over to him, and beg him not to tell whence it had come.

Meanwhile, Vania, alone in the room which had been allotted to him, was anxiously considering what would be the best thing for him to do.

"I have no possible way of finding out who took that ring," he thought. "My best plan will be to steal away from here in the dead of night and to hide in some far-off and little-known place till the matter is forgotten." He sat down at the open

window and looked out over the outbuildings belonging to the palace. And as he sat there he heard a cock crow in one of the further stableyards. "When that cock has crowed again three times," he said to himself, "Beetle, you had best be off."

Not long after this the footman came to the door of the room and stationed himself at the keyhole. And at that very moment Vania heard the cock crow in the distance.

"That's the first of them," he said aloud. The footman, hearing this, rushed away in alarm.

"He's a magician, right enough," he told the others. "When I went to the door to listen, I heard him say: 'That's the first of them.'"

A little later the coachman took up his stand outside the door, and once more it so happened that the cock crowed again at that very moment.

"That's the second of them," said Vania. The coachman was no less frightened than the footman had been.

He rushed off to tell the others.

"The game's up," he said. "It is evident that he knows everything. As soon as I went to the door I heard him say: 'That's the second of them.'"

But before they finally decided to confess all, the cook thought he might as well take his turn at the door, too. Again it happened that the cock crowed at the very moment when he arrived outside.

"And that's the third of them," said Vania, in a loud decided voice, for he was now determined to wait no longer but to fly from the palace at once. He listened to hear if all was still, and then tiptoed across the room, opened the door quietly, and went out. But he had gone only a few steps before he came upon the footman, the cook, and the coachman all huddled together in a corner waiting for the dawn to come, so that they might go into the magician's room and confess all.

When, however, they saw him coming, they fell with one accord on their knees and implored him not to tell the Tsar that they had stolen the ring.

"I know not how this has come about," thought Vania, "but it seems that the Beetle's luck has not deserted him after all."

Of this he, of course, said nothing to the three men trembling before him, but promised them that if they would hand over the stolen ring he would keep silent about their guilt. Whereupon they produced the precious jewel and went off with many protestations of gratitude. Vania crept quietly into the apartment in which he had been received the day before by the Tsar. It was very early in the morning; no one was about.

He managed to pull up a loose board in the floor, placed the ring underneath it, put the board back into its place, and returned quietly to his own room, where he slept soundly till aroused by the Tsar's servants. Very soon after he was commanded to the royal presence and entered the audience chamber with a smiling face.

"Well, Mr. Magician," said the Tsar, "have you discovered the whereabouts of my ring? You have had the whole night in which to work your magic, but if you are unable to produce my ring, that night will have been your last."

Vania bowed low.

"Great Tsar," he said. "I am pleased to be able to tell you that I have been successful. If you will deign to follow me I will show you the place where your ring is to be found."

So the Tsar and all his retinue followed little Beetle, who led them to the spot where he had concealed the ring, and, raising the board, showed them where it lay.

"Your Majesty must have dropped the ring," said Vania, "and it doubtless rolled away and fell through a crevice. That is all that I was able to learn of the matter."

The Tsar was greatly pleased.

"You are certainly a first-rate magician," he said. "I will see that you are handsomely rewarded". And he gave instructions to his treasurer to pay Vania so generous a sum of money that he could hardly believe his ears. Now he

could go home to his wife and tell her that he need do no more 'magic,' since the money was enough to provide them with food and shelter for the rest of their lives.

But he was not yet quite out of the wood, for a few minutes later the Tsar went for a little walk in the palace grounds. And as he walked, being a rather suspicious person, he bethought himself that it was possible that the magician had made a lucky guess in the matter of the lost ring.

"I will try him once more before I let him go off with the money," he said.

At that moment a flying beetle flew into his hand. He closed his fingers over it, went indoors, and ordered the magician to be brought before him.

"I have one more question to ask you," he said. "This is a simple matter. Tell me what I have in my closed hand."

Poor Vania was dumbfounded.

"Beetle," he said, half aloud, in his anguish, "you are caught this time."

The Tsar heard the words.

"Marvellous, truly marvellous," he said, and opening his hand, let the beetle fly away.

Vania bowed low and retired. His one desire was to get away from the palace as quickly as possible lest his powers should again be put to the test.

He reached home safely with his reward, and you may imagine how happy he was to be home again, and how delighted his wife was to see him.

They returned to their own village, where they settled down to a quiet, happy life. But Beetle kept his word and gave up all claim to magical powers from that time onward till the end of his days.



The Snuff-Box

A BASQUE FOLK-TALE

There was once a young man who, like so many others, so the old tale puts it, wished to travel.

So off he set one fine morning, determined to seek his fortune. He had not gone very far when he found a snuff-box lying in his path. He picked it up and opened the lid, whereupon the snuff-box asked "Que quieres?" (What do you wish?)

The lad was frightened and was on the point of throwing it away, but fortunately he thought better of it and put it in his pocket. He walked on for some time, but his thoughts kept on returning to the strange box, and he wondered what would happen if he answered the question. It would be easy enough to say what he wished for!

At last he took the box out of his pocket again. It was made of dark wood and curiously carved with what looked like letters and signs. But the carving was so worn down with age that he could make little of it. In the end he plucked up courage enough to open the box. Immediately it again spoke. "Que quieres?" it said, just as before.

"I should like a hatful of gold," replied the youth, promptly, and instantly his wish was fulfilled. He was overjoyed, for he realized that he would now never want for anything. He journeyed happily on, and after passing through many great forests he came to a fine castle built of stone, with many windows and many turrets. He was so taken with this great castle that he walked round and round it, staring at it all the time.

Now this castle belonged to the king of that country, and he happened to be standing at one of his windows looking out to see whether the skies promised a good day for hunting.

And he saw the young man walking round his castle and staring at it.

He opened the window and called out to him.

"What are you staring at, young man?" he said.

"I'm staring at your castle," said the young man jauntily.

"I suppose you'd like to have one like it," said the king.

The lad did not answer. But he smiled to himself, thinking what a surprise he would be able to give the mocking king.

The same evening he opened his snuff-box, and when it asked the usual question he replied that he would like to have a castle with beams of solid gold, diamond tiles upon the roof, and furniture of silver ornamented with precious stones. Immediately the castle rose up in the great meadow in front of the king's castle.

Next morning, when the king came to his window, his eyes were dazzled by this glorious building lit up by the rays of the morning sun.

He hastily donned his mantle of fur and velvet and went out to find out how such an amazing thing had come to pass.

When he found out that the owner of all this magnificence was the young man who had stared at his own castle the day before, he was filled with astonishment.

"You must be a very great and powerful person," he said to him. "I must beg your forgiveness if I seemed a little brusque in my manner yesterday. As we are, it seems, to be neighbours, we should also be friends, and I hope that you will often be my guest."

The young man was quite ready to be friends with the king and entertained him royally, for the snuff-box supplied him with servants, food, and everything necessary for his comfort and his pleasure.

The king had a beautiful daughter with whom the young man fell in love, and they were married in a few weeks' time and were very happy together.

But the king's wife was envious of her son-in-law's magnificent possessions and became still more so after finding out

from her daughter the secret of the snuff-box. Her daughter would not tell her where the snuff-box was kept. Her husband hid it carefully away in a secret place every night and told her to be sure not to disclose the hiding-place to a soul.

But the envious queen bribed one of the servants to keep watch, and this servant found out where it was concealed, stole it while her master and mistress were asleep, and took it to the queen.

When the queen opened it and heard the question "Que quieres?" she replied: "Take me and my husband and all our household, together with the fine palace of gold and diamonds, to the other side of the Red Sea, but leave my daughter and her husband behind. Let them wake up in the morning and find themselves in our old castle. But go you with us to our new abode."

All this the snuff-box performed, and when the young man and his wife woke the next morning, they found themselves alone in the old castle and no sign of the snuff-box anywhere.

The young man did not give way to despair, for he was bold and resourceful. He bade his wife farewell, took from the stable the best horse he could find, and from the king's treasure-house as much gold as the horse could carry, and set out, determined to find his box and his castle.

He searched the country up and down, but no trace of either could he find, and at last he had no money left, so that he was obliged to beg food for himself and his horse.

And one day an old man advised him to journey to the Moon; for the Moon-man was a great traveller and made a long journey every day. He might be able to help with advice. So the young man set off for the home of the Moon.

He journeyed a long, long time and at last he reached the Moon's house. There he found the Moon's mother all alone, for her son had not yet returned from his journey.

"Why have you come here?" said the mother of the Moon. "My son eats up all strangers. Do not let him find you here when he comes."

But the young man would not take her advice.

"I will tell you my story," he said, "and why I have come here." So he told her all about his snuff-box and about his castle of gold and diamonds and how they had been stolen away from him, and how he hoped that the Moon, being a man of many journeys, might perhaps be able to help him with advice.

And very soon the Moon arrived home.

"I smell a human being," he said, as soon as he reached the threshold. Then his mother, who had hidden her visitor away behind the linen-press, told him his story.

The Moon was interested in this tale and bade the youth come forward and not fear any harm.

But he could give him no news of his castle, for he had not seen it on his journeyings.

"But if I were you, I should go to the Sun's home," he said. "He makes greater journeys than I do and he may have seen your castle."

So the young man set out on his travels again, well provided with food for himself and provender for his horse.

He journeyed for many days and at last he reached the home of the Sun. The Sun was not at home, but his mother received the young man and asked him what he wanted.

"Do not tarry here," she said. "My son is a very fierce person. He eats up whatever comes in his way. I advise you to be gone before he comes home."

But the young man would not go. "I am so wretched," he said, "that I do not much care whether I live or die." Then he told the old lady the story of his snuff-box and his castle of gold and diamonds, and how they had been stolen away by the wicked queen.

And since he was determined to stay, the Sun's mother hid him in the store-cupboard.

When the Sun came home he stood at the open door and cried: "I smell a human being. Where is he?"

Then his mother told him the story of the unhappy young man who had come to ask his advice and help.

"Let me see this young man," said the sun.

Then the youth came out from his hiding-place and told the Sun how his castle of gold and diamonds had been stolen away, together with the magic snuff-box, and how he had left his wife and had been travelling for many long days to try and find them again.

The Sun was interested in the tale, but he had not seen the castle on his journeys round the world. However, he recommended the young man to go to the home of the Wind.

"The Wind goes all over the world," he said, "and searches every corner. He will surely have seen your castle and will be able to tell you where to look for it."

So the young man said good-bye to the Sun and his mother and set out once again on his travels.

And after many weary days he came at last to the home of the Wind.

And there he saw an old woman carrying water from the well to the house and pouring it into great barrels.

When the young man drew near she came to meet him.

"What do you seek here?" she said.

"I have come to see the Wind," he replied. "I want his advice and help."

"You have indeed come to the wrong place," said the old woman. "My son, the Wind, always arrives home terribly thirsty and in a very bad temper after his busy day. He eats up every stranger who crosses his path."

But the youth said he did not care in the least. He was by now utterly desperate. If he could not find his castle and his snuff-box he had no wish to live any longer.

So the old woman hid him under the staircase. And very soon after the Wind came blustering home.

"I can smell a human being, Mother," he said. "Where have you hidden him? Out with him that I may eat him up."

But his mother persuaded the Wind to have a long drink from the water-barrel and then to sit down and eat the food which she had prepared. And when he had eaten and drunk and was in a better temper she told him the sad story of the young man.

And the Wind called to him to come out from his hiding-place and give an account of himself.

And when the Wind had heard the tale of the snuff-box and of the castle of gold and diamonds, he thumped on the table with his strong hand.

"I have seen your castle," he said. "This very afternoon I blew over it and did my best to dislodge some of those fine tiles from the roof. But I did not succeed. They were too well fastened on."

The youth trembled with joy and excitement.

"Where is it? Where is it?" he cried.

"Far, far away," replied the Wind. "On the borders of the Red Sea."

But the young man was not dismayed. He had travelled so far. The journey was nothing to him now that he knew he would reach his goal.

So he set off once more with his horse, and in time he arrived at a town on the borders of the Red Sea.

And there he asked if any one needed a gardener, for he thought that if he could get some work to do it would keep him while he inquired about his castle.

But imagine his joy when he was told that there was a magnificent castle down by the sea and that the gardener employed there had left the day before.

There he went, and found, as he had hoped, that it was his own castle of gold and diamonds. He said nothing at first, but applied for the post of gardener and then went quietly about his work. But before long he made friends with one of the chambermaids, and the chambermaid told him that her master and mistress owned a snuff-box which was said to possess magic powers.

"I should like to see it," said the young man, and one day when her master and mistress were out, the chambermaid showed him the place where it was kept.

He seized it eagerly and opened the lid.

"Que quieres?" it said.

"Oh, my dear 'Que Quieres,' my darling 'Que Quieres,' take me and my beautiful castle back to my wife, and let the king and the queen and all these people be drowned in the Red Sea."

And so it all happened, and the young man lived happily ever after with his wife, for they had everything they desired. But though the chronicler of this tale does not mention the matter, I can't help hoping that the chambermaid was saved, for it really would have been too bad—wouldn't it?—if she had been drowned in the Red Sea with the rest.



The Crocodile and the Monkey

AN EASTERN TALE

There was once a crocodile who lived on a sandbank in a river. He was quite a nice fellow, sociable and affectionate, though not very clever. His wife, on the other hand, was not at all a nice person. She was, I am sorry to tell you, cruel, selfish, and vain, and of a very jealous disposition. In spite of this, her husband adored her. He even made poems to her.

They weren't particularly good poems; but it isn't very easy to make good poems, as everyone knows who has tried. But they weren't bad, for a crocodile. And I told you he wasn't very brainy. Here is one of the poems he made:

My beauteous one, my beauteous one,
My croco—croco—dear,
By land or sea, where e'er it be
You have no single peer.

Your graceful form, your melting eyes,
My loving heart beguile,
I've searched around, no charm I've found
To match your darling smile.

When he told this to his wife she didn't look as pleased as you might have expected.

"I don't like that last bit," she said; "the bit about searching round."

"No, I don't think that *is* a very good bit," said her husband. "I had a lot of difficulty over the last line but one. It sounds a little awkward, doesn't it? It wouldn't *flow*."

"I don't mind about the flow," said his wife. "It's the searching around I don't like, I tell you. You've no business to be searching around for a better smile than mine."

It was no use her husband trying to explain that he put that in to make a rhyme. Mrs. Crocodile wouldn't look at it that way, and though he changed the lines to

But oh, how fair, how sweet and rare
Your darling, darling smile.

that made no difference. She kept on brooding over it and turning it over in her mind long after he had forgotten all about it.

The crocodile's wife was a lazy creature; she never moved about much, but spent most of her time idly basking in the sun and admiring her own reflection in the water. The crocodile, though, was rather energetic, and would go quite a long way in search of adventure. She always made him tell her exactly where he had been—he had to give an account of every single minute. This he always did most faithfully and truly, for he really had a very sincere nature.

One day, on one of his expeditions, he came to a place in the river where a fine banyan tree stood on the bank. He was hot and tired, and he lay down in the shallow water near the bank and rested. The banyan tree cast a pleasant shade, which he found very agreeable. Presently he noticed a monkey in the branches of the tree busy picking and eating the ripe fruit.

"Good morning," said the crocodile, when the monkey came down to a lower branch within speaking distance; "you seem to be enjoying yourself."

"Good morning to you, sir," replied the monkey. "I'm enjoying myself very much indeed. Would you like some fruit? There's plenty here for both of us."

The crocodile thanked him politely, and the monkey threw down some of the ripe fruit for him to eat. They had a little more amiable conversation, and then the crocodile bade the monkey farewell and went off home to his wife, to whom, as

usual, he told the story of his morning's adventure.

Before many days had gone by he went again to the same spot and again saw the monkey in the banyan tree. This he felt to be very fortunate, as he had so much enjoyed meeting him before. They had another pleasant talk, and again the crocodile very much appreciated the fruit which the monkey threw down to him. It was indeed a very great treat, for crocodiles, being unable to climb trees, are not able to get fruit for themselves.

When the time came for the crocodile to depart, the monkey said that he hoped they would meet again.

"I am generally here in the mornings," he said, "and shall always be delighted to see you."

The crocodile promised to come again soon, which he did, and so, in a short time quite a warm friendship sprang up between the two.

The crocodile told his new friend all about his lovely wife, and the monkey on several occasions sent her a present of banyan fruit. The monkey told the crocodile all about his own affairs and his many adventures among the forest trees, which could be seen not very far away, and what with one thing and another they spent many happy hours together.

But as time went on the crocodile's wife became suspicious of this new friendship.

"I've searched around"—she kept repeating over and over again to herself. "That's what he's been doing—searching around. I don't believe a word of what he says. Probably that monkey doesn't even exist. He's spending his time with someone else!"

She gradually worked herself up into a great state over this, but, being a cunning as well as a jealous creature, she decided not to tell her husband her thoughts until she had contrived some means of putting an end to this friendship of which she was so suspicious. Finally she decided on a plan, and as a first step she pretended to be very ill; so one day, when her husband came home, he found her lying on the sandbank groaning and lamenting.

He was, of course, very much upset by this. He was afraid his beautiful and adored wife was going to die. She was, by the way, a very good actress and certainly had every appearance of being very ill indeed. He suggested all sorts of remedies, but she would have none of them.

At last, when he was in utter despair, she said, interrupting her remarks with many groans, that she had once heard a very learned person say that the heart of a monkey was a certain cure for that very malady from which she was suffering.

"But how am I to procure such a thing?" asked the anxious husband.

"That is easy enough," said his groaning wife. "What about your friend in the banyan tree? You could easily persuade him to give you his heart if you put your mind to it."

Her husband was horrified at the suggestion, as well he might be. Moreover, he was quite sure that the monkey would never consent to give him his heart, and said so. But his artful wife had a plan all ready in her head.

"There is no need at all for you to let him know that you want his heart," she said, "since you love me so little that you do not care to ask him for it. If you do as I tell you we can get him to come here without any difficulty, and once he is here and in our power we can do with him what we will."

The crocodile was more upset than ever when he heard his wife's cunning suggestion as to how the monkey was to be tricked into coming. He spoke of the kind way in which the monkey had always behaved and pointed out with great earnestness that nothing in the whole world was so hateful as the betrayal of a friend. But his wife would not listen to him. She was determined to put an end to this business and to destroy this rival, whoever it might be.

She groaned and moaned and rolled about and wept bitterly, declaring that he loved his friend better than his wife, and that he would be glad if she died so that he could be more free to spend his time with the monkey.

"You have been searching around," she said. "I guessed it some time ago and now I know it for certain. It is that which has made me fall a victim to this terrible illness. But you do not care. You no longer love me, that is the truth of the matter. Oh...oh... You will not have much longer to wait. Oh—oh—oh..." And she writhed about in apparent agony.

The poor crocodile was at his wits' end. What could he do? He still adored his horrid wife, strange though it seems, and he really believed she was terribly ill.

So at last, very reluctantly, and with many misgivings, he promised to do what she wished. She thereupon gave him careful instructions as to how he must act in order to get the monkey to visit them, and he set off with a heavy heart.

The monkey was in the banyan tree as usual, happily jumping from branch to branch in the hot sunshine. When they had exchanged greetings and had had a little more pleasant talk, the crocodile felt that he could put off the evil moment no longer.

"I have a message for you from my wife," he said at last. "I have told her so much about you that she is dying to meet you. Moreover, she says I have been sadly wanting in hospitality never to have asked you to come and see us after your great kindness in the matter of the fruit. Will you not come back with me to-day and pay us a visit?"

"That is very kind of you," said the monkey, "and I should very much like to meet your wife, who, if she is as lovely as your description of her, must indeed be beautiful. But how am I to accompany you? I cannot swim; also I believe your home is in the water and I cannot breathe under water."

"That is quite easy," said the crocodile, "we live on a sandbank, where you will be quite comfortable. As for getting there, you have only to get on my back and I will convey you."

So the monkey accepted.

The crocodile's heart grew heavier and heavier. He was touched at the monkey's trust in him, which he was about to requite so hatefully. At the same time he kept thinking of his sick wife and how she would certainly die if he returned without the monkey.

The worst thing of all, it seemed to him, was the fact that the monkey would have to die without preparing as he should to meet his Maker.

He swam silently down the river, and the monkey, noticing this, asked him what he was thinking about. So then, feeling that the monkey could not possibly escape, for the river was wide and he kept well to the middle of it, he told him of the fate in store for him.

The monkey listened quietly until the crocodile had finished and then replied:

"My dear friend, I have heard your tale with great sympathy and am very much touched by your unhappy situation. Willingly will I give you my heart in order to save the life of so beautiful a creature as your wife. But it is a pity you did not tell me before we started on this journey. I have a habit of hanging my heart every morning early on a branch of the banyan tree so that it should not get damaged while I am jumping about. However, the matter can easily be put right. If you will turn round and take me back I will get my heart for you."

So the crocodile, after earnestly thanking the monkey, swam back again to the place whence they had started. As soon as they drew in to the bank the monkey leaped off the crocodile's back and up into the tree, and looked down at the crocodile, who was expectantly waiting close to the bank.

"Go back to your horrid wife, you silly old crocodile," said the monkey, "and tell her that monkeys may keep their hearts hanging on branches, but they keep their wits in their heads."

THE END

Transcriber's Note:

1. page 63—corrected typo 'permisson' to 'permission' in sentence '...answered that all he asked was permisson to go...'

2. page 79—spaces added after 'man' and 'the' in sentence '...something about the mannot speaking thetruth.'
3. page 96—corrected typo 'kingdon' to 'kingdom' in sentence '...carried away to the kingdon of the...'
4. page 137—corrected typo 'possibly' to 'possibly' in sentence "But how can you possibly do that?"
5. page 158—corrected typo 'Queieres' to 'Quieres' in sentence "'Oh, my dear 'Que Queieres,'...'

[End of *Folk-Tales from Many Lands* by Rose Fyleman]