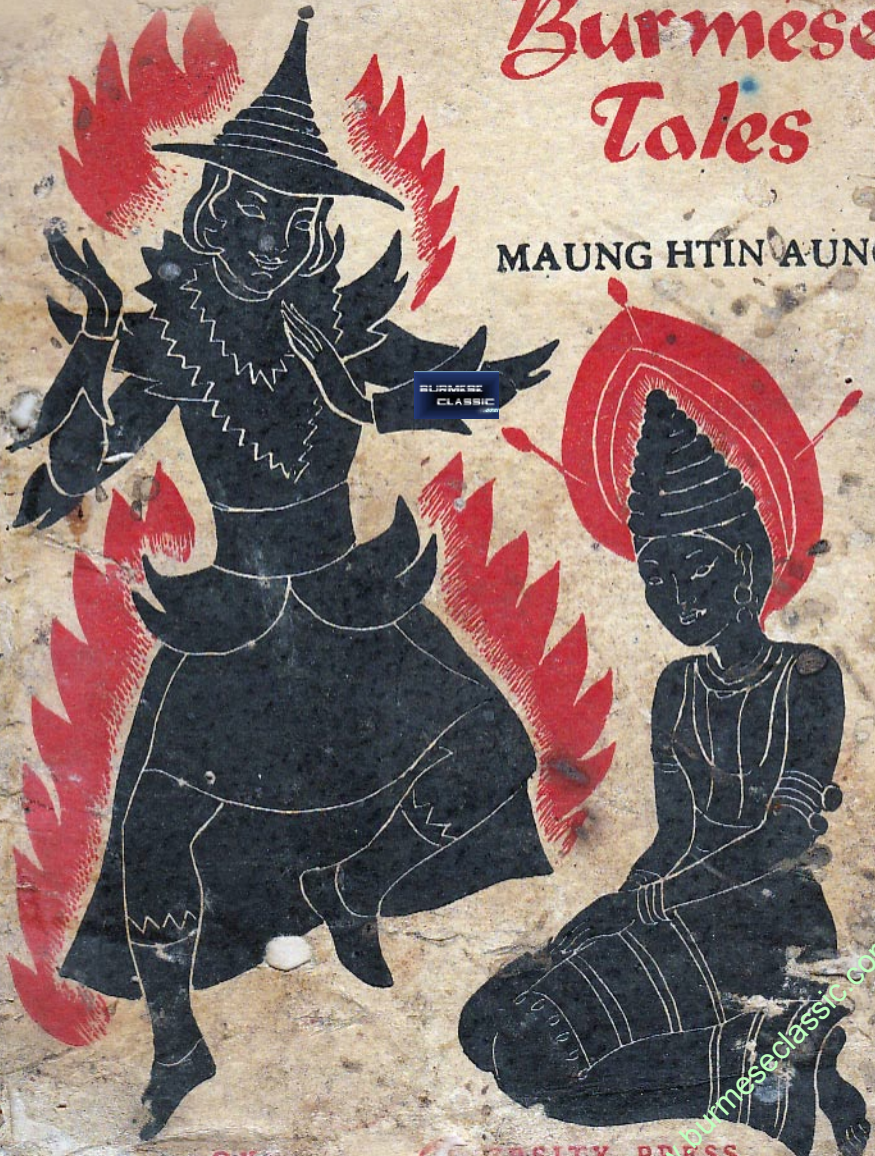


Thirty Burmese Tales

MAUNG HTIN AUNG



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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By

MAUNG HTIN AUNG, M.A., LL.B., Ph.D., D.Litt.
BARRISTER-AT-LAW

BURMESE
CLASSIC



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I. ANIMAL TALES

BURMESE
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I. THE RABBIT HAS A COLD

KING LION appointed the Bear, the Monkey, and the Rabbit to be his ministers of state, and together they roamed the forest. But one day the Lion became tired of their company, and wanted to kill and eat them. However, as he himself had chosen them to be his ministers, he had to think of an excuse which would give a semblance of legality to his unjust act.

So King Lion called his three ministers of state, and said to them, 'My lords, you have been my ministers for some time, and I must now find out whether high office has spoilt you.' The Lion opened his mouth wide, and asked the Bear to state what sort of smell issued from the royal mouth. As the Lion was a great meat-eater, naturally a foul smell came out from his mouth.

The Bear, ever truthful, said, 'Your Majesty, it is a foul smell.'

'Rank treason,' roared the Lion in anger. 'You insult the king to his face. The punishment for treason is death.' So saying, he pounced upon the Bear and killed him.

The Lion now asked the Monkey to say what sort of smell issued from the royal mouth. The Monkey, after witnessing the fate of the Bear, thought that the only way to escape with his

life was to resort to flattery, and said, 'Your Majesty, it is a delicious smell, as sweet as the choicest perfume.'

'You are a liar and a flatterer,' roared the Lion in anger. 'Everyone knows that only a foul smell can come out of my mouth as I am a great meat-eater. Untruthful and flattering counsellors to the king are a danger to the state.' So saying, he pounced upon the Monkey and killed him.

The Lion now said to the Rabbit, 'Wise Rabbit, what sort of smell issues from my mouth?'

'I am sorry, Your Majesty,' replied the Rabbit, 'I have a cold and my nose is blocked. May I go home and rest until my cold is cured, for only then shall I be able to use my nose and say what sort of smell issues from the royal mouth?' The Lion had no choice, but to let the Rabbit go home and, needless to say, the Rabbit never went near him again.

2. MASTER PO AND THE TIGER

A YOUNG boy, by the name of Master Po, used to leave his village every day and wander in the forest. He became friends with all the animals, especially the Tiger. Master Po and the Tiger used to take long walks in the forest

together. Master Po had a genuine affection for his friend, but the Tiger had an ulterior motive; he looked forward to the day when he could ask young Master Po to take him to the village, so that he could run away with a fat calf or two belonging to the villagers. One day, the Tiger said to Master Po, 'Friend Po, will you take me to your village?'

'I cannot do that, good Tiger,' replied Master Po, 'for the villagers all dislike you. You must remember that you have often pounced upon their cattle while at pasture outside the village.'

'If you won't take me, I will go there by myself,' said the Tiger petulantly.

That same evening, the Tiger loitered about the village gate. Master Po saw him, and said to him, 'Friend Tiger, do not loiter about here, for the villagers are full of cunning, and they will trap you.' But the Tiger merely laughed at this warning. Master Po stood at the gate, trying to persuade his friend to go back to the forest, but without success. It now became dark, and as his parents were calling him, Master Po went back to his house with a final warning to the Tiger. The Tiger waited until the villagers were all asleep. He then went into the village, and came out dragging a fat

calf. Early the next day, Master Po went into the forest and found the Tiger. 'Tiger,' said Master Po, 'we have been friends for a long time, so please heed my words. Tonight they are laying a trap for you, so do not come again to our village.' But the Tiger laughed at the warning as before.

That night the Tiger entered the village, and was duly caught in the trap laid by the villagers. In the morning, the villagers found him. 'We will let him rage and roar in the trap until he exhausts himself,' agreed the villagers, 'and we will let him die slowly of starvation and thirst.' So they left the Tiger in the trap.

For six days the Tiger raged and roared, and Master Po felt sorry for his friend, but as he was afraid of a beating from his parents, he did not dare to set the Tiger free. On the seventh day, however, Master Po felt that it was worth a beating to save his friend, so he went and opened the trap. 'Run away now, good Tiger,' said Master Po, 'for the sake of our friendship, I will face the anger of my parents and other villagers.'

'Thank you,' replied the Tiger, 'but I must eat you, for I am exhausted and cannot hunt for prey.' Master Po pleaded that as the animal owed him a debt of gratitude for freeing

him, the Tiger should not eat him. The Tiger, in reply, contended that there was no such thing as a debt of gratitude. In the end, Master Po succeeded in persuading the Tiger that they should find a judge and let him decide their dispute.

Master Po and the Tiger went into the forest in search of a judge, and they met the Skull of a dead ox. They begged the Skull to decide their dispute. After listening to the arguments put forward by the disputants, the Skull gave his decision: 'There is no such thing as a debt of gratitude. For example, my master made me plough his land for many years, but when I became old in his service, he killed me and ate me. So the Tiger should eat Master Po.'

'I will eat you now,' roared the Tiger. But Master Po claimed the right of appeal to another judge. So Master Po and the Tiger went on until they met the Banyan Tree, whom they asked to decide their case. The Banyan Tree, after listening to the arguments put forward by the disputants, gave his decision: 'There is no such thing as a debt of gratitude. For example, human beings rest in my shade from the heat and glare of the sun, yet they break my branches and take away

my flowers. So the Tiger should eat Master Po.'

'I will eat you now,' roared the Tiger. But Master Po claimed the right of appeal to another judge. 'Remember this is your last chance,' warned the Tiger, 'for one is entitled to go before three courts only for the same dispute.' So the two went on until they met the Rabbit.

'Wise Rabbit,' said they, 'please decide our dispute.' After listening to the arguments of the disputants, the Rabbit said that he would have to visit the scene of the dispute, before he could give his decision.

So the Rabbit went with Master Po and the Tiger to the trap at the village. 'Now,' said the Rabbit, 'where were you, Tiger, when Master Po came to free you?'

'I was in the trap,' replied the Tiger.

'Show me exactly how you stood in the trap,' asked the Rabbit, and the Tiger went and stood in the trap. 'Now, Master Po,' said the Rabbit, 'close the trap first and then show me how you came and freed the Tiger.' When Master Po had locked the trap, the Rabbit shouted, 'Stop! Do not free the Tiger.' The Rabbit then explained to the astonished Tiger and Master Po, 'I have now restored the *status quo* of the dis-

putants. The Tiger is back at his place, and Master Po is back at his place also. The dispute is now over.' The Rabbit then went back to the forest, and Master Po ran back to his home. The Tiger died of hunger and thirst a few days later.

3. JUDGE RABBIT

MISTER CLEVER and MISTER STUPID were neighbours, and the former had a cow, whereas the latter had a mare. One night Clever's cow gave birth to a calf, and Stupid's mare gave birth to a colt. Clever, being a light sleeper, heard the bleating of the calf and the neighing of the colt. Taking a light, he went down to the cowshed to have a look. He noticed that there was no light in Stupid's stable. Guessing that Stupid had not been awakened by the neighing of the colt, Clever took the calf to the stable, and brought the colt to the cowshed. Then he went back to bed.

Early the next day he went round the village, telling everybody that a strange and wonderful thing had happened; his cow had given birth to a colt. The villagers flocked to the cowshed, and gazed in wonder at the colt. By this time, Stupid had found the calf in his stable and, suspecting the truth, he came to Clever and

accused him of stealing his colt. Clever denied, maintaining that by a strange freak of nature, his cow had given birth to a colt. 'But what about the calf in my stable?' asked Stupid indignantly.

'By a strange freak of nature also,' suggested Clever sweetly, 'your mare must have given birth to a calf.' Stupid appealed to the neighbours, who however admitted their inability to decide the dispute. So Stupid asked Clever to go with him to another village to find a judge. On the way they met the Rabbit and asked him to act as judge in their dispute.

'With pleasure,' replied the Rabbit. Stupid and Clever explained what the dispute was, and the Rabbit said, 'I am busy now, but will fix a date for your case. I will meet you in your village at sunrise on the morning of the seventh day from now. Be ready with your witnesses.' Stupid and Clever thanked the Rabbit, and came back to their village.

On the appointed day at sunrise Stupid and Clever and the whole village assembled to await the coming of Judge Rabbit. The sun rose higher and higher until it was noon, but there was no Judge Rabbit. Noon passed and still there was no Judge Rabbit. It was only at sunset that the Rabbit appeared. As it was so unusual for the

Rabbit to break his word, the villagers could not help asking why he did not come at the appointed time, although in ordinary circumstances they should, out of courtesy, have asked no questions of a judge.

'I am so sorry,' replied Judge Rabbit, 'but I was delayed by an accident. As I was coming to you this morning, I saw a sandbank in the river on fire, and the whole day I have been carrying water in a wicker crate and pouring it on the fire to put it out.'

Clever, who took pride in his cleverness, thought that Judge Rabbit was trying to test the intelligence of the villagers. 'Sire Judge,' said he brightly, 'how can a sandbank in the middle of the river be on fire, and how can water be carried in a wicker crate? It is against nature. I do not believe you!'

'Quite right, Clever,' replied Judge Rabbit calmly, 'how can a cow give birth to a colt, and how can a mare give birth to a calf? It is against nature. So take back your calf and give back the colt to your neighbour Stupid.' The villagers applauded the decision of Judge Rabbit, and from that day onwards they always chose the Rabbit as their judge in all their disputes.

4. THE THREE FOOLISH ANIMALS

THE WISE RABBIT sat under a tree and pondered on life in general. He said to himself, 'The world is full of difficulties and dangers. First, there are natural catastrophes such as earthquakes and landslides and storms. Second, there is always the danger of famine, of shortage of food and water. Third, there is the danger of thieves and robbers.' He then remembered an important appointment and went away.

Unknown to him, three animals had been listening to him, namely, the Lapwing, the Earthworm, and the Monkey. They were very foolish animals, and they became panic-stricken at the words of the Rabbit. The Lapwing thought in particular of natural catastrophes and with tears he said, 'What if the sky should fall on me when I am asleep? If it should fall when I am awake at least I can fly away, but if it should fall when I am asleep I shall be crushed to death.'

The Earthworm thought specially of the danger of famine, and with tears he said, 'What if there should be a shortage of soil which is my food? I shall die, I shall die.'

The Monkey thought in particular of thieves, and with tears he said, 'The earth is my most

valuable property, but at night I leave it to sleep aloft in a tree. What if thieves and robbers should come and steal the earth while I am asleep?'

From that time onwards, the Lapwing sleeps on his back with his two little legs in the air, so that if the sky should fall the legs would support the fallen sky; the Earthworm vomits out the soil after eating it, in case there should be shortage of soil; and the Monkey comes down from his tree three times every night, and feels the ground to assure himself that the earth has not been stolen from him.

5. WHY THE RABBIT'S NOSE TWITCHES

THE Frog was jealous of the Rabbit's reputation for wisdom, and planned to make the Rabbit the laughing-stock of the jungle. So he hid himself underneath a stone and when he saw the Rabbit coming along leisurely, the Frog hallowed in a loud voice 'Ong-Ing'.

The Rabbit jumped one cubit into the air and then ran away in fright. As he ran, he knocked down a Pumpkin. The Pumpkin rolled down the slope to a Sessamin field and bumped against a Sessamin Plant, scattering the Sessamin seeds. The Wild Fowl happened to be

flying over the spot, and some of the seeds got into his eyes, temporarily blinding him. The Wild Fowl alighted on a Bamboo Plant. The Bamboo broke and fell on a Snake who was sleeping underneath. The Snake ran away in fright and bumped against the Wild Pig who was quietly eating a Cucumber. The Wild Pig dropped it in fright, and the Cucumber fell into the nearby pool. There was a *Naga*-dragon sleeping at the bottom of the pool, and he felt very annoyed at being disturbed by the Cucumber.

'You shall die,' said the *Naga* to the Cucumber.

'Oh, Sir, Oh, Sir,' replied the Cucumber, 'I am not to blame. The Wild Pig pushed me in.'

The *Naga* left the pool and soon caught the Pig. 'You shall die,' said the *Naga*.

'Oh, Sir, Oh, Sir,' replied the Pig, 'I am not to blame. The Snake bumped against me.'

The *Naga* chased the Snake and soon caught him. 'You shall die,' said the *Naga*.

'Oh, Sir, Oh, Sir,' replied the Snake, 'I am not to blame. The Bamboo fell on me.'

The *Naga* went to the Bamboo and said, 'You shall die.'

'Oh, Sir, Oh, Sir,' replied the Bamboo, 'I am not to blame. The Wild Fowl alighted on me.'

The *Naga* soon caught the Wild Fowl and said, 'You shall die.'

'Oh, Sir, Oh, Sir,' replied the Wild Fowl, 'the Sessamin Plant threw his seeds into my eyes and blinded me.'

The *Naga* went to the Sessamin Plant and said, 'You shall die.'

'Oh, Sir, Oh, Sir,' replied the Sessamin Plant, 'I am not to blame. The Pumpkin bumped into me.'

The *Naga* soon found the Pumpkin, and said, 'You shall die.'

'Oh, Sir, Oh, Sir,' replied the Pumpkin, 'the Rabbit knocked me down.'

The *Naga* found the Rabbit and said, 'You shall die.'

'Oh, Sir, Oh, Sir,' replied the Rabbit, 'I am not to blame. A Monster from under a stone frightened me.'

The *Naga* went and looked under the stone, but as the Frog had fled, he could not find anything under the stone. The *Naga* went back to the Rabbit, and said, 'You little liar, there was no monster, and you shall die.' The poor Rabbit stood there trembling from head to foot, and his nose twitched and twitched in fright. The *Naga* roared with laughter to see the Rabbit's nose twitching and, recovering his temper, he

went back to his pool. And even at the present day, the Rabbit's nose is forever twitching.

6. WHY THE TIGER IS SO BITTER AGAINST THE CAT

ALTHOUGH the Tiger was big and strong and fierce, he was so clumsy in his movements that he became the laughing-stock of the jungle. 'Look at the clumsy Tiger,' the animals jeered: 'he will soon starve to death as he is so clumsy that he cannot catch any prey.'

The Tiger felt very unhappy until he remembered his cousin, the Cat. So he went to his cousin and said, 'Cousin, please teach me all your methods of hunting and catching prey, and I will serve you faithfully for three full years.' The Cat agreed.

So the Tiger became the pupil of the Cat, and although they were cousins and he the elder, he showed the Cat every respect due from a pupil to his teacher. He swept the house; he prepared the meals; he ran errands; he accompanied the Cat wherever he went; and he learnt his lessons. In short, the Tiger was the perfect pupil. The Cat at first was a good teacher but later he became jealous of his own pupil. 'The Tiger masters all the tricks I teach him,' he reflected, 'and

if I teach all I know, he will rival me, nay, he will surpass me, for he is stronger and bigger than me.' So he decided that he would not teach the Tiger one special trick.

The three years of apprenticeship drew to an end, and the Tiger respectfully asked, 'Sire Teacher, have I learnt everything?'

'Everything,' replied the Cat untruthfully. The Tiger thanked the Cat and went away joyfully.

The Tiger now started hunting on his own, but he was soon disappointed with himself, for as he crouched to spring on a doe, the latter seemed to know that she was in danger, and ran away. He again crouched to spring on a bullock, and again the Tiger failed to get his prey. 'Hide yourself well and surprise your prey' was one of the maxims of his teacher the Cat, and he had hidden himself well behind a bamboo thicket, but both the doe and the bullock knew that he was there. He was puzzled and, crouching as if to spring, he considered his position carefully. At last he realized that the 'thud, thud' of his tail, as he swished it up and down, served as a warning to his would-be victims. 'It is that treacherous Cat,' he cried out in anger, 'he never taught me to swish the tail about without making a noise.' His anger increased when he

remembered how silent was the Cat's tail when on a hunt, and he swore that he would eat up the Cat, nay even the Cat's dung, if the Cat could not be found.

And from that day onwards, the Tiger has been looking for the Cat, who, however, is so cunning that he is still alive. In fact, the Cat will not give to his old pupil even the doubtful satisfaction of finding his dung, and so he always covers up his dung with earth or ash.

7. WHY THE CORMORANT HAS NO TAIL

ONCE there was a King who ruled over human beings and animals. He had as his retainers not only human beings but animals also. The Cormorant was one of the animal retainers, and he was very proud of his appearance. He strutted about in the King's palace flourishing his long tail. Now the Cormorant had a beautiful tail: it was shaped like a V at the end and was covered with black spots as was the rest of the Cormorant's body.

One day the King ordered all his subjects to come and appear before him. The Gudgeon came in answer to the King's summons, and as he entered the throne room, he saw the Cormorant standing near the door. The Gudgeon's

heart missed a beat, for the Cormorant was a fisher-bird with a special liking for gudgeons, but he remembered that all human beings and animals had to preserve the strictest truce while in the King's city, and felt reassured. The Cormorant's mouth watered when he saw the Gudgeon, but he knew he should not even touch the Gudgeon, for otherwise he would be executed for treason. But he was tempted, by the Gudgeon's timid behaviour, to frighten him, and so he stared rudely at the Gudgeon, and when the latter stared back in fright, the Cormorant gave a sudden wink with his left eye. The Gudgeon gave a wild shriek of fear, and ran out of the palace back to his home. The poor fish was later arrested, and was tried for treason.

'Why did you create a disturbance in my palace, and why did you go away without my permission?' asked the King, who was acting as the judge in the trial.

'Your Majesty,' replied the Gudgeon, 'my ancient enemy the Cormorant, who was standing near the door in the throne room, frightened me by making eyes at me.' As after due inquiry the Gudgeon's statement was found to be true, he was pardoned. As for the Cormorant, he was ordered to give a banquet to the

Gudgeon that very evening as compensation for frightening the poor fish.

That evening the Cormorant gave a banquet to the Gudgeon and plied him with drinks, until the fish fell into a drunken sleep. Then the sly Cormorant took off the Gudgeon's tail, and hid it in the fork of a tree, meaning to eat it later when the hue and cry for it was over. When the fish woke up in the morning and missed his tail and broke into tears, the Cormorant suggested that as the city was full of thieves, they surely had stolen the missing tail. The Gudgeon, however, refused to accept the Cormorant's explanation, knowing him to be such a sly fellow, and took the matter to a Court of Law. The Court, after hearing evidence, decided that as a host was responsible for the safety of the life and property of his guest, the Cormorant should surrender his tail to the Gudgeon as compensation. So the Cormorant's tail was duly cut off, and joined to the tail stump of the Gudgeon. That is why the Gudgeon now has a tail shaped like a V at its end and covered with black spots so different from the rest of the Gudgeon's body. As to the Cormorant, he did not dare to take down the stolen tail from the fork of the tree and join it to his own tail stump, lest it should

become obvious to the world that he was a common thief. That is why the Cormorant has no tail at the present day.

8. THE CROW AND THE WREN

THE Crow once caught the Wren, and said to her, 'I will eat you now.' The Wren wailed to herself, 'Oh, my little daughter, my little daughter, who will look after you when I am dead?' The Crow thought to himself, 'This Wren is old and tough, but her daughter will be young and soft,' and so he suggested to the Wren, 'I will let you go if you will promise to give me your daughter to eat on the seventh day from now.' The Wren promised and the Crow let her go.

On the seventh day, the Crow came to the Wren and asked for her daughter.

'You eat all sort of rubbish,' said the Wren, 'and your beak is dirty. My daughter is clean and sweet, and unless you wash your mouth in front of me, I cannot put my daughter in your beak.'

'All right,' replied the Crow, 'I will come back soon with some water.' Then he flew away.

The Crow went to the Water, and said;

'Water, Water, come with me,
To wash the Beak,
To eat the little Wren.'

The Water replied, 'How can you take me away without a pot? So go and get a pot first.'

'All right,' said the Crow, and flew away.

The Crow then went to the Pot and said:

'Pot, Pot, come with me,
To fetch the Water,
To wash the Beak,
To eat the little Wren.'

'I am willing to come,' replied the Pot, 'but I have a hole in my side. So please go and fetch some mud to fill up the hole.'

'All right,' said the Crow, and flew away. The Crow then went to the Mud and said:

'Mud, Mud, come with me,
To mend the Pot,
To fetch the Water,
To wash the Beak,
To eat the little Wren.'

'I am willing to come,' replied the Mud, 'but I am too hard to mend the Pot. So please ask some buffalo to come and wallow here.'

'All right,' said the Crow and flew away. The Crow then went to the Buffalo and said:

'Buffalo, Buffalo, come with me,
To wallow the Mud,

To mend the Pot,
To fetch the Water,
To wash the Beak,
To eat the little Wren.'

'I am willing to come,' replied the Buffalo, 'but I am too weak with hunger to wallow. Please get me some grass to eat.'

'All right,' said the Crow, and flew away. The Crow then went to the Grass and said:

'Grass, Grass, come with me,
To feed the Buffalo,
To wallow the Mud,
To mend the Pot,
To fetch the Water,
To wash the Beak,
To eat the little Wren.'

'I am willing to come,' replied the Grass, 'but the Buffalo is such a big eater, and he needs more of me. If you can give me some fresh land, I will grow more until there is enough of me for the Buffalo.'

'All right,' said the Crow, and flew away. The Crow then went to the Land and said:

'Land, Land, come with me,
To grow the Grass,
To feed the Buffalo,
To wallow the Mud,
To mend the Pot,

To fetch the Water,
To wash the Beak,
To eat the little Wren.'

'I am willing to come,' replied the Land, 'but, as you see, I am covered with forest. How can the Grass grow on me, unless the forest is cleared?'

'All right,' said the Crow, and flew away. The Crow then went to the Forest and said:

'Forest, Forest, go away,
To clear the Land,
To grow the Grass,
To feed the Buffalo,
To wallow the Mud,
To mend the Pot,
To fetch the Water,
'To wash the Beak,
To eat the little Wren.'

'I am willing to go away,' replied the Forest, 'but I cannot move, as the roots of my trees are stuck in the ground. If you will please fetch a fire, and burn me up, the Land will be cleared.'

'All right,' said the Crow, and flew away. The Crow then went to the Fire and said:

'Fire, Fire, come with me,
To burn the Forest,
To clear the Land,
To grow the Grass,

To feed the Buffalo,
To wallow the Mud,
To mend the Pot,
To fetch the Water,
To wash the Beak,
To eat the little Wren.'

'I will come,' replied the Fire. The Crow in great joy flew back towards the Forest with the Fire in his beak, but before he could reach it, his beak had become so badly burned that he had to drop the Fire. Giving up all hope of eating the little Wren, the Crow flew home in disgust.

9. HOW FRIENDSHIP BEGAN AMONG BIRDS

AT FIRST friendship was unknown among birds, for there was intense rivalry among them all. If a bird saw another bird, he at once said, 'I am a better bird than you,' and the other replied, 'Certainly not, for I am better than you,' then they would start to fight.

One day the Pheasant met the crow and, being in no mood to quarrel, he said, 'Crow, you are a better bird than me.'

The Crow was not only surprised but very pleased at these words of the Pheasant, and out

of politeness, he replied, 'No, no, Pheasant, you are a better bird than me.' The two birds sat down and had a chat.

Then the Pheasant said to the Crow, 'Crow, I like you. Let us stay together.'

'All right, Pheasant,' replied the Crow. So the two lived together in a big tree. With the passing of time, their regard for each other grew, but in their case familiarity did not breed contempt, and they continued to show courtesy and respect to each other.

Other birds watched the association of the Pheasant and the Crow with interest, and they were surprised that the two birds should stay together for such a long time without fighting or quarrelling. At last some of the birds decided to test their friendship. So they went to the Pheasant while the Crow was away, and said, 'Pheasant, why do you live with that good-for-nothing Crow?'

'You must not say that,' replied the Pheasant, 'the Crow is a better bird than me, and he honours me by living with me in this tree.'

The next day they went to the Crow while the Pheasant was away and said, 'Crow, why do you live with that good-for-nothing Pheasant?'

'You must not say that,' replied the Crow, 'the

Pheasant is a better bird than me, and he honours me by living with me in this tree.'

The birds were deeply impressed with the attitude of the Pheasant and the Crow towards each other, and they said to themselves, 'Why couldn't we be like the Pheasant and the Crow, instead of fighting and quarrelling?' And from that day onwards, friendship and respect for one another developed among birds.

10. HOW THE CROW BECAME SMALL IN SIZE

ONCE there was a great king who ruled over all men and all animals. He was a just and kindly ruler, and his subjects, except for a wicked few, loved and obeyed him. He was also mighty in body and a show of his fist was enough to frighten a rebellious subject into submission. However, one day the Crow decided to rebel. The Crow at that time was a big and mighty bird, and as at present, he was the most cunning of all birds. He wanted to become the king of the birds. So the Crow cajoled some of the birds to recognize him as their king, and fought the others into submission, until at last all the birds were under him. But he was not satisfied, and he now wanted to rule over

human beings also. With this end in view, the Crow led his army of birds to the great king's city.

The great king, realizing that the birds had been won over by cunning or by force to join the Crow's rebellion, did not wish to kill them. So he did not call out his soldiers, but went alone to meet the Crow and his army of birds. 'Crow,' said the great king, 'I have no desire to kill you or your followers. I will pardon you if you will ask for forgiveness and disband your army.'

'Be honest,' replied the Crow insolently, 'and say that you are frightened of this mighty Crow.' The king showed his mighty fist to frighten the Crow, into submission. 'Ha, Ha,' jeered the Crow, 'do you call that a fist? Compared to my big and mighty body, it is indeed a tiny thing.'

At this insult the great king became angry, and said, 'Crow, I do not wish to kill you, but for your insolence I will punish you now. You are very proud of your size, and you are contemptuous of my fist. So I lay this curse upon you: May you become as small as my fist.'

The Crow opened his mouth to give an insolent reply, but before he could say a word, his body started to shrink, and it continued to shrink

until the Crow was no bigger than the great king's fist. All the other birds begged for pardon from the king, but the Crow flew away in fear and shame.

II. A BRIDEGROOM FOR MISS MOUSE

Miss Mouse was so beautiful that her parents decided to marry her to the most powerful being on earth. So they set out in search of a bridegroom.

They went first to the Sun. 'Oh, Sun,' they pleaded, 'please marry our beautiful daughter.' When the Sun agreed readily, they were assailed by a doubt, and asked, 'But are you really the most powerful being on earth?'

'Why, no,' replied the Sun, 'the Rain is more powerful than me because when it rains, I am driven out from the sky.'

'Sorry,' said the parents of Miss Mouse, turning to go, 'but we want only the most powerful being to marry our daughter.'

They went to the Rain, who however said that the Wind was stronger than he, for rain clouds were always being driven about by the Wind. So they went to the Wind, who, although willing to marry Miss Mouse admitted that he was not the most powerful being, for he had never been

able, however hard he tried, to blow away the Mound, who always stood in the Wind's way. So they went to the Mound, who told them that the Bull was more powerful, for the Bull came every evening to sharpen his horns against the Mound, breaking chunks off it in the process. So they went to the Bull, who regretted he was not the most powerful being, for he had to turn right and left according to the orders of the Rope, which acted as the reins in the bullock-cart driver's hands. So they went to the Rope, who was overjoyed at the prospect of marrying the beautiful Miss Mouse, but he also had to admit that there was one more powerful, namely the Mouse who lived in the cow-shed, for he came every night to gnaw at the Rope.

So the Mouse who lived in the cow-shed was chosen as the bridegroom. He was found to be a strong and handsome fellow, a worthy mate for Miss Mouse.

12. THE LITTLE CHICKEN AND THE OLD CAT

THE little Chicken said to her mother, 'Mother, please bake me a cake.' The old Hen consented, and asked her daughter to bring some firewood splinters, which human beings threw away. So

the little Chicken went into the kitchen of a nearby house, but as she was picking up some firewood splinters, an old Cat found her and threatened to eat her.

'If you will be so kind as to let me go,' pleaded the little Chicken, 'I will give you a piece of my cake.'

'All right,' said the old Cat.

The little Chicken went home with the firewood splinters, and told her mother about her adventure. 'Don't worry, little daughter,' said the old Hen, 'I will bake you a big, big cake, so that there will be more than enough for you and your old Cat.' When the big, big cake had been baked, the old Hen gave it to the little Chicken, reminding her at the same time that she should not forget to leave a bit for the old Cat. But the cake tasted so nice that the greedy little Chicken ate it all up. Then she said to her Mother, 'What shall I do now? I have eaten all the cake.'

'You greedy little thing,' scolded the old Hen.

'Perhaps he has forgotten,' said the little Chicken hopefully. 'Perhaps he won't come, perhaps he doesn't know where we live.' But just at that moment, she saw the Cat coming towards her. 'Oh dear, what shall I do now, for the old Cat is here?' she cried out in fear.

'Follow me,' said the old Hen, and rushed into the kitchen of the nearby house. The little Chicken followed. The old Hen and the little Chicken looked round for a hiding place in the kitchen and, discovering a big earthen jar, they slipped inside it.

The old Cat saw the Hen and the little Chicken running away and felt very angry. 'Where is my share of the cake?' he shouted. 'I will eat you up, you greedy Chicken, and your mother too.' He followed the fugitives into the kitchen, but although he cast his eyes round, he could not spy them. 'But they must be here,' he argued to himself, 'for I saw them running in here and, moreover, there is only one door. Sooner or later, they must come out of their hiding place.' So he sat down in the doorway, and waited patiently.

Inside the earthen jar the old Hen and the little Chicken were trembling with fear. After some time, however, the little Chicken felt bolder and became fidgety. So she whispered in her mother's ear, 'Mother, I want to sneeze.'

'You will do nothing of the sort,' replied her mother angrily, 'for the old Cat will hear you and will look inside the earthen jar.'

Some moments passed, and the little Chicken

again whispered, 'Please let me sneeze just a bit.'

'No,' replied her mother, 'decidedly not.'

Some moments passed, and the little Chicken again whispered, 'Please let me sneeze just a tiny bit.'

'No,' replied her mother.

Some moments passed, and the little Chicken again whispered, 'Let me sneeze just a half of a tiny bit.'

The mother lost patience and said 'yes'; and the little Chicken gave a loud, loud sneeze. The sneeze was so loud that the earthen jar broke in two exposing the old Hen and the little Chicken to view. Luckily for them, however, the old Cat ran away in fright, thinking it was a peal of thunder. So the old Hen was able to leave the kitchen safe and sound, with the little Chicken strutting proudly behind her.

13. HOW THE GALON-BIRD BECAME A SALT-MAKER

As a Dragon was having a stroll in the forest, a Galon-Bird saw him from the sky, and swooped down to catch him. The Dragon looked round swiftly for a hiding place, but found none. However, a king was near by on

a hunt and, assuming human form, the Dragon lost himself in the king's retinue. The *Galon* was puzzled at the sudden disappearance of the Dragon, but soon guessed what the latter had done. So he assumed human form also and, joining the king's retinue, he scanned the face of every retainer carefully. The Dragon quaked in fear, for he knew that the Bird would recognize him. The king and his company met a group of merchants, who respectfully stood aside for the king and his men to pass. The Dragon slipped into the group of merchants and went along with them.

The *Galon*-Bird had scanned the face of every retainer, but he did not find the Dragon. After consideration, he realized what the Dragon had done, and followed the group of merchants. But by that time the merchants were approaching the sandy shore of the sea, and when the Dragon saw his enemy coming towards them, he decided to make a dash to the sea. So, assuming Dragon form, he ran across the sand towards the sea. The Bird saw him and, assuming *Galon* form, he chased his prey. However, he was just too late, and the Dragon dived into the water and returned to his home beneath the sea.

The *Galon* wept in disappointment, for he

had set his heart on eating that particular Dragon. He felt he could not leave the place where the Dragon entered the water, for he expected that the latter would one day come out of the sea again, and he decided to wait. However, he realized that it was out of the question to wait in his own form, for the Dragon would see him from underneath the water and, moreover, human beings would come and harm him. There was a village of salt-makers, who made salt from the sea-water near by and, assuming human form, the *Galon* joined them. He worked and watched at the edge of the sea every day, but the Dragon did not reappear. The *Galon* grew old and died as a morose salt-maker, for he never caught the Dragon after all.

14. WHY THE BUFFALO HAS NO UPPER TEETH

THE BUFFALO and the Ox were cousins and they were very fond of each other. The Buffalo had two rows of fine teeth, but the Ox had only one row, which was on his lower jaw. But the Buffalo was a kindly old thing, and when he had eaten his meal he would lend his upper teeth to the Ox.

The Horse was a wonderful dancer, and he was also a wonderful clown. He could sing very well too. He toured the countryside dancing and singing and clowning. Everywhere the animals flocked to see the horse putting up a fine show.

One evening the Horse was giving a performance near the place where the Ox and the Buffalo were living. The Buffalo did not care for such frivolities, and for him to stay submerged in water up to the neck was better than any dancing or clowning. But the Ox was only a young animal, and he wanted to see the show. But as other animals went to such shows in all their finery, the Ox wanted to go with both rows of teeth, so that when he laughed at the jokes of the clown, all the world would see that he had two rows of lovely teeth. So after he had finished eating his evening meal, he did not return the upper teeth to his cousin, but slipped away to the place where the Horse was performing.

The Ox strutted up to the front and took his seat. On the stage the Horse danced, and the animals clapped their hands. The Horse now performed acrobatic tricks, and recited humorous verses, until the animals were prostrate with uncontrollable laughter. The Ox laughed

with his mouth wide open, and the Horse saw the two rows of ivory teeth. The Horse also had no upper teeth, and felt very jealous that the stupid-looking Ox should have them. So he thought of a trick.

The Horse finished his act and he sat down amidst applause. 'Oh, Horse,' said the animals, 'you are wonderful.'

'My friends and patrons,' replied the Horse, 'I could entertain you more if some one would lend me his upper teeth, for then I could talk better and sing better.' Up jumped the foolish Ox and, taking out his upper teeth, handed them to the Horse. The Horse expressed his thanks to the Ox, and after resting for some minutes continued his performance. He sang a merry song, and the animals roared with laughter. Then he turned a back somersault, and the animals clapped their hoofs in joy. He turned another back somersault, and he was off the stage. The animals clapped the more. Then the Horse gave another back somersault, and now he was quite a distance from the stage. As the animals cheered his acrobatic trick, he suddenly turned his back to the audience, and ran with all his might. The Ox, crying, 'Stop thief, return me my upper teeth,' chased the Horse, but as the Horse was such a

fine runner, very soon he was over the hills and far away.

That is why at the present day the Buffalo has no upper teeth. Even now, the Buffalo wails, 'It's mine, it's mine.' The Ox, to support his cousin's claim, cries, 'That's true, that's true.' And the Horse laughs in reply 'Hee, hee, hee,' for he still possesses the upper teeth gained from the Ox at that performance of long ago.

15. WHY THE BARKING DEER BARKS

THE STAG in all his glory marched up and down the forest, crying, 'Hello, hello, I am like a soldier.' He did look like a soldier with his strong body and beautiful antlers.

The Small Deer with his short horn imitated the Stag, and he also marched up and down, crying, 'Hello, hello, I am like a soldier.'

The Monkey, sitting aloft in a tree, was playing with a creeper, and shouting, 'Coil up the rope! Coil up the rope!' He looked down and saw the Small Deer swaggering up and down, and laughed aloud.

The Small Deer was annoyed. 'What are you laughing at, oh you Fool of the Tree Top?' he asked.

'At you, my dear,' replied the Monkey, and he went on shouting, 'Coil up the rope! Coil up the rope!'

'Are you thinking of catching me with a rope?' asked the Small Deer indignantly. The Monkey did not deign to answer and went on playing with the creeper. 'You wicked animal,' said the Small Deer, 'I will make the tree fall down, so that you also will fall down.' So saying, he went and gored the tree with his horn. The tree did not fall, but the horn stuck in the trunk. The poor Deer pulled and pushed but the horn remained stuck. The Deer struggled the whole day but he remained stuck to the tree. The sun set and darkness came, and the Deer became frightened. But the Monkey still sat on the tree, playing with the creeper, and mocking the Deer with his cries of 'Coil up the rope! Coil up the rope!'

The Leopard now prowled the forest, and the Deer pleaded, 'Sir Monkey, please save me. The Leopard with his piercing eyes will soon see me and kill me.' The Monkey pitied the Deer at last and said, 'Bark like a dog, and I will shout like a human being. The Leopard will think a hunter and his dogs are waiting for him, and will run away.' So the Deer barked like a dog,

and the Monkey shouted. The Leopard, as expected, ran away in fear.

When dawn broke, the Monkey came down from the tree and freed the Deer. 'I shall not be boastful again,' promised the Small Deer, 'and I shall never again cry that I am like a soldier. Instead I shall always bark.' He then said farewell to the Monkey, and ran back to his home, barking all the way.

II. ROMANTIC TALES

1. LITTLE MISS FROG

LITTLE Miss Frog was clever and industrious, but her neighbour Big Miss Frog was stupid and lazy. Everybody loved Little Miss Frog, and so Big Miss Frog was very jealous of her.

Little Miss Frog's mother said to her, 'Child, take this bamboo tube and fetch me some water from the river.' Little Miss Frog went down to the river, but as she stooped to fill the bamboo tube the current carried it away from her hand. Little Miss Frog jumped into the river to recover her bamboo tube, and she also was carried away by the current. Luckily for her, however, she was able to reach the bamboo tube. She clung to it, and thus saved herself from drowning.

An old Ogress, some miles down the river, was in the habit of capturing human beings and animals, for she loved to eat flesh. When she saw Little Miss Frog come floating down the river, clinging to the bamboo tube, the Ogress swam out to her and brought her ashore. But as Little Miss Frog was so small, the Ogress thought that it was not worth eating her up, and so she decided to employ her as her servant.

The Ogress took Little Miss Frog to her house, and said, 'Little Miss Frog, rid my hair of lice.' Little Miss Frog looked in the

Ogress's hair, but it was as clean as it could be. However, she guessed that the Ogress would think her lazy if she said she could find no lice in her hair. So she said to the Ogress, 'Please, may I go into the kitchen to wash my hands before I handle your beautiful hair?'

'What a clean little girl!' exclaimed the Ogress. Little Miss Frog slipped out of the back door, and climbed up the fig tree which was growing near by, and brought back the kernel of a fig. After washing her hands in the kitchen, she went back to the Ogress. After pretending to search among the hair, she said, 'Oh Mistress, what a lot of louse eggs there are in your hair,' and showed the kernel of the fig, which looked like a cluster of louse eggs. The Ogress was very pleased, and said that Little Miss Frog was an industrious little girl.

The next day the Ogress had to go out on some business, and she asked Little Miss Frog to mind the house in her absence. 'But don't you be inquisitive and peep into my bedroom,' the Ogress warned with a frown. Little Miss Frog waited until the Ogress was lost from view, and then she peeped into the bedroom. She saw bones and skulls and half-eaten bodies of human beings and animals. But she kept her nerve, and after carefully shutting the bed-

room door again, she sat down quietly as if she had seen nothing. The Ogress came back, and she said to Little Miss Frog, 'You are a good little girl. Will you stay with me in this house for many months?'

'I would love to, Mistress,' replied Little Miss Frog, 'but I am always wondering who is looking after my old mother, now that her only child is away from her.'

'Are you afraid of me?' asked the Ogress, wanting to find out whether Little Miss Frog had disobeyed her and discovered the secret of her bedroom.

'I respect you, Mistress,' said Little Miss Frog sweetly, 'and I love you. But I am not afraid of you.' The Ogress was so pleased with Little Miss Frog's answer that she gave her seven bars of gold, and allowed her to walk back along the river bank to her own village.

All the frogs in the village praised Little Miss Frog when they heard her story, and Big Miss Frog became very jealous. She went down to the river in a huff, taking a bamboo tube, and floated down the stream astride the bamboo tube. The Ogress, as expected, swam out to Big Miss Frog and brought her ashore. Although Big Miss Frog was big for a frog, she was too small for the Ogress to eat her, and so the

Ogress decided to employ her as her servant. The Ogress took the frog to her house and said, 'Big Miss Frog, rid my hair of lice.' Big Miss Frog gave the hair a glance, and told her mistress that there were no lice in her hair. 'What a lazy girl,' thought the Ogress. 'She is telling me a lie just because she is too lazy to look for the lice.' The next day the Ogress had to go out on some business and she asked Big Miss Frog to mind the house. 'But don't you be inquisitive and peep into my bedroom,' she warned with a frown. The moment the Ogress left the house, Big Miss Frog opened the bedroom door, and seeing the bones and skulls and the half-eaten bodies, she cried out in fear, 'I want to go home!' The Ogress, who had gone only a short distance, heard her cries and came rushing back. Finding Big Miss Frog crying, with the bedroom door wide open, she at once knew that Big Miss Frog had disobeyed her. So she ate up Big Miss Frog.

2. THE FROG MAIDEN

AN OLD couple was childless, and the husband and the wife longed for a child. So when the wife found that she was with child, they were overjoyed, but to their great disappointment,

the wife gave birth not to a human child, but to a little she-frog. However, as the little frog spoke and behaved as a human child, not only the parents but also the neighbours came to love her and called her affectionately 'Little Miss Frog'.

Some years later the woman died, and the man decided to marry again. The woman he chose was a widow with two ugly daughters and they were very jealous of Little Miss Frog's popularity with the neighbours. All three took a delight in illtreating Little Miss Frog.

One day the youngest of the king's four sons announced that he would perform the hair-washing ceremony on a certain date and he invited all young ladies to join in the ceremony, as he would choose at the end of the ceremony one of them to be his princess.

On the morning of the appointed day the two ugly sisters dressed themselves in fine raiment, and with great hopes of being chosen by the Prince they started for the palace. Little Miss Frog ran after them, and pleaded, 'Sisters, please let me come with you.'

The sisters laughed and said mockingly, 'What, the little frog wants to come? The invitation is to young ladies and not to young frogs.' Little Miss Frog walked along with

them towards the palace, pleading for permission to come. But the sisters were adamant, and so at the palace gates she was left behind. However, she spoke so sweetly to the guards that they allowed her to go in. Little Miss Frog found hundreds of young ladies gathered round the pool full of lilies in the palace grounds; and she took her place among them and waited for the Prince.

The Prince now appeared, and washed his hair in the pool. The ladies also let down their hair and joined in the ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, the Prince declared that as the ladies were all beautiful, he did not know whom to choose and so he would throw a posy of jasmynes into the air; and the lady on whose head the posy fell would be his princess. The Prince then threw the posy into the air, and all the ladies present looked up expectantly. The posy, however, fell on Little Miss Frog's head, to the great annoyance of the ladies, especially the two stepsisters. The Prince also was disappointed, but he felt that he should keep his word. So Little Miss Frog was married to the Prince, and she became Little Princess Frog.

Some time later, the old king called his four sons to him and said, 'My sons, I am now too old to rule the country, and I want to retire to the

forest and become a hermit. So I must appoint one of you as my successor. As I love you all alike, I will give you a task to perform, and he who performs it successfully shall be king in my place. The task is, bring me a golden deer at sunrise on the seventh day from now.'

The Youngest Prince went home to Little Princess Frog and told her about the task. 'What, only a golden deer!' exclaimed Princess Frog. 'Eat as usual, my Prince, and on the appointed day I will give you the golden deer.' So the Youngest Prince stayed at home, while the three elder princes went into the forest in search of the deer. On the seventh day before sunrise, Little Princess Frog woke up her husband and said, 'Go to the palace, Prince and here is your golden deer.' The young Prince looked, then rubbed his eyes, and looked again. There was no mistake about it; the deer which Little Princess Frog was holding by a lead was really of pure gold. So he went to the palace, and to the great annoyance of the elder princes who brought ordinary deer, he was declared to be the heir by the king. The elder princes, however, pleaded for a second chance, and the king reluctantly agreed. 'Then perform this second task,' said the king. 'On the seventh day from now at sunrise, you must bring me

the rice that never becomes stale, and the meat that is ever fresh.'

The Youngest Prince went home and told Princess Frog about the new task. 'Don't you worry, sweet Prince,' said Princess Frog. 'Eat as usual, sleep as usual, and on the appointed day I will give you the rice and meat.' So the Youngest Prince stayed at home, while the three elder princes went in search of the rice and meat. On the seventh day at sunrise, Little Princess Frog woke up her husband and said, 'My Lord, go to the palace now, and here is your rice and meat.' The Youngest Prince took the rice and meat, and went to the palace, and to the great annoyance of the elder princes who brought only well-cooked rice and meat, he was again declared to be the heir. But the three elder princes again pleaded for one more chance, and the king said, 'This is positively the last task. On the seventh day from now at sunrise, bring me the most beautiful woman on this earth.'

'Ho, ho!' said the three elder princes to themselves in great joy. 'Our wives are very beautiful, and we will bring them. One of us is sure to be declared heir, and our good-for-nothing brother will be nowhere this time.' The Youngest Prince overheard their remark, and

felt sad, for his wife was a frog and ugly. When he reached home, he said to his wife, 'Dear Princess, I must go and look for the most beautiful woman on this earth. My brothers will bring their wives, for they are really beautiful, but I will find someone who is more beautiful.'

'Don't you fret, my Prince,' replied Princess Frog. 'Eat as usual, sleep as usual, and you can take me to the palace on the appointed day; surely I shall be declared to be the most beautiful woman.'

The Youngest Prince looked at the Princess in surprise; but he did not want to hurt her feelings, and he said gently, 'All right, Princess, I will take you with me on the appointed day.'

On the seventh day at dawn, Little Princess Frog woke up the Prince and said, 'My Lord, I must make myself beautiful. So please wait outside and call me when it is nearly time to go.' The Prince left the room as requested. After some moments, the Prince shouted from outside, 'Princess, it is time for us to go.'

'Please wait, my Lord,' replied the Princess, 'I am just powdering my face.'

After some moments the Prince shouted, 'Princess, we must go now.'

'All right, my Lord,' replied the Princess, 'please open the door for me.'

The Prince thought to himself, 'Perhaps, just as she was able to obtain the golden deer and the wonderful rice and meat, she is able to make herself beautiful,' and he expectantly opened the door, but he was disappointed to see Little Princess Frog still a frog and as ugly as ever. However, so as not to hurt her feelings, the Prince said nothing and took her along to the Palace. When the Prince entered the audience chamber with his Frog Princess the three elder princes with their wives were already there. The king looked at the Prince in surprise and said, 'Where is your beautiful maiden?'

'I will answer for the prince, my king,' said the Frog Princess. 'I am his beautiful maiden.' She then took off her frog skin and stood a beautiful maiden dressed in silk and satin. The king declared her to be the most beautiful maiden in the world, and selected the Prince as his successor on the throne. The Prince asked his Princess never to put on the ugly frog skin again, and the Frog Princess, to accede to his request, threw the skin into the fire.

3. THE GOLDEN CROW.

LONG ago there lived an old widow, who was very poor. She had a daughter, who was pretty and good-natured.

One day the mother asked the daughter to scare away the birds from the tray of rice which was being dried in the sun. So the daughter sat down near the tray, and scared away the birds. When the rice was nearly dried, however, a strange bird came flying towards the tray. It was a crow, but with gold feathers. The Golden Crow laughed at the little girl's efforts to scare him away and calmly ate up the rice. The girl started to cry, saying 'Oh, my mother is so poor! My mother is so poor! The rice is valuable to her.'

The Golden Crow gave her a kindly look, and said, 'Little girl, I will pay for the rice. Come to the big tamarind tree outside the village at sunset, and I will give you something.' Then the Crow flew away.

At sunset, the little girl went to the big tamarind tree and looked up at the branches. To her surprise, she saw that there was a little house of gold at the top of the tree. The Crow looked out of a window of the little house, and said, 'Oh, there you are! Do come up. But of

course, I must drop the ladder first. Do you want the golden ladder, the silver ladder, or the brass ladder?"

'I am only a poor little girl,' replied the girl, 'and I can only ask for the brass ladder.' To her surprise, the Crow put down the golden ladder, and the little girl climbed up to the little gold house.

'You must have dinner with me,' invited the Crow; and he went on. 'But let me see, do you want the gold dish, the silver dish, or the brass dish to eat your food from?'

'I am only a poor little girl,' replied the girl, 'and I can only ask for the brass dish.' To her surprise, the Crow brought out the gold dish and the food in it was delicious.

'You are a good little girl,' said the Crow, when the little girl had finished eating, 'and I would like you to stay here with me for ever. But your mother needs you more, so I must send you back home before it gets too dark.' Then he went into the bedroom, and brought out a big box, a medium-sized box, and a small box. 'Choose one of these boxes,' said the Crow, 'and give it to your mother.'

'The rice was not much,' replied the little girl, 'and the little box would be more than enough.' She then chose the little box and, after thanking

the Golden Crow, climbed down the golden ladder and went towards her home. When she reached there, she gave the little box to her mother. Together they opened the box, and they were surprised and delighted to find in the box a hundred priceless rubies. The mother and daughter became very rich, and lived in luxury.

There was another old widow in the village, but she was not poor. She also had a little daughter, who, however, was greedy and bad tempered. This widow and her daughter became very jealous of the other widow and her good little daughter. When they heard about the gift of the Golden Crow, they decided to get a similar gift. So they put out a tray of rice in the sun, and the greedy little girl kept watch. But as she was so lazy, she did not try to scare away the birds which came to eat up the rice, with the result that when the Golden Crow at last turned up, there was very little rice left. However, the Golden Crow ate what remained, and the greedy girl shouted rudely, 'Hey, Crow, give me and my mother some wealth for the rice you have eaten.'

The Crow looked at her with a frown, but he replied politely enough, 'Little girl, I will pay for the rice. Come to the big tamarind tree outside

the village at sunset, and I will give you something.' Then the Crow flew away.

At sunset, the greedy little girl went to the big tamarind tree, and without waiting for the Crow to come out, she shouted, 'Hey, Crow, keep your promise.'

The Crow put his head out of the window and asked, 'What sort of a ladder do you want to climb up here? The golden ladder, the silver ladder or the brass ladder?'

'The gold ladder, of course,' replied the greedy little girl; but, to her disappointment, the Crow put down the brass ladder.

When the girl had entered the little gold house, the Crow said, 'I must give you your dinner. But what sort of dish do you want to eat your food from? The gold dish, the silver dish or the brass dish?'

'The gold dish, of course,' replied the greedy little girl. But, to her disappointment, her food was served in the brass dish.

The food was delicious but it was a tiny morsel, and the greedy girl was very annoyed. Then the Crow brought out one big box, one medium-sized box, and one small box, and said, 'Choose one of these boxes, and give it to your mother.' The greedy girl, of course, chose the big box, and without remembering to thank the Crow

she struggled down the ladder with her burden. When she reached home, she and her mother joyfully opened the big box; but to their disappointment and terror, a big snake came out. The snake hissed at them angrily, and then glided out of the house.

4. MASTER HEAD

ONCE a poor woman gave birth to a son, but he had only a head and no body. The husband was ashamed of the mis-shapen child and wanted to kill him, but the wife said that, whether mis-shapen or well-shapen, a child was a child. The child then said, 'Mother, I am grateful to you, and I will prove a worthy son who will look after you in your old age.' The mother told her neighbours of her wonderful child, and they came to look at him in wonder. And they all called him 'Master Head'.

Some weeks later Master Head said to his mother, 'Mother, please take me to the chief merchant in the king's city.' The mother took him there. 'Sire Merchant,' said Master Head, 'give my mother one thousand silver coins, and take me as your slave. Then you can exhibit me to the public. You can charge them a fee for looking at me.' The merchant was pleased, and

did as Master Head suggested. In a few days' time, the merchant received one thousand silver coins from the people who flocked to see the wonderful Master Head.

A convoy of seven merchant ships arrived from overseas. Master Head said to the merchant, 'Sire Merchant, I have served you faithfully and well. May I now travel overseas and seek adventure? Sell me to those foreign merchants as a slave for one thousand silver coins.' The merchant had become very fond of Master Head, and he was reluctant to part with the wonderful child. But just to please Master Head the merchant sold him to the sailors of one of the seven ships for one thousand silver coins. When their cargo had been sold the seven ships sailed away. Within a few hours of leaving port a great storm blew, and the ship on which Master Head was travelling became separated from the other ships. The storm raged for three days, after which the wind suddenly dropped and the ship was becalmed. The sailors considered that the presence of a mis-shapen child on board had brought bad luck to their ship, and they wanted to throw Master Head overboard. But Master Head said, 'Friends, be patient. Tie me to the top of the mast.' The sailors tied Master Head to

the mast. He then gave a mighty puff, and at once the ship moved forward swiftly. The sailors felt so grateful that they told Master Head not to consider himself as their slave any longer. Master Head continued to blow from the mast until they reached a pleasant-looking island. He liked the island very much and wanted to stop there. The sailors begged him not to stop the ship for, although the island was not far away from their own country, they always avoided the island, as it was full of ogres. But Master Head said that he was not afraid of ogres. As he said these words a fresh wind started to blow, and Master Head said, 'Friends, your ship can now sail without me. So please leave me here.' So they put him ashore, and sailed away.

On the island Master Head waited patiently, and at sunset the ogres of the island came down to bathe in the sea. Master Head greeted them and talked to them so sweetly that the ogres came to like him. He lived with the ogres for many happy months, and they loved him so much that they taught him a magic formula to chant. One day Master Head saw his old ship sailing past the island and he gave a mighty shout. The sailors recognized his voice and steered the ship towards the island. The sailors

were frightened to see the ogres standing round Master Head who, however, assured them that the ogres would not harm them. Master Head expressed his desire to go back to his own country and the sailors offered to take him back. The ogres bade farewell to their little friend and gave him a basketful of rubies as a parting gift. When the ship arrived at Master Head's own city he gave all his jewels to the sailors. 'I will give you more,' said he to the sailors, 'if you will become my men.' The sailors offered their services at once to Master Head.

Master Head ordered his men to take him to the king's palace. When he reached the palace gates he sent word to the king that, unless he was given the king's daughter in marriage and appointed crown prince, he would destroy the palace together with its inmates. The king's ministers came to the gates to see who the intruder was, and loud was their laughter when they saw Master Head. 'Why, you are only a head without a body,' they mocked, 'and your men are merely ragamuffins from a ship.' At this Master Head took out his snuff-box and chanted the magic formula which the ogres had taught him. At once thousands of fully armed horse-soldiers came out of the snuff-box one by

one, and surrounded the palace. The king had no choice but to surrender. Master Head became the crown prince and married the king's daughter. When the marriage ceremony was over Master Head suddenly became a handsome young man with a fine head and a mighty body.

5. THE BIG TORTOISE

ONCE there lived a fisherman and his wife and they had a very beautiful daughter by the name of Mistress Youngest. The mother was very fond of the daughter, but the father was a little indifferent. One day the couple went out fishing in a boat, and for some hours the husband could not catch anything at all. He became very short-tempered, whereas his wife became anxious lest she should not be able to cook any fish for her daughter. After great trouble a fish was caught, and the wife cried, 'This is for Mistress Youngest and not for sale.' Another fish was caught, and again the wife cried out, 'I reserve this for Mistress Youngest.' Then another was caught, and the wife again cried out 'I claim this for Mistress Youngest.' At this the husband became very angry and hit her with an oar, and she fell into the sea and

was transformed into a big tortoise. The fisherman of course thought that she was drowned. When he arrived back at his village he simply said that his wife fell into the sea and was drowned. Everybody assumed that it was all an unfortunate accident, and everyone felt sorry for the fisherman over his loss.

After some time the fisherman decided to marry again, and he chose as his spouse a hateful old witch. She was a widow and had a daughter by her first marriage. The daughter was a sour-tempered young woman with an ugly face made uglier by pock-marks. Both the mother and the daughter were jealous of Mistress Youngest because she was so beautiful and kind, and between them they made her life a misery. They made her do all the household work, and they scolded her and jeered at her. The fisherman took no interest in Mistress Youngest and just left her to the tender mercies of his wife and step-daughter.

One afternoon Mistress Youngest felt so unhappy that she slipped out of her house and went to the seashore. There she sat down and cried her heart out. Presently she saw an old tortoise swimming towards her and, to her surprise, she saw that the old tortoise was crying also. Now she guessed that the old tortoise was her mother,

and she took the animal in her arms. The tortoise, of course, could not speak to her, but it seemed so pleased to be with Mistress Youngest. So every afternoon Mistress Youngest came to the seashore and stayed with the tortoise until night-fall.

After a few days the step-mother and the step-sister noticed that, in spite of their ill-treatment, Mistress Youngest seemed happier than before, and also that she disappeared from the house every afternoon. So they followed her to the seashore and saw her sitting and talking to the tortoise. They were very furious that Mistress Youngest should have any friends, and they decided to deprive Mistress Youngest of her happy afternoons.

The next morning the step mother made a lot of crisp and dry pancakes, and put them under her bed. When her husband returned from his work in the afternoon the step-mother, pretending to be very ill, lay in bed; when she turned this way and that way, naturally the cakes underneath her made a crackling noise and she moaned repeatedly:—

‘This side I turn, crackle, crackle,
That side I turn, crackle, crackle,
I die of splintered bones.’

The husband became so anxious that he rushed

out and brought back the village physician. The physician had been bribed beforehand by the step-mother, so he looked at the patient and said that it was a serious disease, but the remedy was easy. 'Give her tortoise flesh at once,' he prescribed, 'and she will be all right in no time.'

'How fortunate!' exclaimed the patient. 'My daughter tells me that a big, fat tortoise comes to the shore every afternoon, and so my husband can easily go and catch it at once.' Then the step-daughter led the fisherman to the place where Mistress Youngest was sitting with the tortoise in her arms. The fisherman, in spite of the tearful entreaties for the animal's life on the part of Mistress Youngest, killed the tortoise at once, and ordered Mistress Youngest to cook it quickly for her step-mother.

Poor Mistress Youngest! How she cried and cried in the kitchen as she prepared her step-mother's dinner. She was stricken with grief and the work was tiring. As the tortoise was an exceptionally big one, she had to wash more than a hundred dishes to contain all the cooked flesh. At last all was ready, and the step-mother jumped up from bed, saying that the mere smell of the tortoise flesh had cured her. She invited her husband and daughter to share

the meal with her. Out of sheer malice, she also invited Mistress Youngest who, of course, declined, saying that she was unwell. As there were so many dishes of tortoise flesh, the step-mother decided to send one dish to each neighbour, because her treatment of the gentle Mistress Youngest had made her unpopular with the neighbours and she wanted to become popular. So she ordered Mistress Youngest to take a dish to every cottage in the village with her compliments.

At every cottage Mistress Youngest was asked, 'What could we do to make you happy?' and she always replied, 'Please eat the flesh, but do not throw away the bones. Please keep the bones in the eaves of your cottage, so that I can come and collect them without disturbing you.' Late that night, she went from cottage to cottage and brought back the bones from the caves. Then she buried the bones just outside her cottage door, and she made this oath: 'If I truly love my mother, may a tree of gold and silver fruit grow here to mark her grave.' Early the next day, all the neighbours were surprised to see a wonderful tree which seemed to have grown overnight, right in front of the cottage of the fisherman. It was indeed a wonderful tree, for some of its fruits were of silver, and

others were of gold. As the neighbours stood around and gaped at the tree, the king of the country passed by on his hunting elephant. 'A gold and silver tree in this remote village!' he said, 'and who owns it?'

The step-mother came out of the cottage and answered, 'My daughter owns it, your Majesty.'

'Call her here then,' ordered the king, and the step-sister came forward. 'Is that your tree?' asked the king.

'Yes, your Majesty,' answered the step-sister.

'If that is so, pluck your fruit and come with me,' ordered the king. The step-sister climbed up the tree and, although she pulled with all her strength, the fruit could not be plucked. 'I don't believe you own the tree,' said the king with a frown, 'and I wonder who is the real owner.'

'We think Mistress Youngest owns it, your Majesty,' said the neighbours. The king summoned Mistress Youngest to his presence and asked her to prove that the tree belonged to her. So Mistress Youngest sat under the tree and made this oath: 'If this tree belongs to me, may all the fruits fall into my lap,' and all the fruits fell into her lap. The king was very pleased, and took her away on his elephant to the capital where she was crowned as queen.

The step-mother and the step-sister gnashed their teeth in anger and malice, and they cut down the tree out of sheer spite.

After four or five months the step-mother and the step-sister thought of a plan to kill Mistress Youngest, and so they sent word to her begging her to forgive them their past misdeeds and to come and stay with them for a few weeks. Mistress Youngest was a very kind and trusting young woman, and she believed them. So, asking permission from her husband the king she went to the village, taking only a few retainers, and these few she sent back the moment she reached her father's cottage, as she did not want her old friends in the village to think that she had become conceited with so many servants and followers round her. Before the retainers went away, however, she instructed them to come back after one month.

The step-mother and the step-sister were outwardly very sweet and loving to Mistress Youngest, but all the time they were waiting eagerly for an opportunity to kill her. One day, while sitting at dinner, the step-mother dropped a spoon down a hole in the kitchen flooring, and Mistress Youngest, ever dutiful, thinking that the spoon had been dropped

accidentally, went down to fetch it. When she was right underneath the step-mother emptied a cauldron of boiling water over her, and poor Mistress Youngest was transformed into a white paddy-bird which flew away swiftly. On the appointed day the retainers came back, and they were met by the wicked step-sister who was dressed up in the fine raiment of Mistress Youngest. 'You are not our Queen,' they exclaimed indignantly.

'I am,' replied the step-sister, 'but you cannot recognize me as I was attacked by the terrible disease of small-pox during your absence, and as a result my face is now disfigured.' The retainers were rather dubious, but all the same they had to escort her back to the king. When she arrived at the palace, the king said in anger, 'You are not Mistress Youngest, for your face is pock-marked, whereas her face was as fair as the lily.'

'My Lord,' replied the step-sister, 'I was attacked by the terrible disease of small-pox. Will you discard me just because I contracted the disease through no fault of my own?'

'You cannot be Mistress Youngest,' said the king, 'for your forehead is high and ugly, unlike her beautiful forehead.'

'I missed you so much, my Lord,' replied the

step-sister, 'that I often cried, hitting my forehead against the floor, and it has now become swollen.'

'You cannot be Mistress Youngest,' said the king, 'for your nose is too long and ugly, so different from her beautiful nose.'

'My Lord,' replied the step-sister, 'I missed you so much that I was always weeping, and I had to wipe my nose so many times. No wonder my nose has become long.' The king, however, remained suspicious.

Now Mistress Youngest was a wonderful weaver, and all the king's dresses were woven by her. Wanting to test the step-sister, he now asked her to weave a dress for him. The step-sister went to the weaving room, but as she was a fool with her hands she sat at the loom in great fear lest her lack of skill in weaving should show that she was an impostor. But Mistress Youngest, in the form of the paddy-bird, came to her rescue, for even as a bird Mistress Youngest cared only for the happiness of her husband and wanted him to wear a fine dress. So the white paddy-bird flew into the weaving room by the window and, seizing the spindle in her beak, she wove a dress of wonderful pattern. The step-sister watched the paddy-bird in silence until it had

finished weaving and had dropped the spindle; then she picked up the spindle and threw it at the paddy-bird, who fell down dead. She picked up the dead bird and, calling the cook, ordered him to roast it. When the king came into the room in the evening she showed him the dress, and said, 'My Lord, the dress would have been even better had not a white paddy-bird come and interfered with my weaving.' The king had to admit that the dress was well woven but he remained wrapped in gloom, for he still suspected that the step-sister was an impostor.

The king sat down to dinner and a servant brought in the roasted paddy-bird. 'What is this?' asked the king.

'It is that interfering paddy-bird,' said the step-sister. 'I killed it and had it roasted specially for you.'

'Poor little bird! I don't wish to eat you,' said the king, ordering his servant to take it away. The servant also felt sorry for the bird and, instead of eating it or throwing it away, buried it behind the kitchen. The next day a big quince tree was seen growing behind the kitchen and the step-sister, being suspicious of trees which grew overnight, made careful inquiries, but nobody could say how the tree came

to be there. The servant of the previous night, however, guessed that the tree had something to do with the paddy-bird, for the tree was growing out of the very place where he had buried the bird; but he did not say anything as he was frightened of the step-sister.

An old man and his wife came to the palace kitchen to sell their firewood. After selling it, they rested under the big quince tree and a big quince fruit fell into the woman's lap. 'Lucky it did not fall on our heads!' They laughed. They picked up the fruit meaning to eat it in the evening, but when they reached their home the woman thought that it was not ripe enough yet to be eaten. So she put it away in an earthen jar meaning to eat it a few days later. Early next morning the couple went out as usual to gather firewood, and as usual they returned at breakfast time. They were astonished to find that in their absence the cottage had been swept clean, and the meal cooked. They looked everywhere, but could not find any trace of the stranger who had so kindly tidied up the cottage and cooked the meal. The next morning the same thing happened. 'I will solve the mystery tomorrow,' whispered the old man to his wife that night, 'for I have thought of a plan.'

Long before the first streak of daylight appeared the old man got up from bed and, giving a nudge with his elbow to his wife, he cried loudly, 'You old lazybones, get up, get up, and let us go earlier than usual, so that we can gather more firewood.' The old woman, realizing that her husband wanted all the world to think that they were going out, said loudly in reply, 'You are the lazybones, for I am ready to go out now.' They went out of their cottage shouting and pretending to quarrel but, after they had gone half a mile, they came back stealthily in the darkness and, entering their cottage silently, they hid behind the door to watch. When the sun had risen they saw a tiny little woman come out of the earthen jar, and run into the kitchen. 'It is a fruit maiden,' whispered the old woman, 'and I know how to catch her.' So saying she fetched one of her skirts and, spreading it, she stood by the jar. Then she gave a shout, which frightened the little fruit maiden, who, now came running towards the jar. The old woman threw the skirt over the fruit maiden, and lo! Mistress Youngest stood before them. 'You are our queen,' they said, recognizing her, 'and we must take you to our lord the king.' At first Mistress Youngest refused as she did not want

her step-sister to get into trouble, but in the end she agreed as she wanted to see her husband again so badly.

The king and the step-sister were giving an audience to the courtiers when the old couple entered with Mistress Youngest. The king was very pleased to see Mistress Youngest again, but he was not too surprised at her return, for he had always suspected that the step-sister was an impostor.

'But I am Mistress Youngest,' protested the step-sister, 'and this woman is an impostor and a witch. She has bewitched you all to make you think that she is I.'

'She is the true Mistress Youngest,' said the old couple, who then proceeded to relate how they had found Mistress Youngest.

'Didn't I tell you?' shouted the step-sister in triumph. 'A fruit maiden, and a witch I should say!' Mistress Youngest then told the king how she was first transformed into a paddy-bird and then into a fruit maiden.

'I demand that the custom of the people should be followed in this case,' exclaimed the step-sister, 'and I demand a trial by ordeal.' Now in a trial by ordeal, the parties to a dispute had to fight a duel with swords; but, whereas the defendant was allowed to fight with an iron

sword, the plaintiff had to use a wooden one, for on the plaintiff was the burden of proof and it was assumed that, if justice was really on his side, he would win in spite of the fact that his sword was wooden. But the step-sister had no faith in a trial by ordeal, and she thought that she would be able to kill Mistress Youngest with one stroke of her iron sword.

The king and his courtiers were certain that the step-sister was an impostor, and did not want to put Mistress Youngest to the ordeal; but what could they do? For even the king was not above the customary law of the people, and the step-sister's demand was a legitimate one. The king now ordered that the two swords be brought, and the wooden one given to Mistress Youngest, for she was the plaintiff and it was for her to prove her case. Mistress Youngest faced her step-sister, and made this oath: 'If I am really Mistress Youngest, may my step-sister's sword become harmless to me.' So she stood there calmly, making no attempt to use her wooden sword, while the step-sister hewed and hacked at her with the iron sword. But Mistress Youngest remained unscathed, for the iron sword became as soft as velvet whenever it touched her body. Suddenly, the wooden sword, of its own accord, slipped out of Mistress

Youngest's hand and cut off the step-sister's head.

The king decided that the step-mother should be made to suffer also, although Mistress Youngest pleaded for her pardon. Accordingly he gave orders that the dead body of the step-sister be first cut into pieces, and then put into a jar and pickled. Afterwards he sent the jar to the step-mother with the message that it was a special gift of pickled fish made by the queen herself. The old step-mother was so proud of the royal gift that she asked her husband to come and taste the pickle at once. As she served out spoonful after spoonful, she kept chattering about her dear daughter, the queen, until the husband lost his temper and said, 'Woman, don't talk rubbish, but eat on.'

The step-mother took out another spoonful from the jar, and cried out in alarm, 'This looks like a human finger, my daughter's finger.'

'Don't talk rubbish,' said the irate husband, 'but eat on.'

She took out another spoonful and cried out in alarm, 'This looks like a human toe, my daughter's toe.'

'Don't talk rubbish,' said the irate husband, 'but eat on.'

The step-mother peeped into the jar to see whether there was any pickle left, and she saw at the bottom the pock-marked face of her daughter. 'It is my daughter, it is my daughter,' she wailed. At this the husband got up and beat her soundly for talking nonsense.

6. RAIN CLOUD THE CROCODILE

AN OLD fisherman and his wife found a crocodile's egg in their net, and they put it in a small pond at the back of their house. In due course the egg hatched and a little crocodile came out. The fisher couple had no children, and they loved the baby crocodile as if he were their own son. They gave him the name of Master Rain Cloud. Some months passed, and as Rain Cloud had grown too big for the pond the fisherman fenced off a part of the river near his home, and put the crocodile there.

After one or two years Rain Cloud became too big to be shut up behind a fence, and the fisherman said to him, 'My son, I will now take down the fence, and you are free to go. But at noon every day I will call out to you and you must come to the river bank to take some food from me, and also to let me know that you are all right.' So every day at noon, the fisherman,

sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by his wife, would call out 'Rain Cloud, Rain Cloud' across the water and the crocodile would swim towards him and take the food from his hands. This went on for many months. In the meantime, Rain Cloud became wild and conceited, for he became the master of that small river. The small river came to be known as 'The Stream of Master Rain Cloud', and even at the present day it bears the same name.

One day the old fisherman and his wife forgot to go to the river bank with food and call for Rain Cloud. The crocodile in his conceit had come to look upon the daily gift of food, not as a loving gift from his parents to a son, but as a tribute offered by a vassal to his overlord. So he felt very angry when the fisherman failed to turn up at the usual time. The next day the fisherman came alone and called out, 'Rain Cloud, my son.' The crocodile swam towards him and suddenly seized hold of the fisherman's legs. 'What ails you, my son?' asked the fisherman gently.

'You neglected to bring me my tribute yesterday, and I will eat you now,' was the reply.

'Remember, my son, that I have been a father to you,' pleaded the fisherman.

'I will eat you all the same,' the crocodile replied insolently.

'Give me time to pray,' said the fisherman. When the crocodile consented, the fisherman prayed, 'I say that I am guiltless and do not deserve to die. If that is true, may I be reborn as a Master of White Magic, and may I be able to kill this ungrateful crocodile. I am ready now,' he then told the crocodile, who at once killed and ate him.

Rain Cloud wandered up and down the many streams of the Irrawaddy Delta, and he was feared by all, for he killed and ate hundreds of people. But, with the passing of years, he mellowed. Perhaps the memory of his happy childhood years with the fisher couple made him kinder to human beings when his youthful conceit and fiery temper had disappeared with age. He was full of remorse over the killing of the old fisherman. He became the friend of human beings, who learnt to love and trust him. He loved human company so much that when a female crocodile, by the name of Brownish, fell in love with him, he scorned her love, making her his mortal enemy.

Now, when a crocodile attained the age of one hundred years, he could assume the form of a human being. So the moment Rain Cloud

attained the age of one hundred years he assumed human form and, becoming a merchant, he traded up and down the Delta. At one of the Delta towns, he fell in love with a beautiful damsel, and married her. He spent some happy years with her.

By this time the old fisherman had been reborn, and at the age of sixteen he became a Master of White Magic. The Delta was full of tales about the prowess and power of Rain Cloud the Crocodile, and people were mystified over the long absence of the crocodile, of course not knowing that he had assumed human form. The Master Magician wanted to test the power of his magic wand, and so he went to the river bank. He struck the water once with his magic wand and commanded, 'Rain Cloud the Crocodile, come here at once.' Some miles away at his home, Rain Cloud heard the command, and he realized that the vengeful incarnation of the fisherman would kill him soon. So he told his wife at last that he was Rain Cloud the Crocodile and that he was going to his death at the hands of the fisherman now reborn as a Master Magician. He requested his wife to follow him and claim his dead body. The Master Magician struck the water for the second time and commanded, 'Rain Cloud the

Crocodile, come here at once.' Poor Rain Cloud! He bade a tearful farewell to his beloved and, reassuming crocodile form, hurried down the river. The Master Magician for the third time struck the water with his wand and commanded, 'Rain Cloud the Crocodile, come here at once.' Rain Cloud appeared at his feet, and the Master Magician killed him with one blow of his wand. The half of the crocodile's body which was in the water became pure gold and the other half, which was on land, became rubies. The Master Magician was stricken with remorse after killing Rain Cloud and went away without touching the gold and the jewels. Rain Cloud's wife later came and built a pagoda over the gold and jewel remains of her beloved Rain Cloud.

7. THE RAINBOW

THE QUEEN of Syriam died while expecting the birth of a child. But, when her funeral pyre was being lit the child was born. It was a girl and the king, her father, named her Princess Mwaynun. However, she could not be taken back to the city for it was believed that, as she was born in a cemetery, she would bring ill luck to it. So the king built her a palace near the cemetery. Later

a town grew round the palace, which came to be known as Dalla.

Across the river-mouth there was the kingdom of Mingaladon, and the king's son, Prince Nandar, fell in love with the princess of Dalla. The king of Mingaladon and his people disapproved of the romance, as they also considered that, as she was born in a cemetery, she would bring ill luck to the kingdom. The king gave orders that no boatman should row his son across to Dalla, and prohibited the prince from ever going across the river again.

The city of Mingaladon was very near to the stream in which Rain Cloud the Crocodile lived and, as the prince sadly gazed across the river, Rain Cloud happened to swim by. The crocodile went to the prince, and offered his services. The prince was grateful, but he remained sad. 'Master,' said Rain Cloud, 'can I do nothing for you?'

'You cannot help me, Rain Cloud,' replied the prince, 'for who can help me to go to my beloved across the river without my father knowing?'

Rain Cloud proposed to carry him in his mouth when darkness had fallen. 'Nobody can see you then,' explained Rain Cloud, 'and the king will never know that you have disobeyed

his orders. Moreover, I will swim so swiftly that you will be in my mouth only for a few moments, and you cannot die for lack of air.' The prince accepted Rain Cloud's suggestion, and every night the prince went across the river in the crocodile's mouth to his beloved princess, returning the next morning at dawn.

A female crocodile, by the name of Brownish, fell in love with Rain Cloud, but as he scorned her love she became his bitter enemy. She felt very jealous to see Rain Cloud going across the river, looking so proud with the precious burden in his mouth. Brownish, being a crocodile who had attained the age of one hundred years, transformed herself into a human being, and became a serving-maid to the princess. She was so wily and cunning that she soon became the favourite lady-in-waiting and confidante of the princess. One day she said to the princess, 'My Lady, when your prince comes at night, do you sleep on his right or on his left?'

'On his left,' replied the princess innocently, 'using his left arm as my pillow.'

'That shows that he doesn't love you enough,' said the crocodile Brownish slyly. 'If he really loves you, he will allow you to sleep on his right side, with his right arm as your pillow.'

'Of course he will let me do anything I like,' replied the princess indignantly.

'Try him tonight,' suggested Brownish. 'Ask to be allowed to sleep on the right, with your head on his right arm.' The cunning crocodile suggested this because she realized that if a woman should sleep with her head on the right arm of a hero or a prince, ill-luck would befall him. Of course Brownish had no enmity towards the prince, but she knew that Rain Cloud would get into trouble with the king of Mingaladon, should some accident happen to the prince while travelling across the river in his mouth.

That night when the prince came to the princess as usual, she asked to be allowed to sleep on his right side with her head on his right arm. 'Beloved,' replied the prince, 'do you not know that ill-luck would befall me if you should sleep with your head on my right arm?'

But the princess thought that he was merely giving her an excuse as he did not love her enough to comply with her request. 'You do not love me enough,' said the princess. In the end the prince allowed the princess to sleep with her head on his right arm, so as to assure her that he loved her dearly.

Dawn came and the prince went down to the

shore where the faithful Rain Cloud was waiting. The prince entered the crocodile's mouth, and Rain Cloud started on the return journey. But something came over the crocodile's mind, and he entirely forgot that the prince was in his mouth. He swam up and down the river for many hours and the prince fainted through the continued lack of air. In the city of Mingaladon the king and his courtiers were searching for the missing prince, and they came down in a body to the shore, hoping that the prince had gone only to his beloved, and that no untoward accident had befallen him. Rain Cloud saw the king on the river bank, and only then did he remember that his master the prince was in his mouth. Swimming swiftly to the shore, he opened his mouth and placed the prince at his father's feet. But the prince was dead. Rain Cloud was heart-broken and explained to the king how the prince came to be in his mouth. 'I am ready to die and follow my prince,' said Rain Cloud, 'so punish me swiftly, my Lord.'

'You have been a faithful servant to my son,' said the sorrow-stricken king. 'I pardon you. But for the sake of your dead master, swim back to the princess and acquaint her with the sad news.' Rain Cloud swam swiftly across the river again, and told the princess that her be-

loved was dead. The princess became stricken with sorrow and remorse, for she felt that she was the cause of the prince's death by bringing ill-luck upon him. She soon died of a broken heart.

That day at sunset, at Mingaladon, the funeral pyre of the prince was lit, and over at Dalla the funeral pyre of the princess was lit also. The people, on both sides of the river, watched with sorrow the smoke from the funeral pyres rising into the sky. As they watched, they saw that the smoke from each pyre met over the river, and lo! a rainbow was formed.

8. THE OLD MAN IN THE MOON

ONCE there was an old man in a village, and he earned his living by pounding rice on hire. He had no friend nor companion, except for an old rabbit. The whole day, and part of the night when there was a moon, the old man pounded the paddy, and the old rabbit crouched near by, eating the chaff that his master threw away.

One moonlit night the old man, while pounding the paddy, said to himself, 'It is sheer waste of time sifting the grain from the chaff after

pounding. If only I had an old woman with me, she could do the sifting besides keeping me and my rabbit company.' The Moon-goddess heard his words, and felt sorry for him. The next day, assuming the form of an old woman, she came to the old man and kept him company. The whole day she sifted with a sieve the grain from the chaff, while the old man pounded the paddy. At nightfall, she went back to the sky.

Every day the Moon-goddess assumed the form of an old woman, and kept the old man and the rabbit company. At nightfall she always went away, for if it was a moonlit night she had to go and look after her Moon, and if it was a moonless night the old man did not need her help as he did not work in the dark. Weeks went by in this manner, until the old man asked, 'Who are you? Why do you go away when night falls?' and the old woman replied that she was the Moon-goddess. 'Take me and my rabbit to your Moon,' pleaded the old man, 'and let us live with you for ever, for we are so lonely without you.' So the Moon-goddess took the old man and the rabbit to her Moon, and let them stay with her for ever.

When the moon is full little children nowadays gaze at it carefully, for, provided they are not 'cry-babies', they will see in the moon the

old man still pounding rice, and the old rabbit still eating the chaff that the old man throws away.

9. THE ECLIPSE OF THE MOON

A poor widow lay dying, and she called her two grandsons to her bedside. 'Lads,' she said, 'unlike other grandmothers I cannot leave gold and silver for you to inherit. But for the elder, I leave my mortar, and for the younger, my pestle, both of which you will find in the kitchen.' She died soon after. The elder brother said to himself, 'What could I do with this mortar? I am not a kitchen servant.' So he did not take the mortar, but went to another village where he prospered by sheer hardwork.

The younger brother, however, had great faith in his dead grandmother. 'She wouldn't have left the pestle to me as my inheritance,' he argued to himself, 'unless it would be of some value to me.' So he carried the pestle with him everywhere, to the great amusement of the neighbours. He earned his living by gathering firewood and selling it in the village. But he remained very poor.

One day, while he was gathering firewood, a big snake appeared and he climbed up a tree in

fear. To his surprise, the snake spoke to him, 'I will not harm you,' the snake said. 'I only want to borrow your pestle.'

'Why do you want it?' the younger brother asked.

'My husband has just died,' the snake explained, 'but if your magic pestle is put against his nostrils, he will be restored to life.'

'I didn't know my pestle was a magic one,' said the younger brother incredulously.

'Come with me and you will know,' said the snake. So he followed the snake to another part of the forest, where he found a snake lying dead. He put his pestle against the nostrils of the dead snake, and at once the snake became alive. 'The power of the pestle is in its smell,' explained the first snake, 'and as long as you do not tell about it to any one, its power will remain.' The snake then thanked the younger brother, and went away.

The younger brother went back to his village and on the way he found the body of a dog, which had been dead for some time and had become putrid. The younger brother put his pestle against the nostrils of the dog, and at once it jumped up alive. The younger brother named the dog 'Master Putrid', and the latter became his faithful servant and companion.

The younger brother soon became famous as the great physician who could cure even the dead. But nobody guessed that it was the pestle which did the cure; people thought that he carried the pestle merely as a mascot. Some time after, the king's only daughter died, and the younger brother was sent for by the king. He duly restored the princess to life. The king, in gratitude gave the princess to him in marriage. So the younger brother became the crown prince. He, however, went on with his great work of restoring the dead to life, until in the kingdom there was no grief or sorrow but only happiness.

The younger brother one day had an idea. 'My pestle can conquer death,' he mused, 'but surely it can conquer old age also.' So every day, as an experiment, he put the pestle against his nostrils, and also against the nostrils of the princess. Of course the princess was surprised at the action of her husband, but she put it down as merely a whim of a clever physician. After some weeks, he realized that he and the princess had not grown old at all, and that he had discovered the secret of eternal youth. But the Moon was jealous that two mortals should be eternally as youthful as herself. 'Even the sun grows old,' the Moon said to herself, 'for every

evening he grows old and red and ugly.' So the Moon waited for an opportunity to steal the wonderful pestle.

One day it chanced that the pestle became wet and covered with mildew. So the crown prince put it in the sun to dry, and he sat watching it. 'My lord,' protested the princess, 'it is so unseemly of a prince to be drying an old pestle in the sun and to sit watching it. Surely you can leave your soldiers to guard it.' She was so persistent that the crown prince gave way in the end. 'But I can't trust anybody to guard it, except my faithful Putrid,' he said. So Master Putrid sat and watched over the pestle. The Moon saw her chance and came down from the sky to steal the pestle. As it was broad daylight the Moon with her faint light was invisible to the faithful Putrid, who, however, smelt an intruder, and looked puzzled. The Moon picked up the pestle and ran off with it. The dog Putrid gave chase, led by the smell of the pestle which was stronger than the scent of the Moon.

From that day onward, the dog has been continually chasing the Moon. At night he can see the Moon, but during the day Putrid relies on the smell of the pestle to continue the chase. Because he is always inhaling the smell of the

pestle, the dog has become eternally youthful and immortal. Sometimes he catches the Moon and, putting her in his mouth, tries to swallow her; but she is too big for the little dog's throat and, however hard he tries, he cannot swallow her; in the end, he vomits out the Moon. Then the chase begins anew. Thus the chase goes on for ever. So when there is an eclipse of the Moon, the Burmese say, 'The Moon is caught by Master Putrid,' and when the eclipse is over, they say, 'The Moon has been vomited out.'

10. THE THREE DRAGON EGGS

IN the hills of Northern Burma there once lived a *Naga*-princess. She was very beautiful, and the sun-god fell in love with her. So he came down from the sky, and lived with her for some time. Then he returned to the sky. Later, the dragon-princess gave birth to three eggs, and she carefully looked after them. When the eggs were nearly hatched, she called the crow to her and asked him to go and tell the sun-god that his three children would soon be hatched. At that time the crow was snow-white in colour. The crow flew to the sun-god, and gave him the message. The sun-god brought out a ruby, which was worth a kingdom, from among his

treasures and said to the crow, 'Tell my beloved that I cannot come and see the children. But give her this ruby, and ask her to buy a kingdom with it, so that my children can rule over it.' Then the sun-god wrapped up the ruby in a piece of cloth, and gave it to the crow, who flew towards the Northern Hills of Burma, with the bundle in his beak.

On the way the crow saw a caravan of five hundred merchants. The merchants were having their breakfast, and hundreds of birds were hopping about near by, gobbling up the morsels of food thrown to them by the merchants. The crow felt hungry, and alighted not far away. After hiding his bundle under a bush, he joined the other birds. One of the merchants saw the crow hiding the bundle, and he stole towards the bush without letting the crow see him. He found the ruby in the bundle, and took the jewel, replacing it with a piece of cow-dung. The crow after having his fill, picked up the bundle and, without realizing that the ruby had been stolen, flew on to the dragon-princess. The princess received the message and the bundle in great joy, but her joy soon turned to sorrow when she found only a piece of cow-dung in the bundle. She died soon after of a broken heart. When the sun-god

learnt of the tragedy later, he scorched the feathers of the crow as punishment for losing the ruby. Since that time the crow has been black in colour.

The eggs lay neglected for many days and they did not hatch as there was no mother to look after them. When the rains came, the eggs were washed into the Irrawaddy, and they floated down the great river. When they reached Mogok one of the eggs struck against a rock and broke and countless numbers of rubies fell out of it. That is why there are rubies at Mogok. When the two remaining eggs reached Middle Burma one egg struck against a rock, and a tiger came out of the broken egg. The last egg reached Lower Burma, where it struck against a rock and a crocodile came out. So the tigers and the crocodiles of the present day are descendants of the tiger and the crocodile who were the children of the dragon-princess and the sun-god.

III. HUMOROUS TALES

I. THE DRUNKARD AND THE
OPIUM-EATER

ONCE in a village there lived a Drunkard and an Opium-eater. Both outcasts of society, they became fast friends. Having no house of their own, they spent their time in the various rest-houses of the village. But they avoided one particular rest-house, namely the one at the cemetery, for all believed that it was the meeting place of the ghosts of the village every night. One evening, however, the Drunkard was more intoxicated than usual and, in spite of the entreaties and warnings of his friend the Opium-eater, he went to spend the night at the cemetery rest-house, taking with him many pots of toddy. He reached the rest-house and sat drinking. As he became more and more intoxicated he became bolder, and his mind more alert. He did not feel sleepy at all.

About midnight two or three ghosts came in but, before they could suspect that he was a human being, the Drunkard calmly said, 'Hello, fellows, you are late today, or am I early?' Other ghosts came in until the rest-house was absolutely full. One of the ghosts then looked round and said, 'I smell human flesh. I suspect the presence of a stranger.'

'Why not count us,' suggested another ghost.

The Drunkard at once stood up and shouted, 'One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. All correct, all correct.'

The ghosts believed him, and settled down to talk about various matters. 'Do you know, gentlemen,' one talkative ghost said, 'that underneath where I am sitting, there lie buried seven pots of gold?' The Drunkard carefully noted where the speaker was sitting. The talk went on until dawn, when the ghosts went away. The Drunkard dug up the seven pots of gold and became very rich. He bought a house, and lived in luxury with his friend the Opium-eater.

The Opium-eater, however, was not satisfied, and he wanted to have seven pots of gold also. So he prevailed upon his friend the Drunkard to tell him the secret of how he found the pots of gold. When the Opium-eater had listened to his friend's story, he decided to go and spend the night at the rest-house at the cemetery. He duly went there but, as he was full of opium, he became very sleepy, and when some ghosts came into the rest-house at midnight he was half-asleep. The ghosts looked at him with suspicion. Other ghosts came in, until the rest-house was absolutely full. One ghost said that

as he could smell human flesh, he suspected the presence of a human being among them. Another ghost reminded the company of how some nights before a human being had been present at their meeting, and had run off with some pots of gold after listening to their talk.

A third ghost stood up and started to count the company. All the time the Opium-eater was too sleepy to do anything to prevent his presence from being discovered. The ghost finished counting, and reported that there was one extra. Those ghosts who had suspected the Opium-eater from the beginning, seized hold of him and carefully scrutinized him. When they saw that he was a human being, they pulled his nose until it became full three yards long. Then all the ghosts left the rest-house without saying anything more.

The next morning the Drunkard went to look for his friend at the rest-house and found him half dead with fear. The Drunkard helped the Opium-eater to his feet, and took him home. As the two friends walked through the village, all the villagers roared with laughter to see the three-yard long nose of the Opium-eater. 'Friend,' consoled the Drunkard, 'I will go to night, and find out the cure for your long nose.' When night came the Drunkard went to the

rest-house, after fortifying himself with many pots of toddy. He waited until two or three ghosts came in. Then he said cheerfully, 'Hello, you fellows, I came early hoping to find a human being in the rest-house again. Last night I had no fun at all, for you people crowded round him and gave me no chance to get at his nose. The ghosts laughed, and never suspected him. When the ghosts had all assembled, one ghost suggested that the company be carefully counted, as he could smell human flesh. But the Drunkard, alert as ever, stood up and shouted, 'One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. All correct, all correct.' The ghosts believed him, and started to talk. 'By the way,' said the Drunkard during a lull in the conversation, 'we did have great fun last night with that fellow's nose. Out of sheer curiosity, I want to know whether that nose will ever be the right length again.'

'Yes,' answered a wise-looking ghost, 'provided, of course, that the right remedy is applied. If the fellow touches the tip of his nose with a pestle, the nose will shrink half an inch and, if he does that repeatedly, it will be the right length again.' The Drunkard changed the conversation. When the ghosts had gone away with the coming of dawn, the Drunkard

returned to his friend the Opium-eater and told him the glad news. The Opium-eater used the pestle with due care and deliberation, in case his nose should become too short, and at last it was the right size again.

2. THE OPIUM-EATER AND THE FOUR OGRES

ONCE four ogres came to a rest-house in a village and ate up all the travellers who were sleeping there. Since that time, no one was ever bold enough to enter the rest-house, and it remained empty for a long time.

There was an Opium-eater in the village, and he was so lazy that he had no regular work. He moved softly, spoke softly, and was considered to be timid and cowardly. And he was always half-asleep. One evening he ran out of opium, and had no money even to buy a few grains. So he went round the village, boasting that he was the bravest man in it, until the young bloods of the village became annoyed and challenged him to spend the night at the rest-house. 'Gladly will I do that,' replied the Opium-eater, 'provided that you fill up my opium pipe, and also give me my dinner.' His pipe was duly filled, and he was given a bundle

containing one fried lobster, one boiled egg, a bamboo-tube-cake, and a pancake. He was then escorted to the rest-house by the young men, and left there.

The four ogres came into the rest-house at midnight, and they were surprised to find a human being in it. They came in with noisy footsteps, but the Opium-eater was so engrossed in his pipe that he did not hear anything. The ogres sat round the Opium-eater and rolled their big eyes to frighten him, but he did not see them as his eyes were closed in the ecstasy of opium. The ogres became a little nervous of this human being who took no notice of their presence. They became more frightened as they looked at him carefully for they thought that he was eating fire. They did not know whether to eat him up or to run away. Fascinated, they watched him.

The Opium-eater now felt hungry and, without opening his eyes, he opened the bundle. 'What have we got here?' he asked himself feeling the food with his hands. First of all he felt the lobster. 'Master Whiskers, Master Whiskers, I am glad to have you here,' he addressed the lobster. But the first ogre's name happened to be Master Whiskers, for his chin was covered with hair; and he was sore afraid.

Then the Opium-eater felt the egg, and said, 'Master Bald, Master Bald, I am glad to have you here.' The second ogre's name happened to be Master Bald, for he had no hair on his head or chin; and he was sore afraid. Then the Opium-eater felt the bamboo-tube cake, and said 'Master Lanky, Master Lanky, I am glad to have you here.' The third ogre's name happened to be Master Lanky, for his body was thin and long; and he was sore afraid. Then the Opium-eater felt the pan-cake, and said, 'Master Round, Master Round, I am so glad to have you here.' The fourth ogre's name happened to be Master Round, for he was short and fat and round; and he was sore afraid. Then the Opium-eater said to himself, 'First, I will eat the Whiskers. Then I will eat the Bald. Then I will eat the Lanky. And I will finish off with the Round.' At this the four ogres knelt down before the Opium-eater and begged for their lives. The Opium-eater now opened his eyes and saw them but he thought that they were asking for the cakes. So he said, 'No, no, I must eat for I am hungry.'

'My Lord,' pleaded the ogres, 'please let us go and we will give you the seven pots of gold which are buried underneath the rest-house stairs.'

The Opium-eater now realized that they were pleading for their lives and said, 'All right. Bring the gold pots here.' The four ogres dug up the pots and gave them to the Opium-eater, who told them that they were free to go. The ogres went away, and they never came to the rest-house again. As for the Opium-eater he became very rich and lived in great luxury.

3. THE FOUR YOUNG MEN

In a village there lived four young men, and they could make up strange and impossible tales. One day they espied a traveller resting in the rest-house outside the village and he was wearing fine clothes. The young men conspired to cheat him of his fine clothes. So they went to the traveller and engaged him in conversation. After some time one of the young men suggested, 'Let us make a bet. Let each of us tell his most wonderful adventure and any one doubting the truth of the story shall become the slave of the narrator.' When the traveller agreed to the suggestion the young men smiled to themselves thinking the traveller to be an old fool. They did not suspect that the traveller could tell impossible stories and, even if he could, they merely had to say that they believed

his story. On the other hand, they expected that as their stories would be so strange and impossible the traveller would forget himself and express his doubt as to the truth of the stories. Of course they did not really mean to make him their slave, but they meant to claim the clothes of the traveller, as a master owned not only the person of a slave but also his property. The young men went back to the village, and brought back the headman to act as a judge over their bet.

The first young man now narrated his wonderful adventure. 'When I was in my mother's womb my mother asked my father to pluck some plums from the tree in front of our house, but my father replied that the tree was too high for him to climb. My mother asked my brothers, but they gave the same answer. I could not bear to see my poor mother disappointed over her desire to eat a few plums, so I slipped out and climbed the tree. I plucked some plums and wrapped them in my jacket. Then I left the plums wrapped in the jacket in the kitchen, and re-entered my mother's womb. Nobody guessed how the plums came to be there, but my mother was able to eat some plums. As there were many plums left over after my mother had eaten, she gave seven

plums each to all the inmates of the house and to all the neighbours. Still there were many plums left over, so my mother piled them in front of the door and, do you know, the door could not be seen from the street, so high was the pile of plums! The first young man looked at the traveller hoping that he would express some doubt as to the truth of the story, but the traveller merely nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The other three men also nodded their heads.

Now it was the second young man's turn, and he said: 'When I was a week old I took a stroll in the forest, and saw a big tamarind tree with ripe tamarinds. I climbed up the tree swiftly as I felt so hungry. When I had eaten my fill, I felt so heavy and sleepy that I could not climb down. So I went back to the village and, bringing a ladder, I propped it against the tree. Then I came down by the ladder. It was really fortunate that I found a ladder in the village, otherwise I would still be up that tamarind tree.' The second young man looked expectantly at the traveller, who however, nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The other three young men also nodded their heads.

The third young man now narrated his

wonderful adventure. 'When I was of the ripe age of one year I chased what I thought to be a rabbit into a bush, but when I crawled into the bush I found that it was really a tiger. The animal opened his mouth wide, meaning to swallow me. I protested that it was grossly unfair of him, for I was looking for a rabbit and not for a tiger. But the tiger took no notice of my protest, and came nearer with his big mouth open. So I caught hold of his upper jaw with my left arm, and gave a jerk. To my surprise, the huge animal broke into two and died.' The third young man looked expectantly at the traveller who, however, merely nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The other three young men also nodded their heads.

The fourth young man then narrated his adventure. 'Last year I went fishing in a boat but I could not catch a single fish. I asked other fishermen, and they said that they had not caught a single fish either. So, deciding to investigate what was happening at the bottom of the river, I jumped out of my boat and dived. After about three days I touched bottom, and I discovered that a fish as huge as a mountain was eating up all the other fishes. I killed the fish with one blow of my fist. By that time I was feeling so hungry that I decided to eat it

then and there. So I lit a fire and, after roasting the fish, ate it at one sitting. Then I floated back to the surface and regained my boat, none the worse for my little excursion to the bottom of the river.' The fourth young man looked expectantly at the traveller, who merely nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The other three young men nodded their heads also.

The traveller now told his adventure. 'Some years ago I had a cotton farm. One cotton tree was unusually big, and was bright red in colour. For a long time it had no leaf or branch, but four branches later appeared. The branches had no leaves but they had a fruit each. I plucked off the four fruits and, when I cut them open, a young man jumped out from each fruit. As they came from my cotton tree they were legally my slaves, and I made them work on my farm. But, being lazy fellows, they ran away after a few weeks. Since that time I have been travelling all over the country in search of them and only now have I found them. Young fellows, you know very well that you are my long-lost slaves. Come back to my farm with me now.'

The four young men hung down their heads in mortification, for they were in a hopeless

position; if they should say that they believed the story, it would amount to an admission that they were the traveller's long-lost slaves. But on the other hand, if they should say that they did not believe the story, they would become his slaves according to the bet. The headman asked the young men three times to indicate whether they believed the traveller's story or not but, as they remained motionless and speechless with downcast eyes, he declared that the traveller had won the bet. The traveller, however, was magnanimous. 'The clothes that you are wearing belong to me,' he said, 'for you are my slaves. Take them off and give them to me. After that I will give you your freedom.' So the young men had to surrender their clothes to him, and the traveller went away, shouldering the bundle of clothes that he had won by his wonderful story telling.

4. THE FOUR DEAF PEOPLE

ONCE there lived a deaf little novice in a monastery. One day the abbot said to him: 'Go to the village and ask for an offering of some tobacco.' The little novice thought that he was being asked to get some sauce.

The little novice went to the village and saw

a deaf little girl working at her loom in front of her house. 'Lay-woman,' said the novice, 'please make an offering of sauce to our monastery.'

'My weaving reed is of three hundred and twenty divisions,' replied the little girl.

'No need to abuse me,' said the novice. 'If you are busy, I will get it myself.' So he walked into the kitchen, and, taking some sauce out of the pot, he returned to the monastery.

The little girl went running to her mother who was washing some clothes and said, 'Mother, mother, please go and report to the abbot about his rude little novice. He came and asked me about my weaving reed and then, suddenly rushing into the kitchen ran off with some sauce.'

'You naughty little girl,' replied the mother who was also deaf, 'you are very young to think about marriage. I shall get you a husband only when you are old enough.' The little girl went back to her loom and the mother went on with her washing.

After some minutes of deep thought, the mother decided that the matter was important enough to be reported to her husband. So she ran to her husband who was making baskets. 'Husband, husband,' she shouted, 'our daughter is getting ideas into her head. She has just asked me to get her a husband although she is but a kid.

I'm afraid you will have to beat her.'

The husband, who was also deaf, gave her a tolerant smile, and replied, 'You shouldn't have argued, for you are mistaken. Of course all winnowing sieves are round; only baskets for putting paddy in are square.'

5. MASTER CROOKED AND MASTER TWISTED

SAID Master Crooked to Master Twisted: 'Let us earn some money by a trick.' So they went to a village and, after stealing a bullock, hid it away. When the owner wandered all over the village looking for the lost bullock Master Crooked said to him: 'My master, the great fortune-teller Twisted has newly arrived in the village. He is now staying in the village rest-house. Why not consult him?'

So the owner went and consulted Twisted who, after pretending to look at his books, said: 'Go due east from this rest-house until you come to a big mango tree. Then turn to the right and go until you come to a big tamarind tree. Then go due north until you come to a big banyan tree. If you find your bullock there, give me my consultation fee of ten silver coins. If you do not find it, then I am a mountebank, and do not

give me any fee.' The owner went to the directed place, and of course the bullock was there. The owner gave ten silver coins to Twisted in gratitude.

Crooked and Twisted were just making ready to leave the rest-house when the village headman arrived. 'I want to consult the great master astrologer,' said the headman, 'whose wonderful prediction about the missing bullock is the subject of all talk in the village. My gold betel-box was stolen last night. Will you please find it for me?'

'The stars are not favourable for consultation at present,' replied Twisted. 'Please come in the morning, and I will tell you where to find the betel-box.'

When the headman had gone Twisted suggested to his companion that they should run away at once, but Crooked pointed out that the whole village would chase them if they were seen running away. 'Let us wait until night has fallen,' he suggested. When night fell Twisted said, 'Let us go now,' but Crooked replied, 'Let us wait for the moon.' Now it happened that the thief who stole the golden betel-box was a fellow named Luck and in the darkness he came stealthily to the rest-house, and listened from beneath the floor to find out whether the for-

tune-teller had learnt the truth from the stars. Twisted said to Crooked, 'Why did you ever make me start this game? Now I have to run away as if I were a common thief, yes, a thief,' and Crooked replied, 'Do not blame me. Blame luck! Blame luck!' The thief from underneath the floor heard only the words 'common thief' and 'blame luck' and thought that they were speaking about him; so, trembling with fear, he said, 'Master Astrologer, I am the unfortunate Luck who stole the betel-box. I confess that I buried the betel-box underneath the stairs of the cemetery rest-house. Please do not give me away to the headman.'

'All right, Luck,' replied Twisted, 'you may go now.' Luck went away gratefully. The next morning when the headman came, Twisted was able to tell him where he would find the lost betel-box. The headman found it and gave Twisted one hundred silver coins as consultation fee. He also took Crooked and Twisted to his house for breakfast.

Just as Crooked and Twisted were saying adieu to the headman, a king's messenger arrived, and gave the headman the following information. A fleet of seven merchant ships filled to the brim with jewels had arrived at the king's city that morning, and the merchant who owned

the ships had challenged the king to a bet. He had a small iron box with him, and he said to the king: 'If, on the seventh day from now, any astrologer in your kingdom can tell what is inside this small box, I will give you these seven ships with all their treasure. But if none of your astrologers can tell correctly, you must surrender me your kingdom.' The king accepted the bet, thinking that it would be an easy matter for the court astrologer, but the court astrologer had confessed his inability to say what the box contained. So the king had sent messengers all over the kingdom to find a master astrologer.

The headman, after listening to the messenger's tale, said joyfully, 'Take Master Twisted to the king. He will surely be able to tell what the box contains.'

So Crooked and Twisted had to go along with the messenger to the king. Twisted assured the king that he would be able to tell what the box contained on the appointed day. The king was overjoyed, and gave Twisted a fine house with many servants and wonderful food.

The two cheats enjoyed themselves to the full and, on the night before the appointed day, Crooked said to Twisted, 'We have lived royally, and we have enjoyed ourselves. We will not run away nor

will we face disgrace tomorrow. Let us go and drown ourselves in the sea.'

'But we can swim,' protested Twisted, who did not quite like the idea of committing suicide.

'We will swim out to sea,' exclaimed Crooked 'and we will swim on and on until we are exhausted. Then we shall drown.' So the two went and jumped into the sea.

As they swam past one of the seven treasure ships they heard a child's voice saying, 'Grandfather, you are the master merchant's cook, and surely you know the secret.'

An old man's voice replied, 'Child, why do you want to know what does not concern you?'

'I want to know, I want to know,' said the child petulantly. 'I will not go to bed until you tell me.'

'You naughty child,' said the grandfather. But the child went on asking, 'Please tell me, please tell me.' At last the grandfather gave in. 'Listen, child,' said he, 'inside the iron box there is a brass box; inside the brass box, there is a silver box; inside the silver box, there is a gold box; inside the gold box, there is an ounce of the choicest perfume. Now, go to bed.' Crooked and Twisted, who had been listening to the conversation, silently congratulated each other and swam back to the shore. Next morning,

needless to say, Twisted was able to tell correctly what the iron box contained, and the merchant had to surrender his treasure ships to the king. Twisted was appointed court astrologer on the spot, and was taken back to the palace by the king for a chat.

While Twisted was away at the palace, Crooked went back to their fine house and set fire to it. He also deliberately scorched his hands. He then rushed to the palace and, prostrating himself before Twisted, he said, 'Forgive me, my master, for all your books are burnt. A fire broke out in your house, and all my efforts to save your precious books were of no avail.' Twisted, on hearing the news, shed tears, beating his breast and tearing his hair. 'Oh, oh,' he cried, 'how can I make any more predictions, for all my books are lost!' The king soothed him with kind words, and appointed him a minister of state to console him. The king then looked at the scorched hands of Crooked, and said, 'Such true and faithful servants are rare. You risked your life for the books of your master. I need men like you,' and he made Crooked commander of the royal armies.

