LANG ANDREW

THE ORANGE FAIRY BOOK

Andrew Lang

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Содержание

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Preface

The children who read fairy books, or have fairy books read to them, do not read prefaces, and the parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, who give fairy books to their daughters, nieces, and cousins, leave prefaces unread. For whom, then, are prefaces written? When an author publishes a book 'out of his own head,' he writes the preface for his own pleasure. After reading over his book in print – to make sure that all the 'u's' are not printed as 'n's,' and all the 'n's' as 'u's' in the proper names – then the author says, mildly, in his preface, what he thinks about his own book, and what he means it to prove – if he means it to prove anything – and why it is not a better book than it is. But, perhaps, nobody reads prefaces except other authors; and critics, who hope that they will find enough in the preface to enable them to do without reading any of the book.

This appears to be the philosophy of prefaces in general, and perhaps authors might be more daring and candid than they are with advantage, and write regular criticisms of their own books in their prefaces, for nobody can be so good a critic of himself as the author – if he has a sense of humour. If he has not, the less he says in his preface the better.

These Fairy Books, however, are not written by the Editor, as he has often explained, 'out of his own head.' The stories are taken from those told by grannies to grandchildren in many countries and in many languages – French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Gaelic, Icelandic, Cherokee, African, Indian, Australian, Slavonic, Eskimo, and what not. The stories are not literal, or word by word translations, but have been altered in many ways to make them suitable for children. Much has been left out in places, and the narrative has been broken up into conversations, the characters telling each other how matters stand, and speaking for themselves, as children, and some older people, prefer them to do. In many tales, fairly cruel and savage deeds are done, and these have been softened down as much as possible; though it is impossible, even if it were desirable, to conceal the circumstance that popular stories were never intended to be tracts and nothing else. Though they usually take the side of courage and kindness, and the virtues in general, the old story-tellers admire successful cunning as much as Homer does in the Odyssey. At least, if the cunning hero, human or animal, is the weaker, like Odysseus, Brer Rabbit, and many others, the story-teller sees little in intellect but superior cunning, by which tiny Jack gets the better of the giants. In the fairy tales of no country are 'improper' incidents common, which is to the credit of human nature, as they were obviously composed mainly for children. It is not difficult to get rid of this element when it does occur in popular tales.

The old puzzle remains a puzzle – why do the stories of the remotest people so closely resemble each other? Of course, in the immeasurable past, they have been carried about by conquering races, and learned by conquering races from vanquished peoples. Slaves carried far from home brought their stories with them into captivity. Wanderers, travellers, shipwrecked men, merchants, and wives stolen from alien tribes have diffused the stories; gipsies and Jews have passed them about; Roman soldiers of many different races, moved here and there about the Empire, have trafficked in them. From the remotest days men have been wanderers, and wherever they went their stories accompanied them. The slave trade might take a Greek to Persia, a Persian to Greece; an Egyptian woman to Phoenicia; a Babylonian to Egypt; a Scandinavian child might be carried with the amber from the Baltic to the Adriatic; or a Sidonian to Ophir, wherever Ophir may have been; while the Portuguese may have borne their tales to South Africa, or to Asia, and thence brought back other tales to Egypt. The stories wandered wherever the Buddhist missionaries went, and the earliest French voyageurs told them to

the Red Indians. These facts help to account for the sameness of the stories everywhere; and the uniformity of human fancy in early societies must be the cause of many other resemblances.

In this volume there are stories from the natives of Rhodesia, collected by Mr. Fairbridge, who speaks the native language, and one is brought by Mr. Cripps from another part of Africa, Uganda. Three tales from the Punjaub were collected and translated by Major Campbell. Various savage tales, which needed a good deal of editing, are derived from the learned pages of the 'Journal of the Anthropological Institute.' With these exceptions, and 'The Magic Book,' translated by Mrs. Pedersen, from 'Eventyr fra Jylland,' by Mr. Ewald Tang Kristensen (Stories from Jutland), all the tales have been done, from various sources, by Mrs. Lang, who has modified, where it seemed desirable, all the narratives.

The Story of the Hero Makoma

From the Senna (Oral Tradition)

Once upon a time, at the town of Senna on the banks of the Zambesi, was born a child. He was not like other children, for he was very tall and strong; over his shoulder he carried a big sack, and in his hand an iron hammer. He could also speak like a grown man, but usually he was very silent.

One day his mother said to him: 'My child, by what name shall we know you?'

And he answered: 'Call all the head men of Senna here to the river's bank.' And his mother called the head men of the town, and when they had come he led them down to a deep black pool in the river where all the fierce crocodiles lived.

'O great men!' he said, while they all listened, 'which of you will leap into the pool and overcome the crocodiles?' But no one would come forward. So he turned and sprang into the water and disappeared.

The people held their breath, for they thought: 'Surely the boy is bewitched and throws away his life, for the crocodiles will eat him!' Then suddenly the ground trembled, and the pool, heaving and swirling, became red with blood, and presently the boy rising to the surface swam on shore.

But he was no longer just a boy! He was stronger than any man and very tall and handsome, so that the people shouted with gladness when they saw him.

'Now, O my people!' he cried, waving his hand, 'you know my name – I am Makoma, "the Greater"; for have I not slain the crocodiles into the pool where none would venture?'

Then he said to his mother: 'Rest gently, my mother, for I go to make a home for myself and become a hero.' Then, entering his hut he took Nu-endo, his iron hammer, and throwing the sack over his shoulder, he went away.

Makoma crossed the Zambesi, and for many moons he wandered towards the north and west until he came to a very hilly country where, one day, he met a huge giant making mountains.

'Greeting,' shouted Makoma, 'you are you?'

'I am Chi-eswa-mapiri, who makes the mountains,' answered the giant; 'and who are you?'

'I am Makoma, which signifies "greater,"' answered he.

'Greater than who?' asked the giant.

'Greater than you!' answered Makoma.

The giant gave a roar and rushed upon him. Makoma said nothing, but swinging his great hammer, Nu-endo, he struck the giant upon the head.

He struck him so hard a blow that the giant shrank into quite a little man, who fell upon his knees saying: 'You are indeed greater than I, O Makoma; take me with you to be your slave!' So Makoma picked him up and dropped him into the sack that he carried upon his back.

He was greater than ever now, for all the giant's strength had gone into him; and he resumed his journey, carrying his burden with as little difficulty as an eagle might carry a hare.

Before long he came to a country broken up with huge stones and immense clods of earth. Looking over one of the heaps he saw a giant wrapped in dust dragging out the very earth and hurling it in handfuls on either side of him.

'Who are you,' cried Makoma, 'that pulls up the earth in this way?'

'I am Chi-dubula-taka,' said he, 'and I am making the river-beds.'

'Do you know who I am?' said Makoma. 'I am he that is called "greater"!'

'Greater than who?' thundered the giant.

'Greater than you!' answered Makoma.

With a shout, Chi-dubula-taka seized a great clod of earth and launched it at Makoma. But the hero had his sack held over his left arm and the stones and earth fell harmlessly upon it, and, tightly gripping his iron hammer, he rushed in and struck the giant to the ground. Chi-dubula-taka grovelled before him, all the while growing smaller and smaller; and when he had become a convenient size Makoma picked him up and put him into the sack beside Chi-eswa-mapiri.

He went on his way even greater than before, as all the river-maker's power had become his; and at last he came to a forest of bao-babs and thorn trees. He was astonished at their size, for every one was full grown and larger than any trees he had ever seen, and close by he saw Chi-gwisa-miti, the giant who was planting the forest.

Chi-gwisa-miti was taller than either of his brothers, but Makoma was not afraid, and called out to him: 'Who are you, O Big One?'

'I,' said the giant, 'am Chi-gwisa-miti, and I am planting these bao-babs and thorns as food for my children the elephants.'

'Leave off!' shouted the hero, 'for I am Makoma, and would like to exchange a blow with thee!'

The giant, plucking up a monster bao-bab by the roots, struck heavily at Makoma; but the hero sprang aside, and as the weapon sank deep into the soft earth, whirled Nu-endo the hammer round his head and felled the giant with one blow.

So terrible was the stroke that Chi-gwisa-miti shrivelled up as the other giants had done; and when he had got back his breath he begged Makoma to take him as his servant. 'For,' said he, 'it is honourable to serve a man so great as thou.'

Makoma, after placing him in his sack, proceeded upon his journey, and travelling for many days he at last reached a country so barren and rocky that not a single living thing grew upon it – everywhere reigned grim desolation. And in the midst of this dead region he found a man eating fire.

'What are you doing?' demanded Makoma.

'I am eating fire,' answered the man, laughing; 'and my name is Chi-idea-moto, for I am the flame-spirit, and can waste and destroy what I like.'

'You are wrong,' said Makoma; 'for I am Makoma, who is "greater" than you – and you cannot destroy me!'

The fire-eater laughed again, and blew a flame at Makoma. But the hero sprang behind a rock – just in time, for the ground upon which he had been standing was turned to molten glass, like an overbaked pot, by the heat of the flame-spirit's breath.

Then the hero flung his iron hammer at Chi-idea-moto, and, striking him, it knocked him helpless; so Makoma placed him in the sack, Woro-nowu, with the other great men that he had overcome.

And now, truly, Makoma was a very great hero; for he had the strength to make hills, the industry to lead rivers over dry wastes, foresight and wisdom in planting trees, and the power of producing fire when he wished.

Wandering on he arrived one day at a great plain, well watered and full of game; and in the very middle of it, close to a large river, was a grassy spot, very pleasant to make a home upon.

Makoma was so delighted with the little meadow that he sat down under a large tree and removing the sack from his shoulder, took out all the giants and set them before him. 'My friends,' said he, 'I have travelled far and am weary. Is not this such a place as would suit a hero for his home? Let us then go, to-morrow, to bring in timber to make a kraal.'

So the next day Makoma and the giants set out to get poles to build the kraal, leaving only Chi-eswa-mapiri to look after the place and cook some venison which they had killed. In the evening, when they returned, they found the giant helpless and tied to a tree by one enormous hair!

'How is it,' said Makoma, astonished, 'that we find you thus bound and helpless?'

'O Chief,' answered Chi-eswa-mapiri, 'at mid-day a man came out of the river; he was of immense statue, and his grey moustaches were of such length that I could not see where they ended!

He demanded of me "Who is thy master?" And I answered: "Makoma, the greatest of heroes." Then the man seized me, and pulling a hair from his moustache, tied me to this tree – even as you see me.'

Makoma was very wroth, but he said nothing, and drawing his finger-nail across the hair (which was as thick and strong as palm rope) cut it, and set free the mountain-maker.

The three following days exactly the same thing happened, only each time with a different one of the party; and on the fourth day Makoma stayed in camp when the others went to cut poles, saying that he would see for himself what sort of man this was that lived in the river and whose moustaches were so long that they extended beyond men's sight.

So when the giants had gone he swept and tidied the camp and put some venison on the fire to roast. At midday, when the sun was right overhead, he heard a rumbling noise from the river, and looking up he saw the head and shoulders of an enormous man emerging from it. And behold! right down the river-bed and up the river-bed, till they faded into the blue distance, stretched the giant's grey moustaches!

'Who are you?' bellowed the giant, as soon as he was out of the water.

'I am he that is called Makoma,' answered the hero; 'and, before I slay thee, tell me also what is thy name and what thou doest in the river?'

'My name is Chin-debou Mau-giri,' said the giant. 'My home is in the river, for my moustache is the grey fever-mist that hangs above the water, and with which I bind all those that come unto me so that they die.'

'You cannot bind me!' shouted Makoma, rushing upon him and striking with his hammer. But the river giant was so slimy that the blow slid harmlessly off his green chest, and as Makoma stumbled and tried to regain his balance, the giant swung one of his long hairs around him and tripped him up.

For a moment Makoma was helpless, but remembering the power of the flame-spirit which had entered into him, he breathed a fiery breath upon the giant's hair and cut himself free.

As Chin-debou Mau-giri leaned forward to seize him the hero flung his sack Woronowu over the giant's slippery head, and gripping his iron hammer, struck him again; this time the blow alighted upon the dry sack and Chin-debou Mau-giri fell dead.

When the four giants returned at sunset with the poles, they rejoiced to find that Makoma had overcome the fever-spirit, and they feasted on the roast venison till far into the night; but in the morning, when they awoke, Makoma was already warming his hands to the fire, and his face was gloomy.

'In the darkness of the night, O my friends,' he said presently, 'the white spirits of my fathers came upon me and spoke, saying: "Get thee hence, Makoma, for thou shalt have no rest until thou hast found and fought with Sakatirina, who had five heads, and is very great and strong; so take leave of thy friends, for thou must go alone."'

Then the giants were very sad, and bewailed the loss of their hero; but Makoma comforted them, and gave back to each the gifts he had taken from them. Then bidding them 'Farewell,' he went on his way.

Makoma travelled far towards the west; over rough mountains and water-logged morasses, fording deep rivers, and tramping for days across dry deserts where most men would have died, until at length he arrived at a hut standing near some large peaks, and inside the hut were two beautiful women.

'Greeting!' said the hero. 'Is this the country of Sakatirina of five heads, whom I am seeking?'

'We greet you, O Great One!' answered the women. 'We are the wives of Sakatirina; your search is at an end, for there stands he whom you seek!' And they pointed to what Makoma had thought were two tall mountain peaks. 'Those are his legs,' they said; 'his body you cannot see, for it is hidden in the clouds.'

Makoma was astonished when he beheld how tall was the giant; but, nothing daunted, he went forward until he reached one of Sakatirina's legs, which he struck heavily with Nu-endo. Nothing

happened, so he hit again and then again until, presently, he heard a tired, far-away voice saying: 'Who is it that scratches my feet?'

And Makoma shouted as loud as he could, answering: 'It is I, Makoma, who is called "Greater"!' And he listened, but there was no answer.

Then Makoma collected all the dead brushwood and trees that he could find, and making an enormous pile round the giant's legs, set a light to it.

This time the giant spoke; his voice was very terrible, for it was the rumble of thunder in the clouds. 'Who is it,' he said, 'making that fire smoulder around my feet?'

'It is I, Makoma!' shouted the hero. 'And I have come from far away to see thee, O Sakatirina, for the spirits of my fathers bade me go seek and fight with thee, lest I should grow fat, and weary of myself.'

There was silence for a while, and then the giant spoke softly: 'It is good, O Makoma!' he said. 'For I too have grown weary. There is no man so great as I, therefore I am all alone. Guard thyself!' and bending suddenly he seized the hero in his hands and dashed him upon the ground. And lo! instead of death, Makoma had found life, for he sprang to his feet mightier in strength and stature than before, and rushing in he gripped the giant by the waist and wrestled with him.

Hour by hour they fought, and mountains rolled beneath their feet like pebbles in a flood; now Makoma would break away, and summoning up his strength, strike the giant with Nu-endo his iron hammer, and Sakatirina would pluck up the mountains and hurl them upon the hero, but neither one could slay the other. At last, upon the second day, they grappled so strongly that they could not break away; but their strength was failing, and, just as the sun was sinking, they fell together to the ground, insensible.

In the morning when they awoke, Mulimo the Great Spirit was standing by them; and he said: 'O Makoma and Sakatirina! Ye are heroes so great that no man may come against you. Therefore ye will leave the world and take up your home with me in the clouds.' And as he spake the heroes became invisible to the people of the Earth, and were no more seen among them.

The Magic Mirror

[Native Rhodesian Tale.]

From the Senna

A long, long while ago, before ever the White Men were seen in Senna, there lived a man called Gopani-Kufa.

One day, as he was out hunting, he came upon a strange sight. An enormous python had caught an antelope and coiled itself around it; the antelope, striking out in despair with its horns, had pinned the python's neck to a tree, and so deeply had its horns sunk in the soft wood that neither creature could get away.

'Help!' cried the antelope, 'for I was doing no harm, yet I have been caught, and would have been eaten, had I not defended myself.'

'Help me,' said the python, 'for I am Insato, King of all the Reptiles, and will reward you well!'

Gopani-Kufa considered for a moment, then stabbing the antelope with his assegai, he set the python free.

'I thank you,' said the python; 'come back here with the new moon, when I shall have eaten the antelope, and I will reward you as I promised.'

'Yes,' said the dying antelope, 'he will reward you, and lo! your reward shall be your own undoing!'

Gopani-Kufa went back to his kraal, and with the new moon he returned again to the spot where he had saved the python.

Insato was lying upon the ground, still sleepy from the effects of his huge meal, and when he saw the man he thanked him again, and said: 'Come with me now to Pita, which is my own country, and I will give you what you will of all my possessions.'

Gopani-Kufa at first was afraid, thinking of what the antelope had said, but finally he consented and followed Insato into the forest.

For several days they travelled, and at last they came to a hole leading deep into the earth. It was not very wide, but large enough to admit a man. 'Hold on to my tail,' said Insato, 'and I will go down first, drawing you after me.' The man did so, and Insato entered.

Down, down, down they went for days, all the while getting deeper and deeper into the earth, until at last the darkness ended and they dropped into a beautiful country; around them grew short green grass, on which browsed herds of cattle and sheep and goats. In the distance Gopani-Kufa saw a great collection of houses all square, built of stone and very tall, and their roofs were shining with gold and burnished iron.

Gopani-Kufa turned to Insato, but found, in the place of the python, a man, strong and handsome, with the great snake's skin wrapped round him for covering; and on his arms and neck were rings of pure gold.

The man smiled. 'I am Insato,' said he, 'but in my own country I take man's shape – even as you see me – for this is Pita, the land over which I am king.' He then took Gopani-Kufa by the hand and led him towards the town.

On the way they passed rivers in which men and women were bathing and fishing and boating; and farther on they came to gardens covered with heavy crops of rice and maize, and many other grains which Gopani-Kufa did not even know the name of. And as they passed, the people who were singing at their work in the fields, abandoned their labours and saluted Insato with delight, bringing also palm wine and green cocoanuts for refreshment, as to one returned from a long journey.

‘These are my children!’ said Insato, waving his hand towards the people. Gopani-Kufa was much astonished at all that he saw, but he said nothing. Presently they came to the town; everything here, too, was beautiful, and everything that a man might desire he could obtain. Even the grains of dust in the streets were of gold and silver.

Insato conducted Gopani-Kufa to the palace, and showing him his rooms, and the maidens who would wait upon him, told him that they would have a great feast that night, and on the morrow he might name his choice of the riches of Pita and it should be given him. Then he was away.

Now Gopani-Kufa had a wasp called Zengi-mizi. Zengi-mizi was not an ordinary wasp, for the spirit of the father of Gopani-Kufa had entered it, so that it was exceedingly wise. In times of doubt Gopani-Kufa always consulted the wasp as to what had better be done, so on this occasion he took it out of the little rush basket in which he carried it, saying: ‘Zengi-mizi, what gift shall I ask of Insato to-morrow when he would know the reward he shall bestow on me for saving his life?’

‘Biz-z-z,’ hummed Zengi-mizi, ‘ask him for Sipao the Mirror.’ And it flew back into its basket.

Gopani-Kufa was astonished at this answer; but knowing that the words of Zengi-mizi were true words, he determined to make the request. So that night they feasted, and on the morrow Insato came to Gopani-Kufa and, giving him greeting joyfully, he said:

‘Now, O my friend, name your choice amongst my possessions and you shall have it!’

‘O king!’ answered Gopani-Kufa, ‘out of all your possessions I will have the Mirror, Sipao.’

The king started. ‘O friend, Gopani-Kufa,’ he said, ‘ask anything but that! I did not think that you would request that which is most precious to me.’

‘Let me think over it again then, O king,’ said Gopani-Kufa, ‘and to-morrow I will let you know if I change my mind.’

But the king was still much troubled, fearing the loss of Sipao, for the mirror had magic powers, so that he who owned it had but to ask and his wish would be fulfilled; to it Insato owed all that he possessed.

As soon as the king left him, Gopani-Kufa again took Zengi-mizi, out of his basket. ‘Zengi-mizi,’ he said, ‘the king seems loth to grant my request for the Mirror – is there not some other thing of equal value for which I might ask?’

And the wasp answered: ‘There is nothing in the world, O Gopani-Kufa, which is of such value as this Mirror, for it is a Wishing Mirror, and accomplishes the desires of him who owns it. If the king hesitates, go to him the next day, and the day after, and in the end he will bestow the Mirror upon you, for you saved his life.’

And it was even so. For three days Gopani-Kufa returned the same answer to the king, and, at last, with tears in his eyes, Insato gave him the Mirror, which was of polished iron, saying: ‘Take Sipao, then, O Gopani-Kufa, and may thy wishes come true. Go back now to thine own country; Sipao will show you the way.’

Gopani-Kufa was greatly rejoiced, and, taking farewell of the king, said to the Mirror:

‘Sipao, Sipao, I wish to be back upon the Earth again!’

Instantly he found himself standing upon the upper earth; but, not knowing the spot, he said again to the Mirror:

‘Sipao, Sipao, I want the path to my own kraal!’

And behold! right before him lay the path!

When he arrived home he found his wife and daughter mourning for him, for they thought that he had been eaten by lions; but he comforted them, saying that while following a wounded antelope he had missed his way and had wandered for a long time before he had found the path again.

That night he asked Zengi-mizi, in whom sat the spirit of his father, what he had better ask Sipao for next?

‘Biz-z-z,’ said the wasp, ‘would you not like to be as great a chief as Insato?’

And Gopani-Kufa smiled, and took the Mirror and said to it:

‘Sipao, Sipao, I want a town as great as that of Insato, the King of Pita; and I wish to be chief over it!’

Then all along the banks of the Zambesi river, which flowed near by, sprang up streets of stone buildings, and their roofs shone with gold and burnished iron like those in Pita; and in the streets men and women were walking, and young boys were driving out the sheep and cattle to pasture; and from the river came shouts and laughter from the young men and maidens who had launched their canoes and were fishing. And when the people of the new town beheld Gopani-Kufa they rejoiced greatly and hailed him as chief.

Gopani-Kufa was now as powerful as Insato the King of the Reptiles had been, and he and his family moved into the palace that stood high above the other buildings right in the middle of the town. His wife was too astonished at all these wonders to ask any questions, but his daughter Shasasa kept begging him to tell her how he had suddenly become so great; so at last he revealed the whole secret, and even entrusted Sipao the Mirror to her care, saying:

‘It will be safer with you, my daughter, for you dwell apart; whereas men come to consult me on affairs of state, and the Mirror might be stolen.’

Then Shasasa took the Magic Mirror and hid it beneath her pillow, and after that for many years Gopani-Kufa ruled his people both well and wisely, so that all men loved him, and never once did he need to ask Sipao to grant him a wish.

Now it happened that, after many years, when the hair of Gopani-Kufa was turning grey with age, there came white men to that country. Up the Zambesi they came, and they fought long and fiercely with Gopani-Kufa; but, because of the power of the Magic Mirror, he beat them, and they fled to the sea-coast. Chief among them was one Rei, a man of much cunning, who sought to discover whence sprang Gopani-Kufa’s power. So one day he called to him a trusty servant named Butou, and said: ‘Go you to the town and find out for me what is the secret of its greatness.’

And Butou, dressing himself in rags, set out, and when he came to Gopani-Kufa’s town he asked for the chief; and the people took him into the presence of Gopani-Kufa. When the white man saw him he humbled himself, and said: ‘O Chief! take pity on me, for I have no home! When Rei marched against you I alone stood apart, for I knew that all the strength of the Zambesi lay in your hands, and because I would not fight against you he turned me forth into the forest to starve!’

And Gopani-Kufa believed the white man’s story, and he took him in and feasted him, and gave him a house.

In this way the end came. For the heart of Shasasa, the daughter of Gopani-Kufa, went forth to Butou the traitor, and from her he learnt the secret of the Magic Mirror. One night, when all the town slept, he felt beneath her pillow and, finding the Mirror, he stole it and fled back with it to Rei, the chief of the white men.

So it befell that, one day, as Gopani-Kufa was gazing up at the river from a window of the palace he again saw the war-canoes of the white men; and at the sight his spirit misgave him.

‘Shasasa! my daughter!’ he cried wildly, ‘go fetch me the mirror, for the white men are at hand.’

‘Woe is me, my father!’ she sobbed. ‘The Mirror is gone! For I loved Butou the traitor, and he has stolen Sipao from me!’

Then Gopani-Kufa calmed himself, and drew out Zengi-mizi from its rush basket.

‘O spirit of my father!’ he said, ‘what now shall I do?’

‘O Gopani-Kufa!’ hummed the wasp, ‘there is nothing now that can be done, for the words of the antelope which you slew are being fulfilled.’

‘Alas! I am an old man – I had forgotten!’ cried the chief. ‘The words of the antelope were true words – my reward shall be my undoing – they are being fulfilled!’

Then the white men fell upon the people of Gopani-Kufa and slew them together with the chief and his daughter Shasasa; and since then all the power of the Earth has rested in the hands of the white men, for they have in their possession Sipao, the Magic Mirror.

Story of the King Who Would See Paradise

Once upon a time there was king who, one day out hunting, came upon a fakeer in a lonely place in the mountains. The fakeer was seated on a little old bedstead reading the Koran, with his patched cloak thrown over his shoulders.

The king asked him what he was reading; and he said he was reading about Paradise, and praying that he might be worthy to enter there. Then they began to talk, and, by-and-bye, the king asked the fakeer if he could show him a glimpse of Paradise, for he found it very difficult to believe in what he could not see. The fakeer replied that he was asking a very difficult, and perhaps a very dangerous, thing; but that he would pray for him, and perhaps he might be able to do it; only he warned the king both against the dangers of his unbelief, and against the curiosity which prompted him to ask this thing. However, the king was not to be turned from his purpose, and he promised the fakeer always to provided him with food, if he, in return, would pray for him. To this the fakeer agreed, and so they parted.

Time went on, and the king always sent the old fakeer his food according to his promise; but, whenever he sent to ask him when he was going to show him Paradise, the fakeer always replied: 'Not yet, not yet!'

After a year or two had passed by, the king heard one day that the fakeer was very ill – indeed, he was believed to be dying. Instantly he hurried off himself, and found that it was really true, and that the fakeer was even then breathing his last. There and then the king besought him to remember his promise, and to show him a glimpse of Paradise. The dying fakeer replied that if the king would come to his funeral, and, when the grave was filled in, and everyone else was gone away, he would come and lay his hand upon the grave, he would keep his word, and show him a glimpse of Paradise. At the same time he implored the king not to do this thing, but to be content to see Paradise when God called him there. Still the king's curiosity was so aroused that he would not give way.

Accordingly, after the fakeer was dead, and had been buried, he stayed behind when all the rest went away; and then, when he was quite alone, he stepped forward, and laid his hand upon the grave! Instantly the ground opened, and the astonished king, peeping in, saw a flight of rough steps, and, at the bottom of them, the fakeer sitting, just as he used to sit, on his rickety bedstead, reading the Koran!

At first the king was so surprised and frightened that he could only stare; but the fakeer beckoned to him to come down, so, mustering up his courage, he boldly stepped down into the grave.

The fakeer rose, and, making a sign to the king to follow, walked a few paces along a dark passage. Then he stopped, turned solemnly to his companion, and, with a movement of his hand, drew aside as it were a heavy curtain, and revealed – what? No one knows what was there shown to the king, nor did he ever tell anyone; but, when the fakeer at length dropped the curtain, and the king turned to leave the place, he had had his glimpse of Paradise! Trembling in every limb, he staggered back along the passage, and stumbled up the steps out of the tomb into the fresh air again.

The dawn was breaking. It seemed odd to the king that he had been so long in the grave. It appeared but a few minutes ago that he had descended, passed along a few steps to the place where he had peeped beyond the veil, and returned again after perhaps five minutes of that wonderful view! And what WAS it he had seen? He racked his brains to remember, but he could not call to mind a single thing! How curious everything looked too! Why, his own city, which by now he was entering, seemed changed and strange to him! The sun was already up when he turned into the palace gate and entered the public durbar hall. It was full; a chamberlain came across and asked him why he sat unbidden in the king's presence. 'But I am the king!' he cried.

'What king?' said the chamberlain.

'The true king of this country,' said he indignantly.

Then the chamberlain went away, and spoke to the king who sat on the throne, and the old king heard words like ‘mad,’ ‘age,’ ‘compassion.’ Then the king on the throne called him to come forward, and, as he went, he caught sight of himself reflected in the polished steel shield of the bodyguard, and started back in horror! He was old, decrepit, dirty, and ragged! His long white beard and locks were unkempt, and straggled all over his chest and shoulders. Only one sign of royalty remained to him, and that was the signet ring upon his right hand. He dragged it off with shaking fingers and held it up to the king.

‘Tell me who I am,’ he cried; ‘there is my signet, who once sat where you sit – even yesterday!’

The king looked at him compassionately, and examined the signet with curiosity. Then he commanded, and they brought out dusty records and archives of the kingdom, and old coins of previous reigns, and compared them faithfully. At last the king turned to the old man, and said: ‘Old man, such a king as this whose signet thou hast, reigned seven hundred years ago; but he is said to have disappeared, none know whither; where got you the ring?’

Then the old man smote his breast, and cried out with a loud lamentation; for he understood that he, who was not content to wait patiently to see the Paradise of the faithful, had been judged already. And he turned and left the hall without a wor, and went into the jungle, where he lived for twenty-five years a life of prayer and and meditation, until at last the Angel of Death came to him, and mercifully released him, purged and purified through his punishment.

How Isuro the Rabbit Tricked Gudu

[A Pathan story told to Major Campbell.]

Far away in a hot country, where the forests are very thick and dark, and the rivers very swift and strong, there once lived a strange pair of friends. Now one of the friends was a big white rabbit named Isuro, and the other was a tall baboon called Gudu, and so fond were they of each other that they were seldom seen apart.

One day, when the sun was hotter even than usual, the rabbit awoke from his midday sleep, and saw Gudu the baboon standing beside him.

'Get up,' said Gudu; 'I am going courting, and you must come with me. So put some food in a bag, and sling it round your neck, for we may not be able to find anything to eat for a long while.'

Then the rabbit rubbed his eyes, and gathered a store of fresh green things from under the bushes, and told Gudu that he was ready for the journey.

They went on quite happily for some distance, and at last they came to a river with rocks scattered here and there across the stream.

'We can never jump those wide spaces if we are burdened with food,' said Gudu, 'we must throw it into the river, unless we wish to fall in ourselves.' And stooping down, unseen by Isuro, who was in front of him, Gudu picked up a big stone, and threw it into the water with a loud splash.

'It is your turn now,' he cried to Isuro. And with a heavy sigh, the rabbit unfastened his bag of food, which fell into the river.

The road on the other side led down an avenue of trees, and before they had gone very far Gudu opened the bag that lay hidden in the thick hair about his neck, and began to eat some delicious-looking fruit.

'Where did you get that from?' asked Isuro enviously.

'Oh, I found after all that I could get across the rocks quite easily, so it seemed a pity not to keep my bag,' answered Gudu.

'Well, as you tricked me into throwing away mine, you ought to let me share with you,' said Isuro. But Gudu pretended not to hear him, and strode along the path.

By-and-bye they entered a wood, and right in front of them was a tree so laden with fruit that its branches swept the ground. And some of the fruit was still green, and some yellow. The rabbit hopped forward with joy, for he was very hungry; but Gudu said to him: 'Pluck the green fruit, you will find it much the best. I will leave it all for you, as you have had no dinner, and take the yellow for myself.' So the rabbit took one of the green oranges and began to bite it, but its skin was so hard that he could hardly get his teeth through the rind.

'It does not taste at all nice,' he cried, screwing up his face; 'I would rather have one of the yellow ones.'

'No! no! I really could not allow that,' answered Gudu. 'They would only make you ill. Be content with the green fruit.' And as they were all he could get, Isuro was forced to put up with them.

After this had happened two or three times, Isuro at last had his eyes opened, and made up his mind that, whatever Gudu told him, he would do exactly the opposite. However, by this time they had reached the village where dwelt Gudu's future wife, and as they entered Gudu pointed to a clump of bushes, and said to Isuro: 'Whenever I am eating, and you hear me call out that my food has burnt me, run as fast as you can and gather some of those leaves that they may heal my mouth.'

The rabbit would have liked to ask him why he ate food that he knew would burn him, only he was afraid, and just nodded in reply; but when they had gone on a little further, he said to Gudu:

'I have dropped my needle; wait here a moment while I go and fetch it.'

'Be quick then,' answered Gudu, climbing into a tree. And the rabbit hastened back to the bushes, and gathered a quantity of the leaves, which he hid among his fur, 'For,' thought he, 'if I get them now I shall save myself the trouble of a walk by-and-by.'

When he had plucked as many as he wanted he returned to Gudu, and they went on together. The sun was almost setting by the time they reached their journey's end and being very tired they gladly sat down by a well. Then Gudu's betrothed, who had been watching for him, brought out a pitcher of water – which she poured over them to wash off the dust of the road – and two portions of food. But once again the rabbit's hopes were dashed to the ground, for Gudu said hastily:

'The custom of the village forbids you to eat till I have finished.' And Isuro did not know that Gudu was lying, and that he only wanted more food. So he saw hungrily looking on, waiting till his friend had had enough.

In a little while Gudu screamed loudly: 'I am burnt! I am burnt!' though he was not burnt at all. Now, though Isuro had the leaves about him, he did not dare to produce them at the last moment lest the baboon should guess why he had stayed behind. So he just went round a corner for a short time, and then came hopping back in a great hurry. But, quick though he was, Gudu had been quicker still, and nothing remained but some drops of water.

'How unlucky you are,' said Gudu, snatching the leaves; 'no sooner had you gone than ever so many people arrived, and washed their hands, as you see, and ate your portion.' But, though Isuro knew better than to believe him, he said nothing, and went to bed hungrier than he had ever been in his life.

Early next morning they started for another village, and passed on the way a large garden where people were very busy gathering monkey-nuts.

'You can have a good breakfast at last,' said Gudu, pointing to a heap of empty shells; never doubting but that Isuro would meekly take the portion shown him, and leave the real nuts for himself. But what was his surprise when Isuro answered:

'Thank you; I think I should prefer these.' And, turning to the kernels, never stopped as long as there was one left. And the worst of it was that, with so many people about, Gudu could not take the nuts from him.

It was night when they reached the village where dwelt the mother of Gudu's betrothed, who laid meat and millet porridge before them.

'I think you told me you were fond of porridge,' said Gudu; but Isuro answered: 'You are mistaking me for somebody else, as I always eat meat when I can get it.' And again Gudu was forced to be content with the porridge, which he hated.

While he was eating it, however a sudden thought darted into his mind, and he managed to knock over a great pot of water which was hanging in front of the fire, and put it quite out.

'Now,' said the cunning creature to himself, 'I shall be able in the dark to steal his meat!' But the rabbit had grown as cunning as he, and standing in a corner hid the meat behind him, so that the baboon could not find it.

'O Gudu!' he cried, laughing aloud, 'it is you who have taught me to be clever.' And calling to the people of the house, he bade them kindle the fire, for Gudu would sleep by it, but that he would pass the night with some friends in another hut.

It was still quite dark when Isuro heard his name called very softly, and, on opening his eyes, beheld Gudu standing by him. Laying his finger on his nose, in token of silence, he signed to Isuro to get up and follow him, and it was not until they were some distance from the hut that Gudu spoke.

'I am hungry and want something to eat better than that nasty porridge that I had for supper. So I am going to kill one of those goats, and as you are a good cook you must boil the flesh for me.' The rabbit nodded, and Gudu disappeared behind a rock, but soon returned dragging the dead goat with him. The two then set about skinning it, after which they stuffed the skin with dried leaves, so that no

one would have guessed it was not alive, and set it up in the middle of a lump of bushes, which kept it firm on its feet. While he was doing this, Isuro collected sticks for a fire, and when it was kindled, Gudu hastened to another hut to steal a pot which he filled with water from the river, and, planting two branches in the ground, they hung the pot with the meat in it over the fire.

'It will not be fit to eat for two hours at least,' said Gudu, 'so we can both have a nap.' And he stretched himself out on the ground, and pretended to fall fast asleep, but, in reality, he was only waiting till it was safe to take all the meat for himself. 'Surely I hear him snore,' he thought; and he stole to the place where Isuro was lying on a pile of wood, but the rabbit's eyes were wide open.

'How tiresome,' muttered Gudu, as he went back to his place; and after waiting a little longer he got up, and peeped again, but still the rabbit's pink eyes stared widely. If Gudu had only known, Isuro was asleep all the time; but this he never guessed, and by-and-bye he grew so tired with watching that he went to sleep himself. Soon after, Isuro woke up, and he too felt hungry, so he crept softly to the pot and ate all the meat, while he tied the bones together and hung them in Gudu's fur. After that he went back to the wood-pile and slept again.

In the morning the mother of Gudu's betrothed came out to milk her goats, and on going to the bushes where the largest one seemed entangled, she found out the trick. She made such lament that the people of the village came running, and Gudu and Isuro jumped up also, and pretended to be as surprised and interested as the rest. But they must have looked guilty after all, for suddenly an old man pointed to them, and cried:

'Those are thieves.' And at the sound of his voice the big Gudu trembled all over.

'How dare you say such things? I defy you to prove it,' answered Isuro boldly. And he danced forward, and turned head over heels, and shook himself before them all.

'I spoke hastily; you are innocent,' said the old man; 'but now let the baboon do likewise.' And when Gudu began to jump the goat's bones rattled and the people cried: 'It is Gudu who is the goat-slayer!' But Gudu answered:

'Nay, I did not kill your goat; it was Isuro, and he ate the meat, and hung the bones round my neck. So it is he who should die!' And the people looked at each other, for they knew not what to believe. At length one man said:

'Let them both die, but they may choose their own deaths.'

Then Isuro answered:

'If we must die, put us in the place where the wood is cut, and heap it up all round us, so that we cannot escape, and set fire to the wood; and if one is burned and the other is not, then he that is burned is the goat-slayer.'

And the people did as Isuro had said. But Isuro knew of a hole under the wood-pile, and when the fire was kindled he ran into the hole, but Gudu died there.

When the fire had burned itself out and only ashes were left where the wood had been, Isuro came out of his hole, and said to the people:

'Lo! did I not speak well? He who killed your goat is among those ashes.'

Ian, the Soldier's Son

[Mashona Story.]

There dwelt a knight in Grianaig of the land of the West, who had three daughters, and for goodness and beauty they had not their like in all the isles. All the people loved them, and loud was the weeping when one day, as the three maidens sat on the rocks on the edge of the sea, dipping their feet in the water, there arose a great beast from under the waves and swept them away beneath the ocean. And none knew whither they had gone, or how to seek them.

Now there lived in a town a few miles off a soldier who had three sons, fine youths and strong, and the best players at shinny in that country. At Christmastide that year, when families met together and great feasts were held, Ian, the youngest of the three brothers, said:

'Let us have a match at shinny on the lawn of the knight of Grianaig, for his lawn is wider and the grass smoother than ours.'

But the others answered:

'Nay, for he is in sorrow, and he will think of the games that we have played there when his daughters looked on.'

'Let him be pleased or angry as he will,' said Ian; 'we will drive our ball on his lawn to-day.'

And so it was done, and Ian won three games from his brothers. But the knight looked out of his window, and was wroth; and bade his men bring the youths before him. When he stood in his hall and beheld them, his heart was softened somewhat; but his face was angry as he asked:

'Why did you choose to play shinny in front of my castle when you knew full well that the remembrance of my daughters would come back to me? The pain which you have made me suffer you shall suffer also.'

'Since we have done you wrong,' answered Ian, the youngest, 'build us a ship, and we will go and seek your daughters. Let them be to windward, or to leeward, or under the four brown boundaries of the sea, we will find them before a year and a day goes by, and will carry them back to Grianaig.'

In seven days the ship was built, and great store of food and wine placed in her. And the three brothers put her head to the sea and sailed away, and in seven days the ship ran herself on to a beach of white sand, and they all went ashore. They had none of them ever seen that land before, and looked about them. Then they saw that, a short way from them, a number of men were working on a rock, with one man standing over them.

'What place is this?' asked the eldest brother. And the man who was standing by made answer:

'This is the place where dwell the three daughters of the knight of Grianaig, who are to be wedded to-morrow to three giants.'

'How can we find them?' asked the young man again. And the overlooker answered:

'To reach the daughters of the knight of Grianaig you must get into this basket, and be drawn by a rope up the face of this rock.'

'Oh, that is easily done,' said the eldest brother, jumping into the basket, which at once began to move – up, and up, and up – till he had gone about half-way, when a fat black raven flew at him and pecked him till he was nearly blind, so that he was forced to go back the way he had come.

After that the second brother got into the creel; but he fared no better, for the raven flew upon him, and he returned as his brother had done.

'Now it is my turn,' said Ian. But when he was halfway up the raven set upon him also.

'Quick! quick!' cried Ian to the men who held the rope. 'Quick! quick! or I shall be blinded!' And the men pulled with all their might, and in another moment Ian was on top, and the raven behind him.

'Will you give me a piece of tobacco?' asked the raven, who was now quite quiet.

'You rascal! Am I to give you tobacco for trying to peck my eyes out?' answered Ian.

'That was part of my duty,' replied the raven; 'but give it to me, and I will prove a good friend to you.' So Ian broke off a piece of tobacco and gave it to him. The raven hid it under his wing, and then went on; 'Now I will take you to the house of the big giant, where the knight's daughter sits sewing, sewing, till even her thimble is wet with tears.' And the raven hopped before him till they reached a large house, the door of which stood open. They entered and passed through one hall after the other, until they found the knight's daughter, as the bird had said.

'What brought you here?' asked she. And Ian made answer:

'Why may I not go where you can go?'

'I was brought hither by a giant,' replied she.

'I know that,' said Ian; 'but tell me where the giant is, that I may find him.'

'He is on the hunting hill,' answered she; 'and nought will bring him home save a shake of the iron chain which hangs outside the gate. But, there, neither to leeward, nor to windward, nor in the four brown boundaries of the sea, is there any man that can hold battle against him, save only Ian, the soldier's son, and he is now but sixteen years old, and how shall he stand against the giant?'

'In the land whence I have come there are many men with the strength of Ian,' answered he. And he went outside and pulled at the chain, but he could not move it, and fell on to his knees. At that he rose swiftly, and gathering up his strength, he seized the chain, and this time he shook it so that the link broke. And the giant heard it on the hunting hill, and lifted his head, thinking —

'It sounds like the noise of Ian, the soldier's son,' said he; 'but as yet he is only sixteen years old. Still, I had better look to it.' And home he came.

'Are you Ian, the soldier's son?' he asked, as he entered the castle.

'No, of a surety,' answered the youth, who had no wish that they should know him.

'Then who are you in the leeward, or in the windward, or in the four brown boundaries of the sea, who are able to move my battle-chain?'

'That will be plain to you after wrestling with me as I wrestle with my mother. And one time she got the better of me, and two times she did not.'

So they wrestled, and twisted and strove with each other till the giant forced Ian to his knee.

'You are the stronger,' said Ian; and the giant answered:

'All men know that!' And they took hold of each other once more, and at last Ian threw the giant, and wished that the raven were there to help him. No sooner had he wished his wish than the raven came.

'Put your hand under my right wing and you will find a knife sharp enough to take off his head,' said the raven. And the knife was so sharp that it cut off the giant's head with a blow.

'Now go and tell the daughter of the king of Grianaig; but take heed lest you listen to her words, and promise to go no further, for she will seek to help you. Instead, seek the middle daughter, and when you have found her, you shall give me a piece of tobacco for reward.'

'Well have you earned the half of all I have,' answered Ian. But the raven shook his head.

'You know only what has passed, and nothing of what lies before. If you would not fail, wash yourself in clean water, and take balsam from a vessel on top of the door, and rub it over your body, and to-morrow you will be as strong as many men, and I will lead you to the dwelling of the middle one.'

Ian did as the raven bade him, and in spite of the eldest daughter's entreaties, he set out to seek her next sister. He found her where she was seated sewing, her very thimble wet from the tears which she had shed.

'What brought you here?' asked the second sister.

'Why may I not go where you can go?' answered he; 'and why are you weeping?'

'Because in one day I shall be married to the giant who is on the hunting hill.'

'How can I get him home?' asked Ian.

'Nought will bring him but a shake of that iron chain which hangs outside the gate. But there is neither to leeward, nor to westward, nor in the four brown boundaries of the sea, any man that can hold battle with him, save Ian, the soldier's son, and he is now but sixteen years of age.'

'In the land whence I have come there are many men with the strength of Ian,' said he. And he went outside and pulled at the chain, but he could not move it, and fell on his knees. At that he rose to his feet, and gathering up his strength mightily, he seized the chain, and this time he shook it so that three links broke. And the second giant heard it on the hunting hill, and lifted his head, thinking —

'It sounds like the noise of Ian, the soldier's son,' said he; 'but as yet he is only sixteen years old. Still, I had better look to it.' And home he came.

'Are you Ian, the soldier's son?' he asked, as he entered the castle.

'No, of a surety,' answered the youth, who had no wish that this giant should know him either; 'but I will wrestle with you as if I were he.'

Then they seized each other by the shoulder, and the giant threw him on his two knees. 'You are the stronger,' cried Ian; 'but I am not beaten yet.' And rising to his feet, he threw his arms round the giant.

Backwards and forwards they swayed, and first one was uppermost and then the other; but at length Ian worked his leg round the giant's and threw him to the ground. Then he called to the raven, and the raven came flapping towards him, and said: 'Put your hand under my right wing, and you will find there a knife sharp enough to take off his head.' And sharp indeed it was, for with a single blow, the giant's head rolled from his body.

'Now wash yourself with warm water, and rub yourself over with oil of balsam, and to-morrow you will be as strong as many men. But beware of the words of the knight's daughter, for she is cunning, and will try to keep you at her side. So farewell; but first give me a piece of tobacco.'

'That I will gladly,' answered Ian breaking off a large bit.

He washed and rubbed himself that night, as the raven had told him, and the next morning he entered the chamber where the knight's daughter was sitting.

'Abide here with me,' she said, 'and be my husband. There is silver and gold in plenty in the castle.' But he took no heed, and went on his way till he reached the castle where the knight's youngest daughter was sewing in the hall. And tears dropped from her eyes on to her thimble.

'What brought you here?' asked she. And Ian made answer:

'Why may I not go where you can go?'

'I was brought hither by a giant.'

'I know full well,' said he.

'Are you Ian, the soldier's son?' asked she again. And again he answered:

'Yes, I am; but tell me, why are you weeping?'

'To-morrow the giant will return from the hunting hill, and I must marry him,' she sobbed. And Ian took no heed, and only said: 'How can I bring him home?'

'Shake the iron chain that hangs outside the gate.'

And Ian went out, and gave such a pull to the chain that he fell down at full length from the force of the shake. But in a moment he was on his feet again, and seized the chain with so much strength that four links came off in his hand. And the giant heard him in the hunting hill, as he was putting the game he had killed into a bag.

'In the leeward, or the windward, or in the four brown boundaries of the sea, there is none who could give my chain a shake save only Ian, the soldier's son. And if he has reached me, then he has left my two brothers dead behind him.' With that he strode back to the castle, the earth trembling under him as he went.

'Are you Ian, the soldier's son?' asked he. And the youth answered:

'No, of a surety.'

'Then who are you in the leeward, or the windward, or in the four brown boundaries of the sea, who are able to shake my battle chain? There is only Ian, the soldier's son, who can do this, and he is but now sixteen years old.

'I will show you who I am when you have wrestled with me,' said Ian. And they threw their arms round each other, and the giant forced Ian on to his knees; but in a moment he was up again, and crooking his leg round the shoulders of the giant, he threw him heavily to the ground. 'Stumpy black raven, come quick!' cried he; and the raven came, and beat the giant about the head with his wings, so that he could not get up. Then he bade Ian take out a sharp knife from under his feathers, which he carried with him for cutting berries, and Ian smote off the giant's head with it. And so sharp was that knife that, with one blow, the giant's head rolled on the ground.

'Rest now this night also,' said the raven, 'and to-morrow you shall take the knight's three daughters to the edge of the rock that leads to the lower world. But take heed to go down first yourself, and let them follow after you. And before I go you shall give me a piece of tobacco.'

'Take it all,' answered Ian, 'for well have you earned it.'

'No; give me but a piece. You know what is behind you, but you have no knowledge of what is before you.' And picking up the tobacco in his beak, the raven flew away.

So the next morning the knight's youngest daughter loaded asses with all the silver and gold to be found in the castle, and she set out with Ian the soldier's son for the house where her second sister was waiting to see what would befall. She also had asses laden with precious things to carry away, and so had the eldest sister, when they reached the castle where she had been kept a prisoner. Together they all rode to the edge of the rock, and then Ian lay down and shouted, and the basket was drawn up, and in it they got one by one, and were let down to the bottom. When the last one was gone, Ian should have gone also, and left the three sisters to come after him; but he had forgotten the raven's warning, and bade them go first, lest some accident should happen. Only, he begged the youngest sister to let him keep the little gold cap which, like the others, she wore on her head; and then he helped them, each in her turn, into the basket.

Long he waited, but wait as he might, the basket never came back, for in their joy at being free the knight's daughters had forgotten all about Ian, and had set sail in the ship that had brought him and his brothers to the land of Grianaig.

At last he began to understand what had happened to him, and while he was taking counsel with himself what had best be done, the raven came to him.

'You did not heed my words,' he said gravely.

'No, I did not, and therefore am I here,' answered Ian, bowing his head.

'The past cannot be undone,' went on the raven. 'He that will not take counsel will take combat. This night, you will sleep in the giant's castle. And now you shall give me a piece of tobacco.'

'I will. But, I pray you, stay in the castle with me.'

'That I may not do, but on the morrow I will come.'

And on the morrow he did, and he bade Ian go to the giant's stable where stood a horse to whom it mattered nothing if she journeyed over land or sea.

'But be careful,' he added, 'how you enter the stable, for the door swings without ceasing to and fro, and if it touches you, it will cause you to cry out. I will go first and show you the way.'

'Go,' said Ian. And the raven gave a bob and a hop, and thought he was quite safe, but the door slammed on a feather of his tail, and he screamed loudly.

Then Ian took a run backwards, and a run forwards, and made a spring; but the door caught one of his feet, and he fell fainting on the stable floor. Quickly the raven pounced on him, and picked him up in his beak and claws, and carried him back to the castle, where he laid ointments on his foot till it was as well as ever it was.

'Now come out to walk,' said the raven, 'but take heed that you wonder not at aught you may behold; neither shall you touch anything. And, first, give me a piece of tobacco.'

Many strange things did Ian behold in that island, more than he had thought for. In a glen lay three heroes stretched on their backs, done to death by three spears that still stuck in their breasts. But he kept his counsel and spake nothing, only he pulled out the spears, and the men sat up and said:

'You are Ian the soldier's son, and a spell is laid upon you to travel in our company, to the cave of the black fisherman.'

So together they went till they reached the cave, and one of the men entered, to see what should be found there. And he beheld a hag, horrible to look upon, seated on a rock, and before he could speak, she struck him with her club, and changed him into a stone; and in like manner she dealt with the other three. At the last Ian entered.

'These men are under spells,' said the witch, 'and alive they can never be till you have anointed them with the water which you must fetch from the island of Big Women. See that you do not tarry.' And Ian turned away with a sinking heart, for he would fain have followed the youngest daughter of the knight of Grianaig.

'You did not obey my counsel,' said the raven, hopping towards him, 'and so trouble has come upon you. But sleep now, and to-morrow you shall mount the horse which is in the giant's stable, that can gallop over sea and land. When you reach the island of Big Women, sixteen boys will come to meet you, and will offer the horse food, and wish to take her saddle and bridle from her. But see that they touch her not, and give her food yourself, and yourself lead her into the stable, and shut the door. And be sure that for every turn of the lock given by the sixteen stable lads you give one. And now you shall break me off a piece of tobacco.'

The next morning Ian arose, and led the horse from the stable, without the door hurting him, and he rode across the sea to the island of the Big Women, where the sixteen stable lads met him, and each one offered to take his horse, and to feed her, and to put her into the stable. But Ian only answered:

'I myself will put her in and will see to her.' And thus he did. And while he was rubbing her sides the horse said to him:

'Every kind of drink will they offer you, but see you take none, save whey and water only.' And so it fell out; and when the sixteen stable-boys saw that he would drink nothing, they drank it all themselves, and one by one lay stretched around the board.

Then Ian felt pleased in his heart that he had withstood their fair words, and he forgot the counsel that the horse had likewise given him saying:

'Beware lest you fall asleep, and let slip the chance of getting home again'; for while the lads were sleeping sweet music reached his ears, and he slept also.

When this came to pass the steed broke through the stable door, and kicked him and woke him roughly.

'You did not heed my counsel,' said she; 'and who knows if it is not too late to win over the sea? But first take that sword which hangs on the wall, and cut off the heads of the sixteen grooms.'

Filled with shame at being once more proved heedless, Ian arose and did as the horse bade him. Then he ran to the well and poured some of the water into a leather bottle, and jumping on the horse's back rode over the sea to the island where the raven was waiting for him.

'Lead the horse into the stable,' said the raven, 'and lie down yourself to sleep, for to-morrow you must make the heroes to live again, and must slay the hag. And have a care not to be so foolish to-morrow as you were to-day.'

'Stay with me for company,' begged Ian; but the raven shook his head, and flew away.

In the morning Ian awoke, and hastened to the cave where the old hag was sitting, and he struck her dead as she was, before she could cast spells on him. Next he sprinkled the water over the heroes, who came to life again, and together they all journeyed to the other side of the island, and there the raven met them.

‘At last you have followed the counsel that was given you,’ said the raven; ‘and now, having learned wisdom, you may go home again to Grianaig. There you will find that the knight’s two eldest daughters are to be wedded this day to your two brothers, and the youngest to the chief of the men at the rock. But her gold cap you shall give to me and, if you want it, you have only to think of me and I will bring it to you. And one more warning I give you. If anyone asks you whence you came, answer that you have come from behind you; and if anyone asks you whither you are going, say that you are going before you.’

So Ian mounted the horse and set her face to the sea and her back to the shore, and she was off, away and away till she reached the church of Grianaig, and there, in a field of grass, beside a well of water, he leaped down from his saddle.

‘Now,’ the horse said to him, ‘draw your sword and cut off my head.’ But Ian answered:

‘Poor thanks would that be for all the help I have had from you.’

‘It is the only way that I can free myself from the spells that were laid by the giants on me and the raven; for I was a girl and he was a youth wooing me! So have no fears, but do as I have said.’

Then Ian drew his sword as she bade him, and cut off her head, and went on his way without looking backwards. As he walked he saw a woman standing at her house door. She asked him whence he had come, and he answered as the raven had told him, that he came from behind. Next she inquired whither he was going, and this time he made reply that he was going on before him, but that he was thirsty and would like a drink.

‘You are an impudent fellow,’ said the woman; ‘but you shall have a drink.’ And she gave him some milk, which was all she had till her husband came home.

‘Where is your husband?’ asked Ian, and the woman answered him:

‘He is at the knight’s castle trying to fashion gold and silver into a cap for the youngest daughter, like unto the caps that her sisters wear, such as are not to be found in all this land. But, see, he is returning; and now we shall hear how he has sped.’

At that the man entered the gate, and beholding a strange youth, he said to him: ‘What is your trade, boy?’

‘I am a smith,’ replied Ian. And the man answered:

‘Good luck has befallen me, then, for you can help me to make a cap for the knight’s daughter.’

‘You cannot make that cap, and you know it,’ said Ian.

‘Well, I must try,’ replied the man, ‘or I shall be hanged on a tree; so it were a good deed to help me.’

‘I will help you if I can,’ said Ian; ‘but keep the gold and silver for yourself, and lock me into the smithy to-night, and I will work my spells.’ So the man, wondering to himself, locked him in.

As soon as the key was turned in the lock Ian wished for the raven, and the raven came to him, carrying the cap in his mouth.

‘Now take my head off,’ said the raven. But Ian answered:

‘Poor thanks were that for all the help you have given me.’

‘It is the only thanks you can give me,’ said the raven, ‘for I was a youth like yourself before spells were laid on me.’

Then Ian drew his sword and cut off the head of the raven, and shut his eyes so that he might see nothing. After that he lay down and slept till morning dawned, and the man came and unlocked the door and shook the sleeper.

‘Here is the cap,’ said Ian drowsily, drawing it from under his pillow. And he fell asleep again directly.

The sun was high in the heavens when he woke again, and this time he beheld a tall, brown-haired youth standing by him.

‘I am the raven,’ said the youth, ‘and the spells are broken. But now get up and come with me.’

Then they two went together to the place where Ian had left the dead horse; but no horse was there now, only a beautiful maiden.

'I am the horse,' she said, 'and the spells are broken'; and she and the youth went away together.

In the meantime the smith had carried the cap to the castle, and bade a servant belonging to the knight's youngest daughter bear it to her mistress. But when the girl's eyes fell on it, she cried out:

'He speaks false; and if he does not bring me the man who really made the cap I will hang him on the tree beside my window.'

The servant was filled with fear at her words, and hastened and told the smith, who ran as fast as he could to seek for Ian. And when he found him and brought him into the castle, the girl was first struck dumb with joy; then she declared that she would marry nobody else. At this some one fetched to her the knight of Grianaig, and when Ian had told his tale, he vowed that the maiden was right, and that his elder daughters should never wed with men who had not only taken glory to themselves which did not belong to them, but had left the real doer of the deeds to his fate.

And the wedding guests said that the knight had spoken well; and the two elder brothers were fain to leave the country, for no one would converse with them.

The Fox and the Wolf

[From Tales of the West Highlands.]

At the foot of some high mountains there was, once upon a time, a small village, and a little way off two roads met, one of them going to the east and the other to the west. The villagers were quiet, hard-working folk, who toiled in the fields all day, and in the evening set out for home when the bell began to ring in the little church. In the summer mornings they led out their flocks to pasture, and were happy and contented from sunrise to sunset.

One summer night, when a round full moon shone down upon the white road, a great wolf came trotting round the corner.

'I positively must get a good meal before I go back to my den,' he said to himself; 'it is nearly a week since I have tasted anything but scraps, though perhaps no one would think it to look at my figure! Of course there are plenty of rabbits and hares in the mountains; but indeed one needs to be a greyhound to catch them, and I am not so young as I was! If I could only dine off that fox I saw a fortnight ago, curled up into a delicious hairy ball, I should ask nothing better; I would have eaten her then, but unluckily her husband was lying beside her, and one knows that foxes, great and small, run like the wind. Really it seems as if there was not a living creature left for me to prey upon but a wolf, and, as the proverb says: "One wolf does not bite another." However, let us see what this village can produce. I am as hungry as a schoolmaster.'

Now, while these thoughts were running through the mind of the wolf, the very fox he had been thinking of was galloping along the other road.

'The whole of this day I have listened to those village hens clucking till I could bear it no longer,' murmured she as she bounded along, hardly seeming to touch the ground. 'When you are fond of fowls and eggs it is the sweetest of all music. As sure as there is a sun in heaven I will have some of them this night, for I have grown so thin that my very bones rattle, and my poor babies are crying for food.' And as she spoke she reached a little plot of grass, where the two roads joined, and flung herself under a tree to take a little rest, and to settle her plans. At this moment the wolf came up.

At the sight of the fox lying within his grasp his mouth began to water, but his joy was somewhat checked when he noticed how thin she was. The fox's quick ears heard the sound of his paws, though they were soft as velvet, and turning her head she said politely:

'Is that you, neighbour? What a strange place to meet in! I hope you are quite well?'

'Quite well as regards my health,' answered the wolf, whose eye glistened greedily, 'at least, as well as one can be when one is very hungry. But what is the matter with you? A fortnight ago you were as plump as heart could wish!'

'I have been ill – very ill,' replied the fox, 'and what you say is quite true. A worm is fat in comparison with me.'

'He is. Still, you are good enough for me; for "to the hungry no bread is hard."'

'Oh, you are always joking! I'm sure you are not half as hungry as I!'

'That we shall soon see,' cried the wolf, opening his huge mouth and crouching for a spring.

'What are you doing?' exclaimed the fox, stepping backwards.

'What am I doing? What I am going to do is to make my supper off you, in less time than a cock takes to crow.'

'Well, I suppose you must have your joke,' answered the fox lightly, but never removing her eye from the wolf, who replied with a snarl which showed all his teeth:

'I don't want to joke, but to eat!'

'But surely a person of your talents must perceive that you might eat me to the very last morsel and never know that you had swallowed anything at all!'

'In this world the cleverest people are always the hungriest,' replied the wolf.

'Ah! how true that is; but – '

'I can't stop to listen to your "buts" and "yets,"' broke in the wolf rudely; 'let us get to the point, and the point is that I want to eat you and not talk to you.'

'Have you no pity for a poor mother?' asked the fox, putting her tail to her eyes, but peeping slily out of them all the same.

'I am dying of hunger,' answered the wolf, doggedly; 'and you know,' he added with a grin, 'that charity begins at home.'

'Quite so,' replied the fox; 'it would be unreasonable of me to object to your satisfying your appetite at my expense. But if the fox resigns herself to the sacrifice, the mother offers you one last request.'

'Then be quick and don't waste my time, for I can't wait much longer. What is it you want?'

'You must know,' said the fox, 'that in this village there is a rich man who makes in the summer enough cheeses to last him for the whole year, and keeps them in an old well, now dry, in his courtyard. By the well hang two buckets on a pole that were used, in former days, to draw up water. For many nights I have crept down to the palace, and have lowered myself in the bucket, bringing home with me enough cheese to feed the children. All I beg of you is to come with me, and, instead of hunting chickens and such things, I will make a good meal off cheese before I die.'

'But the cheeses may be all finished by now?'

'If you were only to see the quantities of them!' laughed the fox. 'And even if they were finished, there would always be ME to eat.'

'Well, I will come. Lead the way, but I warn you that if you try to escape or play any tricks you are reckoning without your host – that is to say, without my legs, which are as long as yours!'

All was silent in the village, and not a light was to be seen but that of the moon, which shone bright and clear in the sky. The wolf and the fox crept softly along, when suddenly they stopped and looked at each other; a savoury smell of frying bacon reached their noses, and reached the noses of the sleeping dogs, who began to bark greedily.

'Is it safe to go on, think you?' asked the wolf in a whisper. And the fox shook her head.

'Not while the dogs are barking,' said she; 'someone might come out to see if anything was the matter.' And she signed to the wolf to curl himself up in the shadow beside her.

In about half an hour the dogs grew tired of barking, or perhaps the bacon was eaten up and there was no smell to excite them. Then the wolf and the fox jumped up, and hastened to the foot of the wall.

'I am lighter than he is,' thought the fox to herself, 'and perhaps if I make haste I can get a start, and jump over the wall on the other side before he manages to spring over this one.' And she quickened her pace. But if the wolf could not run he could jump, and with one bound he was beside his companion.

'What were you going to do, comrade?'

'Oh, nothing,' replied the fox, much vexed at the failure of her plan.

'I think if I were to take a bit out of your haunch you would jump better,' said the wolf, giving a snap at her as he spoke. The fox drew back uneasily.

'Be careful, or I shall scream,' she snarled. And the wolf, understanding all that might happen if the fox carried out her threat, gave a signal to his companion to leap on the wall, where he immediately followed her.

Once on the top they crouched down and looked about them. Not a creature was to be seen in the courtyard, and in the furthest corner from the house stood the well, with its two buckets suspended from a pole, just as the fox had described it. The two thieves dragged themselves noiselessly along

the wall till they were opposite the well, and by stretching out her neck as far as it would go the fox was able to make out that there was only very little water in the bottom, but just enough to reflect the moon, big, and round and yellow.

'How lucky!' cried she to the wolf. 'There is a huge cheese about the size of a mill wheel. Look! look! did you ever see anything so beautiful!'

'Never!' answered the wolf, peering over in his turn, his eyes glistening greedily, for he imagined that the moon's reflection in the water was really a cheese.

'And now, unbeliever, what have you to say?' and the fox laughed gently.

'That you are a woman – I mean a fox – of your word,' replied the wolf.

'Well, then, go down in that bucket and eat your fill,' said the fox.

'Oh, is that your game?' asked the wolf, with a grin. 'No! no! The person who goes down in the bucket will be you! And if you don't go down your head will go without you!'

'Of course I will go down, with the greatest pleasure,' answered the fox, who had expected the wolf's reply.

'And be sure you don't eat all the cheese, or it will be the worse for you,' continued the wolf. But the fox looked up at him with tears in her eyes.

'Farewell, suspicious one!' she said sadly. And climbed into the bucket.

In an instant she had reached the bottom of the well, and found that the water was not deep enough to cover her legs.

'Why, it is larger and richer than I thought,' cried she, turning towards the wolf, who was leaning over the wall of the well.

'Then be quick and bring it up,' commanded the wolf.

'How can I, when it weighs more than I do?' asked the fox.

'If it is so heavy bring it in two bits, of course,' said he.

'But I have no knife,' answered the fox. 'You will have to come down yourself, and we will carry it up between us.'

'And how am I to come down?' inquired the wolf.

'Oh, you are really very stupid! Get into the other bucket that is nearly over your head.'

The wolf looked up, and saw the bucket hanging there, and with some difficulty he climbed into it. As he weighed at least four times as much as the fox the bucket went down with a jerk, and the other bucket, in which the fox was seated, came to the surface.

As soon as he understood what was happening, the wolf began to speak like an angry wolf, but was a little comforted when he remembered that the cheese still remained to him.

'But where is the cheese?' he asked of the fox, who in her turn was leaning over the parapet watching his proceedings with a smile.

'The cheese?' answered the fox; 'why I am taking it home to my babies, who are too young to get food for themselves.'

'Ah, traitor!' cried the wolf, howling with rage. But the fox was not there to hear this insult, for she had gone off to a neighbouring fowl-house, where she had noticed some fat young chickens the day before.

'Perhaps I did treat him rather badly,' she said to herself. 'But it seems getting cloudy, and if there should be heavy rain the other bucket will fill and sink to the bottom, and his will go up – at least it may!'

How Ian Direach Got the Blue Falcon

[From Cuentos Populares, por Antonio de Trueba.]

Long ago a king and queen ruled over the islands of the west, and they had one son, whom they loved dearly. The boy grew up to be tall and strong and handsome, and he could run and shoot, and swim and dive better than any lad of his own age in the country. Besides, he knew how to sail about, and sing songs to the harp, and during the winter evenings, when everyone was gathered round the huge hall fire shaping bows or weaving cloth, Ian Direach would tell them tales of the deeds of his fathers.

So the time slipped by till Ian was almost a man, as they reckoned men in those days, and then his mother the queen died. There was great mourning throughout all the isles, and the boy and his father mourned her bitterly also; but before the new year came the king had married another wife, and seemed to have forgotten his old one. Only Ian remembered.

On a morning when the leaves were yellow in the trees of the glen, Ian slung his bow over his shoulder, and filling his quiver with arrows, went on to the hill in search of game. But not a bird was to be seen anywhere, till at length a blue falcon flew past him, and raising his bow he took aim at her. His eye was straight and his hand steady, but the falcon's flight was swift, and he only shot a feather from her wing. As the sun was now low over the sea he put the feather in his game bag, and set out homewards.

'Have you brought me much game to-day?' asked his stepmother as he entered the hall.

'Nought save this,' he answered, handing her the feather of the blue falcon, which she held by the tip and gazed at silently. Then she turned to Ian and said:

'I am setting it on you as crosses and as spells, and as the fall of the year! That you may always be cold, and wet and dirty, and that your shoes may ever have pools in them, till you bring me hither the blue falcon on which that feather grew.'

'If it is spells you are laying I can lay them too,' answered Ian Direach; 'and you shall stand with one foot on the great house and another on the castle, till I come back again, and your face shall be to the wind, from wheresoever it shall blow.' Then he went away to seek the bird, as his stepmother bade him; and, looking homewards from the hill, he saw the queen standing with one foot on the great house, and the other on the castle, and her face turned towards whatever tempest should blow.

On he journeyed, over hills, and through rivers till he reached a wide plain, and never a glimpse did he catch of the falcon. Darker and darker it grew, and the small birds were seeking their nests, and at length Ian Direach could see no more, and he lay down under some bushes and sleep came to him. And in his dream a soft nose touched him, and a warm body curled up beside him, and a low voice whispered to him:

'Fortune is against you, Ian Direach; I have but the cheek and the hoof of a sheep to give you, and with these you must be content.' With that Ian Direach awoke, and beheld Gille Mairtean the fox.

Between them they kindled a fire, and ate their supper. Then Gille Mairtean the fox bade Ian Direach lie down as before, and sleep till morning. And in the morning, when he awoke, Gille Mairtean said:

'The falcon that you seek is in the keeping of the Giant of the Five Heads, and the Five Necks, and the Five Humps. I will show you the way to his house, and I counsel you to do his bidding, nimbly and cheerfully, and, above all, to treat his birds kindly, for in this manner he may give you his falcon to feed and care for. And when this happens, wait till the giant is out of his house; then throw a cloth

over the falcon and bear her away with you. Only see that not one of her feathers touches anything within the house, or evil will befall you.'

'I thank you for your counsel,' spake Ian Direach, 'and I will be careful to follow it.' Then he took the path to the giant's house.

'Who is there?' cried the giant, as someone knocked loudly on the door of his house.

'One who seeks work as a servant,' answered Ian Direach.

'And what can you do?' asked the giant again.

'I can feed birds and tend pigs; I can feed and milk a cow, and also goats and sheep, if you have any of these,' replied Ian Direach.

'Then enter, for I have great need of such a one,' said the giant.

So Ian Direach entered, and tended so well and carefully all the birds and beasts, that the giant was better satisfied than ever he had been, and at length he thought that he might even be trusted to feed the falcon. And the heart of Ian was glad, and he tended the blue falcon till his fathers shone like the sky, and the giant was well pleased; and one day he said to him:

'For long my brothers on the other side of the mountain have besought me to visit them, but never could I go for fear of my falcon. Now I think I can leave her with you for one day, and before nightfall I shall be back again.'

Scarcely was the giant out of sight next morning when Ian Direach seized the falcon, and throwing a cloth over her head hastened with her to the door. But the rays of the sun pierced through the thickness of the cloth, and as they passed the doorpost she gave a spring, and the tip of one of her feathers touched the post, which gave a scream, and brought the giant back in three strides. Ian Direach trembled as he saw him; but the giant only said:

'If you wish for my falcon you must first bring me the White Sword of Light that is in the house of the Big Women of Dhiurradh.'

'And where do they live?' asked Ian. But the giant answered:

'Ah, that is for you to discover.' And Ian dared say no more, and hastened down to the waste. There, as he hoped, he met his friend Gille Mairtean the fox, who bade him eat his supper and lie down to sleep. And when he had wakened next morning the fox said to him:

'Let us go down to the shore of the sea.' And to the shore of the sea they went. And after they had reached the shore, and beheld the sea stretching before them, and the isle of Dhiurradh in the midst of it, the soul of Ian sank, and he turned to Gille Mairtean and asked why he had brought him thither, for the giant, when he had sent him, had known full well that without a boat he could never find the Big Women.

'Do not be cast down,' answered the fox, 'it is quite easy! I will change myself into a boat, and you shall go on board me, and I will carry you over the sea to the Seven Big Women of Dhiurradh. Tell them that you are skilled in brightening silver and gold, and in the end they will take you as servant, and if you are careful to please them they will give you the White Sword of Light to make bright and shining. But when you seek to steal it, take heed that its sheath touches nothing inside the house, or ill will befall you.'

So Ian Direach did all things as the fox had told him, and the Seven Big Women of Dhiurradh took him for their servant, and for six weeks he worked so hard that his seven mistresses said to each other: 'Never has a servant had the skill to make all bright and shining like this one. Let us give him the White Sword of Light to polish like the rest.'

Then they brought forth the White Sword of Light from the iron closet where it hung, and bade him rub it till he could see his face in the shining blade; and he did so. But one day, when the Seven Big Women were out of the way, he bethought him that the moment had come for him to carry off the sword, and, replacing it in its sheath, he hoisted it on his shoulder. But just as he was passing through the door the tip of the sheath touched it, and the door gave a loud shriek. And the Big Women heard it, and came running back, and took the sword from him, and said:

'If it is our sword you want, you must first bring us the bay colt of the King of Erin.'

Humbled and ashamed, Ian Direach left the house, and sat by the side of the sea, and soon Gille Mairtean the fox came to him.

'Plainly I see that you have taken no heed to my words, Ian Direach,' spoke the fox. 'But eat first, and yet once more will I help you.'

At these words the heart returned again to Ian Direach, and he gathered sticks and made a fire and ate with Gille Mairtean the fox, and slept on the sand. At dawn next morning Gille Mairtean said to Ian Direach:

'I will change myself into a ship, and will bear you across the seas to Erin, to the land where dwells the king. And you shall offer yourself to serve in his stable, and to tend his horses, till at length so well content is he, that he gives you the bay colt to wash and brush. But when you run away with her see that nought except the soles of her hoofs touch anything within the palace gates, or it will go ill with you.'

After he had thus counselled Ian Direach, the fox changed himself into a ship, and set sail for Erin. And the king of that country gave into Ian Direach's hands the care of his horses, and never before did their skins shine so brightly or was their pace so swift. And the king was well pleased, and at the end of a month he sent for Ian and said to him:

'You have given me faithful service, and now I will entrust you with the most precious thing that my kingdom holds.' And when he had spoken, he led Ian Direach to the stable where stood the bay colt. And Ian rubbed her and fed her, and galloped with her all round the country, till he could leave one wind behind him and catch the other which was in front.

'I am going away to hunt,' said the king one morning while he was watching Ian tend the bay colt in her stable. 'The deer have come down from the hill, and it is time for me to give them chase.' Then he went away; and when he was no longer in sight, Ian Direach led the bay colt out of the stable, and sprang on her back. But as they rode through the gate, which stood between the palace and the outer world, the colt swished her tail against the post, which shrieked loudly. In a moment the king came running up, and he seized the colt's bridle.

'If you want my bay colt, you must first bring me the daughter of the king of the Franks.'

With slow steps went Ian Direach down to the shore where Gille Mairtean the fox awaited him.

'Plainly I see that you have not done as I bid you, nor will you ever do it,' spoke Gille Mairtean the fox; 'but I will help you yet again for a third time I will change myself into a ship, and we will sail to France.'

And to France they sailed, and, as he was the ship, the Gille Mairtean sailed where he would, and ran himself into the cleft of a rock, high on to the land. Then, he commanded Ian Direach to go up to the king's palace, saying that he had been wrecked, that his ship was made fast in a rock, and that none had been saved but himself only.

Ian Direach listened to the words of the fox, and he told a tale so pitiful, that the king and queen, and the princess their daughter, all came out to hear it. And when they had heard, nought would please them except to go down to the shore and visit the ship, which by now was floating, for the tide was up. Torn and battered was she, as if she had passed through many dangers, yet music of a wondrous sweetness poured forth from within.

'Bring hither a boat,' cried the princess, 'that I may go and see for myself the harp that gives forth such music.' And a boat was brought, and Ian Direach stepped in to row it to the side of the ship.

To the further side he rowed, so that none could see, and when he helped the princess on board he gave a push to the boat, so that she could not get back to it again. And the music sounded always sweeter, though they could never see whence it came, and sought it from one part of the vessel to another. When at last they reached the deck and looked around them, nought of land could they see, or anything save the rushing waters.

The princess stood silent, and her face grew grim. At last she said:

‘An ill trick have you played me! What is this that you have done, and whither are we going?’

‘It is a queen you will be,’ answered Ian Direach, ‘for the king of Erin has sent me for you, and in return he will give me his bay colt, that I may take him to the Seven Big Women of Dhiurradh, in exchange for the White Sword of Light. This I must carry to the giant of the Five Heads and Five Necks and Five Humps, and, in place of it, he will bestow on me the blue falcon, which I have promised my stepmother, so that she may free me from the spell which she has laid on me.’

‘I would rather be wife to you,’ answered the princess.

By-and-by the ship sailed into a harbour on the coast of Erin, and cast anchor there. And Gille Mairtean the fox bade Ian Direach tell the princess that she must bide yet a while in a cave amongst the rocks, for they had business on land, and after a while they would return to her. Then they took a boat and rowed up to some rocks, and as they touched the land Gille Mairtean changed himself into a fair woman, who laughed, and said to Ian Direach, ‘I will give the king a fine wife.’

Now the king of Erin had been hunting on the hill, and when he saw a strange ship sailing towards the harbour, he guessed that it might be Ian Direach, and left his hunting, and ran down to the hill to the stable. Hastily he led the bay colt from his stall, and put the golden saddle on her back, and the silver bridle over his head, and with the colt’s bridle in his hand, he hurried to meet the princess.

‘I have brought you the king of France’s daughter,’ said Ian Direach. And the king of Erin looked at the maiden, and was well pleased, not knowing that it was Gille Mairtean the fox. And he bowed low, and besought her to do him the honour to enter the palace; and Gille Mairtean, as he went in, turned to look back at Ian Direach, and laughed.

In the great hall the king paused and pointed to an iron chest which stood in a corner.

‘In that chest is the crown that has waited for you for many years,’ he said, ‘and at last you have come for it.’ And he stooped down to unlock the box.

In an instant Gille Mairtean the fox had sprung on his back, and gave him such a bite that he fell down unconscious. Quickly the fox took his own shape again, and galloped away to the sea shore, where Ian Direach and the princess and the bay colt awaited him.

‘I will become a ship,’ cried Gille Mairtean, ‘and you shall go on board me.’ And so he did, and Ian Direach let the bay colt into the ship and the princess went after them, and they set sail for Dhiurradh. The wind was behind them, and very soon they saw the rocks of Dhiurradh in front. Then spoke Gille Mairtean the fox:

‘Let the bay colt and the king’s daughter hide in these rocks, and I will change myself into the colt, and go with you to the house of the Seven Big Women.’

Joy filed the hearts of the Big Women when they beheld the bay colt led up to their door by Ian Direach. And the youngest of them fetched the White Sword of Light, and gave it into the hands of Ian Direach, who took off the golden saddle and the silver bridle, and went down the hill with the sword to the place where the princess and the real colt awaited him.

‘Now we shall have the ride that we have longed for!’ cried the Seven Big Women; and they saddled and bridled the colt, and the eldest one got upon the saddle. Then the second sister sat on the back of the first, and the third on the back of the second, and so on for the whole seven. And when they were all seated, the eldest struck her side with a whip and the colt bounded forward. Over the moors she flew, and round and round the mountains, and still the Big Women clung to her and snorted with pleasure. At last she leapt high in the air, and came down on top of Monadh the high hill, where the crag is. And she rested her fore feet on the crag, and threw up her hind legs, and the Seven Big Women fell over the crag, and were dead when they reached the bottom. And the colt laughed, and became a fox again and galloped away to the sea shore, where Ian Direach, and the princess and the real colt and the White Sword of Light were awaiting him.

‘I will make myself into a ship,’ said Gille Mairtean the fox, ‘and will carry you and the princess, and the bay colt and the White Sword of Light, back to the land.’ And when the shore was reached, Gille Mairtean the fox took back his own shape, and spoke to Ian Direach in this wise:

‘Let the princess and the White Sword of Light, and the bay colt, remain among the rocks, and I will change myself into the likeness of the White Sword of Light, and you shall bear me to the giant, and, instead, he will give you the blue falcon.’ And Ian Direach did as the fox bade him, and set out for the giant’s castle. From afar the giant beheld the blaze of the White Sword of Light, and his heart rejoiced; and he took the blue falcon and put it in a basket, and gave it to Ian Direach, who bore it swiftly away to the place where the princess, and the bay colt, and the real Sword of Light were awaiting him.

So well content was the giant to possess the sword he had coveted for many a year, that he began at once to whirl it through the air, and to cut and slash with it. For a little while Gille Mairtean let the giant play with him in this manner; then he turned in the giant’s hand, and cut through the Five Necks, so that the Five Heads rolled on the ground. Afterwards he went back to Ian Direach and said to him:

‘Saddle the colt with the golden saddle, and bridle her with the silver bridle, and sling the basket with the falcon over your shoulders, and hold the White Sword of Light with its back against your nose. Then mount the colt, and let the princess mount behind you, and ride thus to your father’s palace. But see that the back of the sword is ever against your nose, else when your stepmother beholds you, she will change you into a dry faggot. If, however, you do as I bid you, she will become herself a bundle of sticks.’

Ian Direach hearkened to the words of Gille Mairtean, and his stepmother fell as a bundle of sticks before him; and he set fire to her, and was free from her spells for ever. After that he married the princess, who was the best wife in all the islands of the West. Henceforth he was safe from harm, for had he not the bay colt who could leave one wind behind her and catch the other wind, and the blue falcon to bring him game to eat, and the White Sword of Light to pierce through his foes?

And Ian Direach knew that all this he owed to Gille Mairtean the fox, and he made a compact with him that he might choose any beast out of his herds, whenever hunger seized him, and that henceforth no arrow should be let fly at him or at any of his race. But Gille Mairtean the fox would take no reward for the help he had given to Ian Direach, only his friendship. Thus all things prospered with Ian Direach till he died.

The Ugly Duckling

[From Tales of the West Highlands.]

It was summer in the land of Denmark, and though for most of the year the country looks flat and ugly, it was beautiful now. The wheat was yellow, the oats were green, the hay was dry and delicious to roll in, and from the old ruined house which nobody lived in, down to the edge of the canal, was a forest of great burdocks, so tall that a whole family of children might have dwelt in them and never have been found out.

It was under these burdocks that a duck had built herself a warm nest, and was not sitting all day on six pretty eggs. Five of them were white, but the sixth, which was larger than the others, was of an ugly grey colour. The duck was always puzzled about that egg, and how it came to be so different from the rest. Other birds might have thought that when the duck went down in the morning and evening to the water to stretch her legs in a good swim, some lazy mother might have been on the watch, and have popped her egg into the nest. But ducks are not clever at all, and are not quick at counting, so this duck did not worry herself about the matter, but just took care that the big egg should be as warm as the rest.

This was the first set of eggs that the duck had ever laid, and, to begin with, she was very pleased and proud, and laughed at the other mothers, who were always neglecting their duties to gossip with each other or to take little extra swims besides the two in the morning and evening that were necessary for health. But at length she grew tired of sitting there all day. 'Surely eggs take longer hatching than they did,' she said to herself; and she pined for a little amusement also. Still, she knew that if she left her eggs and the ducklings in them to die none of her friends would ever speak to her again; so there she stayed, only getting off the eggs several times a day to see if the shells were cracking – which may have been the very reason why they did not crack sooner.

She had looked at the eggs at least a hundred and fifty times, when, to her joy, she saw a tiny crack on two of them, and scrambling back to the nest she drew the eggs closer the one to the other, and never moved for the whole of that day. Next morning she was rewarded by noticing cracks in the whole five eggs, and by midday two little yellow heads were poking out from the shells. This encouraged her so much that, after breaking the shells with her bill, so that the little creatures could get free of them, she sat steadily for a whole night upon the nest, and before the sun arose the five white eggs were empty, and ten pairs of eyes were gazing out upon the green world.

Now the duck had been carefully brought up, and did not like dirt, and, besides, broken shells are not at all comfortable things to sit or walk upon; so she pushed the rest out over the side, and felt delighted to have some company to talk to till the big egg hatched. But day after day went on, and the big egg showed no signs of cracking, and the duck grew more and more impatient, and began to wish to consult her husband, who never came.

'I can't think what is the matter with it,' the duck grumbled to her neighbour who had called in to pay her a visit. 'Why I could have hatched two broods in the time that this one has taken!'

'Let me look at it,' said the old neighbour. 'Ah, I thought so; it is a turkey's egg. Once, when I was young, they tricked me to sitting on a brood of turkey's eggs myself, and when they were hatched the creatures were so stupid that nothing would make them learn to swim. I have no patience when I think of it.'

'Well, I will give it another chance,' sighed the duck, 'and if it does not come out of its shell in another twenty-four hours, I will just leave it alone and teach the rest of them to swim properly and

to find their own food. I really can't be expected to do two things at once.' And with a fluff of her feathers she pushed the egg into the middle of the nest.

All through the next day she sat on, giving up even her morning bath for fear that a blast of cold might strike the big egg. In the evening, when she ventured to peep, she thought she saw a tiny crack in the upper part of the shell. Filled with hope, she went back to her duties, though she could hardly sleep all night for excitement. When she woke with the first steaks of light she felt something stirring under her. Yes, there it was at last; and as she moved, a big awkward bird tumbled head foremost on the ground.

There was no denying it was ugly, even the mother was forced to admit that to herself, though she only said it was 'large' and 'strong.' 'You won't need any teaching when you are once in the water,' she told him, with a glance of surprise at the dull brown which covered his back, and at his long naked neck. And indeed he did not, though he was not half so pretty to look at as the little yellow balls that followed her.

When they returned they found the old neighbour on the bank waiting for them to take them into the duckyard. 'No, it is not a young turkey, certainly,' whispered she in confidence to the mother, 'for though it is lean and skinny, and has no colour to speak of, yet there is something rather distinguished about it, and it holds its head up well.'

'It is very kind of you to say so,' answered the mother, who by this time had some secret doubts of its loveliness. 'Of course, when you see it by itself it is all right, though it is different, somehow, from the others. But one cannot expect all one's children to be beautiful!'

By this time they had reached the centre of the yard, where a very old duck was sitting, who was treated with great respect by all the fowls present.

'You must go up and bow low before her,' whispered the mother to her children, nodding her head in the direction of the old lady, 'and keep your legs well apart, as you see me do. No well-bred duckling turns in its toes. It is a sign of common parents.'

The little ducks tried hard to make their small fat bodies copy the movements of their mother, and the old lady was quite pleased with them; but the rest of the ducks looked on discontentedly, and said to each other:

'Oh, dear me, here are ever so many more! The yard is full already; and did you ever see anything quite as ugly as that great tall creature? He is a disgrace to any brood. I shall go and chase him out!' So saying she put up her feathers, and running to the big duckling bit his neck.

The duckling gave a loud quack; it was the first time he had felt any pain, and at the sound his mother turned quickly.

'Leave him alone,' she said fiercely, 'or I will send for his father. He was not troubling you.'

'No; but he is so ugly and awkward no one can put up with him,' answered the stranger. And though the duckling did not understand the meaning of the words, he felt he was being blamed, and became more uncomfortable still when the old Spanish duck who ruled the fowlyard struck in:

'It certainly is a great pity he is so different from these beautiful darlings. If he could only be hatched over again!'

The poor little fellow drooped his head, and did not know where to look, but was comforted when his mother answered:

'He may not be quite as handsome as the others, but he swims better, and is very strong; I am sure he will make his way in the world as well as anybody.'

'Well, you must feel quite at home here,' said the old duck waddling off. And so they did, all except the duckling, who was snapped at by everyone when they thought his mother was not looking. Even the turkey-cock, who was so big, never passed him without mocking words, and his brothers and sisters, who would not have noticed any difference unless it had been put into their heads, soon became as rude and unkind as the rest.

At last he could bear it no longer, and one day he fancied he saw signs of his mother turning against him too; so that night, when the ducks and hens were still asleep, he stole away through an open door, and under cover of the burdock leaves scrambled on by the bank of the canal, till he reached a wide grassy moor, full of soft marshy places where the reeds grew. Here he lay down, but he was too tired and too frightened to fall asleep, and with the earliest peep of the sun the reeds began to rustle, and he saw that he had blundered into a colony of wild ducks. But as he could not run away again he stood up and bowed politely.

'You are ugly,' said the wild ducks, when they had looked him well over; 'but, however, it is no business of ours, unless you wish to marry one of our daughters, and that we should not allow.' And the duckling answered that he had no idea of marrying anybody, and wanted nothing but to be left alone after his long journey.

So for two whole days he lay quietly among the reeds, eating such food as he could find, and drinking the water of the moorland pool, till he felt himself quite strong again. He wished he might stay were he was for ever, he was so comfortable and happy, away from everyone, with nobody to bite him and tell him how ugly he was.

He was thinking these thoughts, when two young ganders caught sight of him as they were having their evening splash among the reeds, looking for their supper.

'We are getting tired of this moor,' they said, 'and to-morrow we think of trying another, where the lakes are larger and the feeding better. Will you come with us?'

'Is it nicer than this?' asked the duckling doubtfully. And the words were hardly out of his mouth, when 'Pif! pah!' and the two new-comers were stretched dead beside him.

At the sound of the gun the wild ducks in the rushes flew into the air, and for a few minutes the firing continued.

Luckily for himself the duckling could not fly, and he floundered along through the water till he could hide himself amidst some tall ferns which grew in a hollow. But before he got there he met a huge creature on four legs, which he afterwards knew to be a dog, who stood and gazed at him with a long red tongue hanging out of his mouth. The duckling grew cold with terror, and tried to hide his head beneath his little wings; but the dog snuffed at him and passed on, and he was able to reach his place of shelter.

'I am too ugly even for a dog to eat,' said he to himself. 'Well, that is a great mercy.' And he curled himself up in the soft grass till the shots died away in the distance.

When all had been quiet for a long time, and there were only stars to see him, he crept out and looked about him.

He would never go near a pool again, never, thought he; and seeing that the moor stretched far away in the opposite direction from which he had come, he marched bravely on till he got to a small cottage, which seemed too tumbledown for the stones to hold together many hours longer. Even the door only hung upon one hinge, and as the only light in the room sprang from a tiny fire, the duckling edged himself cautiously in, and lay down under a chair close to the broken door, from which he could get out if necessary. But no one seemed to see him or smell him; so he spend the rest of the night in peace.

Now in the cottage dwelt an old woman, her cat, and a hen; and it was really they, and not she, who were masters of the house. The old woman, who passed all her days in spinning yarn, which she sold at the nearest town, loved both the cat and the hen as her own children, and never contradicted them in any way; so it was their grace, and not hers, that the duckling would have to gain.

It was only next morning, when it grew light, that they noticed their visitor, who stood trembling before them, with his eye on the door ready to escape at any moment. They did not, however, appear very fierce, and the duckling became less afraid as they approached him.

'Can you lay eggs?' asked the hen. And the duckling answered meekly:

'No; I don't know how.' Upon which the hen turned her back, and the cat came forward.

‘Can you ruffle your fur when you are angry, or purr when you are pleased?’ said she. And again the duckling had to admit that he could do nothing but swim, which did not seem of much use to anybody.

So the cat and the hen went straight off to the old woman, who was still in bed.

‘Such a useless creature has taken refuge here,’ they said. ‘It calls itself a duckling; but it can neither lay eggs nor purr! What had we better do with it?’

‘Keep it, to be sure!’ replied the old woman briskly. ‘It is all nonsense about it not laying eggs. Anyway, we will let it stay here for a bit, and see what happens.’

So the duckling remained for three weeks, and shared the food of the cat and the hen; but nothing in the way of eggs happened at all. Then the sun came out, and the air grew soft, and the duckling grew tired of being in a hut, and wanted with all his might to have a swim. And one morning he got so restless that even his friends noticed it.

‘What is the matter?’ asked the hen; and the duckling told her.

‘I am so longing for the water again. You can’t think how delicious it is to put your head under the water and dive straight to the bottom.’

‘I don’t think I should enjoy it,’ replied the hen doubtfully. ‘And I don’t think the cat would like it either.’ And the cat, when asked, agreed there was nothing she would hate so much.

‘I can’t stay here any longer, I Must get to the water,’ repeated the duck. And the cat and the hen, who felt hurt and offended, answered shortly:

‘Very well then, go.’

The duckling would have liked to say good-bye, and thank them for their kindness, as he was polite by nature; but they had both turned their backs on him, so he went out of the rickety door feeling rather sad. But, in spite of himself, he could not help a thrill of joy when he was out in the air and water once more, and cared little for the rude glances of the creatures he met. For a while he was quite happy and content; but soon the winter came on, and snow began to fall, and everything to grow very wet and uncomfortable. And the duckling soon found that it is one thing to enjoy being in the water, and quite another to like being damp on land.

The sun was setting one day, like a great scarlet globe, and the river, to the duckling’s vast bewilderment, was getting hard and slippery, when he heard a sound of whirring wings, and high up in the air a flock of swans were flying. They were as white as snow which had fallen during the night, and their long necks with yellow bills were stretched southwards, for they were going – they did not quite know whither – but to a land where the sun shone all day. Oh, if he only could have gone with them! But that was not possible, of course; and besides, what sort of companion could an ugly thing like him be to those beautiful beings? So he walked sadly down to a sheltered pool and dived to the very bottom, and tried to think it was the greatest happiness he could dream of. But, all the same, he knew it wasn’t!

And every morning it grew colder and colder, and the duckling had hard work to keep himself warm. Indeed, it would be truer to say that he never was warm at all; and at last, after one bitter night, his legs moved so slowly that the ice crept closer and closer, and when the morning light broke he was caught fast, as in a trap; and soon his senses went from him.

A few hours more and the poor duckling’s life had been ended. But, by good fortune, a man was crossing the river on his way to his work, and saw in a moment what had happened. He had on thick wooden shoes, and he went and stamped so hard on the ice that it broke, and then he picked up the duckling and tucked him under his sheepskin coat, where his frozen bones began to thaw a little.

Instead of going on his work, the man turned back and took the bird to his children, who gave him a warm mess to eat and put him in a box by the fire, and when they came back from school he was much more comfortable than he had been since he had left the old woman’s cottage. They were kind little children, and wanted to play with him; but, alas! the poor fellow had never played in his life, and thought they wanted to tease him, and flew straight into the milk-pan, and then into the

butter-dish, and from that into the meal-barrel, and at last, terrified at the noise and confusion, right out of the door, and hid himself in the snow amongst the bushes at the back of the house.

He never could tell afterwards exactly how he had spent the rest of the winter. He only knew that he was very miserable and that he never had enough to eat. But by-and-by things grew better. The earth became softer, the sun hotter, the birds sang, and the flowers once more appeared in the grass. When he stood up, he felt different, somehow, from what he had done before he fell asleep among the reeds to which he had wandered after he had escaped from the peasant's hut. His body seemed larger, and his wings stronger. Something pink looked at him from the side of a hill. He thought he would fly towards it and see what it was.

Oh, how glorious it felt to be rushing through the air, wheeling first one way and then the other! He had never thought that flying could be like that! The duckling was almost sorry when he drew near the pink cloud and found it was made up of apple blossoms growing beside a cottage whose garden ran down to the banks of the canal. He fluttered slowly to the ground and paused for a few minutes under a thicket of syringas, and while he was gazing about him, there walked slowly past a flock of the same beautiful birds he had seen so many months ago. Fascinated, he watched them one by one step into the canal, and float quietly upon the waters as if they were part of them.

'I will follow them,' said the duckling to himself; 'ugly though I am, I would rather be killed by them than suffer all I have suffered from cold and hunger, and from the ducks and fowls who should have treated me kindly.' And flying quickly down to the water, he swam after them as fast as he could.

It did not take him long to reach them, for they had stopped to rest in a green pool shaded by a tree whose branches swept the water. And directly they saw him coming some of the younger ones swam out to meet him with cries of welcome, which again the duckling hardly understood. He approached them glad, yet trembling, and turning to one of the older birds, who by this time had left the shade of the tree, he said:

'If I am to die, I would rather you should kill me. I don't know why I was ever hatched, for I am too ugly to live.' And as he spoke, he bowed his head and looked down into the water.

Reflected in the still pool he saw many white shapes, with long necks and golden bills, and, without thinking, he looked for the dull grey body and the awkward skinny neck. But no such thing was there. Instead, he beheld beneath him a beautiful white swan!

'The new one is the best of all,' said the children when they came down to feed the swans with biscuit and cake before going to bed. 'His feathers are whiter and his beak more golden than the rest.' And when he heard that, the duckling thought that it was worth while having undergone all the persecution and loneliness that he had passed through, as otherwise he would never have known what it was to be really happy.

The Two Caskets

[Hans Andersen.]

Far, far away, in the midst of a pine forest, there lived a woman who had both a daughter and a stepdaughter. Ever since her own daughter was born the mother had given her all that she cried for, so she grew up to be as cross and disagreeable as she was ugly. Her stepsister, on the other hand, had spent her childhood in working hard to keep house for her father, who died soon after his second marriage; and she was as much beloved by the neighbours for her goodness and industry as she was for her beauty.

As the years went on, the difference between the two girls grew more marked, and the old woman treated her stepdaughter worse than ever, and was always on the watch for some pretext for beating her, or depriving her of her food. Anything, however foolish, was good enough for this, and one day, when she could think of nothing better, she set both the girls to spin while sitting on the low wall of the well.

'And you had better mind what you do,' said she, 'for the one whose thread breaks first shall be thrown to the bottom.'

But of course she took good care that her own daughter's flax was fine and strong, while the stepsister had only some coarse stuff, which no one would have thought of using. As might be expected, in a very little while the poor girl's thread snapped, and the old woman, who had been watching from behind a door, seized her stepdaughter by her shoulders, and threw her into the well.

'That is an end of you!' she said. But she was wrong, for it was only the beginning.

Down, down, down went the girl – it seemed as if the well must reach to the very middle of the earth; but at last her feet touched the ground, and she found herself in a field more beautiful than even the summer pastures of her native mountains. Trees waved in the soft breeze, and flowers of the brightest colours danced in the grass. And though she was quite alone, the girl's heart danced too, for she felt happier than she had since her father died. So she walked on through the meadow till she came to an old tumbledown fence – so old that it was a wonder it managed to stand up at all, and it looked as if it depended for support on the old man's beard that climbed all over it.

The girl paused for a moment as she came up, and gazed about for a place where she might safely cross. But before she could move a voice cried from the fence:

'Do not hurt me, little maiden; I am so old, so old, I have not much longer to live.'

And the maiden answered:

'No, I will not hurt you; fear nothing.' And then seeing a spot where the clematis grew less thickly than in other places, she jumped lightly over.

'May all go well with thee,' said the fence, as the girl walked on.

She soon left the meadow and turned into a path which ran between two flowery hedges. Right in front of her stood an oven, and through its open door she could see a pile of white loaves.

'Eat as many loaves as you like, but do me no harm, little maiden,' cried the oven. And the maiden told her to fear nothing, for she never hurt anything, and was very grateful for the oven's kindness in giving her such a beautiful white loaf. When she had finished it, down to the last crumb, she shut the oven door and said: 'Good-morning.'

'May all go well with thee,' said the oven, as the girl walked on.

By-and-by she became very thirsty, and seeing a cow with a milk-pail hanging on her horn, turned towards her.

‘Milk me and drink as much as you will, little maiden,’ cried the cow, ‘but be sure you spill none on the ground; and do me no harm, for I have never harmed anyone.’

‘Nor I,’ answered the girl; ‘fear nothing.’ So she sat down and milked till the pail was nearly full. Then she drank it all up except a little drop at the bottom.

‘Now throw any that is left over my hoofs, and hang the pail on my horns again,’ said the cow. And the girl did as she was bid, and kissed the cow on her forehead and went her way.

Many hours had now passed since the girl had fallen down the well, and the sun was setting.

‘Where shall I spend the night?’ thought she. And suddenly she saw before her a gate which she had not noticed before, and a very old woman leaning against it.

‘Good evening,’ said the girl politely; and the old woman answered:

‘Good evening, my child. Would that everyone was as polite as you. Are you in search of anything?’

‘I am in search of a place,’ replied the girl; and the woman smiled and said:

‘Then stop a little while and comb my hair, and you shall tell me all the things you can do.’

‘Willingly, mother,’ answered the girl. And she began combing out the old woman’s hair, which was long and white.

Half an hour passed in this way, and then the old woman said:

‘As you did not think yourself too good to comb me, I will show you where you may take service. Be prudent and patient and all will go well.’

So the girl thanked her, and set out for a farm at a little distance, where she was engaged to milk the cows and sift the corn.

As soon as it was light next morning the girl got up and went into the cow-house. ‘I’m sure you must be hungry,’ said she, patting each in turn. And then she fetched hay from the barn, and while they were eating it, she swept out the cow-house, and strewed clean straw upon the floor. The cows were so pleased with the care she took of them that they stood quite still while she milked them, and did not play any of the tricks on her that they had played on other dairymaids who were rough and rude. And when she had done, and was going to get up from her stool, she found sitting round her a whole circle of cats, black and white, tabby and tortoise-shell, who all cried with one voice:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.