

STEEL FLORA WEBSTER

TALES OF THE PUNJAB:
FOLKLORE OF INDIA

Flora Steel

Tales of the Punjab: Folklore of India

«Public Domain»

Steel F.

Tales of the Punjab: Folklore of India / F. Steel — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

TO THE LITTLE READER	7
SIR BUZZ	8
THE RAT'S WEDDING	12
THE FAITHFUL PRINCE	16
THE BEAR'S BAD BARGAIN	21
PRINCE LIONHEART AND HIS THREE FRIENDS	24
THE LAMBIKIN	31
BOPOLÛCHÎ	33
PRINCESS AUBERGINE	36
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	37

Flora Annie Webster Steel

Tales of the Punjab: Folklore of India

PREFACE

Many of the tales in this collection appeared either in the *Indian Antiquary*, the *Calcutta Review*, or the *Legends of the Punjab*. They were then in the form of literal translations, in many cases uncouth or even unpresentable to ears polite, in all scarcely intelligible to the untravelled English reader; for it must be remembered that, with the exception of the Adventures of Raja Rasâlu, all these stories are strictly folk-tales passing current among a people who can neither read nor write, and whose diction is full of colloquialisms, and, if we choose to call them so, vulgarisms. It would be manifestly unfair, for instance, to compare the literary standard of such tales with that of the *Arabian Nights*, the *Tales of a Parrot*, or similar works. The manner in which these stories were collected is in itself sufficient to show how misleading it would be, if, with the intention of giving the conventional Eastern flavour to the text, it were to be manipulated into a flowery dignity; and as a description of the procedure will serve the double purpose of credential and excuse, the authors give it,—premising that all the stories but three have been collected by Mrs. F. A. Steel during winter tours through the various districts of which her husband has been Chief Magistrate.

A carpet is spread under a tree in the vicinity of the spot which the Magistrate has chosen for his *darbâr*, but far enough away from bureaucracy to let the village idlers approach it should they feel so inclined. In a very few minutes, as a rule, some of them begin to edge up to it, and as they are generally small boys, they commence nudging each other, whispering, and sniggering. The fancied approach of a *chuprâsî*, the 'corrupt lictor' of India, who attends at every *darbâr*, will however cause a sudden stampede; but after a time these become less and less frequent, the wild beasts, as it were, becoming tamer. By and by a group of women stop to gaze, and then the question 'What do you want?' invariably brings the answer 'To see your honour' (*âp ke darshan âe*). Once the ice is broken, the only difficulties are, first, to understand your visitors, and secondly, to get them to go away. When the general conversation is fairly started, inquiries are made by degrees as to how many witches there are in the village, or what cures they know for fever and the evil eye, *etc.* At first these are met by denials expressed in set terms, but a little patient talk will generally lead to some remarks which point the villagers' minds in the direction required, till at last, after many persuasions, some child begins a story, others correct the details, emulation conquers shyness, and finally the story-teller is brought to the front with acclamations: for there is always a story-teller *par excellence* in every village—generally a boy.

Then comes the need for patience, since in all probability the first story is one you have heard a hundred times, or else some pointless and disconnected jumble. At the conclusion of either, however, the teller must be profusely complimented, in the hopes of eliciting something more valuable. But it is possible to waste many hours, and in the end find yourself possessed of nothing save some feeble variant of a well-known legend, or, what is worse, a compilation of oddments which have lingered in a faulty memory from half a dozen distinct stories. After a time, however, the attentive collector is rewarded by finding that a coherent whole is growing up in his or her mind out of the shreds and patches heard here and there, and it is delight indeed when your own dim suspicion that this part of the puzzle fits into that is confirmed by finding the two incidents preserved side by side in the mouth of some perfectly unconscious witness. Some of the tales in this volume have thus been a year or more on the stocks before they had been heard sufficiently often to make their form conclusive.

And this accounts for what may be called the greater literary sequence of these tales over those to be found in many similar collections. They have been selected carefully with the object of securing

a good story in what appears to be its best form; but they have not been doctored in any way, not even in the language. That is neither a transliteration—which would have needed a whole dictionary to be intelligible—nor a version orientalised to suit English tastes. It is an attempt to translate one colloquialism by another, and thus to preserve the aroma of rough ready wit existing side by side with that perfume of pure poesy which every now and again contrasts so strangely with the other. Nothing would have been easier than to alter the style; but to do so would, in the collector's opinion, have robbed the stories of all human value.

That such has been the deliberate choice may be seen at a glance through the only story which has a different origin. The Adventures of Raja Rasâlu was translated from the rough manuscript of a village accountant; and, being current in a more or less classical form, it approaches more nearly to the conventional standards of an Indian tale.

The work has been apportioned between the authors in this way. Mrs. F. A. Steel is responsible for the text, and Major R. C. Temple for the annotations.

It is therefore hoped that the form of the book may fulfil the double intention with which it was written; namely, that the text should interest children, and at the same time the notes should render it valuable to those who study Folklore on its scientific side.

F. A. *Steel*

R. C. *Temple*

TO THE LITTLE READER

Would you like to know how these stories are told? Come with me, and you shall see. There! take my hand and do not be afraid, for Prince Hassan's carpet is beneath your feet. So now!—'Hey presto!

Abracadabra!' Here we are in a Punjabi village.

* * * * *

It is sunset. Over the limitless plain, vast and unbroken as the heaven above, the hot cloudless sky cools slowly into shadow. The men leave their labour amid the fields, which, like an oasis in the desert, surround the mud-built village, and, plough on shoulder, drive their bullocks homewards. The women set aside their spinning-wheels, and prepare the simple evening meal. The little girls troop, basket on head, from the outskirts of the village, where all day long they have been at work, kneading, drying, and stacking the fuel-cakes so necessary in that woodless country. The boys, half hidden in clouds of dust, drive the herds of gaunt cattle and ponderous buffaloes to the thorn-hedged yards. The day is over, the day which has been so hard and toilful even for the children,—and with the night comes rest and play. The village, so deserted before, is alive with voices; the elders cluster round the courtyard doors, the little ones whoop through the narrow alleys. But as the short-lived Indian twilight dies into darkness, the voices one by one are hushed, and as the stars come out the children disappear. But not to sleep: it is too hot, for the sun which has beaten so fiercely all day on the mud walls, and floors, and roofs, has left a legacy of warmth behind it, and not till midnight will the cool breeze spring up, bringing with it refreshment and repose. How then are the long dark hours to be passed? In all the village not a lamp or candle is to be found; the only light—and that too used but sparingly and of necessity—being the dim smoky flame of an oil-fed wick. Yet, in spite of this, the hours, though dark, are not dreary, for this, in an Indian village, is *story-telling time*; not only from choice, but from obedience to the well-known precept which forbids such idle amusement between sunrise and sunset. Ask little Kaniyâ, yonder, why it is that he, the best story-teller in the village, never opens his lips till after sunset, and he will grin from ear to ear, and with a flash of dark eyes and white teeth, answer that travellers lose their way when idle boys and girls tell tales by daylight. And Naraini, the herd-girl, will hang her head and cover her dusky face with her rag of a veil, if you put the question to her; or little Râm Jas shake his bald shaven poll in denial; but not one of the dark-skinned, bare-limbed village children will yield to your request for a story.

No, no!—from sunrise to sunset, when even the little ones must labour, not a word; but from sunset to sunrise, when no man can work, the tongues chatter glibly enough, for that is story-telling time. Then, after the scanty meal is over, the bairns drag their wooden-legged, string-woven bedsteads into the open, and settle themselves down like young birds in a nest, three or four to a bed, while others coil up on mats upon the ground, and some, stealing in for an hour from distant alleys, beg a place here or there.

The stars twinkle overhead, the mosquito sings through the hot air, the village dogs bark at imaginary foes, and from one crowded nest after another rises a childish voice telling some tale, old yet ever new,—tales that were told in the sunrise of the world, and will be told in its sunset. The little audience listens, dozes, dreams, and still the wily Jackal meets his match, or Bopolûchî brave and bold returns rich and victorious from the robber's den. Hark!—that is Kaniyâ's voice, and there is an expectant stir amongst the drowsy listeners as he begins the old old formula—

'Once upon a time—'

SIR BUZZ

Once upon a time a soldier died, leaving a widow and one son. They were dreadfully poor, and at last matters became so bad that they had nothing left in the house to eat.

'Mother,' said the son, 'give me four shillings, and I will go seek my fortune in the wide world.'

'Alas!' answered the mother, 'and where am I, who haven't a farthing wherewith to buy bread, to find four shillings?'

'There is that old coat of my father's,' returned the lad; 'look in the pocket—perchance there is something there.'

So she looked, and behold! there were six shillings hidden away at the very bottom of the pocket!

'More than I bargained for,' quoth the lad, laughing. 'See, mother, these two shillings are for you; you can live on that till I return, the rest will pay my way until I find my fortune.'

So he set off to find his fortune, and on the way he saw a tigress, licking her paw, and moaning mournfully. He was just about to run away from the terrible creature, when she called to him faintly, saying, 'Good lad, if you will take out this thorn for me, I shall be for ever grateful.'

'Not I!' answered the lad. 'Why, if I begin to pull it out, and it pains you, you will kill me with a pat of your paw.'

'No, no!' cried the tigress, 'I will turn my face to this tree, and when the pain comes I will pat *it*.'

To this the soldier's son agreed; so he pulled out the thorn, and when the pain came the tigress gave the tree such a blow that the trunk split all to pieces. Then she turned towards the soldier's son, and said gratefully, 'Take this box as a reward, my son, but do not open it until you have travelled nine miles'

So the soldier's son thanked the tigress, and set off with the box to find his fortune. Now when he had gone five miles, he felt certain that the box weighed more than it had at first, and every step he took it seemed to grow heavier and heavier. He tried to struggle on— though it was all he could do to carry the box—until he had gone about eight miles and a quarter, when his patience gave way. 'I believe that tigress was a witch, and is playing off her tricks upon me,' he cried, 'but I will stand this nonsense no longer. Lie there, you wretched old box!—heaven knows what is in you, and I don't care.'

So saying, he flung the box down on the ground: it burst open with the shock, and out stepped a little old man. He was only one span high, but his beard was a span and a quarter long, and trailed upon the ground.

The little mannikin immediately began to stamp about and scold the lad roundly for letting the box down so violently.

'Upon my word!' quoth the soldier's son, scarcely able to restrain a smile at the ridiculous little figure, 'but you are weighty for your size, old gentleman! And what may your name be?'

'Sir Buzz!' snapped the one-span mannikin, still stamping about in a great rage.

'Upon my word!' quoth the soldier's son once more, 'if *you* are all the box contained, I am glad I didn't trouble to carry it farther.'

'That's not polite,' snarled the mannikin; 'perhaps if you had carried it the full nine miles you might have found something better; but that's neither here nor there. I'm good enough for you, at any rate, and will serve you faithfully according to my mistress's orders.'

'Serve me!—then I wish to goodness you'd serve me with some dinner, for I am mighty hungry! Here are four shillings to pay for it.'

No sooner had the soldier's son said this and given the money, than with a *whiz! boom! bing!* like a big bee, Sir Buzz flew through the air to a confectioner's shop in the nearest town. There he stood, the one-span mannikin, with the span and a quarter beard trailing on the ground, just by the big preserving pan, and cried in ever so loud a voice, 'Ho! ho! Sir Confectioner, bring me sweets!'

The confectioner looked round the shop, and out of the door, and down the street, but could see no one, for tiny Sir Buzz was quite hidden by the preserving pan. Then the mannikin called out louder still, 'Ho! ho! Sir Confectioner, bring me sweets!' And when the confectioner looked in vain for his customer, Sir Buzz grew angry, and ran and pinched him on the legs, and kicked him on the foot, saying, 'Impudent knave! do you mean to say you can't see *me*? Why, I was standing by the preserving pan all the time!'

The confectioner apologised humbly, and hurried away to bring out his best sweets for his irritable little customer. Then Sir Buzz chose about a hundredweight of them, and said, 'Quick, tie them up in something and give them into my hand; I'll carry them home.'

'They will be a good weight, sir,' smiled the confectioner.

'What business is that of yours, I should like to know?' snapped Sir Buzz. 'Just you do as you're told, and here is your money.' So saying he jingled the four shillings in his pocket.

'As you please, sir,' replied the man cheerfully, as he tied up the sweets into a huge bundle and placed it on the little mannikin's outstretched hand, fully expecting him to sink under the weight; when lo! with a *boom! bing!* he whizzed off with the money still in his pocket.

He alighted at a corn-chandler's shop, and, standing behind a basket of flour, called out at the top of his voice, 'Ho! ho! Sir Chandler, bring me flour!'

And when the corn-chandler looked round the shop, and out of the window, and down the street, without seeing anybody, the one-span mannikin, with his beard trailing on the ground, cried again louder than before, 'Ho! ho! Sir Chandler, bring me flour!'

Then on receiving no answer, he flew into a violent rage, and ran and bit the unfortunate corn-chandler on the leg, pinched him, and kicked him, saying, 'Impudent varlet! don't pretend you couldn't see *me*! Why, I was standing close beside you behind that basket!'

So the corn-chandler apologised humbly for his mistake, and asked Sir Buzz how much flour he wanted.

'Two hundredweight,' replied the mannikin, 'two hundredweight, neither more nor less. Tie it up in a bundle, and I'll take it with me.'

'Your honour has a cart or beast of burden with you, doubtless?' said the chandler, 'for two hundredweight is a heavy load.'

'What's that to you?' shrieked Sir Buzz, stamping his foot, 'isn't it enough if I pay for it?' And then he jingled the money in his pocket again.

So the corn-chandler tied up the flour in a bundle, and placed it in the mannikin's outstretched hand, fully expecting it would crush him, when, with a whiz! Sir Buzz flew off, with the shillings still in his pocket. *Boom! bing! boom!*

The soldier's son was just wondering what had become of his one-span servant, when, with a whir! the little fellow alighted beside him, and wiping his face with his handkerchief, as if he were dreadfully hot and tired, said thoughtfully, 'Now I do hope I've brought enough, but you men have such terrible appetites!'

'More than enough, I should say,' laughed the lad, looking at the huge bundles.

Then Sir Buzz cooked the girdle-cakes, and the soldier's son ate three of them and a handful of sweets; but the one-span mannikin gobbled up all the rest, saying at each mouthful, 'You men have such terrible appetites—such terrible appetites!'

After that, the soldier's son and his servant Sir Buzz travelled ever so far, until they came to the King's city. Now the King had a daughter called Princess Blossom, who was so lovely, and tender, and slim, and fair, that she only weighed five flowers. Every morning she was weighed in golden scales, and the scale always turned when the fifth flower was put in, neither less nor more.

Now it so happened that the soldier's son by chance caught a glimpse of the lovely, tender, slim, and fair Princess Blossom, and, of course, he fell desperately in love with her. He would neither sleep

nor eat his dinner, and did nothing all day long but say to his faithful mannikin, 'Oh, dearest Sir Buzz! oh, kind Sir Buzz!—carry me to the Princess Blossom, that I may see and speak to her.'

'Carry you!' snapped the little fellow scornfully, 'that's a likely story! Why, you're ten times as big as I am. You should carry *me!*'

Nevertheless, when the soldier's son begged and prayed, growing pale and pining away with thinking of the Princess Blossom, Sir Buzz, who had a kind heart, was moved, and bade the lad sit on his hand. Then with a tremendous *boom! bing! boom!* they whizzed away and were in the palace in a second. Being night-time, the Princess was asleep; nevertheless the booming wakened her and she was quite frightened to see a handsome young man kneeling beside her. She began of course to scream, but stopped at once when the soldier's son with the greatest politeness, and in the most elegant of language, begged her not to be alarmed. And after that they talked together about everything delightful, while Sir Buzz stood at the door and did sentry; but he stood a brick up on end first, so that he might not seem to pry upon the young people.

Now when the dawn was just breaking, the soldier's son and Princess Blossom, wearied of talking, fell asleep; whereupon Sir Buzz, being a faithful servant, said to himself, 'Now what is to be done? If my master remains here asleep, some one will discover him, and he will be killed as sure as my name is Buzz; but if I wake him, ten to one he will refuse to go.'

So without more ado he put his hand under the bed, and *bing! boom!* carried it into a large garden outside the town. There he set it down in the shade of the biggest tree, and pulling up the next biggest one by the roots, threw it over his shoulder, and marched up and down keeping guard.

Before long the whole town was in a commotion, because the Princess Blossom had been carried off, and all the world and his wife turned out to look for her. By and by the one-eyed Chief Constable came to the garden gate.

'What do you want here?' cried valiant Sir Buzz, making passes at him with the tree.

The Chief Constable with his one eye could see nothing save the branches, but he replied sturdily, 'I want the Princess Blossom!'

'I'll blossom you! Get out of *my* garden, will you?' shrieked the one-span mannikin, with his one and quarter span beard trailing on the ground; and with that he belaboured the Constable's pony so hard with the tree that it bolted away, nearly throwing its rider.

The poor man went straight to the King, saying, 'Your Majesty! I am convinced your Majesty's daughter, the Princess Blossom, is in your Majesty's garden, just outside the town, as there is a tree there which fights terribly.'

Upon this the King summoned all his horses and men, and going to the garden tried to get in; but Sir Buzz behind the tree routed them all, for half were killed, and the rest ran away. The noise of the battle, however, awoke the young couple, and as they were now convinced they could no longer exist apart, they determined to fly together. So when the fight was over, the soldier's son, the Princess Blossom, and Sir Buzz set out to see the world.

Now the soldier's son was so enchanted with his good luck in winning the Princess, that he said to Sir Buzz, 'My fortune is made already; so I shan't want you any more, and you can go back to your mistress.'

'Pooh!' said Sir Buzz. 'Young people always think so; however, have it your own way, only take this hair out of my beard, and if you *should* get into trouble, just burn it in the fire. I'll come to your aid.'

So Sir Buzz boomed off, and the soldier's son and the Princess Blossom lived and travelled together very happily, until at last they lost their way in a forest, and wandered about for some time without any food. When they were nearly starving, a Brâhman found them, and hearing their story said, 'Alas! you poor children!—come home with me, and I will give you something to eat.'

Now had he said 'I will eat you,' it would have been much nearer the mark, for he was no Brâhman, but a dreadful vampire, who loved to devour handsome young men and slender girls. But,

knowing nothing of all this, the couple went home with him quite cheerfully. He was most polite, and when they arrived at his house, said, 'Please get ready whatever you want to eat, for I have no cook. Here are my keys; open all my cupboards save the one with the golden key. Meanwhile I will go and gather firewood.'

Then the Princess Blossom began to prepare the food, while the soldier's son opened all the cupboards. In them he saw lovely jewels, and dresses, and cups and platters, such bags of gold and silver, that his curiosity got the better of his discretion, and, regardless of the Brâhman's warning, he said, 'I *will* see what wonderful thing is hidden in the cupboard with the golden key.' So he opened it, and lo! it was full of human skulls, picked quite clean, and beautifully polished. At this dreadful sight the soldier's son flew back to the Princess Blossom, and said, 'We are lost! we are lost!—this is no Brâhman, but a horrid vampire!'

At that moment they heard him at the door, and the Princess, who was very brave and kept her wits about her, had barely time to thrust the magic hair into the fire, before the vampire, with sharp teeth and fierce eyes, appeared. But at the selfsame moment a *boom! boom! binging* noise was heard in the air, coming nearer and nearer. Whereupon the vampire, who knew very well who his enemy was, changed into a heavy rain pouring down in torrents, hoping thus to drown Sir Buzz, but *he* changed into the storm wind beating back the rain. Then the vampire changed to a dove, but Sir Buzz, pursuing it as a hawk, pressed it so hard that it had barely time to change into a rose, and drop into King Indra's lap as he sat in his celestial court listening to the singing of some dancing girls. Then Sir Buzz, quick as thought, changed into an old musician, and standing beside the bard who was thrumming the guitar, said, 'Brother, you are tired; let *me* play.'

And he played so wonderfully, and sang with such piercing sweetness, that King Indra said, 'What shall I give you as a reward? Name what you please, and it shall be yours.'

Then Sir Buzz said, 'I only ask the rose that is in your Majesty's lap.'

'I had rather you asked more, or less,' replied King Indra; 'it is but a rose, yet it fell from heaven; nevertheless it is yours.'

So saying, he threw the rose towards the musician, and lo! the petals fell in a shower on the ground. Sir Buzz went down on his knees and instantly gathered them up; but one petal escaping, changed into a mouse. Whereupon Sir Buzz, with the speed of lightning, turned into a cat, which caught and gobbled up the mouse.

Now all this time the Princess Blossom and the soldier's son, shivering and shaking, were awaiting the issue of the combat in the vampire's hut; when suddenly, with a *bing! boom!* Sir Buzz arrived victorious, shook his head, and said, 'You two had better go home, for you are not fit to take care of yourselves.'

Then he gathered together all the jewels and gold in one hand, placed the Princess and the soldier's son in the other, and whizzed away home, to where the poor mother—who all this time had been living on the two shillings—was delighted to see them.

Then with a louder *boom! bing! boom!* than usual, Sir Buzz, without even waiting for thanks, whizzed out of sight, and was never seen or heard of again.

But the soldier's son and the Princess Blossom lived happily ever after.

THE RAT'S WEDDING

Once upon a time a fat sleek Rat was caught in a shower of rain, and being far from shelter he set to work and soon dug a nice hole in the ground, in which he sat as dry as a bone while the raindrops splashed outside, making little puddles on the road.

Now in the course of his digging he came upon a fine bit of root, quite dry and fit for fuel, which he set aside carefully—for the Rat is an economical creature—in order to take it home with him. So when the shower was over, he set off with the dry root in his mouth. As he went along, daintily picking his way through the puddles, he saw a poor man vainly trying to light a fire, while a little circle of children stood by, and cried piteously.

'Goodness gracious!' exclaimed the Rat, who was both soft-hearted and curious, 'what a dreadful noise to make! What *is* the matter?'

'The bairns are hungry,' answered the man; 'they are crying for their breakfast, but the sticks are damp, the fire won't burn, and so I can't bake the cakes.'

'If that is all your trouble, perhaps I can help you,' said the good-natured Rat; 'you are welcome to this dry root, and I'll warrant it will soon make a fine blaze.'

The poor man, with a thousand thanks, took the dry root, and in his turn presented the Rat with a morsel of dough, as a reward for his kindness and generosity.

'What a remarkably lucky fellow I am!' thought the Rat, as he trotted off gaily with his prize, 'and clever too! Fancy making a bargain like that—food enough to last me five days in return for a rotten old stick! *Wah! wah! wah!* what it is to have brains!'

Going along, hugging his good fortune in this way, he came presently to a potter's yard, where the potter, leaving his wheel to spin round by itself, was trying to pacify his three little children, who were screaming and crying as if they would burst.

'My gracious!' cried the Rat, stopping his ears, 'what a noise!—do tell me what it is all about.'

'I suppose they are hungry,' replied the potter ruefully; 'their mother has gone to get flour in the bazaar, for there is none in the house. In the meantime I can neither work nor rest because of them.'

'Is that all!' answered the officious Rat; 'then I can help you. Take this dough, cook it quickly, and stop their mouths with food.'

The potter overwhelmed the Rat with thanks for his obliging kindness, and choosing out a nice well-burnt pipkin, insisted on his accepting it as a remembrance.

The Rat was delighted at the exchange, and though the pipkin was just a trifle awkward for him to manage, he succeeded after infinite trouble in balancing it on his head, and went away gingerly, *tink-a-tink, tink-a-tink*, down the road, with his tail over his arm for fear he should trip on it. And all the time he kept saying to himself, 'What a lucky fellow I am! and clever too! Such a hand at a bargain!'

By and by he came to where some neatherds were herding their cattle. One of them was milking a buffalo, and having no pail he used his shoes instead.

'Oh fie! oh fie!' cried the cleanly Rat, quite shocked at the sight.

'What a nasty dirty trick!—why don't you use a pail?'

'For the best of all reasons—we haven't got one!' growled the neatherd, who did not see why the Rat should put his finger in the pie.

'If that is all,' replied the dainty Rat, 'oblige me by using this pipkin, for I cannot bear dirt!'

The neatherd, nothing loath, took the pipkin, and milked away until it was brimming over; then turning to the Rat, who stood looking on, said, 'Here, little fellow, you may have a drink, in payment.'

But if the Rat was good-natured he was also shrewd. 'No, no, my friend,' said he, 'that will not do! As if I could drink the worth of my pipkin at a draught! My dear sir, *I couldn't hold it!* Besides, I never make a bad bargain, so I expect you at least to give me the buffalo that gave the milk.'

'Nonsense!' cried the neatherd; 'a buffalo for a pipkin! Who ever heard of such a price? And what on earth could *you* do with a buffalo when you got it? Why, the pipkin was about as much as you could manage.'

At this the Rat drew himself up with dignity, for he did not like allusions to his size.

'That is my affair, not yours,' he retorted; 'your business is to hand over the buffalo.'

So just for the fun of the thing, and to amuse themselves at the Rat's expense, the neatherds loosed the buffalo's halter and began to tie it to the little animal's tail.

'No! no!' he called, in a great hurry; 'if the beast pulled, the skin of my tail would come off, and then where should I be? Tie it round my neck, if you please.'

So with much laughter the neatherds tied the halter round the Rat's neck, and he, after a polite leave-taking, set off gaily towards home with his prize; that is to say, he set off with the *rope*, for no sooner did he come to the end of the tether than he was brought up with a round turn; the buffalo, nose down grazing away, would not budge until it had finished its tuft of grass, and then seeing another in a different direction marched off towards it, while the Rat, to avoid being dragged, had to trot humbly behind, willy-nilly.

He was too proud to confess the truth, of course, and, nodding his head knowingly to the neatherds, said, 'Ta-ta, good people! I am going home this way. It may be a little longer, but it's much shadier.'

And when the neatherds roared with laughter he took no notice, but trotted on, looking as dignified as possible.

'After all,' he reasoned to himself, 'when one keeps a buffalo one has to look after its grazing. A beast must get a good bellyful of grass if it is to give any milk, and I have plenty of time at my disposal.'

So all day long he trotted about after the buffalo, making believe; but by evening he was dead tired, and felt truly thankful when the great big beast, having eaten enough, lay down under a tree to chew the cud.

Just then a bridal party came by. The bridegroom and his friends had evidently gone on to the next village, leaving the bride's palanquin to follow; so the palanquin bearers, being lazy fellows and seeing a nice shady tree, put down their burden, and began to cook some food.

'What detestable meanness!' grumbled one; 'a grand wedding, and nothing but plain rice pottage to eat! Not a scrap of meat in it, neither sweet nor salt! It would serve the skinflints right if we upset the bride into a ditch!'

'Dear me!' cried the Rat at once, seeing a way out of his difficulty, 'that *is* a shame! I sympathise with your feelings so entirely that if you will allow me I'll give you my buffalo. You can kill it, and cook it.'

'*Your* buffalo!' returned the discontented bearers, 'what rubbish! Whoever heard of a rat owning a buffalo?'

'Not often, I admit,' replied the Rat with conscious pride; 'but look for yourselves. Can you not see that I am leading the beast by a string?'

'Oh, never mind the string!' cried a great big hungry bearer; 'master or no master, I mean to have meat to my dinner!'

Whereupon they killed the buffalo, and, cooking its flesh, ate their dinner with relish; then, offering the remains to the Rat, said carelessly, 'Here, little Rat-skin, that is for you!'

'Now look here!' cried the Rat hotly; 'I'll have none of your pottage, nor your sauce either. You don't suppose I am going to give my best buffalo, that gave quarts and quarts of milk—the buffalo I have been feeding all day—for a wee bit of rice? No!—I got a loaf for a bit of stick; I got a pipkin for a little loaf; I got a buffalo for a pipkin; and now I'll have the bride for my buffalo—the bride, and nothing else!'

By this time the servants, having satisfied their hunger, began to reflect on what they had done, and becoming alarmed at the consequences, arrived at the conclusion it would be wisest to make their escape whilst they could. So, leaving the bride in her palanquin, they took to their heels in various directions.

The Rat, being as it were left in possession, advanced to the palanquin, and drawing aside the curtain, with the sweetest of voices and best of bows begged the bride to descend. She hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry, but as any company, even a Rat's, was better than being quite alone in the wilderness, she did as she was bidden, and followed the lead of her guide, who set off as fast as he could for his hole.

As he trotted along beside the lovely young bride, who, by her rich dress and glittering jewels, seemed to be some king's daughter, he kept saying to himself, 'How clever I am! What bargains I do make, to be sure!'

When they arrived at his hole, the Rat stepped forward with the greatest politeness, and said, 'Welcome, madam, to my humble abode! Pray step in, or if you will allow me, and as the passage is somewhat dark, I will show you the way.'

[Illustration: The rat at the palanquin]

Whereupon he ran in first, but after a time, finding the bride did not follow, he put his nose out again, saying testily, 'Well, madam, why don't you follow? Don't you know it's rude to keep your husband waiting?'

'My good sir,' laughed the handsome young bride, 'I can't squeeze into that little hole!'

The Rat coughed; then after a moment's thought he replied, 'There is some truth in your remark—you *are* overgrown, and I suppose I shall have to build you a thatch somewhere. For to-night you can rest under that wild plum-tree.'

'But I am so hungry!' said the bride ruefully.

'Dear, dear! everybody seems hungry to-day!' returned the Rat pettishly; 'however, that's easily settled—I'll fetch you some supper in a trice.'

So he ran into his hole, returning immediately with an ear of millet and a dry pea.

'There!' said he, triumphantly, 'isn't that a fine meal?'

'I can't eat that!' whimpered the bride; 'it isn't a mouthful; and I want rice pottage, and cakes, and sweet eggs, and sugar-drops. I shall die if I don't get them!'

'Oh dear me!' cried the Rat in a rage, 'what a nuisance a bride is, to be sure! Why don't you eat the wild plums?'

'I can't live on wild plums!' retorted the weeping bride; 'nobody could; besides, they are only half ripe, and I can't reach them.'

'Rubbish!' cried the Rat; 'ripe or unripe, they must do you for to-night, and to-morrow you can gather a basketful, sell them in the city, and buy sugar-drops and sweet eggs to your heart's content!'

So the next morning the Rat climbed up into the plum-tree, and nibbled away at the stalks till the fruit fell down into the bride's veil. Then, unripe as they were, she carried them into the city, calling out through the streets—

'Green plums I sell! green plums I sell!

Princess am I, Rat's bride as well!'

As she passed by the palace, her mother the Queen heard her voice, and, running out, recognised her daughter. Great were the rejoicings, for every one thought the poor bride had been eaten by wild beasts. In the midst of the feasting and merriment, the Rat, who had followed the Princess at a distance, and had become alarmed at her long absence, arrived at the door, against which he beat with a big knobby stick, calling out fiercely, 'Give me my wife! give me my wife! She is mine

by fair bargain. I gave a stick and I got a loaf; I gave a loaf and I got a pipkin; I gave a pipkin and I got a buffalo; I gave a buffalo and I got a bride. Give me my wife! give me my wife!

'La! son-in-law! what a fuss you do make!' said the wily old Queen, through the door, 'and all about nothing! Who wants to run away with your wife? On the contrary, we are proud to see you, and I only keep you waiting at the door till we can spread the carpets, and receive you in style.'

Hearing this, the Rat was mollified, and waited patiently outside whilst the cunning old Queen prepared for his reception, which she did by cutting a hole in the very middle of a stool, putting a red-hot stone underneath, covering it over with a stew-pan-lid, and then spreading a beautiful embroidered cloth over all.

Then she went to the door, and receiving the Rat with the greatest respect, led him to the stool, praying him to be seated.

'Dear! dear! how clever I am! What bargains I do make, to be sure!' said he to himself as he climbed on to the stool. 'Here I am, son-in-law to a real live Queen! What will the neighbours say?'

At first he sat down on the edge of the stool, but even there it was warm, and after a while he began to fidget, saying, 'Dear me, mother-in-law! how hot your house is! Everything I touch seems burning!'

'You are out of the wind there, my son,' replied the cunning old Queen; 'sit more in the middle of the stool, and then you will feel the breeze and get cooler.'

But he didn't! for the stewpan-lid by this time had become so hot, that the Rat fairly frizzled when he sat down on it; and it was not until he had left all his tail, half his hair, and a large piece of his skin behind him, that he managed to escape, howling with pain, and vowing that never, never, never again would he make a bargain!

THE FAITHFUL PRINCE

Long ago there lived a King who had an only son, by name Prince Bahrâmgor, who was as splendid as the noonday sun, and as beautiful as the midnight moon. Now one day the Prince went a-hunting, and he hunted to the north, but found no game; he hunted to the south, yet no quarry arose; he hunted to the east, and still found nothing. Then he turned towards the setting sun, when suddenly from a thicket flashed a golden deer. Burnished gold were its hoofs and horns, rich gold its body. Dazzled by the wonderful sight, the astonished Prince bade his retainers form a circle round the beautiful strange creature, and so gradually enclose and secure it.

'Remember,' said the Prince, 'I hold him towards whom the deer may run to be responsible for its escape, or capture.'

Closer and closer drew the glittering circle of horsemen, while in the centre stood the golden deer, until, with marvellous speed, it fled straight towards the Prince, But he was swifter still, and caught it by the golden horns. Then the creature found human voice, and cried, 'Let me go, oh! Prince Bahrâmgor and I will give you countless treasures!'

But the Prince laughed, saying, 'Not so! I have gold and jewels galore, but never a golden deer.'

'Let me go,' pleaded the deer, 'and I will give you more than treasures!'

'And what may that be?' asked the Prince, still laughing.

'I will give you a ride on my back such as never mortal man rode before,' replied the deer.

'Done!' cried the gay Prince, vaulting lightly to the deer's back; and immediately, like a bird from a thicket, the strange glittering creature rose through the air till it was lost to sight. For seven days and seven nights it carried the Prince over all the world, so that he could see everything like a picture passing below, and on the evening of the seventh day it touched the earth once more, and instantly vanished. Prince Bahrâmgor rubbed his eyes in bewilderment, for he had never been in such a strange country before. Everything seemed new and unfamiliar. He wandered about for some time looking for the trace of a house or a footprint, when suddenly from the ground at his feet popped a wee old man.

'How did you come here? and what are you looking for, my son?' quoth he politely.

So Prince Bahrâmgor told him how he had ridden thither on a golden deer, which had disappeared, and how he was now quite lost and bewildered in this strange country.

'Do not be alarmed, my son,' returned the wee old man; 'it is true you are in Demonsland, but no one shall hurt you, for I am the demon Jasdrûl whose life you saved when I was on the earth in the shape of a golden deer.'

Then the demon Jasdrûl took Prince Bahrâmgor to his house, and treated him right royally, giving him a hundred keys, and saying, 'These are the keys of my palaces and gardens. Amuse yourself by looking at them, and mayhap somewhere you may find a treasure worth having.'

So every day Prince Bahrâmgor opened a new garden, and examined a new palace, and in one he found rooms full of gold, and in another jewels, and in a third rich stuffs, in fact everything the heart could desire, until he came to the hundredth palace, and that he found was a mere hovel, full of all poisonous things, herbs, stones, snakes, and insects. But the garden in which it stood was by far the most magnificent of all. It was seven miles this way, and seven miles that, full of tall trees and bright flowers, lakes, streams, fountains, and summer-houses. Gay butterflies flitted about, and birds sang in it all day and all night. The Prince, enchanted, wandered seven miles this way, and seven miles that, until he was so tired that he lay down to rest in a marble summer-house, where he found a golden bed, all spread with silken shawls. Now while he slept, the Fairy Princess Shâhpasand, who was taking the air, fairy-fashion, in the shape of a pigeon, happened to fly over the garden, and catching sight of the beautiful, splendid, handsome young Prince, she sank to earth in sheer astonishment at beholding

such a lovely sight, and, resuming her natural shape—as fairies always do when they touch the ground—she stooped over the young man and gave him a kiss.

He woke up in a hurry, and what was his astonishment on seeing the most beautiful Princess in the world kneeling gracefully beside him!

'Dearest Prince!' cried the maiden, clasping her hands, 'I have been looking for you everywhere!'

Now the very same thing befell Prince Bahrâmgor that had happened to the Princess Shâhpasand—that is to say, no sooner did he set eyes on her than he fell desperately in love, and so, of course, they agreed to get married without any delay. Nevertheless, the Prince thought it best first to consult his host, the demon Jasdrûl, seeing how powerful he was in Demonsland. To the young man's delight, the demon not only gave his consent, but appeared greatly pleased, rubbing his hands and saying, 'Now you will remain with me and be so happy that you will never think of returning to your own country any more.'

So Prince Bahrâmgor and the Fairy Princess Shâhpasand were married, and lived ever so happily, for ever so long a time.

At last the thought of the home he had left came back to the Prince, and he began to think longingly of his father the King, his mother the Queen, and of his favourite horse and hound. Then from thinking of them he fell to speaking of them to the Princess, his wife, and then from speaking he took to sighing and sighing and refusing his dinner, until he became quite pale and thin. Now the demon Jasdrûl used to sit every night in a little echoing room below the Prince and Princess's chamber, and listen to what they said, so as to be sure they were happy; and when he heard the Prince talking of his far-away home on the earth, he sighed too, for he was a kindhearted demon, and loved his handsome young Prince.

At last he asked Prince Bahrâmgor what was the cause of his growing so pale and sighing so often—for so amiable was the young man that he would rather have died of grief than have committed the rudeness of telling his host he was longing to get away; but when he was asked he said piteously, 'Oh, good demon! let me go home and see my father the King, my mother the Queen, my horse and my hound, for I am very weary. Let me and my Princess go, or assuredly I shall die!'

At first the demon refused, but at last he took pity on the Prince, and said, 'Be it so; nevertheless you will soon repent and long to be back in Demonsland; for the world has changed since you left it, and you will have trouble. Take this hair with you, and when you need help, burn it, then I will come immediately to your assistance.'

Then the demon Jasdrûl said a regretful goodbye, and, Hey presto!—Prince Bahrâmgor found himself standing outside his native city, with his beautiful bride beside him.

But, alas! as the good-natured demon had foretold, everything was changed. His father and mother were both dead, a usurper sat on the throne, and had put a price on Bahrâmgor's head should he ever return from his mysterious journey. Luckily no one recognised the young Prince (so much had he changed during his residence in Demonsland) save his old huntsman, who, though overjoyed to see his master once more, said it was as much as his life was worth to give the Prince shelter; still, being a faithful servant, he agreed to let the young couple live in the garret of his house.

'My old mother, who is blind,' he said, 'will never see you coming and going; and as you used to be fond of sport, you can help me to hunt, as I used to help you.'

So the splendid Prince Bahrâmgor and his lovely Princess hid in the garret of the huntsman's house, and no one knew they were there. Now one fine day, when the Prince had gone out to hunt, as servant to the huntsman, Princess Shâhpasand took the opportunity of washing her beautiful golden hair, which hung round her ivory neck and down to her pretty ankles like a shower of sunshine, and when she had washed it she combed it, and set the window ajar so that the breeze might blow in and dry her hair.

Just at this moment the Chief Constable of the town happened to pass by, and hearing the window open, looked up and saw the lovely Shâhpasand, with her glittering golden hair. He was so

overcome at the sight that he fell right off his horse into the gutter. His servants, thinking he had a fit, picked him up and carried him back to his house, where he never ceased raving about a beautiful fairy with golden hair in the huntsman's garret. This set everybody wondering whether he had been bewitched, and the story meeting the King's ear, he sent down some soldiers to make inquiries at the huntsman's house.

'No one lives here!' said the huntsman's cross old mother, 'no beautiful lady, nor ugly one either, nor any person at all, save me and my son. However, go to the garret and look for yourselves.'

Hearing these words of the old woman, Princess Shâhpasand bolted the door, and, seizing a knife, cut a hole in the wooden roof. Then, taking the form of a pigeon, she flew out, so that when the soldiers burst open the door they found no one in the garret.

The poor Princess was greatly distressed at having to leave her beautiful young Prince in this hurried way, and as she flew past the blind old crone she whispered in her ear, 'I go to my father's house in the Emerald Mountain.'

In the evening when Prince Bahrâmgor returned from hunting, great was his grief at finding the garret empty! Nor could the blind old crone tell him much of what had occurred; still, when he heard of the mysterious voice which whispered, 'I go to my father's house in the Emerald Mountain,' he was at first somewhat comforted. Afterwards, when he reflected that he had not the remotest idea where the Emerald Mountain was to be found, he fell into a very sad state, and casting himself on the ground he sobbed and sighed; he refused his dinner, and never ceased crying, 'Oh, my dearest Princess! my dearest Princess!'

At last he remembered the magic hair, and taking it from its hiding-place threw it into the fire. It had scarcely begun to burn when, Hey presto!—the demon Jasdrûl appeared, and asked him what he wanted.

'Show me the way to the Emerald Mountain,' cried the Prince.

Then the kind-hearted demon shook his head sorrowfully, saying, 'You would never reach it alive, my son. Be guided by me,—forget all that has passed, and begin a new life.'

'I have but one life,' answered the faithful Prince, 'and that is gone if I lose my dearest Princess! As I must die, let me die seeking her.'

Then the demon Jasdrûl was touched by the constancy of the splendid young Prince, and promised to aid him as far as possible. So he carried the young man back to Demonsland, and giving him a magic wand, bade him travel over the country until he came to the demon Nanâk Chand's house.

'You will meet with many dangers by the way,' said his old friend, 'but keep the magic wand in your hand day and night, and nothing will harm you. That is all I can do for you, but Nanâk Chand, who is my elder brother, can help you farther on your way.'

So Prince Bahrâmgor travelled through Demonsland, and because he held the magic wand in his hand day and night, no harm came to him. At last he arrived at the demon Nanâk Chand's house, just as the demon had awakened from sleep, which, according to the habit of demons, had lasted for twelve years. Naturally he was desperately hungry, and on catching sight of the Prince, thought what a dainty morsel he would be for breakfast; nevertheless, though his mouth watered, the demon restrained his appetite when he saw the wand, and asked the Prince politely what he wanted. But when the demon Nanâk Chand had heard the whole story, he shook his head, saying, 'You will never reach the Emerald Mountain, my son. Be guided by me,—forget all that has passed, and begin a new life.'

Then the splendid young Prince answered as before, 'I have but one life, and that is gone if I lose my dearest Princess! If I must die, let me die seeking her.'

This answer touched the demon Nanâk Chand, and he gave the faithful Prince a box of powdered antimony, and bade him travel on through Demonsland till he came to the house of the great demon Safed. 'For,' said he, 'Safed is my eldest brother, and if anybody can do what you want, he will. If you are in need, rub the powder on your eyes, and whatever you wish near will be near, but whatever you wish far will be far.'

So the constant Prince travelled on through all the dangers and difficulties of Demonsland, till he reached the demon Safed's house, to whom he told his story, showing the powder and the magic wand, which had brought him so far in safety.

But the great demon Safed shook his head, saying, 'You will never reach the Emerald Mountain alive, my son. Be guided by me,—forget all that has passed, and begin a new life.'

Still the faithful Prince gave the same answer, 'I have but one life, and that is gone if I lose my dearest Princess! If I must die, let me die seeking her.'

Then the great demon nodded his head approvingly, and said, 'You are a brave lad, and I must do my best for you. Take this *yech*-cap: whenever you put it on you will become invisible. Journey to the north, and after a while in the far distance you will see the Emerald Mountain. Then put the powder on your eyes and wish the mountain near, for it is an enchanted hill, and the farther you climb the higher it grows. On the summit lies the Emerald City: enter it by means of your invisible cap, and find the Princess—if you can.'

So the Prince journeyed joyfully to the north, until in the far far distance he saw the glittering Emerald Mountain. Then he rubbed the powder on his eyes, and behold! what he desired was near, and the Emerald City lay before him, looking as if it had been cut out of a single jewel. But the Prince thought of nothing save his dearest Princess, and wandered up and down the gleaming city protected by his invisible cap. Still he could not find her. The fact was, the Princess Shâhpasand's father had locked her up inside seven prisons, for fear she should fly away again, for he doated on her, and was in terror lest she should escape back to earth and her handsome young Prince, of whom she never ceased talking.

'If your husband comes to you, well and good,' said the old man, 'but you shall never go back to him.'

So the poor Princess wept all day long inside her seven prisons, for how could mortal man ever reach the Emerald Mountain?

Now the Prince, whilst roaming disconsolately about the city, noticed a servant woman who every day at a certain hour entered a certain door with a tray of sweet dishes on her head. Being curious, he took advantage of his invisible cap, and when she opened the door he slipped in behind her. Nothing was to be seen but a large door, which, after shutting and locking the outer one, the servant opened. Again Prince Bahrângor slipped in behind her, and again saw nothing but a huge door. And so on he went through all the seven doors, till he came to the seventh prison, and there sat the beautiful Princess Shâhpasand, weeping salt tears. At the sight of her he could scarcely refrain from flinging himself at her feet, but remembering that he was invisible, he waited till the servant after putting down the tray retired, locking all the seven prisons one by one. Then he sat down by the Princess and began to eat out of the same dish with her.

She, poor thing, had not the appetite of a sparrow, and scarcely ate anything, so when she saw the contents of the dish disappearing, she thought she must be dreaming. But when the whole had vanished, she became convinced some one was in the room with her, and cried out faintly, 'Who eats in the same dish with me?'

Then Prince Bahrângor lifted the *yech*-cap from his forehead, so that he was no longer quite invisible, but showed like a figure seen in early dawn. At this the Princess wept bitterly, calling him by name, thinking she had seen his ghost, but as he lifted the *yech*-cap more and more, and, growing from a shadow to real flesh and blood, clasped her in his arms, her tears changed to radiant smiles.

Great was the astonishment of the servant next day when she found the handsome young Prince seated beside his dearest Princess. She ran to tell the King, who, on hearing the whole story from his daughter's lips, was very much pleased at the courage and constancy of Prince Bahrângor, and ordered Princess Shâhpasand to be released at once; 'For,' he said, 'now her husband has found his way to her, my daughter will not want to go to him.'

Then he appointed the Prince to be his heir, and the faithful Prince Bahrâmgor and his beautiful bride lived happily ever afterwards in the Emerald kingdom.

THE BEAR'S BAD BARGAIN

Once upon a time, a very old woodman lived with his very old wife in a tiny hut close to the orchard of a rich man,—so close that the boughs of a pear-tree hung right over the cottage yard. Now it was agreed between the rich man and the woodman, that if any of the fruit fell into the yard, the old couple were to be allowed to eat it; so you may imagine with what hungry eyes they watched the pears ripening, and prayed for a storm of wind, or a flock of flying foxes, or anything which would cause the fruit to fall. But nothing came, and the old wife, who was a grumbling, scolding old thing, declared they would infallibly become beggars. So she took to giving her husband nothing but dry bread to eat, and insisted on his working harder than ever, till the poor old soul got quite thin; and all because the pears would not fall down! At last, the woodman turned round and declared he would not work any more unless his wife gave him *khichrî* to his dinner; so with a very bad grace the old woman took some rice and pulse, some butter and spices, and began to cook a savoury *khichrî*. What an appetising smell it had, to be sure! The woodman was for gobbling it up as soon as ever it was ready. 'No, no,' cried the greedy old wife, 'not till you have brought me in another load of wood; and mind it is a good one. You must work for your dinner.'

So the old man set off to the forest and began to hack and to hew with such a will that he soon had quite a large bundle, and with every faggot he cut he seemed to smell the savoury *khichrî* and think of the feast that was coming.

Just then a bear came swinging by, with its great black nose tilted in the air, and its little keen eyes peering about; for bears, though good enough fellows on the whole, are just dreadfully inquisitive.

'Peace be with you, friend!' said the bear, 'and what may you be going to do with that remarkably large bundle of wood?'

'It is for my wife,' returned the woodman. 'The fact is,' he added confidentially, smacking his lips, 'she has made *such* a *khichrî* for dinner! and if I bring in a good bundle of wood she is pretty sure to give me a plentiful portion. Oh, my dear fellow, you should just smell that *khichrî*!'

At this the bear's mouth began to water, for, like all bears, he was a dreadful glutton.

'Do you think your wife would give me some too, if I brought her a bundle of wood?' he asked anxiously.

'Perhaps; if it was a very big load,' answered the woodman craftily.

'Would—would four hundredweight be enough?' asked the bear.

'I'm afraid not,' returned the woodman, shaking his head; 'you see *khichrî* is an expensive dish to make,—there is rice in it, and plenty of butter, and pulse, and—'

'Would—would eight hundredweight do?'

'Say half a ton, and it's a bargain!' quoth the woodman.

'Half a ton is a large quantity!' sighed the bear.

'There is saffron in the *khichrî*,' remarked the woodman casually.

The bear licked his lips, and his little eyes twinkled with greed and delight.

'Well, it's a bargain! Go home sharp and tell your wife to keep the *khichrî* hot; I'll be with you in a trice.'

Away went the woodman in great glee to tell his wife how the bear had agreed to bring half a ton of wood in return for a share of the *khichrî*.

Now the wife could not help allowing that her husband had made a good bargain, but being by nature a grumbler, she was determined not to be pleased, so she began to scold the old man for not having settled exactly the share the bear was to have; 'For,' said she, 'he will gobble up the potful before we have finished our first helping.'

On this the woodman became quite pale. 'In that case,' he said, 'we had better begin now, and have a fair start.' So without more ado they squatted down on the floor, with the brass pot full of *khichrî* between them, and began to eat as fast as they could.

'Remember to leave some for the bear, wife,' said the woodman, speaking with his mouth crammed full.

'Certainly, certainly,' she replied, helping herself to another handful.

'My dear,' cried the old woman in her turn, with her mouth so full that she could hardly speak, 'remember the poor bear!'

'Certainly, certainly, my love!' returned the old man, taking another mouthful.

So it went on, till there was not a single grain left in the pot.

'What's to be done now?' said the woodman; 'it is all your fault, wife, for eating so much.'

'My fault!' retorted his wife scornfully, 'why, you ate twice as much as I did!'

'No, I didn't!'

'Yes, you did!—men always eat more than women.'

'No, they don't!'

'Yes, they do!'

'Well, it's no use quarrelling about it now,' said the woodman, 'the *khichrî*'s gone, and the bear will be furious.'

'That wouldn't matter much if we could get the wood,' said the greedy old woman. 'I'll tell you what we must do,—we must lock up everything there is to eat in the house, leave the *khichrî* pot by the fire, and hide in the garret. When the bear comes he will think we have gone out and left his dinner for him. Then he will throw down his bundle and come in. Of course he will rampage a little when he finds the pot is empty, but he can't do much mischief, and I don't think he will take the trouble of carrying the wood away.'

So they made haste to lock up all the food and hide themselves in the garret.

Meanwhile the bear had been toiling and moiling away at his bundle of wood, which took him much longer to collect than he expected; however, at last he arrived quite exhausted at the woodcutter's cottage. Seeing the brass *khichrî* pot by the fire, he threw down his load and went in. And then—mercy! wasn't he angry when he found nothing in it—not even a grain of rice, nor a tiny wee bit of pulse, but only a smell that was so uncommonly nice that he actually cried with rage and disappointment. He flew into the most dreadful temper, but though he turned the house topsy-turvy, he could not find a morsel of food. Finally, he declared he would take the wood away again, but, as the crafty old woman had imagined, when he came to the task, he did not care, even for the sake of revenge, to carry so heavy a burden.

'I won't go away empty-handed,' said he to himself, seizing the *khichrî* pot; 'if I can't get the taste I'll have the smell!'

Now, as he left the cottage, he caught sight of the beautiful golden pears hanging over into the yard. His mouth began to water at once, for he was desperately hungry, and the pears were the first of the season; in a trice he was on the wall, up the tree, and, gathering the biggest and ripest one he could find, was just putting it into his mouth, when a thought struck him.

'If I take these pears home I shall be able to sell them for ever so much to the other bears, and then with the money I shall be able to buy some *khichrî*. Ha, ha! I shall have the best of the bargain after all!'

So saying, he began to gather the ripe pears as fast as he could and put them into the *khichrî* pot, but whenever he came to an unripe one he would shake his head and say, 'No one would buy that, yet it is a pity to waste it! So he would pop it into his mouth and eat it, making wry faces if it was very sour.

Now all this time the woodman's wife had been watching the bear through a crevice, and holding her breath for fear of discovery; but, at last, what with being asthmatic, and having a cold in her head,

she could hold it no longer, and just as the *khichrî* pot was quite full of golden ripe pears, out she came with the most tremendous sneeze you ever heard—'A-h-chc-u!'

The bear, thinking some one had fired a gun at him, dropped the *khichrî* pot into the cottage yard, and fled into the forest as fast as his legs would carry him.

So the woodman and his wife got the *khichrî*, the wood, and the coveted pears, but the poor bear got nothing but a very bad stomach-ache from eating unripe fruit.

PRINCE LIONHEART AND HIS THREE FRIENDS

Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen who would have been as happy as the day was long had it not been for this one circumstance,—they had no children.

At last an old *fakîr*, or devotee, coming to the palace, asked to see the Queen, and giving her some barleycorns, told her to eat them and cease weeping, for in nine months she would have a beautiful little son. The Queen ate the barleycorns, and sure enough after nine months she bore the most charming, lovely, splendid Prince that ever was seen, who was called Lionheart, because he was so brave and so strong.

Now when he grew up to man's estate, Prince Lionheart grew restless also, and was for ever begging his father the King to allow him to travel in the wide world and seek adventures. Then the King would shake his head, saying *only* sons were too precious to be turned adrift; but at last, seeing the young Prince could think of nothing else, he gave his consent, and Prince Lionheart set off on his travels, taking no one with him but his three companions, the Knifegrinder, the Blacksmith, and the Carpenter.

Now when these four valiant young men had gone a short distance, they came upon a magnificent city, lying deserted and desolate in the wilderness. Passing through it they saw tall houses, broad bazaars, shops still full of goods, everything pointing to a large and wealthy population; but neither in street nor house was a human being to be seen. This astonished them very much, until the Knifegrinder, clapping his hand to his forehead, said, 'I remember! This must be the city I have heard about, where a demon lives who will let no one dwell in peace. We had best be off!'

'Not a bit of it!' cried Prince Lionheart. 'At any rate not until I've had my dinner, for I am just desperately hungry!'

So they went to the shops, and bought all they required, laying the proper price for each thing on the counters just as if the shopkeepers had been there. Then going to the palace, which stood in the middle of the town, Prince Lionheart bade the Knifegrinder prepare the dinner, while he and his other companions took a further look at the city.

No sooner had they set off, than the Knifegrinder, going to the kitchen, began to cook the food. It sent up a savoury smell, and the Knifegrinder was just thinking how nice it would taste, when he saw a little figure beside him, clad in armour, with sword and lance, riding on a gaily-caparisoned mouse.

'Give me my dinner!' cried the mannikin, angrily shaking his lance.

'Your dinner! Come, that is a joke!' quoth the Knifegrinder, laughing.

'Give it me at once!' cried the little warrior in a louder voice, 'or I'll hang you to the nearest *pîpal* tree!'

'Wah! whipper-snapper!' replied the valiant Knifegrinder, 'come a little nearer, and let me squash you between finger and thumb!'

At these words the mannikin suddenly shot up into a terribly tall demon, whereupon the Knifegrinder's courage disappeared, and, falling on his knees, he begged for mercy. But his piteous cries were of no use, for in a trice he was hung to the topmost branch of the *pîpal* tree.

'I'll teach 'em to cook in my kitchen!' growled the demon, as he gobbled up all the cakes and savoury stew. When he had finished every morsel he disappeared.

Now the Knifegrinder wriggled so desperately that the *pîpal* branch broke, and he came crashing through the tree to the ground, without much hurt beyond a great fright and a few bruises. However, he was so dreadfully alarmed that he rushed into the sleeping-room, and rolling himself up in his quilt, shook from head to foot as if he had the ague.

By and by in came Prince Lionheart and his companions, all three as hungry as hunters, crying, 'Well, jolly Knifegrinder! where's the dinner?'

Whereupon he groaned out from under his quilt, 'Don't be angry, for it's nobody's fault; only just as it was ready I got a fit of ague, and as I lay shivering and shaking a dog came in and walked off with everything.'

He was afraid that if he told the truth his companions would think him a coward for not fighting the demon.

'What a pity!' cried the Prince, 'but we must just cook some more. Here! you Blacksmith! do you prepare the dinner, while the Carpenter and I have another look at the city.'

Now, no sooner had the Blacksmith begun to sniff the savoury smell, and think how nice the cakes and stew would taste, than the little warrior appeared to him also. And he was quite as brave at first as the Knifegrinder had been, and afterwards he too fell on his knees and prayed for mercy. In fact everything happened to him as it had happened to the Knifegrinder, and when he fell from the tree he too fled into the sleeping-room, and rolling himself in his quilt began to shiver and shake; so that when Prince Lionheart and the Carpenter came back, hungry as hunters, there was no dinner.

Then the Carpenter stayed behind to cook, but he fared no better than the two others, so that when hungry Prince Lionheart returned there were three sick men, shivering and shaking under their quilts, and no dinner. Whereupon the Prince set to work to cook his food himself.

No sooner had it begun to give off a savoury smell than the tiny mouse-warrior appeared, very fierce and valiant.

'Upon my word, you are really a very pretty little fellow!' said the Prince in a patronising way; 'and what may you want?'

'Give me my dinner!' shrieked the mannikin.

'It is not *your* dinner, my dear sir, it is *my* dinner!' quoth the Prince; 'but to avoid disputes let's fight it out.'

Upon this the mouse-warrior began to stretch and grow till he became a terribly tall demon. But instead of falling on his knees and begging for mercy, the Prince only burst into a fit of laughter, and said, 'My good sir! there is a medium in all things! Just now you were ridiculously small, at present you are absurdly big; but, as you seem to be able to alter your size without much trouble, suppose for once in a way you show some spirit, and become just my size, neither less nor more; then we can settle whose dinner it really is.'

The demon could not withstand the Prince's reasoning, so he shrank to an ordinary size, and setting to work with a will, began to tilt at the Prince in fine style. But valiant Lionheart never yielded an inch, and finally, after a terrific battle, slew the demon with his sharp sword.

Then guessing at the truth he roused his three sick friends, saying with a smile, 'O ye valiant ones! arise, for I have killed the ague!'

And they got up sheepishly, and fell to praising their leader for his incomparable valour.

After this, Prince Lionheart sent messages to all the inhabitants of the town who had been driven away by the wicked demon, telling them they could return and dwell in safety, on condition of their taking the Knifegrinder as their king, and giving him their richest and most beautiful maiden as a bride.

This they did with great joy, but when the wedding was over, and Prince Lionheart prepared to set out once more on his adventures, the Knifegrinder threw himself before his master, begging to be allowed to accompany him. Prince Lionheart, however, refused the request, bidding him remain to govern his kingdom, and at the same time gave him a barley plant, bidding him tend it very carefully; since so long as it flourished he might be assured his master was alive and well. If, on the contrary, it drooped, then he might know that misfortune was at hand, and set off to help if he chose.

So the Knifegrinder king remained behind with his bride and his barley plant, but Prince Lionheart, the Blacksmith, and the Carpenter set forth on their travels.

By and by they came to another desolate city, lying deserted in the wilderness, and as before they wandered through it, wondering at the tall palaces, the empty streets, and the vacant shops where

never a human being was to be seen, until the Blacksmith, suddenly recollecting, said, 'I remember now! This must be the city where the dreadful ghost lives which kills every one. We had best be off!'

'After we have had our dinners!' quoth hungry Lionheart.

So having bought all they required from a vacant shop, putting the proper price of everything on the counter, since there was no shopkeeper, they repaired to the palace, where the Blacksmith was installed as cook, whilst the others looked through the town.

No sooner had the dinner begun to give off an appetising smell than the ghost appeared in the form of an old woman, awful and forbidding, with black wrinkled skin, and feet turned backwards.

At this sight the valiant Blacksmith never stopped to parley, but fled into another room and bolted the door. Whereupon the ghost ate up the dinner in no time, and disappeared; so that when Prince Lionheart and the Carpenter returned, as hungry as hunters, there was no dinner to be found, and no Blacksmith.

Then the Prince bade the Carpenter do the cooking while he went abroad to see the town. But the Carpenter fared no better, for the ghost appeared to him also, so that he fled and locked himself up in another room.

'This is really too bad!' quoth Prince Lionheart, when he returned to find no dinner, no Blacksmith, no Carpenter. So he began to cook the food himself, and ho sooner had it given out a savoury smell than the ghost arrived; this time, however, seeing so handsome a young man before her she would not assume her own hag-like shape, but appeared instead as a beautiful young woman.

However, the Prince was not in the least bit deceived, for he looked down at her feet, and when he saw they were set on hind side before, he knew at once what she was; so drawing his sharp strong sword, he said, 'I must trouble you to take your own shape again, as I don't like killing beautiful young women!'

At this the ghost shrieked with rage, and changed into her own loathsome form once more; but at the same moment Prince Lionheart gave one stroke of his sword, and the horrible, awful thing lay dead at his feet.

Then the Blacksmith and the Carpenter crept out of their hiding-places, and the Prince sent messages to all the townsfolk, bidding them come back and dwell in peace, on condition of their making the Blacksmith king, and giving him to wife the prettiest, the richest, and the best-born maiden in the city.

To this they consented with one accord, and after the wedding was over, Prince Lionheart and the Carpenter set forth once more on their travels. The Blacksmith king was loath to let them go without him, but his master gave him also a barley plant, saying, 'Water and tend it carefully; for so long as it flourishes you may rest assured I am well and happy; but if it droops, know that I am in trouble, and come to help me.'

Prince Lionheart and the Carpenter had not journeyed far ere they came to a big town, where they halted to rest; and as luck would have it the Carpenter fell in love with the fairest maiden in the city, who was as beautiful as the moon and all the stars. He began to sigh and grumble over the good fortune of the Knifegrinder and the Blacksmith, and wish that he too could find a kingdom and a lovely bride, until his master took pity on him, and sending for the chief inhabitants, told them who he was, and ordered them to make the Carpenter king, and marry him to the maiden of his choice.

This order they obeyed, for Prince Lionheart's fame had been noised abroad, and they feared his displeasure; so when the marriage was over, and the Carpenter duly established as king, Prince Lionheart went forth on his journey alone, after giving a barley plant, as he had done before, by which his prosperity or misfortune might be known.

Having journeyed for a long time, he came at last to a river, and as he sat resting on the bank, what was his astonishment to see a ruby of enormous size floating down the stream! Then another, and another drifted past him, each of huge size and glowing hue! Wonderstruck, he determined to find out whence they came. So he travelled up stream for two days and two nights, watching the

rubies sweep by in the current, until he came to a beautiful marble palace built close to the water's edge. Gay gardens surrounded it, marble steps led down to the river, where, on a magnificent tree which stretched its branches over the stream, hung a golden basket. Now if Prince Lionheart had been wonderstruck before, what was his astonishment when he saw that the basket contained the head of the most lovely, the most beautiful, the most perfect young Princess that ever was seen! The eyes were closed, the golden hair fluttered in the breeze, and every minute from the slender throat a drop of crimson blood fell into the water, and changing into a ruby, drifted down the stream!

Prince Lionheart was overcome with pity at this heartrending sight; tears rose to his eyes, and he determined to search through the palace for some explanation of the beautiful mysterious head.

So he wandered through richly-decorated marble halls, through carved galleries and spacious corridors, without seeing a living creature, until he came to a sleeping-room hung with silver tissue, and there, on a white satin bed, lay the headless body of a young and beautiful girl! One glance convinced him that it belonged to the exquisite head he had seen swinging in the golden basket by the river-side, and, urged by the desire to see the two lovely portions united, he set off swiftly to the tree, soon returning with the basket in his hand. He placed the head gently on the severed throat, when, lo and behold! they joined together in a trice and the beautiful maiden started up to life once more. The Prince was overjoyed, and, falling on his knees, begged the lovely girl to tell him who she was, and how she came to be alone in the mysterious palace. She informed him that she was a king's daughter, with whom a wicked Jinn had fallen in love, in consequence of which passion he had carried her off by his magical arts: and being desperately jealous, never left her without first cutting off her head, and hanging it up in the golden basket until his return.

Prince Lionheart, hearing this cruel story, besought the beautiful Princess to fly with him without delay, but she assured him they must first kill the Jinn, or they would never succeed in making their escape. So she promised to coax the Jinn into telling her the secret of his life, and in the meantime bade the Prince cut off her head once more, and replace it in the golden basket, so that her cruel gaoler might not suspect anything.

The poor Prince could hardly bring himself to perform so dreadful a task, but seeing it was absolutely necessary, he shut his eyes from the heartrending sight, and with one blow of his sharp bright sword cut off his dear Princess's head, and after returning the golden basket to its place, hid himself in a closet hard by the sleeping-room.

By and by the Jinn arrived, and, putting on the Princess's head once more, cried angrily, 'Fee! fa! fum! This room smells of man's flesh!'

Then the Princess pretended to weep, saying, 'Do not be angry with me, good Jinn, for how can I know aught? Am I not dead whilst you are away? Eat me if you like, but do not be angry with me!'

Whereupon the Jinn, who loved her to distraction, swore he would rather die himself than kill her.

'That would be worse for me!' answered the girl, 'for if you were to die while you are away from here, it would be very awkward for me: I should be neither dead nor alive.'

'Don't distress yourself!' returned the Jinn; 'I am not likely to be killed, for my life lies in something very safe.'

'I hope so, I am sure!' replied the Princess, 'but I believe you only say that to comfort me. I shall never be content until you tell me where it lies, then I can judge for myself if it is safe.'

At first the Jinn refused, but the Princess coaxed and wheedled so prettily, and he began to get so very sleepy, that at last he replied, 'I shall never be killed except by a Prince called Lionheart; nor by him unless he can find the solitary tree, where a dog and a horse keep sentinel day and night. Even then he must pass these warders unhurt, climb the tree, kill the starling which sits singing in a golden cage on the topmost branch, tear open its crop, and destroy the bumble bee it contains. So I am safe; for it would need a lion's heart, or great wisdom, to reach the tree and overcome its guardians.'

'How are they to be overcome?' pleaded the Princess; 'tell me that, and I shall be satisfied.'

The Jinn, who was more than half asleep, and quite tired of being cross-questioned, answered drowsily, 'In front of the horse lies a heap of bones, and in front of the dog a heap of grass. Whoever takes a long stick and changes the heaps, so that the horse has grass, and the dog bones, will have no difficulty in passing.'

The Prince, overhearing this, set off at once to find the solitary tree, and ere long discovered it, with a savage horse and furious dog keeping watch and ward over it. They, however, became quite mild and meek when they received their proper food, and the Prince without any difficulty climbed the tree, seized the starling, and began to twist its neck. At this moment the Jinn, awakening from sleep, became aware of what was passing, and flew through the air to do battle for his life. The Prince, however, seeing him approach, hastily cut open the bird's crop, seized the bumble bee, and just as the Jinn was alighting on the tree, tore off the insect's wings. The Jinn instantly fell to the ground with a crash, but, determined to kill his enemy, began to climb. Then the Prince twisted off the bee's legs, and lo! the Jinn became legless also; and when the bee's head was torn off, the Jinn's life went out entirely.

So Prince Lionheart returned in triumph to the Princess, who was overjoyed to hear of her tyrant's death. He would have started at once with her to his father's kingdom, but she begged for a little rest, so they stayed in the palace, examining all the riches it contained.

Now one day the Princess went down to the river to bathe, and wash her beautiful golden hair, and as she combed it, one or two long strands came out in the comb, shining and glittering like burnished gold. She was proud of her beautiful hair, and said to herself, 'I will not throw these hairs into the river, to sink in the nasty dirty mud,' so she made a green cup out of a *pîpal* leaf, coiled the golden hairs inside, and set it afloat on the stream.

It so happened that the river, farther down, flowed past a royal city, and the King was sailing in his pleasure-boat, when he espied something sparkling like sunlight on the water, and bidding his boatmen row towards it, found the *pîpal* leaf cup and the glittering golden hairs.

He thought he had never before seen anything half so beautiful, and determined not to rest day or night until he had found the owner. Therefore he sent for the wisest women in his kingdom, in order to find out where the owner of the glistening golden hair dwelt.

The first wise woman said, 'If she is on Earth I promise to find her.'

The second said, 'If she is in Heaven I will tear open the sky and bring her to you.'

But the third laughed, saying, 'Pooh! if you tear open the sky I will put a patch in it, so that none will be able to tell the new piece from the old.'

The King, considering the last wise woman had proved herself to be the cleverest, engaged her to seek for the beautiful owner of the glistening golden hair.

Now as the hairs had been found in the river, the wise woman guessed they must have floated down stream from some place higher up, so she set off in a grand royal boat, and the boatmen rowed and rowed until at last they came in sight of the Jinn's magical marble palace.

Then the cunning wise woman went alone to the steps of the palace, and began to weep and to wail. It so happened that as Prince Lionheart had that day gone out hunting, the Princess was all alone, and having a tender heart, she no sooner heard the old woman weeping than she came out to see what was the matter.

'Mother,' said she kindly, 'why do you weep?'

'My daughter,' cried the wise woman, 'I weep to think what will become of you if the handsome Prince is slain by any mischance, and you are left here in the wilderness alone.' For the witch knew by her arts all about the Prince.

'Very true!' replied the Princess, wringing her hands; 'what a dreadful thing it would be! I never thought of it before!'

All day long she wept over the idea, and at night, when the Prince returned, she told him of her fears; but he laughed at them, saying his life lay in safety, and it was very unlikely any mischance should befall him.

Then the Princess was comforted; only she begged him to tell her wherein it lay, so that she might help to preserve it.

'It lies,' returned the Prince, 'in my sharp sword, which never fails. If harm were to come to it I should die; nevertheless, by fair means naught can prevail against it, so do not fret, sweetheart!'

'It would be wiser to leave it safe at home when you go hunting,' pleaded the Princess, and though Prince Lionheart told her again there was no cause to be alarmed, she made up her mind to have her own way, and the very next morning, when the Prince went a-hunting, she hid his strong sharp sword, and put another in the scabbard, so that he was none the wiser.

Thus when the wise woman came once more and wept on the marble stairs, the Princess called to her joyfully, 'Don't cry, mother!—the Prince's life is safe to-day. It lies in his sword, and that is hidden away in my cupboard.'

Then the wicked old hag waited until the Princess took her noonday sleep, and when everything was quiet she stole to the cupboard, took the sword, made a fierce fire, and placed the sharp shining blade in the glowing embers. As it grew hotter and hotter, Prince Lionheart felt a burning fever creep over his body, and knowing the magical property of his sword, drew it out to see if aught had befallen it, and lo! it was not his own sword but a changeling! He cried aloud, 'I am undone! I am undone!' and galloped homewards. But the wise woman blew up the fire so quickly that the sword became red-hot ere Prince Lionheart could arrive, and just as he appeared on the other side of the stream, a rivet came out of the sword hilt, which rolled off, and so did the Prince's head.

Then the wise woman, going to the Princess, said, 'Daughter! see how tangled your beautiful hair is after your sleep! Let me wash and dress it against your husband's return.' So they went down the marble steps to the river; but the wise woman said, 'Step into my boat, sweetheart; the water is clearer on the farther side.'

And then, whilst the Princess's long golden hair was all over her eyes like a veil, so that she could not see, the wicked old hag loosed the boat, which went drifting down stream.

In vain the Princess wept and wailed; all she could do was to make a great vow, saying, 'O you shameless old thing! You are taking me away to some king's palace, I know; but no matter who he may be, I swear not to look on his face for twelve years!'

At last they arrived at the royal city, greatly to the King's delight; but when he found how solemn an oath the Princess had taken, he built her a high tower, where she lived all alone. No one save the hewers of wood and drawers of water were allowed even to enter the courtyard surrounding it, so there she lived and wept over her lost Lionheart.

Now when the Prince's head had rolled off in that shocking manner, the barley plant he had given to the Knifegrinder king suddenly snapped right in two, so that the ear fell to the ground.

This greatly troubled the faithful Knifegrinder, who immediately guessed some terrible disaster had overtaken his dear Prince. He gathered an army without delay, and set off in aid, meeting on the way with the Blacksmith and the Carpenter kings, who were both on the same errand. When it became evident that the three barley plants had fallen at the selfsame moment, the three friends feared the worst, and were not surprised when, after long journeying, they found the Prince's body, all burnt and blistered, lying by the river-side, and his head close to it. Knowing the magical properties of the sword, they looked for it at once, and when they found a changeling in its place their hearts sank indeed! They lifted the body, and carried it to the palace, intending to weep and wail over it, when, lo! they found the real sword, all blistered and burnt, in a heap of ashes, the rivet gone, the hilt lying beside it.

'That is soon mended!' cried the Blacksmith king; so he blew up the fire, forged a rivet, and fastened the hilt to the blade. No sooner had he done so than the Prince's head grew to his shoulders as firm as ever.

'My turn now!' quoth the Knifegrinder king; and he spun his wheel so deftly that the blisters and stains disappeared like magic, and the sword was soon as bright as ever. And as he spun his wheel, the burns and scars disappeared likewise from Prince Lionheart's body, until at last the Prince sat up alive, as handsome as before.

'Where is my Princess?' he cried, the very first thing, and then told his friends of all that had passed.

'It is my turn now!' quoth the Carpenter king gleefully; 'give me your sword, and I will fetch the Princess back in no time.'

So he set off with the bright strong sword in his hand to find the lost Princess. Ere long he came to the royal city, and noticing a tall new-built tower, inquired who dwelt within. When the townspeople told him it was a strange Princess, who was kept in such close imprisonment that no one but hewers of wood and drawers of water were allowed even to enter the courtyard, he was certain it must be she whom he sought. However, to make sure, he disguised himself as a woodman, and going beneath the windows, cried, 'Wood! wood! Fifteen gold pieces for this bundle of wood!'

The Princess, who was sitting on the roof, taking the air, bade her servant ask what sort of wood it was to make it so expensive.

'It is only firewood,' answered the disguised Carpenter, 'but it was cut with this sharp bright sword!'

Hearing these words, the Princess, with a beating heart, peered through the parapet, and recognised Prince Lionheart's sword. So she bade her servant inquire if the woodman had anything else to sell, and he replied that he had a wonderful flying palanquin, which he would show to the Princess, if she wished it, when she walked in the garden at evening.

She agreed to the proposal, and the Carpenter spent all the day in fashioning a marvellous palanquin. This he took with him to the tower garden, saying, 'Seat yourself in it, my Princess, and try how well it flies.'

But the King's sister, who was there, said the Princess must not go alone, so she got in also, and so did the wicked wise woman. Then the Carpenter king jumped up outside, and immediately the palanquin began to fly higher and higher, like a bird.

'I have had enough!—let us go down,' said the King's sister after a time.

Whereupon the Carpenter seized her by the waist, and threw her overboard, just as they were sailing above the river, so that she was drowned; but he waited until they were just above the high tower before he threw down the wicked wise woman, so that she got finely smashed on the stones.

Then the palanquin flew straight to the Jinn's magical marble palace, where Prince Lionheart, who had been awaiting the Carpenter king's arrival with the greatest impatience, was overjoyed to see his Princess once more, and set off, escorted by his three companion kings, to his father's dominions. But when the poor old King, who had very much aged since his son's departure, saw the three armies coming, he made sure they were an invading force, so he went out to meet them, and said, 'Take all my riches, but leave my poor people in peace, for I am old, and cannot fight. Had my dear brave son Lionheart been with me, it would have been a different affair, but he left us years ago, and no one has heard aught of him since.'

On this, the Prince flung himself on his father's neck, and told him all that had occurred, and how these were his three old friends—the Knifegrinder, the Blacksmith, and the Carpenter. This greatly delighted the old man; but when he saw the golden-haired bride his son had brought home, his joy knew no bounds.

So everybody was pleased, and lived happily ever after.

THE LAMBIKIN

Once upon a time there was a wee wee Lambikin, who frolicked about on his little tottery legs, and enjoyed himself amazingly.

Now one day he set off to visit his Granny, and was jumping with joy to think of all the good things he should get from her, when whom should he meet but a Jackal, who looked at the tender young morsel and said—'Lambikin! Lambikin! I'll *eat you!*'

But Lambikin only gave a little frisk, and said—

'To Granny's house I go,
Where I shall fatter grow,
Then you can eat me so.'

The Jackal thought this reasonable, and let Lambikin pass.

By and by he met a Vulture, and the Vulture, looking hungrily at the tender morsel before him, said—'Lambikin! Lambikin! I'll *eat you!*'

But Lambikin only gave a little frisk, and said—

'To Granny's house I go,
Where I shall fatter grow,
Then you can eat me so.'

The Vulture thought this reasonable, and let Lambikin pass.

And by and by he met a Tiger, and then a Wolf, and a Dog, and an Eagle, and all these, when they saw the tender little morsel, said—

'Lambikin! Lambikin! I'll *eat you!*'

But to all of them Lambikin replied, with a little frisk—

'To Granny's house I go,
Where I shall fatter grow,
Then you can eat me so.'

At last he reached his Granny's house, and said, all in a great hurry, 'Granny, dear, I've promised to get very fat; so, as people ought to keep their promises, please put me into the corn-bin *at once!*'

So his Granny said he was a good boy, and put him into the corn-bin, and there the greedy little Lambikin stayed for seven days, and ate, and ate, and ate, until he could scarcely waddle, and his Granny said he was fat enough for anything, and must go home. But cunning little Lambikin said that would never do, for some animal would be sure to eat him on the way back, he was so plump and tender.

'I'll tell you what you must do,' said Master Lambikin, 'you must make a little drumikin out of the skin of my little brother who died, and then I can sit inside and trundle along nicely, for I'm as tight as a drum myself.'

So his Granny made a nice little drumikin out of his brother's skin, with the wool inside, and Lambikin curled himself up snug and warm in the middle, and trundled away gaily. Soon he met with the Eagle, who called out—

'Drumikin! Drumikin!
Have you seen Lambikin?'

And Mr. Lambikin, curled up in his soft warm nest, replied—

'Lost in the forest, and so are you,
On, little Drumikin! Tum-pa, tum-too!'

'How very annoying!' sighed the Eagle, thinking regretfully of the tender morsel he had let slip. Meanwhile Lambikin trundled along, laughing to himself, and singing—

'Tum-pa, tum-too;
Tum-pa, tum-too!'

Every animal and bird he met asked him the same question—

'Drumikin! Drumikin!
Have you seen Lambikin?'

And to each of them the little sly-boots replied—

'Lost in the forest, and so are you,
On, little Drumikin! Tum-pa, tum-too;
Tum-pa, turn-too; Tum-pa, tum-too!'

Then they all sighed to think of the tender little morsel they had let slip.

At last the Jackal came limping along, for all his sorry looks as sharp as a needle, and he too called out—

'Drumikin! Drumikin!
Have you seen Lambikin?'

And Lambikin, curled up in his snug little nest, replied gaily—

'Lost in the forest, and so are you,
On, little Drumikin! Tum-pa—'

But he never got any further, for the Jackal recognised his voice at once, and cried, 'Hullo! you've turned yourself inside out, have you? Just you come out of that!'

Whereupon he tore open Drumikin and gobbled up Lambikin.

BOPOLÛCHÎ

Once upon a time a number of young girls went to draw water at the village well, and while they were filling their jars, fell a-talking of their betrothals and weddings.

Said one—'My uncle will soon be coming with the bridal presents, and he is to bring the finest clothes imaginable.'

Said a second—'And my uncle-in-law is coming, I know, bringing the most delicious sweetmeats you could think of.'

Said a third—'Oh, my uncle will be here in no time, with the rarest jewels in the world.'

But Bopolûchî, the prettiest girl of them all, looked sad, for she was an orphan, and had no one to arrange a marriage for her. Nevertheless she was too proud to remain silent, so she said gaily—'And my uncle is coming also, bringing me fine dresses, fine food, and fine jewels.'

Now a wandering pedlar, who sold sweet scents and cosmetics of all sorts to the country women, happened to be sitting near the well, and heard what Bopolûchî said. Being much struck by her beauty and spirit, he determined to marry her himself, and the very next day, disguised as a well-to-do farmer, he came to Bopolûchî's house laden with trays upon trays full of fine dresses, fine food, and fine jewels; for he was not a real pedlar, but a wicked robber, ever so rich.

Bopolûchî could hardly believe her eyes, for everything was just as she had foretold, and the robber said he was her father's brother, who had been away in the world for years, and had now come back to arrange her marriage with one of his sons, her cousin.

Hearing this, Bopolûchî of course believed it all, and was ever so much pleased; so she packed up the few things she possessed in a bundle, and set off with the robber in high spirits.

But as they went along the road, a crow sitting on a branch croaked—

'Bopolûchî, 'tis a pity!
You have lost your wits, my pretty!
'Tis no uncle that relieves you,
But a robber who deceives you!'

'Uncle!' said Bopolûchî, 'that crow croaks funnily. What does it say?'

'Pooh!' returned the robber, 'all the crows in this country croak like that.'

A little farther on they met a peacock, which, as soon as it caught sight of the pretty little maiden, began to scream—

'Bopolûchî, 'tis a pity!
You have lost your wits, my pretty!
'Tis no uncle that relieves you,
But a robber who deceives you!'

'Uncle!' said the girl, 'that peacock screams funnily. What does it say?'

'Pooh!' returned the robber, 'all peacocks scream like that in this country.'

By and by a jackal slunk across the road; the moment it saw poor pretty Bopolûchî it began to howl—

'Bopolûchî, 'tis a pity!
You have lost your wits, my pretty!
'Tis no uncle that relieves you,
But a robber who deceives you!'

'Uncle!' said the maiden, 'that jackal howls funnily. What does it say?'

'Pooh!' returned the robber, 'all jackals howl like that in this country.'

So poor pretty Bopolûchî journeyed on till they reached the robber's house. Then he told her who he was, and how he intended to marry her himself. She wept and cried bitterly, but the robber had no pity, and left her in charge of his old, oh! ever so old mother, while he went out to make arrangements for the marriage feast.

Now Bopolûchî had such beautiful hair that it reached right down to her ankles, but the old mother hadn't a hair on her old bald head.

'Daughter!' said the old, ever so old, mother, as she was putting the bridal dress on Bopolûchî, 'how did you manage to get such beautiful hair?'

'Well,' replied Bopolûchî, 'my mother made it grow by pounding my head in the big mortar for husking rice. At every stroke of the pestle my hair grew longer and longer. I assure you it is a plan that never fails.'

'Perhaps it would make *my* hair grow!' said the old woman eagerly.

'Perhaps it would!' quoth cunning Bopolûchî.

So the old, ever so old mother put her head in the mortar, and

Bopolûchî pounded away with such a will that the old lady died.

Then Bopolûchî dressed the dead body in the scarlet bridal dress, seated it on the low bridal chair, drew the veil well over the face, and put the spinning-wheel in front of it, so that when the robber came home he might think it was the bride. Then she put on the old mother's clothes, and seizing her own bundle, stepped out of the house as quickly as possible.

On her way home she met the robber, who was returning with a stolen millstone, to grind the corn for the wedding feast, on his head. She was dreadfully frightened, and slipped behind the hedge, so as not to be seen. But the robber, not recognising her in the old mother's dress, thought she was some strange woman from a neighbouring village, and so to avoid being seen he slipped behind the other hedge. Thus Bopolûchî reached home in safety.

Meanwhile, the robber, having come to his house, saw the figure in bridal scarlet sitting on the bridal chair, spinning, and of course thought it was Bopolûchî. So he called to her to help him down with the millstone, but she didn't answer. He called again, but still she didn't answer. Then he fell into a rage, and threw the millstone at her head. The figure toppled over, and lo and behold! it was not Bopolûchî at all, but his old, ever so old mother! Whereupon the robber wept, and beat his breast, thinking he had killed her; but when he discovered pretty Bopolûchî had run away, he became wild with rage, and determined to bring her back somehow.

Now Bopolûchî was convinced that the robber would try to carry her off, so every night she begged a new lodging in some friend's house, leaving her own little bed in her own little house quite empty, but after a month or so she had come to the end of her friends, and did not like to ask any of them to give her shelter a second time. So she determined to brave it out and sleep at home, whatever happened; but she took a bill-hook to bed with her. Sure enough, in the very middle of the night four men crept in, and each seizing a leg of the bed, lifted it up and walked off, the robber himself having hold of the leg close behind her head. Bopolûchî was wide awake, but pretended to be fast asleep, until she came to a wild deserted spot, where the thieves were off their guard; then she whipped out the bill-hook, and in a twinkling cut off the heads of the two thieves at the foot of the bed. Turning round quickly, she did the same to the other thief at the head, but the robber himself ran away in a terrible fright, and scrambled like a wild cat up a tree close by before she could reach him.

'Come down!' cried brave Bopolûchî, brandishing the bill-hook, 'and fight it out!'

But the robber would not come down; so Bopolûchî gathered all the sticks she could find, piled them round the tree, and set fire to them. Of course the tree caught fire also, and the robber, half stifled with the smoke, tried to jump down, and was killed.

After that, Bopolûchî went to the robber's house and carried off all the gold and silver, jewels and clothes, that were hidden there, coming back to the village so rich that she could marry any one she pleased. And that was the end of Bopolûchî's adventures.

PRINCESS AUBERGINE

Once upon a time there lived a poor Brahman and his wife, so poor, that often they did not know whither to turn for a meal, and were reduced to wild herbs and roots for their dinner.

Now one day, as the Brahman was gathering such herbs as he could find in the wilderness, he came upon an Aubergine, or egg-plant. Thinking it might prove useful by and by, he dug it up, took it home, and planted it by his cottage door. Every day he watered and tended it, so that it grew wonderfully, and at last bore one large fruit as big as a pear, purple and white and glossy,—such a handsome fruit, that the good couple thought it a pity to pick it, and let it hang on the plant day after day, until one fine morning when there was absolutely nothing to eat in the house. Then the Brahman said to his wife, 'We must eat the egg-fruit; go and cut it, and prepare it for dinner.'

So the Brahman's wife took a knife, and cut the beautiful purple and white fruit off the plant, and as she did so she thought she heard a low moan. But when she sat down and began to peel the egg-fruit, she heard a tiny voice say quite distinctly, 'Take care!—oh, please take care! Peel more gently, or I am sure the knife will run into me!'

The good woman was terribly perplexed, but went on peeling as gently as she could, wondering all the time what had bewitched the egg-fruit, until she had cut quite through the rind, when—what do you think happened? Why, out stepped the most beautiful little maiden imaginable, dressed in purple and white satin!

The poor Brahman and his wife were mightily astonished, but still more delighted; for, having no children of their own, they looked on the tiny maiden as a godsend, and determined to adopt her. So they took the greatest care of her, petting and spoiling her, and always calling her the Princess Aubergine; for, said the worthy couple, if she was not a Princess *really*, she was dainty and delicate enough to be any king's daughter.

Now not far from the Brahman's hut lived a King, who had a beautiful wife, and seven stalwart young sons. One day, a slave-girl from the palace, happening to pass by the Brahman's cottage, went in to ask for a light, and there she saw the beautiful Aubergine. She went straight home to the palace, and told her mistress how in a hovel close by there lived a Princess so lovely and charming, that were the King once to set eyes on her, he would straightway forget, not only his Queen, but every other woman in the world.

Now the Queen, who was of a very jealous disposition, could not bear the idea of any one being more beautiful than she was herself, so she cast about in her mind how she could destroy the lovely Aubergine. If she could only inveigle the girl into the palace, she could easily do the rest, for she was a sorceress, and learned in all sorts of magic. So she sent a message to the Princess Aubergine, to say that the fame of her great beauty had reached the palace, and the Queen would like to see with her own eyes if report said true.

Now lovely Aubergine was vain of her beauty, and fell into the trap. She went to the palace, and the Queen, pretending to be wonderstruck, said, 'You were born to live in kings' houses! From this time you must never leave me; henceforth you are my sister.'

This flattered Princess Aubergine's vanity, so, nothing loath, she remained in the palace, and exchanged veils with the Queen, and drank milk out of the same cup with her, as is the custom when two people say they will be sisters.

But the Queen, from the very first moment she set eyes on her, had seen that Princess Aubergine was no human being, but a fairy, and knew she must be very careful how she set about her magic. Therefore she laid strong spells upon her while she slept, and said—

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.