**The Song of the Whistling-Thrush**

IN THE WOODED HILLS of western India lives “The Idle Schoolboy” – a bird who cannot learn a simple tune though he is gifted with one of the most beautiful voices in the forest. He whistles away in various sharps and flats, and sometimes, when you think he is really going to produce a melody, he breaks off in the middle of his song as though he had just remembered something very important.

Why is it the Whistling-Thrush can never remember a tune? The story goes that on a hot summer’s afternoon the young God Krishna was wandering along the banks of a mountain stream when he came to a small waterfall, shot through with sunbeams. It was a lovely spot, cool and inviting. Tiny fish flecked the pool at the foot of the waterfall, and a paradise Flycatcher, trailing its silver tail, moved gracefully amongst the trees.

Krishna was enchanted. He threw himself down on a bed of moss and ferns, and began playing on his flute-the famous flute with which he had charmed all the creatures in the forest. A fat yellow lizard nodded its head in time to the music; the birds were hushed; and the shy mouse-deer approached silently on their tiny hooves to see who it was who played so beautifully.

Presently the flute slipped from Krishna’s fingers, and the beautiful young god fell asleep. But it was not a restful sleep, for his dreams were punctuated by an annoying whistling, as though someone who didn’t know much about music was practicing on his flute in an attempt to learn the tune that Krishna had been playing.

Awake now, Krishna sat up and saw a ragged urchin standing ankle-deep in the pool, the sacred flute held to his lips!

Krishna was furious.

“Come here, boy!” he shouted. “How dare you steal my flute and disturb my sleep! Don’t you know who I am?”

The boy, instead of being afraid, was thrilled at the discovery that he stood before his hero, the young Krishna, whose exploits were famous throughout the land.

“I did not steal your flute lord,” he said. “Had that been my intention, I would not have waited for you to wake up. It was only my great love for your music that made me touch your flute. You will teach me to play, will you not? I will be your

**“As Your Liberality, So Your Virtue”**

A BRAHMIN who had no children used to go every day to the king’s palace, and say, “As your liberality, so your virtue.”

He did this daily for a year and six months, and received a rupee each time.

At last the king began to wonder why he was bothering to give away a rupee every day, so he asked the Brahmin, “What do you mean by the saying, ‘As your liberality, so your virtue’, which you keep repeating every day?”

The Brahmin had no idea – it was just a phrase he had been taught to repeat since childhood – so he went home and thought about it, but the king gave him nothing that day; and what was worse, the king said that if the Brahmin failed to come up with a suitable explanation, he would sacrifice him before the Goddess Durga.

That very day a daughter was born to the childless Brahmin and as soon as she came from the womb, she smiled, stood up, and said, “Father, why do you look so sad?”

The father replied, “What is the use of telling you? You were only born today.” But his baby daughter again said, “Father, let me hear about it. Why is your face so sad?”

So her father answered, “Every day since I was a boy, I have been going to the king’s palace and saying, ‘As your liberality, so your virtue.’ Every time I received a rupee. But today the king has threatened to sacrifice me to the Goddess Durga if I do not explain the meaning of the saying to him. Now isn’t that unreasonable? Why should anyone want to know the meaning of something that has been accepted as the truth for centuries?”

His daughter told him go and bathe, and said she would give him the meaning of the saying. So he went and bathed; and he had eaten, he returned to his daughter. She told him to go to the court, and if the king spoke to him, to say, “Your majesty, two days ago a daughter was born in my house. She will tell you the meaning of the saying.”

The father did just as he was told. The king was astonished, and declared that it was nonsense to suppose that an infant could explain the meaning of anything. Nevertheless, he took his elephants, horses and soldiers, and went to the Brahmin’s

house.

When the little girl saw the king, she stood up and asked him why he had come to her home. When he told her, she said, “I can tell you the meaning of the saying, but for the moment I will only say this: in the southern corner of your kingdom lives an oil-man, and his red ox will tell you.”

So the king took away his elephants, horses and soldiers, and went to the oil-man’s house, and asked him whether he kept a red ox to turn his oil mill.

“There he is in the field,” said the oil-man.

The king went up to the ox and said, “Ho, Mr. Oil-man’s ox, can you tell me the meaning of the saying, ‘As your liberality, so your virtue’?”

The ox replied weeping, “I would tell you if I could, but I will only say that there is a clump of sheora trees to the east of your palace, and they will tell you.”

So the king took his elephants, horses and soldiers, and went to the clump of sheora trees and said, “Good sheora trees, tell me the meaning of the saying, ‘As your liberality, so your virtue’.”

The genius of the sheora trees replied: “Listen, king of the world, you have been made a king because in your former life you were very kind and liberal, and gave your whole mind to charity. The woman who was then your wife was very pure in heart, and she has now been born in the house of childless Brahmin. The oil-man’s red ox was formerly your son. And now, last of all, I must explain that I was once your son’s wife, but my heart was hardened against everyone, and I was most unwilling to give anything away; so in the end I became the spirit, or genius, of this grove of trees. I cannot move from here. Our destinies are controlled by the actions of our former lives.”

On hearing this the king returned home. Every day after that the Brahmin went to the palace, and repeated the saying, and received his rupee.

remaining embers, and the fire was extinguished. Toria managed to crawl out of the cave. And there, to his great astonishment, he saw that all the white ashes of the fire were becoming cows, whilst the half-burnt wood was turning into buffaloes.

Toria herded the cows and buffaloes together, and drove them home.

When the king saw the herd, he became very envious, and asked Toria where he had found such fine cows and buffaloes. Toria said, “From that cave into which you pushed me. I did not bring many with me, being on my own. But if you and all your retainers go, you will be able to get as many as you want. But to catch them it will be necessary to close the door of the cave, and light a fire in front, as you did for me.”

“Very well,” said the king. “I and my people will enter the cave, and, as you have sufficient cows and buffaloes, kindly do not go into the cave with us, but kindle the fire outside.”

The king and his people then entered the cave. Toria blocked up the doorway, and then lit a large fire at the entrance. Before long, all that were in the cave were suffocated.

Some days later the daughter of the Sun said, “I want to visit my father’s house.”

Toria said, “Very well, I will also go with you.”

“No, it is foolish of you to think of such a thing,” she said. “you will not be able to get there.”

“If you are able to go, surely I can.” And he insisted on accompanying her.

After travelling a great distance, Toria became so faint from the heat of the sun that he could go no further. His wife said, “Did I not warn you? As for quenching your thirst, there is no water to be found here. But sit down and rest, I will see if I can find some for you.”

While she was away, driven by his great thirst, Toria sucked a raw egg that he had brought with him. No sooner had he done this than he changed into a fowl. When his wife returned with water, she could not find him anywhere; but, sitting where she had left him, was a solitary fowl. Taking the bird in her arms, she continued her journey.

When she reached her father’s house, her sisters asked her, “Where is Toria, your husband?” She replied, “I don’t know. I left him on the road while I went to fetch water. When I returned, he had disappeared. Perhaps he will turn up later.”

Her sisters, seeing the fowl, thought that it would make a good meal. And so, while Toria’s wife was resting, they killed and ate the fowl. Later, when they again enquired of her as to the whereabouts of her husband, she looked thoughtful.

“I can’t be sure,” she said. “But I think you have eaten him.”

**The Wicked Guru**

A CERTAIN KING of the south had a beautiful daughter. When she had reached a marriageable age, the king spoke to his Guru (spiritual teacher) and said: “Tell me, O Guru, by the stars the auspicious day for my daughter’s marriage.”

But the Guru had become enamoured day of the girl’s beauty, and he answered with guile, “It will be wrong to celebrate your daughter’s marriage at this time. It will bring evil on both of you. Instead, adorn her with thirty-six ornaments and clothe her in the finest of her garments, cover her with flowers and sprinkle her with perfumes, and then set her in a spacious box afloat on the waters of the ocean.”

It was the time of Dwapara Yuga – the third age of the world – and the Guru had to be obeyed. So they did as he said, to the great sorrow of the king and all his subjects. The king asked the Guru to stay and comfort them, but he said he had to return at once to his sacred seat, and left for his own home some three days distant.

As soon as he reached his house, the Guru stocked it with gold and pearl and silver and coral and the finest of fabrics that women delight in, and called his three hundred and sixty disciples and said: “My children, go and search the ocean, and whoever finds floating on it a large box, bring it here, and do no come to me again until I summon you.”

They all scattered to do as they had been told.

Meanwhile, the king of a neighbouring country had gone hunting on the sea-shore, where he had wounded a bear in the leg. The wounded bear limped about and gave vent to short savage grunts. As the king looked out to sea, he saw a box floating on the crests of the waves. He was quite a young man, and, being an expert swimmer, he soon brought the box ashore. Great was his surprise and joy to find that it contained a beautiful girl adorned as a bride.

He put the lame bear into the box and set it afloat once again. Then he hurried home with his prize. The girl was only too glad to marry her deliverer, and a great wedding took place.

All this time the Guru’s disciples were searching for the box, and when one of them found it floating near the shore he duly brought it to the Guru, and then disappeared as he had been told. The Guru was delighted. He prepared sweets and fruits and flowers and scents. He closed all the doors of his chamber. He could

“Well, when we left the kitchen we found ourselves in another country, which happened to be our present village. Here we took to shopkeeping. The princess, my mother, died many years ago. That, Chowdhri, is my story. Improve upon it if you can!”

“A very true story,” said the Jat. “My story: though no less true, is perhaps not as wonderful. But it is perfectly true, every word of it…

“My great-grandfather was the wealthiest Jat in the village. His noble appearance and great wisdom brought praise from all who met him. At village meetings he was always given the best seat, and when he settled disputes no one questioned his good judgement. In addition, he was of great physical strength, and a terror to the wicked.”

“True, oh Chowdhri, true,” said the Bania.

“There was a time when a great famine came to our village. There was no rain, the rivers and wells dried up, the trees withered away. Birds and beasts died in thousands. When my great-grandfather saw that the village stores had been exhausted, and that the people would die of hunger if something was not done, he called the Jats together and said, ‘Brother Jats, God Indra is angry with us for some reason, because he has withheld the scarcity is over. I want you to give your fields to me for six months.’ Without any hesitation the Jats gave my great-grandfather their fields. Then, stripping himself of his clothes, he gave one great heave and lifted the entire village of a thousand acres and placed it on his head!”

“True, oh Chowdhri, true!” exclaimed the Bania.

“Then my great-grandfather, carrying the village on his head, searched for rain…

“Wherever there was rain he took the village, so that the rainwater fell on the fields and collected in the wells. Then he told the Jats (who were of course still in the village on his head) to plough their land and sow their seed. The crops that came up had never been so wonderful, and the wheat and the maize rose to such a height that they touched the clouds.”

“True, oh Chowdhri, true,” said the Bania.

“Then my great-grandfather returned to his country and placed the village in its proper place. The farmers reaped a record harvest that year. Ever grain of corn was as big as your head.”

“True, oh Chowdhri, true,” said the Bania, annoyed at the comparison but anxious not to lose his wager. By this time, they had reached the outskirts of the town, but the Jat had not finished his story.

“At that time your great-grandfather was a very poor man,” said the Jat, “and mine, who had made huge profits from his wonderful harvest, employees him as a servant to weigh out the grain for the customers.”

**A Battle of Wits**

IN A VILLAGE in northern India there lived a Bania, a merchant whose shop kept the villagers supplied with their everyday necessities.

One day, on his way to a neighbouring town to make some purchases, he met a poor Jat, one of a tribe of farmers who was also going to town to pay the monthly instalment of a debt he owed to the local Mahajan, the banker and moneylender.

The debt had actually been incurred by the Jat’s great-grandfather and had in the beginning been only fifty rupees; but his great grandfather had been unable to repay it, and in the last fifty years, through interest and compound interest, the amount had grown to five hundred rupees.

The Jat was walking along, wondering if he would ever get out of the clutches of the Mahajan, when the Bania caught up with him.

“Good day to you, Chowdhri,” said the Bania, who, though he had a poor opinion of the farmer’s intelligence, was always polite to his customers. “I see you are going to town to pay your installment to the Mahajan. Before long you will have to give up your lands. Can nothing be done to save them?”

“It is too late to do anything, Shahji,” said the Jat. He was much taller and stronger than the Bania; at the same time he was an easy-going, good-natured sort. The Bania thought he was simple-minded.

“Well, let us forget our worries,” said the Bania, “and pass the time telling stories.”

“A good idea, Shahji! It will make the journey less tiresome. But let there be one condition. No matter how fantastic or silly the story, neither of us must call it untrue. Whoever does so, must pay the other five hundred rupees!”

“Agreed,” said the Bania with a laugh. “And let me begin my story first. My great-grandfather was the greatest of Banias, and tremendously rich.”

“True, oh Shahji, true!” said the Jat.

“At one time he possessed a fleet of forty ships with which he sailed to China, and traded there in rich jewels and costly silks.”

“True, oh Shahji, true!” said the Jat.

“Well, after making a huge fortune my great-grandfather returned home with many unique and precious things. One was a statue of pure gold which was able to

answer any question put to it.”

“True, oh Shahji, true!”

“When my great-grandfather came home, many people came to have their questions answered by his wonderful statue. One day your great-grandfather came with a question. He asked: ‘Who are the wisest of all men?’ The statue replied: ‘The Banias, of course.’ Then he asked: ‘And who are the most foolish?’ The statue replied: ‘The Jats.’ And then your great-grandfather asked, ‘Among the Jats, who is the most stupid?’ The same statue replied: ‘Why, you are, of course.’”

“True, oh Shahji, true,” said the Jat, inwardly resolving to repay the Bania in his own coin.

“My father,” continued the Bania, “was himself a great traveler, and during a tour of the world he saw many wonders. One day, a mosquito hovering near his ear threatened to bite him. My father, not wishing to kill the mosquito, requested it to leave. The mosquito was amazed at such gentlemanly conduct. It said, ‘Noble Shahji, you are the greatest man I ever met, and I mean to do you a great service.’ Saying this, the mosquito opened its mouth, and inside it my father saw a large palace with golden doors and windows. At one of the windows stood the most beautiful princess in the world. At the door of the palace he saw a peasant about to attack the princess. My father, who was very brave, at once jumped into the mouth of the mosquito and entered its stomach. He found it very dark inside.”

“True, oh Shahji, True!” said the Jat.

“Well after sometime my father grew used to the darkness and was able to make out the palace, the princess and the peasant. He at once fell upon the peasant, who happened to be your father. They fought for a year in the stomach of the mosquito. At the end of that time your father was defeated and became my father’s servant. My father then married the princess and I was born from the union. But when I was fifteen years old, a heavy rain of boiling water fell on the palace, which collapsed, throwing us into a scalding sea. With great difficulty we swam ashore, where the four of us found ourselves in a kitchen, where a woman was shaking with terror at the sight of us.”

“True, oh Shahji, true!”

“When the woman, who was a cook, realized that we were men and not ghosts, she complained that we had spoilt her soup. ‘Why did you have to enter my pot of boiling water and frighten me like that?’ she complained. We apologized, explaining that for fifteen years we had been living in the belly of a mosquito, and that it was not our fault that we had found ourselves in her cooking pot. ‘Ah! I remember now,’ she said. ‘A little while ago a mosquito bit me on the arm. You must have been injected into my arm, for when I squeezed out the poison, a large black drop fell into the boiling water. I had no idea you were in it!’”

“True, oh Shahji, True!” said the Jat.

**Seven Brides of Seven Princes**

A LONG TIME AGO there was a king who had seven sons –all of them brave, handsome and clever. The old king loved them equally, and the princes dressed alike and received the same amounts of pocket money. When they grew up they were given separate palaces, but the palaces were built and furnished alike, and if you had seen one palace you had seen the others.

When the Princes were old enough to marry, the king sent his ambassadors all over the country to search out seven brides of equal beauty and talent. The ambassadors travelled everywhere and saw many princesses but could not find seven equally suitable brides. They returned to the king and reported their failure.

The king now became so despondent and gloomy that his chief minister decided that something had to be done to solve his master’s problem.

“Do not be so downcast, Your Majesty,” he said. “Surely it is impossible to find seven brides as accomplished as your seven sons. Let us trust to chance, and then perhaps we shall find the ideal brides.”

The minister had thought out a scheme, and when the princes agreed to it, they were taken to the highest tower of the fort, which overlooked the entire city as well as the surrounding countryside. Seven bows and seven arrows were placed before them, and they were told to shoot in any direction they liked. Each prince had agreed to marry the girl upon whose house the arrow fell, be she daughter of prince or peasant.

The seven princes took up their bows and shot their arrows in different directions, and all the arrows except that of the youngest prince fell on the houses of well-known and highly-respected families. But the arrow shot by the youngest brother went beyond the city and out of sight.

Servants ran in all directions looking for the arrow and, after a long search, found it embedded in the trunk of a great banyan tree, in which sat a monkey.

Great was the dismay and consternation of the king when he discovered that his youngest son’s arrow had made such an unfortunate descent. The king and his courtiers and his minister held a hurried conference. They decided that the youngest prince should be given another chance with his arrow. But to everyone’s surprise, the prince refused a second chance.

“No,” he said. “My brothers have found beautiful and good brides, and that is their good fortune. But do not ask me to break the pledge I took before shooting my arrow. I know I cannot marry this monkey. But I will not marry anyone else! Instead I shall take the monkey home and keep her as a pet.”

The six lucky princes were married with great pomp. The city was ablaze with lights and fireworks, and there was music and dancing in the streets. People decorated their houses with the leaves of mango and banana trees. There was great rejoicing everywhere, except in the palace of the youngest prince. He had placed a diamond collar about the neck of his monkey and seated her on a chair cushioned with velvet. They both looked rather melancholy.

“Poor monkey,” said the prince. “You are lonely as I am on this day of rejoicing. But I shall make your stay here a happy one! Are you hungry?” And he placed a bowl of grapes before her, and persuaded her to eat a few. He began talking to the monkey and spending all his time with her. Some called him foolish, or obstinate; others said he wasn’t quite right in the head.

The king was worried and discussed the situation with his minister and his other sons, in a bid to find some way of bringing the prince to his senses and marrying him into a noble family. But he refused to listen to their advice and entreaties.

As the months passed, the prince grew even more attached to his monkey, and could be seen walking with her in the garden of his palace.

Then one day the king called a meeting of all seven princes and said, “My sons, I have seen you all settled happily in life. Even you, my youngest, appear to be happy with your strange companion. The happiness of a father consists in the happiness of his sons and daughters. Therefore, I wish to visit my daughters-in-law and give them presents.”

The eldest son immediately invited his father to dine at his palace, and the others did the same. The king accepted all their invitations, including that of the youngest prince. The receptions were very grand, and the king presented his daughters-in-law with precious jewels and costly dresses. Eventually it was the turn of the youngest son to entertain the king.

The youngest prince was very troubled. How could he invite his father to a house in which he lived with a monkey? He knew his monkey was more gentle and affectionate than some of the greatest ladies in the land; and he was determined not to hide her away as though she were someone to be ashamed of.

Walking beside his pet in the palace gardens, he said, “What shall I do now, my friend? I wish you had a tongue with which to comfort me. All my brothers have shown their homes and wives to my father. They will ridicule me when I present you to him.”

**Brave and Beautiful**

**O**NCE UPON A TIME there ruled a Rajput King called Kesarising. He had a daughter, Sunderbai, who was her father’s chief treasure: not only was she well versed in the arts and sciences, but she was brave and generous; and as for her beauty, she had no equal among the princesses of India.

In spite of her learning, Sunderbai was a light-hearted as any of her friends and companions. One ­day she was playing with other girls in the palace gardens, when the crown prince of Valabhipura, Birsing, happened to pass by. He had been out hunting; and now, hot and tired, he lay down to rest beneath some trees in the garden. While he was resting, he heard voices close by. At first he paid no attention. But as the voices grew louder, he could not help overhearing.

“When I marry”, said one of the girls, “I shall lead my husband a life of it! Men trample on their wives just as if they were pieces of furniture. And yet, if man has no wife, he is quite useless.”

“You are quite right,” answered Sunderbai. “But I am going to marry Prince Birsing, the son of the king of Valabhipura. And I mean so to win his love that he will have eyes for no other. If he does not treat me as I mean him to, I shall show him by my strength and courage that women are every bit as brave as men. He will so love and honour me that he will never take a second wife.”

Birsing was all attention when he heard his name. he realized that the second speaker must be the kings’s daughter. He decided to slip away before he was seen; but before he went, he looked through the trees at Sunderbai. He was quite taken by her beauty; but he looked thoughtful as he rode away.

When the prince reached his own home, he told the king, his father, that he wanted to marry Kesarising’s daughter. As the two families were equal in the rank, there was no obstacle in the way. And before long, the wedding was celebrated with great splendor, and Sunderbai was carried in state to Birsing’s palace.

The young prince wished to see whether Sunderbai would make good hear boast. And so, on their marriage night, he did not go near her. The princess wondered at his conduct, and her maid-servants and companions wondered still more. But Sunderbai hid her feelings.

Months passed, and then one of the princess’s maids came and said to her,

“Princess, today is New Year’s day, and there is a great festival at the temple. Would you not like to go and see it?” Sunderbai agreed, and at once prepared to go.

Early in the morning she left her place, and went with her maids and ladies to the temple. When Birsing heard that Sunderbai had gone to the temple, he also went there with some of his courtiers, unseen by her. As she worshipped, she prayed aloud, “Goddess Parvathi, bless in all ways my husband!” Then she raised her head, and as she did so, her eyes met those of Birsing, who had come up quietly behind her.

He gave her a mocking smile, and said, “is this the way you mean to conquer your husband-by strength and valour, as you boasted once?”

Sunderbai then knew that Birsing had overheard her that day in the garden. Clasping her hands, she answered, “Lord, women are but foolish creatures. A girl’s chatter should not be taken seriously. Pay no heed to what was said, and in your wisdom forgive me.”

But Birsing shook his head and answered sternly, “Until you make good your words, princess, I will not enter the door of your palace.” And he turned away and left the temple.

Sunderbai stood looking after him, the picture of distress. Then, deciding that if she wanted to win him, she would have to give him proof of her courage and strength, she finished her worship and left the temple.

Sunderbai spent several days pondering what she should do. At last she resolved to leave the place. The Goddess Parvathi might send her the chance which she sought. But to leave the palace and slip through the guards was no easy thing. So she took from her finger a ring, given her by her father, Kesarising; and handing it to one of her trusted companions, she said, “Take this to the king, my father, and say, ‘the jewel in the ring is loose. Please have it put right.’”

The girl did as she was asked, and when Kesarising saw the ring. He guessed that his daughter was in trouble. After the messenger had gone, he took out the stone. Beneath it was a note, on which was written: My father, when two parrots quarrel, it is useless to keep them in the same cage. One day in the garden I told one of my companions that if I married Birsing, I would by my strength and valour make him madly in love with me. The prince overheard what I said, and is putting me to the test. Send me a man’s dress, a coat of mail, and a swift horse. But let no one know.

The king managed to send the horse, cloths, and armour to his daughter by means of a secret passage into her palace. Sunderbai donned the dress and the coat of mail, and warned her maids and companions to tell no one of her flight. Then, mounting her horse, she rode away in the dead of night.

many years.

Riding on a whirlwind, the ghost soon caught up with the idiot who was still feeling down the road away from the village.

“Not so fast, brother!” cried the ghost. “Desert your wife, by all means, but don’t abandon your old family ghost! That shrew has driven me out of the people tree. What a vile tongue! She has made brothers of us-brothers in misfortune. And so we must seek our fortunes together! But first promise me you will not return to your wife.”

The idiot made this promise very willingly, and together they journeyed until they reached a large city.

Before they entered the city, the ghost said, “Now listen, brother. If you follow my advice, your fortune is made. In this city there are two very beautiful girls, one the daughter of a king and the other the daughter of a rich money-lender. I will go and possess the daughter of the king, and when he finds her possessed by a spirit he will try every sort of remedy but with no effect. Meanwhile you must walk daily through the streets in the dress of a Sadhu-one who has renounced the world- and when the king comes and asks you if you can cure his daughter, undertake to do so and make your own terms. As soon as I see you, I shall leave the girl. Then I shall go and possess the daughter of the money-lender. But do not go near her, because I am in love with the girl and do not intend giving her up! If you come near her, I shall break you neck.”

The ghost went off on his whirlwind, while the idiot entered the city on his own and found a bed at the local inn for pilgrims.

The following day everyone in the city was going with the news that the king’s daughter was dangerously ill. Physicians of all sorts came and went, and all pronounced the girl incurable. The king was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He offered half his fortune to anyone who could cure his beautiful and only child. The idiot, having smeared himself with dust and ashes like a Sadhu, began walking the streets, reciting religious verses.

The people were struck by the idiot’s appearance. They took him for a wise and holy man, and reported him to the king, who immediately came into the city, prostrated himself before the idiot, and begged him to cure his daughter. After a show of modesty and reluctance, the idiot was persuaded to accompany the king back to the palace, and the girl was brought before him.

Her hair was disheveled, her teeth were chattering, and her eyes almost starting from their sockets. She howled and cursed and tore at her clothes. The idiot confronted her and recited a few meaningless spells. And the ghost, recognizing him, cried out in terror; “I’ m going, I’m on my way!’

“Give me a sign that you have gone,” demanded the idiot.

“As soon as I leave the girl,” said the ghost, “you will see that mango tree

Uprooted. That is the sign I’ll give.”

A few minutes later the mango tree came crashing down. The girl recovered from her fit and seemed unaware of what had happened. The news of her miraculous cure spread through the city, and the idiot became an object of veneration and wonder. The king kept his word and gave him half his fortune; and so began a period of the happiness and prosperity for the idiot.

A few weeks later the ghost took possession of the moneylender’s daughter, with whom he was in love. Seeing his daughter take leave of her senses, the money to cure his daughter. But remembering the ghost’s warning, the idiot refused. The money-lender was enraged and sent his henchmen to bring the idiot to him by force; and the idiot was dragged along to the rich man’s house.

As soon as the ghost saw his old companion, he cried out in a rage: “Idiot, why have you broken our agreement and come here? Now I will have to break your neck!”

But the idiot, whose reputation for wisdom had actually helped to make his wiser, said, “Brother ghost I have not come to trouble you but to tell you a terrible piece of news. Old friend and protector, we must leave this city soon. SHE has come here-my dreaded wife! -to torment us both, and to drag us back to the village. She is on her way and will be here any minute!”

When the ghost heard this, he cried out, “Oh no, oh no! if SHE has come, then we must go!”

And breaking down the walls and doors of the house, the ghost gathered himself up into a little whirlwind and went scurrying out of the city to look for a vacant peepul tree.

The money-lender, delighted that his daughter had been freed of the evil influence, embraced the idiot and showered presents on him. And in due course the idiot married the money-lender’s beautiful daughter, inherited his wealth and debtors, and became the richest and most successful money-lender in the city.

because I have touched it. I must go and bathe in the sea. Then I will come and worship you and afterwards I will burn my brother’s body. Meanwhile, I leave it in your care.”

Chellan left, and the god told his attendant Ganas(goblins) to watch over the body. These Ganas are inclined to be mischievous, and when the god wasn’t looking, they gobbled up the body of Ganagan.

When Chellan came back from bathing, he reverently worshiped Pillaiyar. He then looked for his brother’s body. It was not to be found. Anxiously they demanded it of the god. Pillaiyar called on his goblins to produce it. Terrified, they confessed to what they had done.

Chellan reaproached the god for the misdeeds of his attendants. And Pillaiyar felt so much pity for him, that by his divine power her restored dead Gangan’s body to Chellan, and brought Gangan to life again.

The two brothers then returned to King Pandya’s capital, where Gangan married the princess and became king when her father died.

And so the fourth prophecy was fulfilled:

“For a little while happiness shall follow.”

But there are wise men who say that the lines of the prophecy were wrongly read and understood, and that the whole should run:

“From birth, poverty;

For ten years, captivity;

On the sea-shore, death for a little while;

Happiness shall follow.”

It is the last two lines that are different. And this must be the correct version, because when happiness came to Gangan it was not “for a little while.” When the Goddess of Good Fortune did arrive, she stayed in his palace for many, many years.

**The Ghost and the Idiot**

**I**N A VILLAGE near Agra there lived a family who was under the special protection of a Munjia, a ghost who lived in the peepul tree. The ghost had attached himself to this particular family and showed his fondness for its members by throwing stones, bones, night-soil and other rubbish at them, and making hideous noises, terrifying them at every opportunity. Under his patronage, the family dwindled away. One by one they died, the only survivor being an idiot boy, whom the ghost did not bother because he felt it beneath his dignity to do so.

But in an Indian village, marriage (like birth and death) must come to all, and it was not long before the neighbours began to make plans for the marriage of the idiot.

After a meeting of the village elders it was decided, first, that the idiot should be married; and second, that he should be married to a shrew of a girl who had passed the age of twenty without finding a suitor!

The shrew and the idiot were soon married off, then left to manage for themselves. The poor idiot had no means of earning a living and had to resort to begging. He had barely been able to support himself before, and now his wife was an additional burden. The first thing she did when she entered the house was to give him a box on the ear and send him out to bring something home for dinner.

The poor fellow went from door to door, but nobody gave him anything, because the same people who had arranged the marriage were annoyed that he had not given them a wedding feast. In the evening, when he returned home empty-handed, his wife cried out: “Are you back, you lazy idiot? Why have you been so long, and what have you brought for me?”

When she found he hadn’t even a paisa she flew into a rage and, removing his head-cloth, tossed it into the peepul tree. Then, taking up her broom, she belaboured her husband until he fled from the house.

But the shrew’s anger had not yet been assuaged. Seeing her husband’s head-cloth in the peepul tree, she began venting her rage on the tree-trunk, accompanying her blows with the most shocking abuse. The ghost who lived in the tree was sensitive to both her blows and her language. Alarmed that her terrible curses might put an end to him, he took to his heels and left the tree in which he had lived for so

more than before, and again let down his water-jar.

As it passed the second landing place on the ruined staircase, a huge snake darted out and twisted itself round the rope. “Oh, Incarnation of Mercy, save me!” it hissed. “unless you help me, I must die here, for I cannot climb the sides of the well. Help me, and I will always serve you!”

Gangan’s heart was again touched, and he drew up the snake. It glided round him as if he were a holy being. “I am the Serpent king.” It said. “I was chasing a rat. It jumped into the well and fell on the third landing below. I followed, but fell on the second landing. Then the goldsmith leaped in and fell on the fourth landing place, while the tiger fell on the top landing. You saved the Tiger King. You have saved me. You may save the rat, if you wish. But do not free the goldsmith. He is not to be trusted. He will harm you if you help him. But I will not forget you, and will come to you aid if you call upon me.”

Then the King of Snakes disappeared into the long grass of the forest.

Gangan let down his jar once more, eager to quench his thirst. But as the jar passed the third landing, the rat leaped into it.

“After the Tiger King, what is a rat?” said Gangan to himself, and pulled the jar up.

Like the tiger and the snake, the rat did reverence, and offered his services if every they were need. And like the tiger and the snake, he warned Gangan against the goldsmith. Then the Rat King – for he was none other- ran off into a hole among the roots of a banyan tree.

By this time Gangan’s thirst was becoming unbearable. He almost flung the water-jar down the well. But again the rope was seized, and Gangan heard the goldsmith beg piteously to be hauled up.

“unless I pull him out of the well, I shall never get any water,” groaned Gangan. “And after all, why not help the unfortunate man?” so with a great struggle-for he was a very fat goldsmith – Gangan got him out of the well and on to the grass beside him.

The goldsmith had much to say. But before listening to him, Gangan let his jar down into the well a fifth time. And then he drank till he was satisfied.

“Friend and deliverer!” cried the goldsmith. “Don’t believe what those beasts have said about me! I live in the holy city of Tenkasi, only a day’s journey north of Papanasam. Come and visit me whenever you are there, I will show you that I am not an ungrateful man.” And he took leave of Gangan and went his way.

“From birth, poverty.”

Gangan resumed his pilgrimage, begging his way to Papanasam. There he stayed many weeks, performing all the ceremonies which pilgrims should perform,

bathing at the waterfall, and watching and watching the Brahmin priests feeding the fishes in the scared stream. He visited other shrines, going as far as Cape Comorin, the southernmost tip of India, where he bathed in the sea. Then he came back through the jungles of Travancore.

He had started on his pilgrimage with his copper water-jar and nothing more. After months of wanderings, it was still the only thing he owned. The first prophecy on the palm leaf had already come true: “from birth, poverty.”

During his wanderings Gangan had never once thought of the Tiger King and the others, but as he walked wearily along in his rags, he saw a ruined well by the roadside, and it reminded him of his wonderful adventure. And just to see if the Tiger King was genuine, he called out: “Oh King of Tigers, let me see you!”

No sooner had he spoken than the Tiger King leaped out of the bushes, carrying in his mouth a glittering golden helmet, embedded with a precious stones.

It was the helmet of King Pandya, the monarch of the land.

The king had been waylaid and killed by robbers, for the sake of the jeweled helmet; but they in turn had fallen prey to the tiger, who had walked away with the helmet.

Gangan of course knew nothing about all this, and when the Tiger King laid the helmet at his feet, he stood stuperfied at its splendor and his own good luck.

After the Tiger King had left him, Gangan thought of the goldsmith. “he will take the jewels out of the helmet, and I will sell some of them. Others I will take home.” So he wrapped the helmet in a rag and made his way to Tenkasi.

In the Tenkasi bazaar he soon found the goldsmith’s shop. When they had talked awhile, Gangan uncovered the golden helmet. The goldsmith- who knew its worth far better than Gangan- gloated over it, and at once agreed to take out the jewels and sell a few so that Gangan might have some money to spend.

“Now let me examine this helmet at leisure,” said the goldsmith. “you go to the shrines, worship, and come back. I will then tell you what your treasure is worth.”

Gangan went off to worship at the famous shrines of Tenkasi. And as soon as he had gone, the goldsmith went off to the local magistrate.

“Did not the herald of King Pandya’s son come here only yesterday and announce that he would give half his kingdom to anyone who discovered his father’s murderer?” he asked, “well, I have found the killer. He has brought the king’s jeweled helmet to me this very day.”

The magistrate called his guards, and they all hurried to the goldsmith’s shop and reached it just as Gangan returned from his tour of the temples.

“Here is the helmet!” exclaimed the goldsmith to the magistrate. “And here is the villain who murdered the king to get it!”

The guards seized poor Gangan and marched him off to Madura, the capital of the Pandya kingdom, and brought him before the murdered king’s son. when

**The Tiger-King’s Gift**

LONG AGO in the days of the ancient Pandya kings of South India. A father and his two sons lived in a village near Madura. The father was an astrologer, but he had never become famous, and so was very poor. The elder son was called Chellan; the younger Gangan. When the time came for the father to put off his earthly body, he gave his few fields to Chellan, and a palm leaf with some words scratched on it to Gangan.

These were the words that Gangan read:

“From birth, poverty;

For ten years, captivity;

On the seashore, death.

For a little while happiness shall follow.”

“This must be my fortune,” said Gangan to himself, “and it doesn’t seem to be much of a fortune. I must have done something terrible in a former birth. But I will go as a pilgrim to Papanasam and do penance. If I can expiate my sin, I may have better luck.”

His only possession was a water jar of hammered copper, which had belonged to his grandfather. He coiled a rope round the jar, in case he needed to draw water from a well. Then he put a little rice into a bundle, said farewell to his brother, and set out.

As he journeyed he had to pass through a great forest. Soon he had eaten all his food and drunk all the water in his jar. In the heat of the day he became very thirsty.

At last he came to an old, disused well. As he looked down into it he could see that a winding stairway had once gone round it down to the water’s edge, and that there had been four landing places at different heights down this stairway; so that those who wanted to fetch water might descend the stairway to the level of the water and fill their water-pots with ease, regardless of whether the well was full, or three-quarters full, or half full or only one quarter full.

Now the well was nearly empty. The stairway had fallen away. Gangan could not

**The Happy Herdsman**

A YOUNG Herdsman was watching some sheep at the edge of the jungle, when a tiger came out and asked him for a sheep.

“They are not my sheep,” said the herdsman. “How can I give you one?”

“All right, don’t,” said the tiger. “I’ll eat you instead. One of these nights.”

When the herdsman came home, he told his mother what had happened, and she said, “We had better get neighbours to sleep in the house, as a precaution.”

So the neighbours brought their beds and slept in the house. The herdsman’s bed was placed in the centre. In the middle of the night the tiger came in quietly, crept under the herdsman’s bed, and carried it off on his shoulders.

When they had gone a little distance, the herdsman fortunately woke, to find himself being borne away on his bed. As they passed under a huge banyan tree, he caught hold of one of its dangling shoots and climbed up. The tiger, knowing nothing of this, went off with bed.

The herdsman was so afraid of the tiger that he remained in the tree all next day. In the evening a herd of cows came to the spot and lay down under the banyan tree. They remained there all night and next morning went off to graze. While they were away, the herdsman came down and cleaned up the area under the banyan tree.

Next night, when the cows came again, they were delighted to find that someone had cleaned the area. They wondered who had done them this service. When the same thing happened three days in succession, the cows called out, “Show yourself, oh unknown friend! We are grateful, and wish to make you acquaintance.” But the herdsman thought this might be some trick on the part of the tiger. He kept quiet and remained hidden in the banyan tree.

Then the cows made a plan. One of them was old and weak, so the others told her: “you lie here and pretend to be sick. Our friend is sure to come down to help you after we have gone. When he comes, catch hold of his dhoti, and don’t let go until we return.”

The old cow did as she was told. When she caught hold of the herdsman’s dhoti, he did his best to drag himself away, but she held fast.

When the cows came back, they told the herdsman how grateful they were to him. They said, “You may have as much of our milk as u want.”

So the herdsman continued to live in the banyan tree, and he would milk the cows every day.

One day, as he was walking about beneath the tree, he saw several young snakes coming out of a hole in the ground. They looked thin and miserable. The herdsman felt sorry for them, so every day he gave them some milk. When they grew strong and began to move about in jungle, they met their mother, who exclaimed: “I can’t believe it! I left you starving, and now here you are, well and strong!” They told her how the herdsman had taken care of them. So she went to the herdsman and said: “Ask any boon you will.” And the herdsman said: “I wish that my hair and skin would turn the colour of gold.” The change took place almost at once, and the snakes went away.

On a hot summer’s day, the herdsman went down to the river to bathe. As he was bathing, a strand of golden hair came away in his hands. He made a little leaf-boat and he put the hair in it, and let it float downstream.

Many miles downstream a king’s daughter was bathing. As the leaf-boat floated past, she picked up the golden hair. “Oh, how lovely!” she exclaimed. “My father must marry me to the man who has hair like this!”

When she showed her father the hair, and told him of her desire to marry its owner, the king made every effort to find him. Finally his soldiers traced the herdsman and told him to accompany them back to king’s palace. “I will do nothing of the sort,” he said.

They tried to drag him away, but he played on his flute and all the cows rushed up, charged the soldiers and drove them off.

When they told the king what happened, he sent his pet crows to get the flute. They came and perched on the banyan tree, and made a lot of noise. The herdsman threw stones at them, but could not drive them away. Finally he became so angry that he threw his flute at them. One of the crows caught it neatly in its beak and flew off with it.

Having got possession of the flute, the king sent another party of soldiers to seize the herdsman. He blew upon another flute, but this one did not have the same magic, and the cows did not rush to his rescue. He was carried off to the king’s palace.

The king lost no time in marrying the herdsman to the princess. They were given a beautiful house and lots of money. But, although the herdsman was fond of his wife, he longed for his former life as a cowherd.

One day he asked his wife to give him the old flute. She took it out of her box and gave it to him. When he blew it, the sound reached the cows, and they all rushed to the king’s palace and began knocking down the walls.

The king was terrified and asked them what they wanted.

“We want our cowherd!” they replied.

give it to him, and he took it and his wife to the palace which Balwanti Rani had built. Then they all returned to the Bhuiya’s native village, and that nights his two wives built a palace even more splendid than the last.

A few days later the old barber arrived. When he shaved the Bhuiya’s head, he recognised him. Then he went and pared the nails of the two wives. After this he went back to the king and said:” The Bhuiya to whom you gave money to buy cloth has come back rolling in wealth, and he has two beautiful wives who are fit only for a king.”

“How do I get hold of them?” asked the king.

“Send for the youth,” said the barber,” and demand your cloth. He won’t be able to produce it, and will have to give you the women instead.”

The king sent for the Bhuiya and asked,” Where is the cloth you promised to bring me?”

“You shall have it tomorrow,” said the Bhuiya.

When he got home, Balwanti Rani saw that he was worried and asked him the reason. He told her how he was in the king’s power.

“Don’t worry,” she said,” I am the fairy whose breast-cloth you cut. I will bring you four bales of the cloth tomorrow.”

Next day the Bhuiya gave the cloth to the amazed king.

Then the barber said:” Tell him to bring you four baskets of ripe mangoes. They are out of season, and he is sure to fail. Then he will have to give up his women.”

Again the Bhuiya youth was troubled, until Balwanti Rani solved the problem, for by her magical powers she planted a garden that night, and in the morning the trees were laden with ripe mangoes. These the youth gave to the king.

“Our plans have failed again,” said the barber.” But let us try another trick. Call the Bhuiya and tell him to bring you news of your parents in the world of the dead.”

When the king gave this order, the Bhuiya was very worried. But when Balwanti Rani heard the story, she said:” Go to the king and say that, in order that you may be able to visit the land of the dead, you must have a house filled with fuel. In this you must be burnt so that your spirit can go to the Yama.”

While the preparations were being made. Balwanti Rani made an underground passage from this place to her own house, and when the fire was lit, the Bhuiya escaped by the passage to his home. He stayed indoors for six months, living in the dark, letting his hair and beard grow. Then he came out and said to the king, “Yamaraj is a terrible place. Look at my condition after being there for six months. Just think of what your parents must be, who have been there twelve years!”

The king was determined to go and see his parents for himself. He had a house filled with fuel and lighted. Then he stepped into the fire and went up in flames. And the Bhuiya took possession of the kingdom, and ruled it for many years with justice

and water his horse. Some soldiers of the chief of that city saw him, and one of them said:” This must be some great prince. Our chief has a daughter for whom he cannot find a suitable husband. If he were to marry her to this prince, his troubles would be over.”

So, they told the chief about the handsome prince who was mounted on a fine

Horse, and he sent for the youth.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I am a chief’s son,” said the Bhuiya.

“If another king offered you his daughter in marriage, would you accept her?”

“I would have to obtain the consent of my parents and brothers”.

“If you refuse to marry her, I will have you killed”

“In that case I must marry her,” said the Bhuiya.

So they were married the next day, with much feasting and ceremony.

“I have some urgent business at home,” said the young man afterwards,” but I will return in a few days and take my wife home.”

So the Bhuiya youth rode off, and after some hard riding he reached the palace of a powerful queen, Balwanti Rani, who lived in the depths of a thick jungle. The palace had seven gates, one within the other. The first was guarded by a demon, whose upper lip stretched to heaven and lower lip to patala, the underworld. When the Bhuiya saw him, he thought, this monster’s mouth will engulf me and my horse. I had better make friends with him. Better still, I will claim a relationship.

So he went up to the demon and said:” I salute you, O maternal Uncle!”

The demon said:” I have had no food for twelve years, and when prey comes my way, it is hard that is should turn out to be my sister’s son. All the same, sit down and tell me what you want.”

“I am here to enquire about the health of Balwanti Rani,” said the youth.

“Do not ask about her,” said the demon. “She sleeps for twelve years and remains awake for twelve years. Just now she is asleep, and as a result all her guards and servants are dying of hunger.”

“How can I manage to see her, Uncle?”

“It’s very difficult, she has seven guards. The first is myself. Next comes a tiger guard; then a leopard guard; then a bear guard. Then come guards of demons and witches. You cannot see the Rani unless you get past all these guards.”

“Well, I must see her, and as my uncle you must tell me how to evade the guards.”

“very well,” said the demon,” Take he-goats for the tiger and the leopard. Take some wild plums for the bear. And the some parched rice for the demons and witches. They are very hungry, and if you feed them, they may let you in. But be careful on your return, as they will then attack you.”

The Bhuiya took these presents with him, and did as he was told, and no one

**How a Tribal Boy Became a King**

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a Bhuiya tribal boy, who was left an orphan when he was very young. The villagers used to give him food, and when he grew up, he was sent to graze cattle in the jungle. At night he used to sleep on a small platform which he had set up in banyan tree.

God Indra pitied the youth and sent a fairy from his heavenly court with a tray of the finest food. But the young man was afraid to look at her and, whenever she came, He would close his eyes in terror.

After some days he told an old woman of the tribe about the fairy’s visits. The old woman said: “This food is sent by Lord Indra. If you don’t eat it, he will be displeased. But if you do not want the fairy to visit you, the next time she comes, just cut off a piece of the cloth which covers her breast.”

When the fairy came again the next night and asked the Bhuiya to eat, he pulled out the curved knife which he used to peel bamboos, and cut off a piece of her dress. After that she stopped visiting him.

One day the village people said to their barber: “It is time that young man’s head was shaved.”

So the barber went to where the Bhuiya was staying in the jungle.

In those days a barber was reputed to be the craftiest of men. There was even a proverb which went: “As the crow is among birds, so is the barber among men. “As the barber was shaving the youth’s head, he saw the piece from the fairy’s robe, and thought:” such fine cloth is not found even in a king’s palace.”

“Where did you get this?” he asked.

“My uncle gave it to me,” answered the youth.

The barber went to the king and told him about the lovely piece of cloth he had seen with the Bhuiya. The king sent for the youth and said,” You must get me a bale of this cloth.”

“I will get it if you give me three hundred rupees,” said the Bhuiya.

The king gave him the money, and with it the youth bought a horse for two hundred rupees, and the rest he spent on good clothes. Then he rode off in search of the cloth.

**The Lost Ruby**

ONCE UPON A TIME there lived a king, who was a great and powerful monarch.

One day he was very sad, and as he sat in his council-hall surrounded by his ministers, the chief minister, who was a good and wise man, asked him: “Defender of the World! Why is your spirit sad today? Your Majesty ought not to allow grief to trouble your mind.”

The king would not tell him his grief. On the contrary, he resented his good minister’s concern for him. “It is all very well for you to talk,” he said. “But if you had reason to be sad, I am sure you would find it is impossible to practice what you have just suggested.” And the king decided to put his chief minister to the test, and told him to wait at the royal palace after council was dismissed.

The minister accordingly made his way to the royal apartments and awaited further orders. The king took out a ruby of great price from a beautiful ivory casket, and placing it in the minister’s hand, told him to look after it with great care.

When the minister got home, he found his wife reclining on cushions, chewing scented paan. He gave her the ruby to keep. She dropped it in a partition of her cash-box and thought no more about it.

No sooner had the wily king delivered the ruby to his minister than he employed female spies to follow him up and mark where he kept the jewel. After a few days he bribed the steward of the minister’s household to steal it for him. The king was sitting on the balcony of his palace overlooking the river, when the jewel was brought to him. Taking it from hands of the steward, he deliberately threw it into the river.

The next morning, after dismissing his court, he asked the chief minister: “Where is the ruby which I gave you to keep the other day?” The minister replied;” I have got it, Defender of the World.”

“Well then,” said the king,” go and fetch it, for I want it right now.”

Imagine the poor minister’s amazement when, ongoing home, he understood that the ruby was nowhere to be found. He hurried back to the king and reported the loss. “Your majesty,” he said, “if you allow me a few days grace, I hope to find it and bring it back to you.”

“Very well,” said the king, laughing to himself. “I give you three days in which

to find the ruby. If, at the end of end of that time, you fail to find it, your life and the lives of all who are dear to you will be forfeit. And your house will be razed to the ground and ploughed up by donkeys!”

The minister left the palace with a heavy heart. He searched everywhere for the lost jewel, but because of its mysterious disappearance he did not have much hope of finding it.

I have no one, he thought, no whom I can leave my riches and possessions. My wife is the only soul on earth who is dear to me, and it seems we must both die after three days. What could be better than for us to enjoy ourselves during this period? We’ll make the most of the time that’s left to us.

In this mood he reached home and told his wife about the king’s decision.

“Let us spend our wealth liberally and freely,” he said, “for soon we must die.”

His wife sighed deeply and only said, “As you wish. Fate has dealt us a cruel blow. Let us take it with it with dignity and good cheer.”

That day saw the commencement of a period of great revelry in the chief minister’s house. Musicians of kinds were engaged, and the halls were filled with guests, who came wondering what great luck had come the way of chief minister. Rich food was served, and night and day the sound of music and laughter filled the house…

In addition, large quantities of food were prepared and given to the poor. No one who came to the house was allowed to leave empty-handed. Tradesmen, when they brought their customary presents of fresh fruit, were rewarded with gold coins, and went away rejoicing.

In a village nearby there lived a poor flower-seller and a fisherwoman; the two women were neighbours and close friends. The flower-seller happened to be visiting the bazaar, where she heard of the grand doings at the minister’s house. So, she hurried there, with a present of vegetables and garlands, and received a gold coin. Then she walked across to her friend’s house and advised her to take a present of fish to the minister, who would reward her in the same manner.

The fisherwoman was very poor. Her husband used to go fishing daily, but he seldom was able to catch large fish; those that he caught were so small that they rarely fetched more than a few pice in the bazaar. So the fisherman said to herself: “Those miserable fish that my husband brings home are hardly worth presenting to the minister-he’ll only feel insulted”, and she thought no more about it.

But the following morning, as good luck would have it, her husband caught alarge Rohu, the most delicious of Indian fresh-water fish. Delighted at his good fortune, he took it home to show his wife, who immediately placed the fish in a basket, covered it with a clean cloth, and hurried to the minister’s house. The minister was really pleased to see such a fine large Rohu fish, and instead of giving

I N A VILLAGE in south India there lived a very rich landlord who owned several villages and many fields; but he was such a great miser that he found it difficult to find tenants who willingly work on his land, and those who did, gave him a lot of trouble. As a result, he left all his fields untilled, and even his tanks and water channels dried up. This made him poorer day by day. But he made no effort to obtain the goodwill of his tenants.

One day a holy man paid him a visit. The landlord poured out his tale of woe.

“These miserable tenants won’t do a thing for me,” he complained.” All my lands are going to waste.”

“My dear good landlord,” said the holy man, “I think I can help you. If you will repeat a mantra - a few magic words - which I will teach you. If you repeat it for three months, day and night, a wonderful demon will appear before you on the first day of the fourth month. He will willingly be your servant and take upon himself all the work that has been left undone by your wretched tenants. The demon will obey all your orders. You will find him equal to a hundred servants!”

The miserly landlord immediately fell at the feet of the holy man and begged for instruction. The sage gave him the magic words and then went his way. The landlord, greatly pleased, repeated the mantra day and night, for three months, till, on the first day of the fourth month, a magnificent young demon stood before him.

“What can I do for you, master?” he said. “I am at your command.”

The landlord was taken aback by the sight of the huge monster who stood before him, and by the sound of his terrible voice, but he summoned up enough courage to say, “You can work for me provided -- er-- you don’t expect any salary.”

“Very well,” said the demon, “but I have one condition. You must give me enough work to keep me busy all the time. If I have nothing to do, I shall kill you and eat you. Juicy landlords are my favourite dish.”

The landlord, certain that there was enough work to keep several demons busy for ever, agreed to these terms. He took the demon to a large tank which had been dry for years, and said: “You must deepen this tank until it is as deep as the height of two palm trees.”

“As you say, master,” said the demon, and set to work

The landlord went home, feeling sure that the job would take several weeks. His wife gave him a good dinner, and he was just sitting down in his courtyard to enjoy the evening breeze when the demon arrived, casually remarking that the tank was ready.

“The tank ready!” exclaimed the astonished landlord.” Why, I thought it would take you several weeks! How shall I keep him busy?” he asked, turning to his wife for aid.” If he goes on at this rate, he’ll soon have an excuse for killing and eating me!”

“You must not lose heart, my husband,” said the landlord’s wife.” Get all the work you can out of the demon. You’ll never find such a good worker again. And when you have no more work for him, let me know -I’ll find something to keep him busy.”

The landlord went out to inspect the tank and found that it had been completed to perfection. Then he set the demon to plough all his farm lands, which extended over a number of villages. This was done in two days. He next asked the demon to dig up all the waste land. This was done in less than a day.

“I’m getting hungry,” said the demon.” Come on, master, give me more work, quickly!”

The landlord felt helpless.” My dear friend,” he said, “my wife says she has a little job for you. Do go and see what it is she wants done. When you have finished, you can come and eat me, because I just can’t see how I can keep you busy much longer!”

The landlord’s wife, who had been listening to them, now came out of the house, holding in her hands a long hair which she had just pulled out of her head.

“Well, my good demon,” she said, “I have a very light job for you. I’m sure you will do it in a twinkling. Take this hair, and when you have made it perfectly straight, bring it back to me.”

The demon laughed uproariously, but took the hair and went away with it.

All night he sat in a peepul tree, trying to straighten the hair. He kept rolling it against his thighs and then lifting it up to see if it had become straight. But no, it would still bend! By morning the demon was feeling very tired.

Then he remembered that goldsmiths, when straightening metal wires, would heat them over a fire. So he made a fire and placed the hair over it, and in the twinkling of an eye it frizzled and burnt up.

The demon was horrified, He dared not return to the landlord’s wife. Not only had he failed to straighten the hair, but he had lost it too. Feeling that he had disgraced himself, he ran away to another part of the land.

So the landlord was rid of his demon. But he had learnt a lesson. He decided that It was better to have tenants working for him than demons, even if it meant paying

**“Who’ll Buy My Mangoes?”**

**W**HEN IT WAS KNOWN that the King of Benares was anxious to marry, kings and princes came from different corners of the country to propose that he marry their daughters. But he would choose none of them. If the daughters were acceptable, their parents were not; and so, when they had all gone, the king sat gloomily at his window, wondering if he would ever find someone to his liking.

His window looked out on the market-place. The bazaar was busy and colourful, fruit-sellers and cloth-merchants and bangle-makers displaying their wares on the pavements. The humbler tradespeople made their way through the crowds, and their voices, shouting their wares, rose harshly in the air. Amongst these voices the king could distinguish one-clear and musical -calling,” Mangoes! Who’ll buy my mangoes?”

The voice pleased him, and the king’s gaze roved over the crowd until he found its owner - sujatha, the daughter of a poor fruit-vendor, who was busily plying her trade. In spite of the ragged clothes she wore, she was a lovely girl, graceful in her movements, slim-waisted, her eyes bright and lustrous; and she was quite unconscious of her beauty.

The king’s heart was smitten. Turning to one of his courtiers, he commanded him to bring the girl before him.

With downcast eyes, the innocent Sujata was led into the royal presence. The king could do nothing but gape at her.

The courtiers put their heads together and whispered,” Surely the king will not marry the daughter of a fruit-seller when he has rejected all the high born princesses in the land!”

But that was just what the king intended. Sujata consented to wed him, and the marriage was celebrated with all the pomp and ceremony of a royal wedding.

At first the king and queen lived together in perfect harmony; but after a few months the king began to notice a disquieting change in his wife. Her natural simplicity, which had so charmed him, left her; and she became cold and haughty, especially with her servants or others of humble upbringing.

By the time they had been married for two years, the king’s patience had worn thin. On their anniversary he held a banquet in honour of his queen, and

woodpecker flew to the top of a tall tree. But the tortoise was so weak that he lay where he was; and the hunter threw him into a bag, and tied it to the tree.

When the antelope saw that the tortoise had been captured, he was determined to save his friend's life. So he let the hunter see him, and pretended to be weak and lame. The hunter saw him, seized his knife, and set off in pursuit. The antelope. keeping just out of his reach, led him into the forest; and when he judged that they had come a sufficient distance, he gave the hunter the slip and returned swiftly by another way. Then he lifted the bag with his horns, dropped it on the ground, ripped it open and let the tortoise out. And the woodpecker came down from the tree.

Then the antelope spoke to his friends: "You have been true friends and have saved my life. Now the hunter will come after you. So you, friend woodpecker, must move elsewhere in the forest with your brood. And you, friend tortoise, must dive into the water and take up residence on the other side of the lake."

So they went their different ways, and when the hunter returned, he could find none of them. He picked up his torn bag, and went home feeling sorry for himself.

**The Crane and the Crab**

EVERY SUMMER the water in the village pond fell very low, and one could see the fish swimming about near the bottom. A crane caught, sight of them and said to himself, “I must find a way to get hold of those fish.” And he sat down in deep thought by the side of the pond.

When the fish caught site of the crane, they said, “Of what are you thinking, my lord, as you sit there?”

“I am thinking about you,” said the crane. “The water in this pool being very low, the heat so great, and food so very scarce, I was wondering what in the world you fishes were going to do!”

“And what do you suggest we do, sir?”

“Well, if you agree, I will take you up one by one in my beak, and carry you off to a fine large pool covered with five different kinds of lotus-flowers, and there I will put you down.”

“But, good sir,” they said, “no crane ever took the slightest thought for the welfare of a fish ever since the world began. Your desire is to eat us, one by one.”

“No, I will not eat you while you trust me,” said the crane. “If you don’t take my word that there is such a pool, send one of our number to go with me and see for himself.”

Believing this to be fair proposal, the fish presented the crane with a great big fish (blind in one eye), who they thought would be match for the crane whether on land or water. The crane carried the fish off and dropped him in the pool, and after allowing him to take a good look at it, brought him back to his old pond. Then he told all the other fish about the charms of the new pool.

The fish become eager to go there, and said to the crane, “We shall be grateful, my lord, if you would kindly take us across.”

Well, to begin with, the crane took the big one-eyed fish again and carried him off to the new pool; but instead of dropping the fish in the water, the crane alighted in a tree which grew at the edge of the pool. Dashing the fish down in fork of the tree, the crane pecked it to death. He then picked it clean and let the bones fall at the foot of the tree.

When the crane returned to the pond, he said, “I’ve thrown him in. Who’s next?”

And so he took the fish one by one, and ate them all. But there was still a crab remaining in the muddy waters of the pond. And the crane wanted to eat him too.

“Mister crab,” he said, “I’ve carried all those fine fish away and dropped them into a beautiful large pool. Com along, I’ll take you there too.”

“And how will you carry me across?” asked the crab.

“In my beak, of course.”

“Ah, but you might drop me like that.” And to himself he said: “He hasn’t put the fish in the pool, that’s certain. But if he would really put me in, it would be wonderful. I could do with a change. And, if he doesn’t –well, I think I know how to deal with him!” And he spoke to the crane: “You won’t be able to hold me tight enough, friend crane. But we crabs have a very firm grip. If I might take hold of your neck with my claws, I could hold on tight and go along with you.”

The crane agreed, and the crab took hold of the bird’s neck with the pincers, and said, “Let’s go.” The crane flew him across and showed him the pool, and then started of the tree.

“You’re going the wrong way, friend,” said the crab.

“Don’t call me friend,” said the crane. “I suppose you thought me your slave to lift you up and carry you about! Well, just take a look at the heap of bones at the foot of the tree. As I ate up all those fish, so I will eat you too.”

“It was because of their own foolishness that the fish were eaten,” said the crab. I won’t be giving you the same opportunity. If we die, we will die together.” And he tightened his grip on the crane’s long neck.

With his mouth open and the tears streaming from his eyes, the crane gasped, “Lord, indeed I will not eat you! Spare my life!”

“Well then, just step down to the pool and put me in,” said the crab.

The crane turned back to the pool, and placed the crab in the mud at the water’s edge.

“Thank you, friend,” said the crab, and nipped off the crane’s head as neatly as if he were cutting a lotus-stalk with a knife.

the palace cook needed an assistance, he presented himself at the royal kitchens.

The cook took Kusa into his service, and the prince proved to be as good a cook as he was a potter – so much so, that a dish specially prepared by him was sent straight to the king.

The king thoroughly enjoyed the dish, when he heard that it had been prepared by the cook’s new assistant he said, “Give him a thousand pieces of gold, and from now on let him prepare and serve all the food for myself and any daughters.”

Kusa was happy to give the king’s gold piece to the chief cook, then set to work to prepare a delicious meal.

At dinner, Pabhavati was horrified to see her husband, disguised as a cook, stagger into the banquet-hall with a heavy load of dishes. He gave no sign of recognition; but the princess was angry and, staring at him with contempt, said: “I do not care for these dishes. Bring me food that someone else has prepared.”

Her sisters protested, crying out that they had never tasted such delicious cooking. But although Kusa came day after day, serving a variety of tasty dishes, Pabhavati would not touch any of them.

At last the prince decided that there was no way in which he could touch the heart of the princess.

Nothing that I do pleases her, he thought. Now I must leave her for ever.

While he was preparing to leave the palace, he heard that the king of Madda was greatly troubled. The king had received news that seven kings were riding towards the city with seven armies, and that each of these kings, having heard of the beauty of Pabhavati, was anxious to make her his wife.

The king was in a quandary, because he felt sure that if he chose one of these kings as the husband of Pabhavati, the other six would attack his kingdom in revenge.

If only Pabhavati had not left her rightful husband, thought the king, these troubles would not have arisen.

Realising that it was useless to spend his time in regrets, the king summoned his advisers and asked them which king he should choose for the princess.

“Not one of them alone,” declared the wise men. “The princess has endangered the kingdom. Therefore, she must suffer the consequences. She must be executed, her body divided into seven pieces, and one portion presented to each of the seven kings. Only in this way can a terrible war be avoided.”

The king was horrified by this advice from his men of wisdom; but while he was sitting alone, deep in thought, Kusa, still in the guise of cook, came to him and said: “Your majesty, let me deal with these kings. Give me your army, and I will crush them or die in the attempt.”

“What!” cried the astonished king. “Shall a cook do battle with kings?”

“If a cook knows how to fight, why not? But I must confess that I am not really a servant, but Prince Kusa, to whom you once entrusted your daughter. Although she has rejected me, I still love her, and it is only right that I should deal with these suitors.”

The king could hardly believe that it was Kusa who stood before him. He had Pabhavati brought to him, and when she admitted that the cook’s apprentice was her royal husband, he cried: “You should be ashamed, daughter, for following your husband to be treated as servant in that palace.”

He dismissed Pabhavati from his presence, and begged Kusa’s pardon for the way in which he had been insulted.

Kusa replied that all he wanted was freedom to deal with the seven invading kings, and the king immediately placed him at the head of the army. The fate of the kingdom lay in Kusa’s hands.

The seven kings were taken by surprise when they saw Kusa and his forces advancing towards them, for they had not expected any resistance. In spite of their superior numbers, they were soon routed by an inspired force under Kusa’s command. They laid down their arms and surrendered, and the Prince led them as captives to the king.

“Deal with these prisoners as you will,” said Kusa.

“They are your captives,” said the king. “It is for you to decide their fate.”

“Then,” said the prince, “since each of these kings wishes to marry a beautiful princess, why do you not marry them all to the sisters of Pabhavati?”

The king was delighted with this solution to his problem; it would guarantee the safety of his kingdom for ever. The seven kings were bowled over by the beauty and grace of Pabhavati’ s sisters. And the seven sisters thought their prospective husbands looked very handsome indeed.

But Pabhavati sat alone, weeping bitter tears. She now realized how heartlessly she had treated Kusa, and what a noble man and lover she had scorned.

He will never forgive me, she thought sadly.

She went to him, and threw herself at his feet, crying: “Forgive me, my husband, and take me back, even if you decide to treat me as a slave.”

Kusa raised her gently from the ground.

“Do you really wish to return to me?” he asked. “Look at me, Pabhavati. I am still as ugly as when you ran away from me.”

Pabhavati gazed at him steadfastly; and instead of the loathing which Kusa had seen in her eyes before, he now saw only wonder and tenderness.

“You have changed!” she cried. “You are no longer ugly!”

“No,” said Kusa. “I haven’t changed. It is you who have changed.”

of the elephant upon which prince Kusa was riding in state.

“Long live Kusa, our noble prince!” cried the people on the streets.

As the elephant passed beneath the window, Pabhavati caught a glimpse of the prince’s face. She shrank back in horror.

“Oh, no!” she cried. “Can that hideous creature be my husband? No, that is not Kusa!”

Her attendant assured her that it was indeed the prince, whereupon Pabhavati decided that she would flee instantly from such an ugly husband. She demanded that an escort be provided for her return to the kingdom of Madda, declaring that she would not be bound by marriage to a husband who was so different from the man she had imagined!

King Okkaka could have forced the princess to remain in the palace, but Kusa shook his head sadly and said, “No, let her do as she wishes.”

Then, forgetful of all the love and tenderness that she had received from Kusa, and thinking only of his ugly face, Pabhavati left the palace and returned to her father’s kingdom.

Prince Kusa was terribly unhappy; but one day the thought occurred to him that if he were to visit Pabhavati in her own land, he might find that her attitude had changed. He changed his princely ropes for simple clothes, and, taking his sitar, he set out on foot for the kingdom of Madda.

After a journey of several days, Kusa arrived one evening at the chief city of Madda.

It was midnight when he reached the royal palace. He crept beneath the walls, then began playing softly upon his sitar. He played so sweetly that the sleepers in the palace stirred and smiled in their dreams. But Pabhavati wakened with a start and tensed as she listened to the familiar music.

That is Kusa below, she thought, afraid and angry at the same time. If my father knows that he is here, I will be forced to return to that hideous husband.

But Kusa had no intention of appealing to the king. He would lose Pabhavati for ever than have her return against her will. He was determined to keep his presence in the city a secret from everyone except the princess.

When morning came he went to the chief potter in the city and asked to become his apprentice.

“If I do good work for you, will you display my wares in the palace?” asked Kusa.

“Certainly,” said the potter. “But show me what you can do.”

Kusa set to work at the potter’s wheel, and the bowls he produced were so beautifully formed that the potter was delighted.

“I am sure the king will purchase such dainty bowls for his daughters,” he said; and taking some of the bowls made by Kusa, he went straight to the palace.

order to protect you. According to this custom, a bride may look upon the face of her husband until one year after the marriage. Therefore, for one whole year, you must only meet your bride in a darkened room.”

“But how will that help me in the end?” asked Kusa doubtfully. “My looks will not have improved by the end of the year. She will have to see me some day.”

“True, but during that year your bride will have learned to love you so much that, when she sees you at last, you will not be ugly in her eyes!”

Prince Kusa had his doubts, but the king was insistent and wasted no time in visiting the kingdom of Madda and returning with the beautiful princess Pabhavati. Soon after, the marriage ceremony was performed in a darkened chamber, by order of the king.

Princess Pabhavati was surprised to discover that she was not to look upon the face of her husband for one year after the marriage had taken place.

This is a strange custom, she thought, but she accepted the condition without protest, and settled in a magnificent suite of apartments, one room of which was always to be kept in complete darkness.

Kusa came daily to this room to visit his bride, and as his voice and manners were kind and gentle, Pabhavati soon grew to love him, although she did not get a glimpse of his face. He spent many hours playing to her upon his sitar, and she would listen to him, enthralled.

Was there ever a prince like this husband of mine? She thought. How I long for the day when I shall see his face! Surely he must be a handsome as he is kind and wise.

All might have been well if Pabhavati had been content to wait for a year; but, after she had been married for only a month, she grew impatient and found herself constantly wondering about Prince Kusa’s appearance. During the second month she could conceal her curiosity no longer. One day, when Kusa was with her in the darkened room, she said: “Dear husband, it makes it makes me said that I must wait so long before I can look upon your face. I beg you to meet me in the light of the day.”

“No, Pabhavati, that impossible,” said the prince. “I cannot disobey my father the king. Be patient a little longer. The months will pass quickly.”

But the quality of patience will absent in the princess, and soon she began question the maidservants and others about her husband’s appearance. As she never received a clear answer, she became more curious. Finally, she bribed one of her attendants to help her obtain aa glimpse of Kusa.

One day, when the Prince was due to ride through the city at the head of a procession, the waiting-woman concealed the princess in a corner-room of the palace, a window of which looked out upon a highway.

When the procession came by, Pabhavati hurried to the window. She heard the sound of music and shouting, and saw gay banners and garlands throw at the feet

fled from the palace, weeping bitterly.

Now, although King Dushyanta appeared to have become callous and cruel in such a short space of time, in reality he had only spoken what he believed to be the truth. He did not remember Shakuntala at all, and for a very good reason. When the old sage Durvasas had muttered his curse, he had decreed, first of all, that she should lose the king’s ring, and then, that until Dushyanta saw the ring again, he would be unable to remember Shakuntala, even though she stood before him.

Not even the God Indra could alter a curse once it had been pronounced by the old sage, and since Dushyanta’s ring had been swept away by the stream in the forest, there was little hope that he would ever remember his bride.

Several years passed, and then one day a fisherman was brought before the king to relate a curious story.

The fisherman had caught a fine carp in the river, and when he had cut the fish open, a gold ring engraven with the name “Dushyanta” was found within the body of carp.

The king examined the ring with interest. “It does look like mine,”. he said, “yet I don’t remember losing it”.

He rewarded the fisherman for his honesty, and after examining the ring again, he placed it upon his finger.

“How strange!” He said, “A cloud seems to be lifting from my mind. Yes, I remember now – this is the ring I gave to my bride, Shakuntala, in the forest. Ah, but what have I done! It was Shakuntala who came to me that day, and I sent her from me with cruel words.

Dushyanta hastened to the forest, but the hermitage was deserted. Father Kanva was long since dead. The king had the land searched, but it was as thought Shakuntala had vanished from the earth. He fell into a deep melancholy from no one could rouse him.

But although the God Indra had not been able to evert the curse of Durvasas, he had not been in different to the suffering that has been caused. And now that the ring had been recovered, he was determined to help the unhappy king.

One day Dushyanta was walking in his garden when he saw a strange object in the sky. It looked like a great shining bird.

As it came nearer, the bird proved to be a chariot drawn by prancing horses, whose reins were held by a celestial–looking being.

The chariot alighted on the earth not far from the king, and the charioteer called: “Dushyanta! Do you not know me? I am Matali, the charioteer of great Indra. Come with me, for Indra has need you.”

Dushyanta was awestruck; but he stepped into the chariot and was whirled upwards so swiftly that soon his kingdom lay like speak beneath him. The chariot

soared till higher, and horses trod the air as if it were solid ground beneath their feet. Then suddenly the chariot stopped in the midst of the clouds, and Matali told Dushyanta to descend.

The king obeyed, and gradually, as the mist cleared and the clouds melted away, he saw that he was alone in a beautiful garden. He felt that surely he was near great Indra’s dwelling.

There was a rustling in the bushes, and Dushyanta waited breathlessly. Perhaps the god was about to reveal himself.

It was not a heavenly being who appeared, However, but a little boy who was carrying a lion cub. The cub struggled fiercely in his arms, but the boy held on to it without fear.

“Come hero, boy,” called the king. “Tell me your name.”

“I do not know it,” said the boy.

“That is strange,” said Dushyanta. He felt irresistibly drawn towards the boy, and held out his hand to him, but the boy drew back.

“No one shall touch me,” he said, and then called out: “Mother, come quickly!”

“I am coming son,” said a gentle voice.

The king stepped back, trembling violently, for there before him stood Shakuntala, looking pale and said but more beautiful than ever.

When she saw the king drew herself up proudly, but Dushyanta fell at her feet, crying: “Shakuntala, do not turn for me. Listen, I beg of you!” And he told her of how he had forgotten her until the recovery of the ring, and of how he had since sought her everywhere.

Shakuntala’s face lit up with joy and she cried, “Oh, Dushyanta, now understand. It must have been the punishment of Durvasas.” And she told him about the curse of the angry sage, how she had lost her ring in the stream, and how she had suffered all these years at the thought if her husband’s denial of her.

“But where have you been all the time?” asked Dushyanta. “What is the place?”

“This is a sacred mountain near the dwelling-place of great Indra. When you denied me in your palace, I felt that I should die of grief. But a wonderful thing happened to me. As I lay weeping on the ground, Indra send his chariot to earth, and I brought here by heavenly beings who have watched over us all this time.”

“Mother,” cried the boy, who had been watching from a little distance. “Who is this man?”

“Your father, my child,” said Shakuntala. “Embrace your son, Dushyanta. He was gift from the gods to comfort me in my loneliness.”

And as Dushyanta knelt down to embrace his son, Matali again appeared in his chariot.

“Are you happy, Dushyanta?” he asked, “Now it is Indra’s wish that you return with me to earth. Cherish your son, happy mortals, for he shall become the founder

.

**Shakuntala**

IN ANCIENT INDIA, when the great God Indra was worshipped, there lived a young king named Dushyanta.

One day, while he was hunting in a great forest, the king become separated from his followers. He wandered on alone through the forest until he found himself in a pleasant grove which led to a hermitage. The little dwelling was the home of an old hermit call Father Kanva. The king had heard many stories about the piety and wisdom of the old man, and decided to honour him with a visit.

To the king’s disappointment, however, the hermitage was empty. He turned away and was about to leave the grove when a gentle voice said, “Wait, my lord,” and a girl stepped out from behind the trees.

In spite of her poor clothes, the girl was so beautiful and dignified that the king’s admiration was aroused and he asked her courteously, “Isn’t this the dwelling-place of the holy Kanva?”

“Yes, my lord,” she replied. “But my father is away on a pilgrimage. Will you not rest here a while?”

She brought him water and fruits for his refreshment, and the king was delighted at the hospitality he was shown. It was clear to him that she did not recognize him as a king: so Dushyanta, who liked to mingle unrecognized among his people, pretended to be a huntsman, and asked the girl her name.

“I am Shakuntala,” she said. “I am Father Kanva’s adopted daughter.”

Encouraged to go on, she told the king that she had been left an orphan when she was very small, and the Kanva had treated her as lovingly as if he had really been her father. Though she was of noble birth, she was very happy living a simple life in forest.

As Dushyanta listened to her and watched her beautiful face, he felt that he could linger in that enchanting spot for ever; but he knew that his followers must be anxiously searching for him, so he took leave of Shakuntala and made his way back to the hunting party.

But he did not leave the forest. Instead he ordered his men to encamp at some distance from the hermitage. The next day, and the following day as well, found him visiting Shakuntala at the hermitage.

Dushyanta and Shakuntala were soon confessing their love for each other; but when the girl learnt that it was the king himself who wished to marry her, she protested that he would surely regret such a hasty decision. Dushyanta, however, soothed her fears, and, dreading lest something might come between them, persuaded her to we him without delay.

There was no need for a priest to marry the lovers, since, in those days, it was lawful for kings and warriors to wed their brides by a simple exchange of flowers or garlands. And so Dushyanta and Shakuntala vowed to be true to each other for ever.

“Come with me to my palace,” said the king. “My people shall acknowledge you as their queen.”

“I cannot leave the forest until I have told father Kanva of our marriage,” said Shakuntala. “I must wait for him to return. But you must return to your palace to carry out your duties. When you come again, I will be ready to join you.”

The king placed a ring, engraven with the name of “Dushyanta”, upon her finger, and promised to return soon.

When he had left, Shakuntala wandered dreamily about the forest, forgetting that someone might visit the hermitage to see father Kanva. At nightfall when she returned to the grove, she was met by a visitor who was spluttering with rage.

The visitor was an old sage named Durvasas, who was dreaded by all because of his violent temper. It was said that if anyone offended him, he would punish them severely. He was known as a “master-curser.”

The sage had been waiting at the hermitage a long time, and felt that he had been insulted by Shakuntala. She pleaded for forgiveness, and begged him to stay; but the old man was in terrible mood. Thrusting the girl aside, he hurried away muttering a curse under his breath.

Shakuntala was troubled not so much by the curse as by the feeling that she had neglected her duties; for in India it is something of a sin if one receives a visitor and allows the guest to depart unhonoured.

Then something happened which worried Shakuntala even more. Whilst she was bathing in the stream near her home, the ring, the king’s gift, slipped from her finger and disappeared in the water.

Shakuntala wept bitterly at her loss; but she was not to know what heartbreak it was to bring her in the future, or how closely her bad luck was connected with the angry sage Durvasas.

It was a great relief to her when father Kanva returned from the pilgrimage. He was not displeased at the news of her marriage to Dushyanta. On the contrary, he was overjoyed. “My daughter, you are worthy of the king,” he said. “Gladly will I give you to Dushyanta when he comes to claim you.”

hair, making use of leaves and grass.

In due course the nest contained a full clutch to eggs, but Jajali never moved. Pity would have prevented him from doing so. Eventually the eggs were hatched, the young birds emerged. Days passed, and their feathers grew. As more days passed, they learned to fly. Then they would go off with their parents for a few hours at a time, in search of food. By now the ascetic had really fulfilled his obligations to the welfare of his guests; but still he did not move! Once they were absent for a week, but he waited until he returned. Finally, he waited for a month, and when they did not come back he decided that they had abandoned the nest for ever, and that he was free to move.

Unfortunately, Jajali felt very proud of himself when he thought of his noble conduct.

“There is nobody like me in all the wide world,” he said to himself. “I must have acquired a great store of merit by this unselfish act.”

He felt so pleased with himself that he slapped his arms and shouted out loud, “There is nobody my equal anywhere!”

And once more he heard a voice – voice as it seemed from heaven: “Jajali! Don’t say that. You are not as good a man as the shopkeeper in Benares, and he would not boast as you have done.”

Jajali’s heart was filled with anger, and he decided that he would go to Benares without further delay and see this wonderful shopkeeper.

When he arrived in Benares, one of the first persons he saw was the shopkeeper busily engaged in his shop, buying and selling herbs and perfumes. The shopkeeper saw him and called out a welcome: “I have been expecting you, most noble Brahmin, for a long time. I have heard of your great asceticism, of how you lived immersed in the ocean, and of all that you have done since, even allowing the birds to build a nest in your hair. I know, too, of how proud you were of that, and came here. Tell me what you want. I shall do my best to help you.”

The Brahmin replied: “You are a shopkeeper, my friend, and the son of a shopkeeper. How does a person like you, who spends all his time buying and selling, acquire so much knowledge and so much wisdom? Where did you get it?”

“My knowledge and wisdom consist in nothing but this,” said the shopkeeper. “I follow and obey that ancient teaching which everybody knows and which consists of universal friendliness and kindness to man and beast. I earn my livelihood by trade, but my scales are always just. I never cheat anyone, and I never injure anyone in thought, word or deed. I quarrel with no-one, fear no-one, hate no-one, praise no-one, abuse no-one. And I am convinced that the life I live is the life that secures the both prosperity and heaven just as surely as the life that is devoted to penance and sacrifice.”

**The Superior Man**

JAJALI was a famous ascetic – one who practiced extreme self-discipline. He had a thorough knowledge of the Vedas, most ancient of sacred books, and attended to the sacrificial fires. He observed long fasts. During the rainy season he slept under the open sky by night and lay in water by day.

In the hot weather Jajali did not seek protection from either burning sun or the scorching wind. He slept in the most uncomfortable places, and smeared his body and long, unkempt hair with filth and mud. If he wore any clothes at all, they were made of rags and skins. He travelled over the whole earth, and dwelt in forests, mountains, or by the shores of the ocean. Once, when he was beside the ocean, he decided to conceal himself beneath its waters. He was able to do so by means of the great self-discipline which he had learnt. He could also project his mind in every direction and make himself aware of all that was happening in different parts of the world.

As Jajali lay one day at the bottom of the ocean, thinking of how his mind could travel everywhere, pride filled his heart, and he told himself that there was nobody quite like him in all in all the world. As he made this boast, a voice spoke in his ear. It was the voice of a spirit who had been watching him.

“You should not have made that boast, most noble Brahmin. There is a shopkeeper I know, a very virtuous man, who lives in Benares and earns a living by buying and selling perfumes. Some say he is the most virtuous of men, but I don’t think he would boast about it!”

“A shopkeeper!” said the ascetic. “I should like to see this wonderful shopkeeper. Tell me where he lives, and how to get there.”

The spirit gave him the necessary directions, and Jajali left his watery bed and set out for Benares.

On the way he came to a forest, where he decided to spend some time practicing fresh austerities. For many days he stood absolutely still. He never moved a muscle, and to all appearance was more like a pillar of stone than a man, with his great mass of filthy, disheveled hair on top.

It was hot long before two birds, in search of a place to build their nest, decided that there was no better spot than the ascetic’s head. And so they built their nest in his

that if he did so, the gods would, in future, invite him to the celebration of every sacrifice.

Shiva agreed, but the problem now was to deal with the creature that he had brought into being. If it remained as it was, it was capable of destroying half the world. Brahma suggested that they divide the creature into a number of different parts, and so reduce its strength. Shiva agreed, and the creature was divided into many parts, and under the name of Fever those parts continue to live among beasts and men.

Fever works in different ways, and shows itself in many diseases and ailments. But Fever was originally the anger which was produced by Shiva at Daksha’s sacrifice.

**Nala and Damayanti**

LONG AGO there reigned in Berar a famous king named Bhima. His chief claim to fame was that he had a beautiful daughter named Damayanti. She was waited upon day and night by a band of handmaids of great beauty, but she shone among them like the moon among the stars, and her hand was sought, we are told, by both gods and mortals.

Nala, King of Nishada, came to hear of Damayanti’s loveliness and her many accomplishments, and was struck with passion for her. She, in turn, had heard that Nala was brave and handsome, well-read and skilled in arms. They loved each other upon the mere fame of their respective virtues, and Damayanti pined for the presence of her unknown lover.

One day while Nala was seated in a grove, dreamed of his beloved, he saw a flock of swans, with wings all flecked with gold, come to rest close by him.

Nala crept up to the leader of the flock and seized him.

“O mighty king,” said the swan, “set me free, and I will do your bidding,

Whatever it might be.”

“If a bird can do a mortal any service,” said Nala, “fly to my love, Damayanti, and tell her how much I love her!” He released the bird, and it flew off to Berar, rejoicing in its freedom.

When the bird arrived in King Bhima’s kingdom, it found Damayanti reclining in her garden, surrounded by her charming handmaids.

he was about to cut off Bharata’s head, when Kali, seeing Bharata and recognizing him immediately as a man of God – a man without hatred in his heart, and with love for all living creatures – was afraid to receive such a sacrifice.

The goddess grew angry with the king. She became visible, and so terrifying was her aspect that the king and his followers fell dead on the spot.

Then Kali turned to Bharata and said, “No deity will allow any harm to come to you.”

She disappeared, and Bharata, who feared neither the sword nor Kali, remained standing, his mind steadfast in God.

The people who had gathered to watched the sacrifice became greatly afraid. They made way for Bharata, and he returned to watch the fields as before.

**Shiva’s Anger**

WHEN the great God Shiva and his wife Uma were sitting one day on the top of a mountain, the goddess happened to notice that the other gods and their wives were setting off together on an expedition.

“Do you know where they are going?” she asked.

“Yes,” said Shiva, “they are going to attend a sacrifice that is being celebrated by Daksha, one of the great sages.”

“But if the gods are to be there, why are you not going?” she asked. “You are the greatest of the gods. Why have you not been invited?”

“Oh, it’s an old story,” said Shiva. “A long time ago the gods made an agreement among themselves that I was to take no part in any of the sacrifices.”

Uma was very angry to hear this. She said it was a strange arrangement that sought to exclude the most powerful of the gods. Indeed, she was so upset that she said she would not speak to her husband until he took steps to alter such an unjust arrangement. Her attitude made Shiva realize that he must do something. Soo he got up and, calling upon all his great powers of yoga, hurried to the place where the sacrifice was being held.

Shiva was followed by thousands of demigods, whom he had called into existence, and on his behalf they put out the fires, threw down the sacrificial stakes, ate up many of those who were celebrating the sacrifice, and insulted the wives of the gods. Lakes of milk were spilt, and mountains of dishes, containing food of every kind, were scattered far and wide.

The sacrifice itself, in the form of a deer, took refuge in flight.

Shiva was very angry when he saw the sacrifice running away, and he set off in swift pursuit.

As he ran, a drop of perspiration formed on his brow. And where it fell to the ground, a great fire sprang up. From the fire a terrible-looking creature emerged; goblin-like, with bold-red eyes and a green beard. It pursued the fleeing deer, caught up with it, and then simply gobbled it up.

Having consumed the sacrifice, the creature turned upon the gods and sages, who fled for safety in all directions. Then Brahma, the Creator, intervened, and asked Shiva to recall the terrible beast that his anger had produced, assuring him

**1**

**Bharata and the Deer**

KING BHARATA ruled over all the world. He was a thoughtful and religious man, and he looked upon the whole world as evidence of the supreme spirit of God.

He worshipped God in the form of Vishnu, the preserver, and was full of devotion, ruling the earth for one hundred thousand tears. He had five sons, amongst whom he divided all his kingdom, and went at last into the forests near the river Gandak, where he lived alone, praying and meditating.

His worship consisted of offering fresh flowers, tender leaves, and wild fruits and roots. He controlled all his senses and never grew weary. There was no one to disturb him, no one to take his mind off the worship of God. He bathed three times a day, and worshipped Vishnu in the golden sun.

One day, while Bharata was bathing in the river, he heard the lion roaring, and saw a deer, which was about to give birth to a fawn, fleeing from the lion and splashing across the river. As it reached the other side it gave birth to the fawn, and then died. Bharata saw the helpless little fawn struggling in the water. Being moved with compassion, he took it in his hands and saved it. Then he took the fawn home and cared for it, and soon began neglecting his services to God; but he was quite unware that this was happening.

‘There is no one to take care for this deer.” He said to himself, “and so I will look after it and bring it up. The great teachers say that to help the helpless is a virtue.”

His love for the deer grew, and he used to bring it tender grass to eat, and he would bathe it, and keep it near him. Sometimes he would hold it in his arms or on his lap. He loved its company. Often, when performing some ceremony, he would break off in the middle to look for the deer.

But one day the deer disappeared.

Bharata was overcome with grief and a terrible sense of loss.

“Did I not take care of you in every way?” he mused. “Now I do not know if

some animal has killed you, or if you will one day return to gladden my heart. I remember how you used to touch me gently with your horns as I sat in meditation. I remember how you would playfully trample on the things I brought for worship, and if I spoke to you in anger, you would stand at a distance till I called you again. The other hermits looked upon you as a holy animal. Perhaps the moon has taken you.”

Unable to get over hos sorrow, he neglected the religious ceremonies he usually performed. He had renounced his family and his kingdom in order to obtain the spiritual freedom of the hermit. Now, because of his attachment to the deer, all his strivings appeared to have been futile.

Then one day the deer returned.

Bharata was overcome with joy. He treated it as though it were his own son, and devoted the rest of his days to its welfare.

In his last days on his death bed, his thoughts were only of the deer; and so, upon his soul leaving his body, he was re-born as a deer. But the memory of his past life remained with him. He felt sorry that he had neglected his duties to God, and regretted his former attachment to the deer. He did not mingle with the rest of the herd, and at last left them and went alone to his old place, where he had formerly lived and worshipped; and there he remained, bathing in the river and grazing on its banks; and so much did he desire to be freed from the body of a deer that, when he died, he was able to be born again into a Brahmin family.

2

**Bharata As A Brahmin**

Born to a Brahmin family, Bharata was well brought up; but remembering his former lives, he kept aloof from other people, so that many thought he was half-witted. When his parents died, his brother forced him to do menial work. People made fun of him, but he paid no attention, and took everything that came his way, good and bad. He cared neither for cold nor heat, going without clothes and sleeping on the bare ground, so that his sacred thread became black with dirt.

In spite of these hardships, he remained sturdy and strong.

One day the king of the country decided to offer a human sacrifice to the Goddess Kali, and hearing from his servants that Bharata was a useless fellow, seized him as being perfectly suitable for the sacrifice.

After a ceremonial bath, Bharata was given fine clothes and decorated with jewels. He was given rich food. Burning camphor and perfumes were placed before him. Then, accompanied by dancers and musicians, he was taken to the temple of Kali.

At the temple the king himself led Bharata to a raised platform. Sword in hand,

forward and took his head in her arms. A shadow fell over them, and she became aware of a terrible form bending over her. He was tall and gaunt, greenish in hue, but with eyes of a fiery red. He carried a noose in one of his hands.

This was Yama, the God of Death.

Savitri rose slowly from the ground and, bending low before Yama, said; “What do you want, oh mighty one?”

“I have come for Satyavan, whose term of life is ended,” And Yama leant forward and drew the prince’s soul right out of his body.

Then, turning to the south, he fled at lightning speed.

But Savitri, too, was fleet of foot. Love lent her wings, and she followed close at Yama’s heels. They came at last to the edge of the world, beyond which no mortal may pass alive, and here the God of Death stopped and spoke.

“Return, Savitri! You have followed far enough. Return and bury your husband’s body with due rites.”

“No, great Yama,” answered Savitri. “When I wed my lord, I vowed to follow him, wherever he went or was taken. I have done no wrong since I made that vow, and so the gods have no power over me to make me break it.”

“That is true.” Said Yama.” And your answer pleases me. Ask a boon of me – but not the gift of your husband’s life!”

Savitri thought for a moment, and then asked that the old King of the Shalwas should regain his sight.

“It is true, oh Yama, that a mortal is pleasing to the gods if she mingles with those who are virtuous?”

It is true, said Yama.

“Then you cannot force me to go, for you are virtuous, and I become more pleasing to the gods every moment I stay beside you.”

Yama was delighted, and told Savitri that, for her good sense, she might obtain another boon from him.

“Then grant that father-in-law may regain his former kingdom.” She said. Yama assented and told her for the third time to go back and find her husband’s body before it was devoured by jackals.

“It does not matter,” said Savitri, “if the jackals devour the corpse. Of what use is the body without the soul? Another body can be found for the soul, if it is released from your noose, but never another soul for the body.”

“You speak with more wisdom than most mortals.” Said the god. “Yet one more boon will I grant you.”

“Grant me a hundred sons, oh mighty Yama, “cried Savitri. And when the god

bowed his head in assent, she laughed and clapped her hands. “If you are indeed a god who keeps his word with men, then release the soul of Satyavan. There is no other man that I can marry, and only by bringing him back to life can you grant me the sons you have promised!”

Yama realised that Savitri had been allowed, by a greater power than he, to triumph over him; so he loosened the coil of rope, and Satyavan’ s soul flew up into the air and back to the forest where his body lay. Some time later, Savitri reached the same place and found her husband lying just as she had left him. She lifted his head, and he opened his eyes and stretched himself and yawned.

“I must have fallen asleep.” He said. “Why did you not wake me before? It is almost sunset.”

Hand in hand they walked home, and on the way she told him all that had happened. And

When they came home they found their father and mother rejoicing with the other hermits because the old man’s sight had suddenly been restored. And even as they rejoiced a messenger arrived to say that the king’s enemy had been slain and that the people wished their former ruler to return to them.

The next day Savitri and Satyavan, with their parents, returned to Shalwa, and there they all lived happily for the rest of their lives. We are told that Savitri and Satyavan lived together for four hundred years, and that they had a hundred sons, as Yama had promised.

Today, when anyone in India wishes to pay a wife the highest compliment, it is said that she is like Savitri, who brought back her husband’s soul from the edge of the world.

for the rest of her life.

“But do not tell your parents as yet,” she said. “Let me first speak to my father.

Savitri returned to her father's palace and found him holding counsel with Narada. The sage had suggested that it was time that a husband was found for Savitri.

“Well, here she is,” said the king, as Savitri approached. “She will tell you whether or not she has found a husband.”

“Yes, father, I have,” she cried, as she knelt at his feet for blessing. “In his dress and his possessions he is a poor man's son, but by birth he is a prince.”

“And his name?”

“Satyavan.”

Before she could say another word, Narada, looking horrified, stood up and with raised hand, said: “No, Princess, not Satyavan!”

“There can be no other,” said Savitri with a smile.

The king turned to Narada and asked: “Is there something wrong with the youth? Is he not all that my daughter takes him for?”

“He is all that she says...”

“Then is he already betrothed? Is there a curse upon him?”

Narada bowed his head and in a low voice said: “He is destined for an early death. Yama, the God of Death, has set his noose for him. Within a year the prince must die.”

Savitri went pale, and almost fainted. But she summoned up all her courage and said, “Narada, you have prophesied his doom. I can but pray and hope. But even the knowledge of this terrible tate cannot shake my purpose. Satyavan shall be my husband for a year, even if for fifty I must be a widow!”

The sage stood silent, his head sunk upon his breast. Then finally he raised his hands towards Savitri in blessing.

“Peace be with you, daughter of the Lord-of-Horses,” he said, and turned and walked away.

The next day it was announced that the Princess Savitri would soon marry a prince in a distant region, and that, since the journey would be long and tedious, only her father would accompany her. Preparations were soon made, and the Lord of-Horses and his beautiful daughter set out for the forest. They took with them many costly gifts for the parents of the bridegroom. But when the old King of the Shalwas heard what had brought them to his home, he was taken aback.

“But how can this be?” he asked. “How will your heaven-sent daughter fare in this rough country? There are no maids to tend on her. And what shall we feed her? We eat the fruits of the forest. We sleep on an earthen floor.”

Savitri took the blind old man by the hand, and spoke to him so sweetly and gently that she removed all his fears.

That same evening, when Satyavan returned from hunting, Savitri was given to him in marriage. The only guests were the hermits who lived nearby. All they brought as gifts were their blessings; and Savitri pleased them by removing her jewels and replacing her rich garments with humble clothes.

The Lord-of-Horses bade his daughter farewell, and rode alone back to his kingdom.

The days and weeks and months slipped by, and it seemed to Satyavan that his wife grew lovelier and more gentle by the hour. No man was as happy as he. Savitri, too, was happy; but as the day of doom approached, she became quiet and pensive. She decided she would not leave his side by day or night. So she watched and waited, and seldom slept.

One morning the blind old king asked Satyavan to go to a part of the forest where there was a bamboo grove. He asked him to cut and bring home several stout pieces of bamboo.

When Satyavan set out, Savitri decided to follow him.

for the rest of her life.

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**L**ONG LONG AGO there was a king who ruled over a large part of India. He was a great horseman, and when he rode he was like a strong wind rushing by. Horses knew and loved him, and because of his power over them he was known as the Lord-of-Horses.

In spite of his fame and popularity, the king was unhappy, for no children had been born to him, and in India this was always considered a great calamity. He went from temple to temple, praying and offering sacrifices, but to no avail - it seemed as though the gods were displeased with him.

Finally, he consulted the great sage Narada.

“How can I please the gods?” he asked. “I have been married five years, but still there is no heir to the throne.”

“Build a new temple,” said Narada. “Build a temple to Brahma the Creator.”

“I shall build the most beautiful temple in the land,” said the king, and he immediately summoned his best workmen and told them to build a temple taller than any other.

“Let it be taller than three palm trees,” he said. “it gold within and gold without. A hundred steps of pure white marble must lead up to it.”

Within a few months a beautiful golden temple was built, surrounded by flowering trees and shrubs. And every day the king visited the temple, making special offerings to Brahma, God of Creation, and his wife, Savitri, that they might send him a son.

His queen and his nobles, and even the sage Narada, had almost given up hope, when one day, as the king laid his offerings before the shrine, he thought he saw a figure growing out of the flames that had sprung up from his sacrifice. And then he heard a voice - the voice, he thought, of a goddess, because though it was small and sweet it filled the temple with its sound.

“You have pleased me with your devotion,” were the words he heard. “I am Savitri, wife of Brahma. What is it you seek?”

His voice trembling, the king said, “Goddess, I desire a son, so that my name may not perish from the land.”

“I will give you a daughter,” replied the clear sweet voice.

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miles away and you won’t even twinkle once. But you kept where I could see you most of the time up there when there wasn't anything else but darkness to look at, didn’t you?... Millions of miles.... Good-bye, Billy Jackson.

Clara, the coloured maid, found the door locked at ten the next day, and they forced it open. Vinegar, and the slapping of wrists and even burnt feathers, proving of no avail, someone ran to ‘phone for an ambulance.

In due time it backed up to the door with much gong-clanging, and the capable young medico, in his white linen coat, ready, active, confident, with his smooth face half debonair, half grim, danced up the steps.

“Ambulance call to 49,’ he said briefly. ‘What’s the trouble?’

‘Oh yes, doctor,’ sniffed Mrs. Parker, as though her trouble that there should be trouble in the house was the greater. ‘I can’t think what can be the matter with her. Nothing we could do would bring her to. It’s a young woman, a Miss Elsie - yes, a Miss Elsie Leeson. Never before in my house – ‘

‘What room?’ cried the doctor in a terrible voice, to which Mrs.Parker was a stranger.

“The skylight room. It— “

Evidently the ambulance doctor was familiar with the location of skylight rooms. He was gone up the stairs, four at a time. Mrs.Parker followed slowly, as her dignity demanded.

On the first landing she met him coming back bearing the astronomer in his arms. He stopped and let loose the practised scalpel of his tongue, not loudly. Gradually Mrs. Parker crumpled as a stiff garment that slips down from a nail. Ever afterwards there remained crumples in her mind and body. Sometimes her curious roomers would ask her what the doctor said to her.

‘Let that be,’ she would answer. ‘If I can get forgiveness for having heard it I will be satisfied.’

The ambulance physician strode with his burden through the pack of hounds that follow the curiosity chase, and even they fell back along the sidewalk abashed, for his face was that of one who bears his own dead.

They noticed that he did not lay down upon the bed prepared for it in the ambulance the form that he carried, and all that he said was: ‘Drive like h - I, Wilson,’ to the driver.

That is all. Is it a story? In the next morning’s paper, I saw a little news item, and the last sentence of it may help you (as it helped me) to weld the incidents together.

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true happiness. If a home is happy it cannot fit too close - let the dresser collapse and become a billiard table; let the mantel turn to a rowing machine, the escritoire to a spare bedchamber, the wash-stand to an upright piano; let the four walls come together, if they will, so you and your Delia are between. But if home be the other kind, let it be wide and long- enter you at the Golden Gate, hang your hat on Hatteras, your cape on Cape Horn, and go out by Labrador.

Joe was painting in the class of the great Magister - you know his fame. His fees are high; his lessons are light - his high-lights have brought him renown. Delia was studying under Rosenstock - you know his repute as a disturber of the piano keys.

They were mighty happy as long as their money lasted. So is every - but I will not be cynical. Their aims were very clear and defined. Joe was to become capable very soon of turning out pictures that old gentlemen with thin side-whiskers and thick pocket-books would sandbag one another in his studio for the privilege of buying. Delia was to become familiar and then contemptuous with Music, so that when she saw the orchestra seats and boxes unsold she could have sore throat and lobster in a private dining-room and refuse to go on the stage.

But the best, in my opinion, was the home life in the little flat - the ardent, voluble chats after the day's study; the cosy dinners and fresh, light breakfasts; the interchange of ambitions - ambitions interwoven each with the other’s or else inconsiderable - the mutual help and inspiration; and overlook my artlessness - stuffed olives and cheese sandwiches at 11p.m.

But after a while Art flagged. It sometimes does, even if some switchman doesn’t flag it. Everything going out and nothing coming in, as the vulgarians say. Money was lacking to pay Mr. Magister and Herr Rosenstock their prices. When one loves one’s Art no service seems too hard. So, Delia said she must give music lessons to keep the chafing dish bubbling.

For two or three days she went out canvassing for pupils. One evening she came home elated.

‘Joe, dear,’ she said gleefully, ‘I’ve a pupil. And, oh, the loveliest people! General - General A. B. Pinkney’s daughter - on Seventy first Street. Such a splendid house, Joe - you ought to see the front door! Byzantine I think you would call it. And inside! Oh, Joe, I never saw anything like it before.

‘My pupil is his daughter Clementina. I dearly love her already. She's a delicate thing - dresses always in white; and the sweetest,

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simplest manners! Only eighteen years old. I’m to give three lessons a week; and, just think, Joe! $5 a lesson. I don’t mind it a bit; for when I get two or three more pupils I can resume my lessons with Herr Rosenstock. Now, smooth out that wrinkle between your brows, dear, and let’s have a nice supper.’

‘That’s all right for you, Dele,’ said Joe, attacking a can of peas with a carving knife and a hatchet, ‘but how about me? Do you think I’m going to let you hustle for wages while I philander in the regions of high art? Not by the bones of Benvenuto Cellini! I guess I can sell papers or lay cobblestones, and bring in a dollar or two.’

Delia came and hung about his neck.

‘Joe, dear, you are silly. You must keep on at your studies. It is not as if I had quit my music and gone to work at something else. While I teach I learn. I am always with my music. And we can live as happily as millionaires on $15 a week. You mustn't think of leaving Mr. Magister.’

‘All right,’ said Joe, reaching for the blue scalloped vegetable dish. ‘But I hate for you to be giving lessons. It isn’t Art. But you’re a trump and a dear to do it.’

‘When one loves one’s Art no service seems too hard,’ said Delia.

‘Magister praised the sky in that sketch I made in the park,’ said Joe. ‘And Tinkle gave me permission to hang two of them in his window. I may sell one if the right kind of a moneyed idiot sees them.’

‘I’m sure you will,’ said Delia sweetly. ‘And now let’s be thankful for General Pinkney and this veal roast.’

During all of the next week the Larrabees had an early breakfast. Joe was enthusiastic about some morning-effect sketches he was doing in Central Park, and Delia packed him off breakfasted, coddled, praised, and kissed at seven o’clock. Art is an engaging mistress. It was most times seven o’clock when he returned in the evening.

At the end of the week Delia, sweetly proud but languid, triumphantly tossed three five-dollar bills on the 8 by 10 (inches) centre table of the 8 by 10 (feet) flat parlour.

‘Sometimes,’ she said, a little wearily, ‘Clementina tries me. I’m afraid she doesn’t practise enough, and I have to tell her the same things so often. And then she always dresses entirely in white, and that does get monotonous. But General Pinkney is the dearest old man! I wish you could know him, Joe. He comes in sometimes

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furnace man or somebody in the basement - out to a drug store for some oil and things to bind it up with. It doesn’t hurt so much now.’

‘What's this?’ asked Joe, taking the hand tenderly and pulling at some white strands beneath the bandages.

‘It’s something soft,’ said Delia, ‘that had oil on it. Oh, Joe, did you sell another sketch?’ She had seen the money on the table.

‘Did I?’ said Joe. ‘Just ask the man from Peoria. He got his depot to-day, and he isn’t sure but he thinks he wants another parkscape and a view on the Hudson. What time this afternoon did you burn your hand, Dele?’

‘Five o’clock, I think,’ said Dele plaintively. ‘The iron - I mean the rabbit came off the fire about that time. You ought to have seen General Pinkney, Joe, when –‘

‘Sit down here a moment, Dele,’ said Joe. He drew her to the couch, sat down beside her and put his arm across her shoulders.

‘What have you been doing for the last two weeks, Dele?’ he asked.

She braved it for a moment or two with an eye full of love and stubbornness, and murmured a phrase or two vaguely of General Pinkney; but at length down went her head and out came the truth and tears.

‘I couldn't get any pupils,’ she confessed. ‘And I couldn’t bear to have you give up your lessons; and I got a place ironing shirts in that big Twenty-fourth Street laundry. And I think I did very well to make up both General Pinkney and Clementina, don’t you, Joe? And when a girl in the laundry set down a hot iron on my hand this afternoon I was all the way home making up that story about the Welsh rabbit. You’re not angry are you, Joe? And if I hadn’t got the work you mightn’t have sold your sketches to that man from Peoria.’

‘He wasn’t from Peoria,’ said Joe slowly

‘Well, it doesn’t matter where he was from. How clever you are, Joe - and - kiss me, Joe - and what made you ever suspect that I wasn’t giving music lessons to Clementina?’

‘I didn’t,’ said Joe, ‘until to-night. And I wouldn't have then, only I sent up this cotton waste and oil from the engine-room this afternoon for a girl upstairs who had her hand burned with a smoothing-iron. I’ve been firing the engine in that laundry for the last two weeks.’

‘And then you didn’t— ‘

‘My purchaser from Peoria,’ said Joe, ‘and General Pinkney are

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the coat straining at its buttons over the chest, the air of conscious conviction of the super-eminence of the male in the cosmogony of creation, even a calm display of bow legs as subduing and enchanting agents in the gentle tourneys of Cupid - these were the approved arms and ammunition of the Clover Leaf gallants. They viewed, then, the genuflexions and alluring poses of this visitor with their chins at a new angle.

‘A friend of mine, Mr. Terry O’Sullivan,’ was Maggie’s formula of introduction. She led him around the room, presenting him to each new-arriving Clover Leaf. Almost was she pretty now, with the unique luminosity in her eyes that comes to a girl with her first suitor and a kitten with its first mouse.

‘Maggie Toole’s got a fellow at last,’ was the word that went round among paper-box girls. ‘Pipe Mag’s floor-walker’ – thus the Give and Takes expressed their indifferent contempt.

Usually at the weekly hops Maggie kept a spot on the wall warm with her back. She felt and showed so much gratitude whenever a self-sacrificing partner invited her to dance that his pleasure was cheapened and diminished. She had even grown used to noticing Anna joggle the reluctant Jimmy with her elbow as a signal for him to invite her chum to walk over his feet through a two-step.

But to-night the pumpkin had turned to a coach and six. Terry O’Sullivan was a victorious Prince Charming, and Maggie Toole winged her first butterfly flight. And though our tropes of fairy land be mixed with those of entomology they shall not spill one drop of ambrosia from the rose-crowned melody of Maggie’s one perfect night.

The girls besieged her for introductions to her ‘fellow.’ The Clover Leaf young men, after two years of blindness, suddenly perceived charms in Miss Toole. They flexed their compelling muscles before her and bespoke her for the dance.

Thus she scored; but to Terry O’Sullivan the honours of the evening fell thick and fast. He shook his curls; he smiled and went easily through the seven motions for acquiring grace in your own room before an open window ten minutes each day. He danced like a faun; he introduced manner and style and atmosphere; his words came trippingly upon his tongue, and -he waltzed twice in succession with the paper-box girl that Dempsey Donovan brought.

Dempsey was the leader of the association. He wore a dress suit, and could chin the bar twice with one hand. He was one of ‘Big Mike’ O’Sullivan’s lieutenants, and was never troubled by trouble. No cop dared to arrest him. Whenever he broke a push-cart man’s

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head or shot a member of the Heinrick B. Sweeney Outing and Literary Association in the kneecap, an officer would drop around and say:

‘The Cap’n’d like to see ye a few minutes round to the office whin ye have time, Dempsey, me boy.’

But there would be sundry gentlemen there with large gold fob chains and black cigars; and somebody would tell a funny story, and then Dempsey would go back and work half an hour with the six-pound dumb-bells. So, doing a tight-rope act on a wire stretched across Niagara was a safe terpsichorean performance compared with waltzing twice with Dempsey Donovan’s paper box girl. At ten o’clock the jolly round face of ‘Big Mike’ O’Sullivan shone at the door for five minutes, upon the scene. He always looked in for five minutes, smiled at the girls and handed out real perfectos to the delighted boys.

Dempsey Donovan was at his elbow instantly, talking rapidly. ‘Big Mike’ looked carefully at the dancers, smiled, shook his head and departed.

The music stopped. The dancers scattered to the chairs along the walls. Terry O’Sullivan, with his entrancing bow, relinquished a pretty girl in blue to her partner and started back to find Maggie. Dempsey intercepted him in the middle of the floor.

Some fine instinct that Rome must have bequeathed to us caused nearly every one to turn and look at them - there was a subtle feeling that two gladiators had met in the arena. Two or three Give and Takes with tight coat-sleeves drew nearer.

‘One moment, Mr. O’Sullivan,’ said Dempsey. ‘I hope you’re enjoying yourself. Where did you say you lived?

The two gladiators were well matched. Dempsey had, perhaps, ten pounds of weight to give away. The O’Sullivan had breadth with quickness Dempsey had a glacial eye, a dominating slit of a mouth, an indestructible jaw, a complexion like a belle’s and the coolness of a champion. The visitor showed more fire in his contempt and less control over his conspicuous sneer. They were enemies by the law written when the rocks were molten. They were each too splendid, too mighty, too incomparable to divide pre-eminence. One only must survive.

‘I live on Grand,’ said O’Sullivan insolently; ‘and no trouble to find me at home. Where do you live?’

Dempsey ignored the question.

‘You say your name’s O’Sullivan,’ he went on. ‘Well, “Big Mike” says he never saw you before.’

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‘Lots of things he never saw,’ said the favourite of the hop.

‘As a rule,’ went on Dempsey, huskily sweet, ‘O’Sullivans in this district know one another. You escorted one of our lady members here, and we want a chance to make good. If you’ve got a family tree let’s see a few historical O’Sullivan buds come out on it. Or do you want us to dig it out of you by the roots?’

‘Suppose you mind your own business, suggested O’Sullivan blandly.

Dempsey’s eyes brightened. He held up an inspired forefinger as though a brilliant idea had struck him.

‘I’ve got it now,’ he said cordially. ‘It was just a little mistake. You ain’t no O’Sullivan. You are a ring-tailed monkey. Excuse us for not recognizing you at first.’

O’Sullivan’s eyes flashed. He made a quick movement, but Andy Geoghan was ready and caught his arm.

Dempsey nodded at Andy and William McMahan, the secretary of the club, and walked rapidly toward a door at the rear of the hall. Two other members of the Give and Take Association swiftly joined the little group. Terry O’Sullivan was now in the hands of Board of Rules and Social Referees. They spoke to him briefly and softly, and conducted him out through the same door at the rear.

This movement on the part of the Clover Leaf members requires a word of elucidation. Back of the association hall was a smaller room rented by the club. In this room personal difficulties that arose on the ballroom floor were settled, man to man, with the weapons of nature, under the supervision of the Board. No lady could say that she had witnessed a fight at a Clover Leaf hop in several years. Its gentlemen members guaranteed that.

So easily and smoothly had Dempsey and the Board done their preliminary work that many in the hall had not noticed the checking of the fascinating O’Sullivan’s social triumph. Among these was Maggie. She looked about for her escort.

‘Smoke up!’ said Rose Cassidy. ‘Wasn’t you on? Demps Donovan picked a scrap with your Lizzie-boy, and they’ve waltzed out to the slaughter-room with him. How’s my hair done up this way, Mag?’

Maggie laid a hand on the bosom of her cheesecloth waist.

‘Gone to fight with Dempsey!’ she said breathlessly. ‘They’ve got to be stopped. Dempsey Donovan can’t fight him. Why, he’ll- he’ll kill him!’

‘Ah, what do you care?’ said Rosa. ‘Don’t some of ‘em fight every hop?’

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‘Say, Mag,’ he said, ‘I’ll see you home. And about next Saturday night? Will you come to the hop with mw if I call around for you?’

It was remarkable how quickly Maggie’s eyes could change from dull to a shining brown.

‘With you, Dempsey?’ she stammered. ‘Say – will a duck swim?’

***VII***

**The Cop and the Anthem**

ON HIS BENCH IN MADUSON SQUARE Soapy moved uneasily. When wild goose honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy movers uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at head.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy’s lap. That was Jack frost s card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy’s mind became cognizant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself inti a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigour. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy were not the highest. In them were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises of soporific Southern skies or drifting in the vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas and bluecoats, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell’s had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Plam Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspaper, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench bear the spurting fountain in the cold as he slept on his bench bear the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed large and timely in Soapy’s mind. He scored the provisions made in the name of charity for the city’s dependents.

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In Sopay’s opinion the Law was more benign that Philantropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy’s proud spirits the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which, though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman’s private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter’s mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing – with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the café management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter’s eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted Island was not to be ab epicurean one. Some other way of entering limbo must be thought of.

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At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People came running round the corner, a policeman in lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

‘Where’s the man that done that?’ inquired the officer excitedly.

‘Don’t you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?’ said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman’s mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smashed windows do not remain to parley with the law’s minions. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man halfway down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery this. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and tell-tale trousers without challenges. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

‘Now, get busy and call a cap,’ said Soapy. ‘And don’t keep a gentleman waiting.’

‘No cop for youse,’ said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. ‘Hey, Con!’

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter’s rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he fatuously termed to himself a ‘cinch.’ A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of severe demeanour learned again a water-plug.

It was Soapy’s design to assume the role of the despicable and execrated ‘masher.’ The refined and elegant appearance of his

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Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat again the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light following hastily.

‘My umbrella,’ he said sternly.

‘Oh, is it?’ sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. ‘Well, why don’t you call a policeman? I took it. Your Umbrella! Why don’t you call a cop? There stands one at the corner.’

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

‘Of course,’ said the umbrella man – ‘that is – well, you know how these mistakes occur – I – if it’s your umbrella I hope you’ll excuse me – I picked it up this morning in a restaurant – If you recognize it as yours, why – I hope you’ll—’

‘Of course it’s mine,’ said Soapy viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even

have been a country churchyard. And

when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quite corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled. Through one violent-stain window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy’s ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, lustrous and serene: vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the caves – for a little while the scene might

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but he always came home cheerful and whistling. One day I touched noses with the black-and-tan in the hall, and I stuck him for an elucidation.

‘See, here, Wiggle-and-skip,’ I says, ‘you know that it ain’t the nature of a real man to play dry-nurse to a dog in public. I never saw one leached to a bow-wow yet that didn’t look like he’d like to lick every day as perky and set up as an amateur prestidigitatior doing the egg trick. How does he do it? Don’t tell me he likes it.’

‘Him?’ says the black-and-tan. ‘Why, he uses Nature’s Own Remedy. He gets spifflicated. At first when we go out he’s as shy as the man on the streamer who would rather play pedro when they make ‘em all jackpots. By the time we’ve been in eight saloons he don’t care whether the thing on the end of his line is a dog or a catfish. I’ve lost two inches of my tail trying to sidestep those swinging doors.’

The pointer I got from that terrier – vaudeville please copy – set me to thinking.

One evening about six o’clock my mistress ordered him to get busy and do the ozone act for Lovey. I have concealed it until now, but that is what she called me. The black-and-tan was called ‘Tweetness.’ I consider that I have the bulge on him as far as you could chase a rabbit. Still ‘Lovey’ is something of a nomenclatural tin-can on the tail of one’s self-respect.

At a quiet place on a safe street I tightened the line of my custodian in front of an attractive, refined saloon. I made a dead-ahead scramble for the doors, whining like a dog in the press despatches that lets the family know that little Alice is bogged while gathering lilies in the brook.

‘Why, darn my eyes,’ says the old man, with a grin; ‘darn my eyes if the saffron-coloured son of a seltzer lemonade ain’t asking me in to take a drink. Let me see – how long’s it been since I saved shoe leather by keeping one foot on the footrest? I believe I”ll-’

I knew I had him. Hot Scotches he took, sitting at a table. For an hour he kept the Campbells coming. I sat by his side rapping for the waiter with my tail, and eating free lunch such as mamma in her flat never equalled with her homemade truck bought at a delicatessen store eight minutes before papa comes home.

When the product of Scotland were all exhausted except the rye bread the old man unwound me from the table leg and played me outside like a fisherman plays a salmon. Out there he took off my collar and threw it into the street.

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‘Poor doggie,’ says he; ‘good doggie. She hasn’t kiss you anymore. ‘S a darned shame. Good doggie, go away and get run over by a street car and be happy.’

I refused to leave. I leaped and frisked around the old man’s legs happy as a pug on a rug.

‘You old flea-headed woodchuck-chaser,’ I said to him – ‘you moon-baying, rabbit-pointing, egg-stealing old beagle, can’t you see that I don’t want to leave you? Can’t you see that we’re both Pups in the Wood and the missis is the cruel uncle after with the dish towel and me with the flea liniment and a pink bow to tie on my tail. Why no cut that all out and be pards for everyone?’

Maybe you’ll say he didn’t understand – maybe he didn’t. But he kind of got a grip on the Hot Scotches, and stood still for a minute thinking.

‘Doggie,’ says he finally, ‘we don’t live more than a dozen lives on this earth, and very few of us live to be more than 300. If I ever see the flat any more I’m a flat, and if you do you’re flatter; and that’s no flattery. I’m offering 60 to 1 that Westward Ho wins out by the length of a dachshund.’

There was no string, but I frolicked along with my master to the Twenty-third Street ferry. And the cats on the route saw reason to give thanks that prehensile claws had been given them.

On the Jersey side my master said to a stranger who stood eating a currant bun:

‘Me and my doggie, we are bound for the Rocky Mountains.’

But what pleased me most was when my old man pulled both of my ears until I howled, and said:

‘You common, monkey-headed, rat-tailed, sulphur-coloured son of a door-mat, do you know what I’m going to call you?’

I thought of ‘Lovely,’ and I whined dolefully.

‘I’m going to call you “Pete,”’ says my master; and if I’d had five tails I couldn’t have done enough wagging to do justice to the occasion.

IX

The Love-philtre of Ikey Schoenstein

THE BLUE LIGHT DRUG STORE is down-town, between the Bowery and First Avenue, where the distance between the two streets is the shortest. The Blue Light does not consider that Pharmacy is a thing

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sat, comely, smoothed-faced, hard, indomitable, good-natured, upon a stool.

‘Ikey,’ said he, when his friend had fetched his mortar and sat opposite, grinding gum benzoin to a powder, ‘get busy with your ear. It’s drugs for me if you’ve got the line I need.’

Ikey scanned the countenance of Mr. McGowan for the usual evidences of conflict, but found none.

‘Take your coat off,’ he ordered. ‘I guess already that you have been stuck in the ribs with a knife. I have many times told you those Dagoes would do you up.’

Mr. McGowan smiled. ‘Not them,’ he said. ‘Not any Dagoes. But you’ve located the diagnosis all right enough – it’s under my coat, near the ribs. Say! Ikey – Rosy and me are goin’ to run away and get married to-night.’

Ikey’s left forefinger was doubled over the edge of the mortar, holding it steady. He gave it a wild rap with the pestle, but felt it not. Meanwhile Mr. McGowan’s smile faded to a look of perplexed gloom.

‘That is,’ he continued, ‘if she keeps in the notion until the time comes. We’ve been layin’ pipes for the gateway for two weeks. One day she says she will; the same evenin’ she says nixy. We’ve agreed on to-night, and Rosy’s stuck to the affirmative this time for two whole days. But it’s five hours yet till the time, and I’m afraid she’ll stand me up when it comes to scratch.’

‘You said you wanted drugs,’ remarked Ikey.

Mr. McGowan looked ill at ease and harassed - a condition opposed to his usual line of demeanour. He made a patent-medicine almanac into a roll and fitted it with unprofitable carefulness about his finger.

‘I wouldn’t have this double handicap make a false start to-night for a million,’ he said. ‘I’ve got a little flat up in Harlem all ready, with chrysanthemums on the table and a kettle ready to boil. And I’ve engaged a pulpit pounder to be ready at his house for us at 9.30. It’s got to come off. And if Rosy don’t change her mind again!’ –Mr. McGowan ceased, a prey to his doubts.

‘I don’t see then yet,’ said Ikey shortly, ‘What makes it that you talk of drugs, or what I can be doing about it.’

‘Old man Riddle don’t like me a little bit,’ went on the uneasy suitor, bent upon marshalling his arguments. ‘For a week he hasn’t let Rosy step outside the door with me. If it wasn’t for losin’ a boarder they’d have bounced me long ago. I’m makin’ $20 a week and she’ll never regret flyin’ the coop with Chunk McGowan.’

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‘You will excuse me, Chuck,’ said Ikey. ‘I must make a prescription that is to be call for soon.’

‘Say,’ said McGowan, looking up suddenly, ‘say, Ikey, ain’t there a drug of some king – some kind of powders that’II make a girl like you better if you give ‘em to her?’

Ikey’s lip beneath his nose curled with the score of superior enlightenment; but before he could answer, McGowan continued:

‘Tim Lacy told me once that he got some from a croaker uptown and fed ‘em to girl in soda water. From the very first dose he was ace-high and everybody else looked like thirty cents to her. They was married in less than two weeks.’

Strong and simple was Chunk McGowan. A better reader of men than Ikey was could have seen that his tough frame was strung upon fine wires. Like a good general who was about to invade the enemy’s territory he was seeking to guard every point against possible failure.

‘I thought,’ went on Chunk hopefully, ‘that if I had one of them powders to give Rosy when I see her at supper to-night it might brace her up and keep her from reneging on the proposition to skip. I guess she don’t need a mule team to drag her away, but women are better at coaching that they are at running bases. If the stuff’II work just for a couple of hours it’II do the trick.’

‘When is this foolishness of running away to be happening?’ asked Ikey.

‘Nine o’clock,’ said Mr.McGowan. ‘Supper’s at seven. At eight Rosy goes to bed with a headache. At nine old Parvenzano lets me through to his backyard, where there’s a board off Riddle’s fence, next door. I go under her window and help her down the fire escape. We’ve got to make it early on the preacher’s account. It’s all dead easy id rosy don’t balk when the flag drops. Can you fix me one of them powders, Ikey?’

Ikey Schoenstein rubbed his nose slowly.

‘Chunk,’ said he, ‘it is of drugs of that nature that pharmaceutists must have much carefulness. To you alone of my acquaintance would I entrust a powder like that. But for you I shall make it, and you shall see how it makes Rosy to think of you.’

Ikey went behind the prescription desk. There he crushed to a powder two soluble tablets, each containing a quarter of grain of morphia. To them he added a little sugar of milk to increase the bulk, and folded the mixture neatly in a white paper. Taken by an adult this powder would ensure several hours of heavy slumber without danger to the sleeper. This he handed to chuck

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McGowan, telling him to administer it in a liquid, if possible, and received the hearty thanks of the backyard Lochinvar.

The subtlety of Ikey’s action becomes apparent upon recital of his subsequent move. He sent a messenger for Mr. Riddle and disclosed the plans of McGowan for eloping with Rosy. Mr. riddle was a stout man, brick-dusty of complexion and sudden in action.

Much obliged,’ he said briefly to Ikey. ‘The lazy Irish loafer! My own room’s just above Rosy’s. I’ll just go up there myself after supper and load the shot-gun and wait. If he comes in my backyard he’ll go away in an ambulance instead of bridal chaise.’

With Rosy held in the clutches of Morpheus for a many hour’s deep slumber, and the bloodthirsty parent waiting, armed and forewarned, Ikey felt that his rival was close, indeed, upon discomfiture.

All night in the Blue Light Store he waited at his duties for chance news of the tragedy, but none came.

At eight o’clock in the morning the day clerk arrived and Ikey started hurriedly for Mrs. Riddle’s to learn the outcome. And lo! As he stepped out of the store who but Chuck McGowan sprang from a passing street-car and grasped his hand – Chuck McGowan with a victor’s smile and flushed with joy.

‘Pulled it off,’ said Chuck with Elysium in his grin. ‘Rosy hit the fire-escape on time to a second and we was under the wire at the Reverend’s at 9.30 ¼. She’s up at the flat – she cooked eggs this morning’ in a blue kimono – Lord I how lucky I am! You must pace up some day, Ikey, and feed with us, I’ve got a job down near the bridge, and that’s where I’M heading for now.’

‘the – the power?’ stammered Ikey.

‘Oh, that stuff you gave me!’ said Chuck broadening his grin; ‘well, it was this way. I sat down at the supper table last night at Riddle’s and I looked at Rosy, and I says to myself, “Chuck, if you get the girl get her on the square – don’t try any hocus-pocus with a thoroughbred like her.” And I keeps the paper you give me in my pocket. And then my lamps falls on another party present, who, I says to myself, is failin’ in a proper affection towards his comin’ son-in-law, so I watches my chance and dumps that power in old man Riddle’s coffee – see?’

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there is plenty of close room. It’s a room everybody likes. It never stays idle long.’

‘Do you have, many theatrical people rooming here?’ asked the young man.

‘They comes and goes. A good proportion of my lodgers is connected with the theatres. Yes, sir, this is the theatrical district. Actor people never stays long anywhere. I get my share. Yes, they comes and they goes.’

He engaged the room, paying for a week in advance. He was tired, he said, and would had been made ready, she said, even to towels and water. As the housekeeper moved away he put, for the thousandth time, the question that he carried at the end of his tongue.

‘A young girl – Miss Vashner – Miss Eloise Vashner – do you remember such a one among your lodgers? She would be singing on the stage, most likely. a fair girl, of medium height and slender, with reddish gold hair and a dark mole near her left eyebrow.’

‘No, I don’t remember the name. Them stage people has names they change as often as their rooms. They comes and they goes. No, I don’t call that one to mind.’

No. always no. five months of ceaseless interrogation and the inevitable negative. So much time spent by day in questioning managers, agents, schools and choruses; by night among the audiences of theatres from all-star casts down to music-halls so low that ha dreaded to find what her. He was sure that since her disappearance from home this grate water-girt city held somewhere, but is was like a monstrous quicksand, shifting its particles constantly, with no foundation, its upper granules of to-day buried to-morrow in ooze and slime.

The furnished room received its large guest with a first glow of pseudo-hospitality, a hectic, haggard perfunctory welcome like the specious smile of a demirep. The sophistical comfort came in reflected gleams from the decayed furniture, the ragged brocade upholstery of a couch and two chairs, a footwide cheap pier glass between the two windows, from one or two gilt picture frames and a brass bedstead in a corner.

The guest reclined, inert, upon a chair, while the room, confused in speech as though it were an apartment in Babel, tried to discourse to him of its divers tenantry.

A polychromatic rug like some brilliant-flowered, rectangular,

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tropical islet lay surrounded by a billowy sea of soiled matting. Upon the gay-papered wall were those pictures that pursue the homeless one from house to house – The Huguenot Lovers, The First Quarrel, The Wedding Breakfast, Psyche at the Fountain. The mantel’s chastely severe outline was ingloriously veiled behind some pert drapery drawn rakishly askew like the sashes of the Amazonian ballet. Upon it was some desolate flotsam cast aside by the room’s marooned when a lucky sail had borne them to a fresh port a trifling vase or two, pictures of actresses, a medicine bottle, some stray cards out of a deck.

One by one, as the characters of a cryptography become explicit, the little signs left by the furnished room’s procession of guests developed a significance. The threadbare space in the throng. Tiny finger-prints on the wall spoke of little prisoners trying to feel their way to sun and air. A splattered stain, raying like the shadow of a bursting bomb, witnessed where a hurled glass or bottle had splintered with its contents against the wall. Across the pier glass had been scrawled with a diamond in staggering letters the name ‘Marie.’ It seemed that the succession of dwellers in the furnished room turned in fury – perhaps tempted beyond forbearance by its garish coldness – and wreaked upon it their passions. The furniture was chipped and bruised: the couch, distorted by bursting springs, seemed a horrible monster that had been slain during the stress of some grotesque convulsion. Some more potent upheavel had cloves a great slice from the marble mantel. Each plank in the floor owned its particular can’t and shriek as from a separate and indi8vidual agony. It seemed incredible that all this malice and injury had been wrought upon the room by those who had called it for a time their home; and yet it may have been the cheated home instinct surviving blindly, the resentful rage at false household gods that had kindled their wrath. A hut that is our own we can sweep and adorn and cherish.

The young tenant in the chair allowed these thoughts to file, soft-shod, thought his mind, while there drifted into the room furnished sound and furnished scents. He heard in one room a tittering and incontinent, slack laughter; in others the monologue of a scold, the rattling of dice, a lullaby, and one crying dully; above him a banjo tinkled with spirit. Doors banged somewhere; the elevated trains roared intermittently; a cat yowled miserably upon a back fence. And he breathed the breath of the house – a dank savour rather than a smell – a cold, musty effluvium as from

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He burrowed in crevices and corners, and found corks and cigarettes. These he passed in passive contempt. But once he found in a fold of the matting a half-smoked cigar, and this he ground beneath his heel with a green and trenchant oath. He sifted the room from end to end. He found dreary and ignored the small records of many a peripatetic tenant; but of her whom he sought, and who may have lodge there, and whose spirit seemed to hover there, he found no trace.

And then he thought of the housekeeper.

He ran from the haunted room downstairs and to a door that showed a crack of light. She came out to his knock. He smothered his excitement as best he could.

‘Will you tell me, madam,’ he besought her, ‘who occupied the room I have before I came?’

‘yes, sir. I can tell you again. ‘Twas Sprowls and Mooney, as I said. Miss B’retta Sprowls it was in the theatres, but Missis Mooney she was. My house is well known for respectability. The marriage certificate hung, framed, on a nail over—’

‘what kind of a lady was Miss Sprowls – in looks, I mean?’

‘Why, black-haired, sir, short and stout, with a comical face. They left a week ago Tuesday.’

‘And before they occupied it?’

‘Why, there was a single gentleman connected with the draying business. He left owing me a week. Before him was Missis Crowder and her two children, that stayed four months; and back of them was old Mr. Doyle, whose sons paid for him. He kept the room six months. The essence that had vivified it was gone. The perfume of mignonette had departed. In its place was the old, stale odour of mouldy house furniture, of atmosphere in storage.

The ebbing of his hope drained his faith. He sat staring at the yellow, singing gaslight. Soon he walked to the bed and began to tear the sheets into strips. With the blade of his knife he drove them tightly into every crevice around windows and doors. When all was snug and taut he turned out light turned the gas full on again and laid himself gratefully upon the bed.

. . . . .

It was Mrs. McCool’s night to go with the can for beer. So she fetched it and sat with Mrs. Purdy in one of those subterranean

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art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint studio resulted.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy finger. Over on the East side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moos-grown ‘places.’

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood tinned by Californian zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with a shaggy, grey eyebrow.

‘She has one chance in – let us say, ten,’ he said, as he shook down the memory in his clinical thermometer. ‘And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-up on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopeia look silly. Your little lady has made up her mind that she’s not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?’

‘She – she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples some day,’ said Sue.

‘Paint? – bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice – a man, for instance?’

‘A man?’ said Sue, with a jews’-harp twang in her voice. ‘Is a man worth – but, no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind.’

‘Well, it is the weakness, then,’ said the doctor. ‘I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession, I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in five chance for her, instead of one in ten.’

After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom and cried a japanese napkin to pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy’s room with drawing-board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face towards the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to

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illustrate a magazine story. Young artist must pave their way to Art by drawing for magazine stories that young authors write to pave their way to Literature.

As Sue was sketching a pair elegant horseshow riding trousers and a monocle on the figure of the hero, an Idabo cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy’s eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting – vaunting backward.

‘Twelve,’ she said, and a little later, ‘eleven’; and then ‘ten’ and ‘nine’; and then ‘eight’ and ‘seven,’ almost together.

Sue looked solicitously out the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots, climbed half-way up the brick wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the crumbling bricks.

‘What is it, dear?’ asked Sue.

‘Six’ said Johnsy, in almost a whisper. ‘They’re falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my head ache to count them. But now it’s easy. Ther4e goes another one. There are only five left now.’

‘Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie.’

‘Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go too. I’ve known that for three days. Didn’t the doctor tell you?’

‘Oh, I never heard of such nonsense,’ complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. ‘What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don’t be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were – let’s see exactly what he said – he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that’s almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street-cars or walking past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for greedy self.’

‘you needn’t get any more wine,’ said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window.

‘There goes another. No, I don’t want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I’ll go too.’

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‘Johnsy, dear’ said Sue bending over her, ‘will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out of the window until I am done working? I must hand those drawings in by to-morrow. I need the light or I would draw the shape down.’

‘Couldn’t you draw in the other room? Asked Johnsy coldly.

‘I’d rather be here by you,’ said Sue.’ ‘ Besides, I don’t want you to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves.’

‘Tell me as soon as you finished,’ said Johnsy, closing her eyes, and lying white and still as a fallen statue, ‘because I want to see the last one fall. I’m tired of waiting. I’m tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one those poor, tired leaves.’

‘Try to sleep,’ said Sue. ‘I must call Behrman up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I’ll not be gone a minute. Don’t try to move till I come back.’

Old Behrman was painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michel Angelo’s Moses beard curling down from the head of a satyr along the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hen of his mistress’s robe. He had been always abought to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drunk gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in anyone, and who regarded himself as special mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries in his dimply-lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that has been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johnsy’s fancy, and how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself, float away when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

Old Behrman with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and derision for such idiotic imaginings.

‘Vass!’ he cried. ‘Is dere people in de world mit der foolishness to die because leafs dey drop off from a confounded vine? I had not heard of such a thing. No, I will bose as a model for your fool hermit-dunderhead. Vy do You allow dot silly pusiness to come in der prain of her? Ach, dot poor little Miss Youhnsy.’

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‘I’m glad I come across you, mister,’ said Haylocks. ‘How’d you like to play a game or two of seven-up? I’ve got the keerds.’

He fished them out of Noah’s valise – a rare, inimitable deck, greasy with bacon suppers and grimy with soil of cornfields.

‘bunco Harry’ laughed loud and briefly.

‘Not for me, sport,’ he said firmly. ‘I don’t go against that make-up of yours for a cent. But I still say you’ve overdone it. The Reubs haven’t dressed like that since ’79. I doubt if you could work Brooklyn for a key-winding watch with that lay-out.’

‘Oh, you needn’t think I ain’t got the money,’ boasted Haylocks. He drew forth a tightly rolled mass or bills as large as a teacup, and laid it on the table.

Got that for my share of grandmother’s farm,’ he announced. ‘There’s $950 in that roll. Thought I’d come into the city and look around for a likely business to go into.’

‘Bunco Harry’ took up the roll of money and looked at it with almost respect in his smiling eyes.

‘I’ve seen worst,’ he said critically. ‘But you’ll never do it in them clothes. You want to get light tan shoes and black suit and a straw hat with a coloured band, and talk a good deal about Pitts burg and freight differentials, and drink sherry for breakfast in order to work off phony stuff like that.’

‘What’s his line?’ asked two or three shifty-eyed men of ‘Bunco Harry’ after Haylocks had gathered up his impugned money and departed.

‘The queer, I guess,’ said Harry. ‘Or else he’s one of Jerome’s men. Or dome guy with a new graft. He’s too much hayseed. Maybe that his – I wonder now – oh no, it couldn’t have been real money.’

Haylocks wandered on. Thirst probably assailed him again, for he dived into a dark groggery on a side-street and bought beer. Several sinister fellows hung upon one end of the bar. At first sight of him their eyes brightened; but when his insistent and exaggerated rusticity became apparent their expressions changed to wary suspicion.

Haylocks swung his valise across the bar.

‘Keep that awhile for me, mister,’ he said, chewing at the end of a virulent claybank cigar. ‘I’ll be back after I knock around a spell. And keep your eye on it, for there’s $950 inside of it, though maybe you wouldn’t think so to look at me.’

Somewhere outside a phonography stuck up a band piece, and Haylocks was off for it, his coat-tail buttons flopping in the middle of his back.

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‘Divvy? Mike,’ said the men hanging upon the bar, winking openly at one another.

‘Honest, now,’ said the bartender, kicking the valise to one side. ‘You don’t think I’d fall to that, do you? Anybody can see he ain’t no jay. One of McAdoo’s come-on squad, I guess. He’s a shine if he made himself up. There ain’t no parts of the country now where they dress like that since they run rural free delivery to Providence, Rhode Island. If he’s got nine-fifty in that valise it’s a ninety-eight-cent Waterbury that’s stopped at ten minutes to ten.’

When Haylocks had exhausted the resources of Mr. Edison to amuse he returned for his valise. And then down Broadway he gallivanted, culling the sights with his eager blue eyes. But still and evermore Broadway rejected him with curt glances and sardonic smiles. He was the oldest of the ‘gags’ that the city must endure. He was so flagrantly impossible, so ultra-rustic, so exaggerated beyond the most freakish products of the barnyard, the hayfield and the vaudeville stage, that he excited only weariness and suspicion. And the wisp of hay in his hair was so genuine, so fresh and redolent of the meadows, so clamorously rural, that even a shell-game man would have put up his peas and folded his table at the sight of it.

Haylocks seated himself upon a flight of stone steps and once more exhumed his roll of yellow-backs from the valise. The outer one, a twenty, he shucked off and beckoned to a newsboy.

‘Son,’ said he, ‘run somewhere and get this changed for me. I’m mighty nigh out of chicken feed; I guess you’ll get a nickel if you’ll hurry up.’

A hurt look appeared through the dirt on the newsy’s face.

‘Aw, watchert’ink! G’wan and get yer funny bill changed yerself. Dey ain’t no farm clothes yet got on. G’wan wit yer stage money.’

On a corner lounged a keen-eyed steerer for a gambling house. He saw Haylocks, and his expression suddenly grew cold and virtuous.

‘Mister,’ said the rural one. ‘I’ve heard of places in this here town where a fellow could have a good game of old sledge or peg a card at keno. I got $950 in this valis, and I come down from old Ulster to see the sights. Know where a fellow could get action on about $9 or $10? I’m going’ to have some sport, and then maybe I’ll buy out a business of some kind.

The steerer looked pained, and investigated a white speck on his left forefinger nail.

‘Cheese it, old man,’ he murmured reproachfully. ‘The central

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Office must be bughouse to send you out looking like such a gillie. You couldn’t get within two blocks of sidewalk crap game in them tony pastor props. The recent Mr. Scotty from Death Valley has got you beat a crosstown block in the way of Elizabethan scenery and mechanical accessories. Let it be skiddoo for yours. Nay, I know of on gilded halls where one way bet a patrol wagon on the ace.’

Rebuffed again by the great city that is so swift to detect artificialities, Haylocks sat upon the kerb and presented his thoughts to hold a conference.

‘It’s my cloths,’ said he; ‘durned id it ain’t. they think I’m a hayseed and won’t have nothing’ to do with me. Nobody never made fun of this hat is Ulster county. I guess if you want floks to notice you in New York you must dress up like they do.’

So Haylocks went shopping in the bazaars where men spake through their noses and rubbed their hands and ran the tape line ecstatically over the bulge in his inside pocket where report a red nubbin of corn with an even number of rows. And messengers bearing parcels and boxes streamed to him hotel on Broadway within the lights of Long Acre.

At nine o’clock in the evening one descended to the sidewalk whom Ulster country would have forsworn. Bright tan were his shoes; his hat the later block. His light grey trousers were deeply creased; a gay blue silk handkerchief flapped from the breast pocket of the elegant English walking-coat. His collar might have graced a laundry window; his blond hair was trimmed close; the wisp of hay was gone.

For an instant he stood, resplendent, with the leisurely air of a boulevardier concocting in his mind the route for his evening pleasures. And then he turned down the gay, bright street with the easy and graceful tread of millionaire.

But in the instant that he had paused the wisest and keenest eyes in the city had enveloped him in their field of vision. A stout man with grey eyes picked two of his friends with a life of his eyebrows from the row of loungers in front of the hotel.

‘The juiciest jay I’ve seen in six months,’ said the man with grey eyes. ‘Come along’

It was half-past eleven when a man galloped into the West forth-seventh street police-station with the story of his wrongs.

‘Nine hundred and fifty dollars,’ he gasped, ‘all my share of grandmother’s farm.’

The desk sergeant wrung from him the name Jabez Bulltongue,