

I will, therefore, relate, for your diversion, the wonderful tale of the crow, the tortoise and others. The princes said—Sir, tell it. Viṣṇusharma said—Listen. I now bring Mitrālabha of which the following is the introductory verse.

Chapter 1.

THE ACQUISITION OF FRIENDS.

Though destitute of means and without wealth, the crow, the tortoise, the deer and the mouse, who were the best of friends and gifted with intellect quickly accomplished their purposes.

The princes asked 'How was this?' Viṣṇusharma related—

There is, on the bank of the Godāvāri, a large silk-cotton tree. There, coming from regions in different quarters, birds were wont to roost at night. Once, when the night was almost spent, and the divine Moon, lord of the night-lots, was pending on the crest of the setting mountain, a crow, Laghupatanaka (Swift-flier) by name, who was awake, saw a Fowler advancing like a second god of death. Seeing him he reflected, 'To-day I have had an unwelcome sight in the early morning. I know not what evil it forebodes.' Saying so he set out, much disturbed at heart, following up his (the Fowler's) course. For, thousands of occasions for sorrow, and hundreds for fear, day by day, overtake the fool and not the wise man. — 3.

Moreover, worldly people must do this—

Every day on rising, they should think that a great calamity is at hand—which of death, disease or sorrow would befall (them) ! (So that in case of an emergency one should be fore-warned and prepared to meet it).

Now the hunter, having scattered the grains of rice, spread out his net, and himself remained concealed. Just at that time a king of pigeons, Chitrāgriva (the Speckle-necked) by name, who was sailing in the sky with his retinue, noticed the grains of rice. Then the pigeon-king said to the pigeons that were attracted by the grains of rice—'Whence can there be the possibility of rice-grains being found in this lonely (tenantless) forest? So let the matter be first carefully examined. I do not see any good will come out of this.

Probably, by this our desire for the rice-grains, we too shall fare similarly (meet with a fate similar) to that of—